



Department of International Management
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STRESS, UNCERTAINTY AND COVID-19
CRISIS:
IMPLICATIONS FOR HUMAN RESOURCES IN
THE HOSPITALITY SECTOR

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INTRODUCTION

In 2021 we are entering a special year, the year of uncertainty and a thousand questions. A year that leaves behind a 2020 that will go down in history. Covid19 exploded in China, and until March 2020 the Covid explosion caused hundreds of deaths a day, we experienced a worldwide lockdown for months, everything came to a standstill. The streets deserted, shops closed and hospital wards crowded, medical staff in a state of distress.

The impact of Covid on health is clear, the economic damage to date is as devastating as it is obvious, but what remains very uncertain and unclear is the near future.

All economic sectors have been hard hit by the crisis, but the tourism sector, based on contacts and interpersonal relations, on travels, exchange, in an era where social distancing is the basis for survival, has been hit harder than others by the crisis.

In fact, according to the European parliament, tourism is one of the sectors most affected by the Covid19 outbreak. The sector produces 9.5% of European gross domestic profit and provides 11.2% of employment in the EU. 22.6 million is the number of people working directly or indirectly in the tourism sector. (European Parliament, 2021)

In Italy, Istat certified for the fourth quarter of 2020 a 70% loss of turnover in accommodation services compared to the same period of the previous year.

At the beginning of 2021, the situation worsened further, with a drop in tourist numbers on Italian soil of 83% compared to the same month in 2020. (Federalberghi, 2021)

The situation is very serious throughout Europe and it is continuing. We continue to live amidst DPCM and restrictions, regional colour changes and proposals to extend school activities, resulting in the postponement of the start of the summer season. Holidays are cancelled, regions are closed, and tourism is slowly dying out. It dies out because there is no opportunity to travel, and it dies out because many of the small and medium-sized enterprises that make up tourism cannot cope.

The uncertainty about the future of this sector is overwhelming. Uncertainty experienced by the 22.6 million employees.

Economic and other difficulties impacting millions of people. But how do they impact?

How do the crisis, stress and uncertainty impact hotel employees?

This was the starting question for the development of this research.

Many studies have been carried out on stress, caused in a general sense by the working dynamics of the sector, to which we must add what is currently happening.

In fact, according to Jung et al “Stress among employees is inevitable in today’s rapidly changing organizational environment; excessive stress has an absolute adverse effect on efficiency (Karatepe & Uludag, 2008). This is because stress impacts an employee’s mental and physical health, negative effect on attitude, diminishing job satisfaction, and increasing turnover intent (Harris, James, & Boonthanom, 2005)”. (Jung et al, 2015, p. 2145)

Always according to Jung et al, (Jung et al, 2015) if an employee accumulates stress in the work environment this may lead to burnout which means psychological exhaustion.

We are currently experiencing a social, economic and health crisis that is unprecedented in recent decades and the impact of all this is bound to be a path that remains to be discovered.

Slow summer reopenings, which seemed to have brought us back to normality, albeit modified by distances and masks, and then again the increasingly intense restrictions.

Working in the sector myself, I felt it was vital to investigate in more detail how stress, crisis and uncertainty impact on employees in the hotel industry. I experienced all this as a student, worker and enthusiast in the sector, and day after day the questions about the impact all this was having on the people close to me grew stronger.

There has been a lot of discussion in recent months about the impact on hotels, on business in general, and I therefore felt it necessary to analyze the situation from the employee's point of view. Human resources are indeed the basis of competitive advantage in a business based on human relations.

Therefore, starting from the centrality of human resources for the competitive advantage of the hotels, the intent is to understand how stress, uncertainty or crisis, such as the current one resulting from the ongoing pandemic, affects these resources.

There is a big concern about the economic losses that the tourism sector is facing in recent months and the challenges for future recovery, but much less is said about the psychological aspect of the employees working in it. Understanding how stress and crisis affect their well-being or commitment can allow the company itself to react better to

change. Hence, the following study, based on a sample of more than 200 people, aims to analyze the impact of crises such as Covid19, stress and uncertainty on the resilience, well-being and commitment of employees in the hotel industry.

The studies conducted so far, have shown that employees with a high level of commitment or well-being perform better. (Guest et al, 2017)

The contribution of the research is therefore addressed to managers, HR departments and hotel managers with the hope that, by giving more insight into the employees who work for them, we can see a revival of tourism that has at its heart the well-being of the staff itself, which through commitment and well-being, can help to increase the performance of the structures.

In the following chapters, after a brief overview of the tourism sector, will be analyzed the importance of human resources in the sector and why they are the basis of competitive advantage.

Human resources that, due to the intrinsic work dynamics of the sector, often find themselves working in situations that are stressful. Work dynamics, seasonality and turnover are all intrinsic aspects of the sector that contribute in various ways to increasing the stress of these resources, and to all this is added the possible stress resulting from the pandemic.

The above aspects will be analyzed in more detail and then the current Covid19 crisis and the economic and psychological repercussions it is having on people will be discussed.

This discussion led to specific hypotheses on the impact of stress and crisis on employees, which could be answered in the last part of the paper through statistical analysis.

The method used to answer the research question is based on statistical analysis conducted on a convenience sample, based on personal contacts with employees in the sector. 210 people answered the questionnaire and thanks to their contribution it was possible to conduct statistical regressions to study the correlation of stress with resilience, well-being and commitment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

PART 1: HUMAN RESOURCES AND THE HOTEL INDUSTRY

1.1 Introduction to the industry

As is well known, the tourism-hotel sector represents one of the main economic drivers in our country. In Italy, tourism contributes to the realization of 13% of the GDP and employs 15% of the national workforce (Centro Studi Confindustria 2020). In fact, it is a sector that is strongly interconnected with much of the national economy. The industry involves a wide variety of businesses, from accommodation, catering, travel agencies, transportation, leisure and entertainment businesses, cultural and sports businesses, bathing establishments, congress organization and management, and finally all the businesses that even indirectly are activated by the presence of a guest in a location. The hotel industry, like all other industries, does not just generate value within the same sector in which they operate. We can say that, in a chain, the hotel business distributes value within a complex chain of actors, from suppliers to transportation services, for example. In Italy there are about 33 thousand hotel structures for over a million rooms, the highest number in Europe. The production value of the sector exceeds 20 billion euros (Centro Studi Confindustria 2020) and represents one of the main components of the tourism industry. Eighty percent work in a company with fewer than 50 employees, compared to a national average of 65% (Centro Studi Confindustria 2020). Only 5.2% of Italian hotels belong to a hotel chain. This characteristic of small size makes companies in the sector particularly vulnerable to the liquidity crisis to which they are exposed due to the sudden cessation of business caused by the current health crisis (Centro Studi Confindustria 2020).

The hotel industry has a strong impact on the territory and not only from an economic point of view. The tourism phenomenon in its contemporary vision is integrated with values, products and local community, contributing to virtuous processes of recovery, regeneration and enhancement of real estate and artistic heritage. The market of hotel transactions and building interventions gives us back the dimension, becoming more and

more the protagonist of the sector. The driving force is represented by a robust internal demand and a globalized market in strong and constant growth until the beginning of the pandemic and destined to return to growth as soon as the contingent situation is under control. Indeed, mobility of people is inherent in our pattern of life, particularly in the younger generations (Sissons & Jones 2012).

1.2 The strategic value of human resources management in the Hotel Industry

1.2.1. Human Resources as the basis for competitive advantage

In order to be successful in the hotel and tourism industry, it is not enough to have a beautiful hotel, with excellent space, top quality linen and starred food, since all this does not automatically lead to any revenue if it is not managed in a manner appropriate to the company's objectives. The quality of the "fixed" resources will only be an excellent starting point for a management capable of living up to them. Revenue will come from the careful use of resources in every department, from the revenue generated at the time of sale, from every single resource that transforms a guest's stay from normal to special. In the hotel-tourism sector, the degree of elasticity and flexibility linked to the characteristics of the structures, facilities and equipment, as well as of the human resources and services, is an element that must be evaluated with particular attention in the strategies and policies for offering and differentiating the product with respect to the composition of demand, since its incorrect evaluation can render useless the efforts and resources invested in marketing by the hotel company. Systemic uncertainty, on the other hand, imposes a continuous search for adaptability in the strategic management of human resources. The strategic importance of human resources, formed by the set of staff skills and competencies, can prove decisive in securing a competitive advantage.

On the one hand, their formation and accumulation is certainly not easy and does not take a short time, even though they are resources that are not subject to being consumed by their use in the production process, but rather to increase with their growth; on the other hand, their fungibility and therefore their easy usability in other organizations in the

same sector, creates the conditions for the development and persistence of an imminent risk of "losing" staff who occupy key positions in the organization (Tracey, 2014).

Staff resources and competencies are many and varied and relate to individual and collective, operational and managerial skills. The degree of training, education, and experience undoubtedly determine the potential for staff to respond in the various stages of production and delivery. However, it is necessary to consider both the skills related to the specific task performed (e.g. knowledge of service styles for waiters, kitchen lines for kitchen staff, customer management and booking techniques for reception staff, etc.), and the skills, culture and "experience" that underpin the ability to cope with the many situations that arise in practice, making decisions and behaving in a manner consistent with the firm's objectives.

The HR sector is the foundation of competitive advantage as a resource that can quickly learn the corrections or dynamics imposed/recommended by the head of each division saves cost and time. A human resource that makes good use of the resources at its disposal makes for great savings, and this happens in every division.

Human resources are the basis of competitive advantage in a hospitality business for various reasons and in various situations. Let's take into consideration some examples that better highlights the concept of HR at the basis of competitive advantage within the sector.

Consider two hotels that are similar in terms of category, quality, services offered and location. The main difference between the two hotels is their human resources. At the booking stage, in fact, it is clear that we are booking a closed box, because we can book a very attractive and well-maintained hotel, or vice versa a mediocre hotel, but the quality of service, and the costumers' experience will depend above all on the quality of the employees who work in the hotel. The ideal employees in a hotel are those who are able to solve the problems of the users with professionalism and courtesy, even being able to anticipate the requests and needs of a customer, to make him feel understood and "pampered".

Differences in competitive advantage is made by each human resources from each department, starting from the housekeeping department or the kitchen till the administrative department. It is the human resources, for example, who welcome the customer into the world of the hotel that immediately achieve that inclusion of the

customer within what could be seen as the microcosm of hospitality, of the reception where any person must feel at ease.

In fact, as pointed out by Péric ‘‘at the hotel as the primary provider of tourism, tourists and employees are directed to cooperate with each other in the realization of the service, and how successful their interaction will be depends largely on the abilities, knowledge and skills of the employees in providing the services’’. (Péric et al, 2019, p.26)

The success of the hotel is mostly in the hands of its staff who, based on their interactions with the end customer, will have the "power" to satisfy or not them.

1.2.2. Human Resources practices in Hotels

While emphasizing the importance of employees in a hotel, it is equally important to stress the need for best HR practices to ensure that employees work in a favorable climate and can perform their services to the best of their ability.

The acknowledged importance of human resources within hospitality establishments in fact should be matched by a consistent level of management practices capable of improving distinctiveness and with it the quality of performance. As Delmotte et al (2011, p.1500) point out, this is possible by introducing HR practices and processes that are relevant to the employees: ‘‘To develop relevant initiatives HR staff has to know the business, both in terms of the long-term objectives of the firm and the short-term goals of line managers, who will use the HR practices and processes to steer their employees in line with organizational strategy. This will allow HR staff to align business strategy and HRM. To do so successfully, a mix of generalist knowledge (How does a firm function?) and expert knowledge on HR practices and processes (What are the conditions under which individual performance-based pay is successful?) is needed’’ (Delmotte et al, 2011, p.1500) and this can help the employee to feel himself as part of the ‘‘family’’ and have an higher commitment to the hotel.

In addition, the authors emphasize the importance of empathy in the context of working relationships: ‘‘Next, empathy is needed as well. An empathetic HR staff is aware of others’ emotions and able to use that emotional awareness to achieve results. An empathetic HR staff is also more likely to gain insight into employees’ individual situations and line managers’ local context’’. (Delmotte et al, 2011, p.1500)

Valuing the HR department and organizing it in a way that gives great attention to the individual employee can be very profitable for the hotel itself.

Very often in hotels there is not even an HR department, unless it is a large hotel chain, and this can lead to less attention being paid to the needs of the employees.

An employee who feels that he or she is followed, understood and knows that he or she can refer to certain people to express problems can work more calmly, perform better and relate better to customers and so, above all, they can be more satisfied.

Employees, by being listened to and treated kindly by their department, may in turn be kinder to the guests themselves.

The way in which the individual employee approaches the guest is in fact of fundamental importance.

Let's think of a very good hotel but with very unfriendly staff, it's just a beautiful hotel but no guest will like to return and will not recommend it to others. A guest, most of the time, when going to a hotel is on holiday, he needs a break and he likes to meet smiling and relaxed people because he has no interest in perceiving the problem or frustration of the individual employee, which would negatively affect his stay in the hotel.

In fact, as has been highlighted by Péric et al 'as employee knowledge and skills are intangible assets of any service organization, employee satisfaction has become one of the most significant issues facing the hotel and tourism industry (Matzler and Renzl, 2007). The quality of work of hotel and tourism employees depends first and foremost on their job satisfaction. Satisfied employees tend to be more productive, positive and creative'. (Péric et al, 2019, p.26)

In addition, often not only is there no specific HR department, but the organisation chart of the hotel is also unclear and not having a precise organisation chart to refer to can lead to employee confusion.

One of the "best practices" identified in the study of Delmotte (Delmotte et al, 2011) is for management to implement a HR roles and responsibilities charter. This tool, it is argued: "can make clear which services belong to the tasks of the HR department and which are outside the scope of HR's responsibilities. This will help to minimize duplication of effort, conflicts, or tasks falling between the cracks. Next, developing a transparent HR organizational chart showing the various positions, the position holders, and lines of command, can help HR customers to detect who they have to contact in case

of problems or questions. Finally, HR staff should ensure availability to customers.” (Delmotte, 2011 p.1489 e ss.).

1.3 Stress and uncertainty in the Hotel industry

Workers in the hotel industry face various challenges including those common to all service industry jobs and those specific to the hotel industry which may generate stress. In general, the concept of "stress" in the field of organizational theory and work psychology has been at the center of a long debates. More specifically, with regard to work and its relation to stress, one of the most established definitions of work-related stress can be found in the work of Parker and De Cotiis (1983). In that important essay has been said that: “the feeling we call job stress may be found in the presence or absence of more lasting deviations from normal functioning. When the stressor is removed without delay, or when the individual is successful in coping with it, the feeling of stress may dissipate quickly without resulting in any second-level outcome. If stress is intense and/or prolonged, however, second-level outcomes are more likely to occur.” (DeCotiis, 1983 p.165)

The term ‘work-related stress’ is used to describe the feeling of a person deviating from normal or self-desired functioning in the workplace due also to elements outside the work context, but dependent on it in terms of psychological status. The use of the term feeling is intentional, as it implies a "subjective awareness of our emotional state" (Gaylin, 1979, p. 1). Moreover, this feeling is both uncomfortable and undesirable for the individual" (DeCotiis, 1983, p. 165). From these definitions it is clear how important it is to consider stress in relation to work and to ensure that it can become a marginal feeling for the employee or at least if stressful situations arise, to prevent them from being prolonged and leading to second level outcomes. Stress in the second level can in fact influence organizational commitment, job satisfaction, job performance and some avoidance behaviors. (DeCotiis, 1983)

There are some elements of uncertainty, and therefore of work stress, even in the sense we just assigned to the term, that are intrinsically correlated with the characteristics of the tourism-hotel sector.

Therefore, having underlined in the previous paragraphs the importance of employees as the basis of competitive advantage, it follows that it is important that they work in the best possible conditions. It would be ideal for anyone, for example, to work with little stress, with a high perceived organizational support or with a permanent contract that would give security but this is very difficult to happen in an industry where many factors that generate stress and uncertainty are intrinsic.

In the following paragraphs we will analyze some of these factors that are characteristic of the hotel industry such as the working dynamics themselves, turnover or seasonality. In addition to all the stress and uncertainty that hotel employees are used to experiencing, there are also periods of shock that can cause an increase in stress levels, such as the crisis resulting from the Covid spread, and it will be interesting and important to analyze in the course of this discussion the effects of all this on employees.

1.3.1. Working dynamics

The working dynamics that characterize the tourist-hotel sector can intrinsically present risk profiles in the field of work-related stress. Stress is inherent in the very way of carrying out the work in each department of each division.

As pointed out by Wong et al “long working hours, shift duties and handling demanding and difficult customers in hotels has become a take-for-granted phenomenon in the hospitality industry (Hsieh et al., 2004; Sarabakhsh et al., 1989). This stress creates a demand on an individual to make a decision on the balance between work and family. People have difficulty working in different roles or even multiple roles (as a supervisor in work, a parent at home) which leads to stress (Grandey and Cropanzano, 1999)”. (Wong et al, 2015, p.195)

This happens because time available to carry out one's work is often short and intense, the working hours are very long, this has been confirmed also by Wong et al who state that “A culture of long working hours in the hospitality industry is so typical that many workers see their working hours as normal and rarely question this practice”. (Wong et al, 2015, p.197)

A good example of this is the dynamics in the dining hall and kitchen, where there must be a lot of harmony and cooperation between employees because stress and tension are

naturally very high. Meals are all concentrated in a short time and everything has to go smoothly during those hours. Every mistake can be very costly.

Empirical research on employee burnout has been extensively conducted in the hospitality industry specially to explain why food-service managers suddenly quit their job (Tabacchi et al., 1990).

In all work dynamics a good employee has to be able to put aside all the stress and frustration that comes from private life or work as it is not allowed to make the customer feel bad.

The work of human resources in a hotel is different from many other jobs. You do not have the privilege of being angry for some reason and sulking in front of an office PC. The only emotion that can shine through is happiness, serenity and well-being, which is what the guest must feel on vacation. Even just having a smile on one's face all the time, and not expressing one's emotions naturally, and be in continuous contact with the clients, who can sometimes be very difficult to deal with, can obviously be a source of stress.

This point has been stressed also by Wong et al, in fact they affirm that ‘‘due to the phenomena of chronic labor shortage, role overload, long and irregular working hours exacerbated by considerable pressure over an extended time period, the prevalence of burnout is higher in service industries. This is so because one’s job involves a high degree of interaction with clients (Vallen, 1993)’’. (Wong et al, 2015, p.197)

This type of dynamic and in general prolonged hours of work are neither healthy or productive. Obviously, all this has a decisive impact on stress levels and job satisfaction.

1.3.2. Seasonality

One of the fundamental characteristics of the hospitality market is undoubtedly that of seasonality which can be a significant source of stress for the HR of the sector.

In accordance with Alanazeh et al seasonality can be defined as ‘‘ the most visible attribute of the tourism industry. It is a special annual dependence caused by the changes in weather, the decision for the time of buying and the time of consuming, creating competitions and effects, and pressure on the destination and employees (Bigović, 2011). Seasonality is a temporal imbalance in tourism, which is expressed by the number of

tourists, travelers, arrivals, expenditures of tourists, and employment (Butler, 1994)”.
(Alanazeh et al, 2015, p. 33)

Seasonal work has been defined by Marshall (1999) as non-permanent paid work for those who have been recruited by hotels to cover their lack of employees in appealing to the needs and wishes of customers. Thus, their recruitment ends as soon as the high season has passed. (Alanazeh et al, 2015)

Seasonality has a negative impact as it puts any employee in a position of uncertainty and employment is affected directly and clearly by it. (Alanazeh et al, 2015)

Seasonality affects the employee who is hired only for the season since he or she will have the anxiety of being reappointed to a particular facility every year and the uncertainty of having to find alternative work during other periods.

Irregular or occasional demand for work affects such employees in terms of e.g. their training, skills or career.

This generally has negative effects on the employee's commitment, health and job satisfaction.

Often during the peak season many employees are hired to cope with higher demand. As there is not always certainty about how the season will go and when and how the peak demand will be, employers often hesitate to hire more employees and do so close to the peak.

This leads to a lack of careful selection of employees, who are hired purely to meet demand. Several problems arise from this dynamic.

First of all, the company does not invest in the training of workers, as mentioned above, who are only hired for seasonal periods, it does not give them an incentive in terms of wages (if they are hired at the last minute, it is likely that the employee himself is in difficulty and decides to accept the job regardless of the wage) and there is no careful selection based on skills.

All this can lead to the hiring of employees who become a big cost for both the company and the employees already working in the hotel.

The damage in terms of the company's point of view comes from the fact that often those who are hired during the peak have few skills, experience or qualifications and this reduces the quality of service and customer satisfaction. (Alanazeh et al, 2015).

Hiring close to the period of need also generates problems at the contractual level. Hiring an employee who is likely to have a very low commitment to the hotel, knowing that he or she will only be working there for a short time, can become an extremely heavy cost. Since the employee earns a salary regardless of the results he or she obtains, while the damage he or she can create to the facility in a few months with an unprofessional attitude can be very great (think of all the guests who come into contact with employees who are unmotivated and not attentive to their work). The problem with seasonal contracts is also that unless an employee is let go in the first two weeks of a trial period, however, it is not at all easy contractually to fire an employee and once he or she is hired the benefits or costs he or she can bring are a closed box.

From the point of view of the employees already working within the organisation this can generate stress as they have to work with other employees who are new to the organisation, who are not part of the team and who are probably less committed than they are.

Finding a balance between employees can be stressful, costly and time consuming but at the same time it is necessary.

“In addition, Cox, Griffith and Rial-Gonzalez (2000) pointed out that high seasonality could easily cause stress when the demands exceed employee's capabilities to meet it, which leads to violence at the work place. Leith (2002) claimed that the high level of pressure leads to an aggressive management style which might have an influence on the employee's decision to quit their jobs". (Alanazeh et al, 2015, p. 334).

Even though hotels try to combat this typical characteristic of the tourism industry by orienting their management towards certain directions such as sports, physical wellness or high-end catering, they all suffer from drops in demand due to seasonality.

In this sense, it is easy to understand management strategies such as those of facilities that aim to specialize in a certain type of non-seasonal tourism, perhaps becoming a point of reference for a community of fans of a certain sport, agonists or not, who stay at the hotel to satisfy needs not only related to hospitality or the need to use only the typical services of a luxury hotel. Numerical flexibility and the ability to adapt the number of workers to market conditions and production needs, is one of the objectives that companies operating in the hospitality sector today seek to achieve and implement in their workforce. To do this, they tend to rely on temporary work, that is, the hiring of workers

through a type of contract of limited duration and fixed term. (Boella & Goss-Turner, 2013).

Seasonality puts a strain on organizational structure and especially on human resource management. Researchers carried on in relation to human resource management (Boella & Goss-Turner, 2013) indicate that in addition to the need to ensure certain protections, benefits and incentive systems, a large role is played by communication campaigns in terms of customer and staff loyalty. The link between a given employee and the brand of a hotel and the set of values that characterize it is to be considered an element that we can define as essential for the management of the same human resources. Seasonality, in this sense, by undermining the continuity of the employment relationship, although the income and employment support system also plays a role that can be define as very important in terms of continuity, also compromises the bond of a given human resource with the company. For hotel companies, this type of factor plays a key role in their human resource management policies. Although establishments are practically always working to find solutions that can minimize the impact of this problem in the human resources organization, the problem of the employee's bond with the organizational structure itself remains. In fact, seasonality leads to the creation of an emotional detachment from what might be called the emotional relationship between the management of the hotel facility, the mission pursued by the facility through its human resources and the value system of reference. While there are many conditions that influence a company's ability to effectively address the challenge of employee retention, it really all comes down to keeping employees engaged.

The termination of an employment relationship, even if due to a sort of stop mitigated by the presence of government support in periods of job loss, still leads the hotel business to incur costs mainly related to the loss of skills that, in the case of hotels, are presented as a set of procedures for the reception, for example, of travelers, for room service and in general for customer care (Hayes et al, 2010).

Summarizing, the termination of an employment relationship, in addition to causing a loss of know-how and skills for the company, can cause an alteration of the internal balance, with increasing demotivation in those who remain and a consequent decline in performance. In order to reduce the costs associated with hiring and training new staff, it

is necessary to implement some employee retention practices that, by improving their satisfaction, consequently, improve their performance.

The most recent studies indicate that the very seasonality and presence within the organizational structure of human resources that we can define as temporary can have negative consequences on the unit in which they are employed: in addition to causing a certain destabilization, it can exacerbate conflicts and the attitudes and behaviors of permanent employees.

In conclusion, there are negative results for the company, for the seasonally hired employee and for the team of employees already working in the hotel.

All these dynamics that generate stress for employees are intrinsic to the industry itself.

1.3.3. Turnover

In the hospitality industry there is a higher turnover rate than the national average and a greater prevalence of atypical contracts and this can influence the quality of services.

For what concern turnover in general, a definition of the phenomena has been given by Koo et al, and according to them turnover intention “is an employee’s continuous deliberation over withdrawal from the organization and consideration of other jobs (Tett & Meyer, 1993). When the turnover rate is high, the organization loses high-quality manpower and incurs heavy expenditure on recruitment and training (Yang, 2008)”. (Koo et al, 2019, p.376)

So, we have a turnover intention when an employee has the intention to leave his/her job. “It is commonly known that hotels that place emphasis on employee retention can save the costs of recruiting new employees, job advertisements, and educating new employees (Van Scotter, Motowidlo, & Cross, 2000)”. (Koo et al, 2019, p.376 ss.)

Stress resulting from turnover affects both employees and the facility itself. The structure part is of less interest here, since our focus is on human resources and their specific perspective; however, it must be said that turnover is a problem for a structure in terms of costs and reputation. Costs in the search for staff and in their training; and reputation because a hotel with a very high turnover does not give a good image of itself and this happens even more in places like the sea and mountains where customers tend to return to the same facilities because they have had a good time and it is appreciated by guests to

be "recognized" and pampered by employees. Returning to a place of the heart and not finding any familiar faces can destabilize the guest and this confirms the fact that the difference between one facility and another is given by the individual resources.

What is certain is that it is advantageous for hotels to have long-term employees in the company. (Koo et al, 2019)

It is clear that, from the point of view of employees, an accentuated turnover in the composition of teams and work groups can affect the levels of sense of belonging to a community, and the feeling of identification with one's own work environment. In recent years, the importance of the role of the worker as an integral part of the company system has grown, as the essence of it, and interest has grown in the various aspects that affect his or her health, both physical and psychological, focusing more on prevention rather than just on treatment, giving new meaning to the psychophysical malaise of the individual and the negative reflection that this has on the organization itself. In this context, the feeling of identification and of recognition and solidarity with colleagues are fundamental variables that could be affected by the accentuation of turnover in the workplace, which is in itself typical of the tourism sector.

From the employee's point of view, the stress of turnover affects the search for and change of job and the performance of the work commitment itself. In the first case it generates stress because if there is a high turnover of employees, they will be looking for work all the time, which will be frustrating and destabilizing. Each division is composed of a team that must work under stress (resulting from the dynamics of work) in a short period of time (a few hours) giving maximum performance and having in front of him the main judges, who will judge instantly and irretrievably, that is the guests.

If there is not good attunement between resources even the simplest task can become very difficult. You run the risk of personal disagreements prevailing and not working in the best way possible. A team that is well formed and in tune, with employees all pulling in the same direction, needs time to form, and continuous change, even of a few elements, within the team itself, will not benefit the performance of the work. The most obvious example is in seasonal hotels where, by nature, turnover is higher than in annual hotels and changing half the team every year makes everything more complex. Generally, when balance is achieved (balance in terms of work dynamics, timing, coordination, serenity

among employees, etc.) the season is already over and the next one will require starting all over again.

Another point of view concerning the turnover, brings at light that there is also a positive aspect of turnover for the organization and for the employee. In accordance with Kim et al, ‘‘from the employer’s perspective, the turnover of capable employees is a loss to the company. However, the turnover of incapable or complaining employees is an opportunity to hire new employees and stabilize the organization. From the employee’s perspective, turnover may be considered a positive factor if it leads to a better position. However, turnover intention is an unpleasant thing so long as the employees remain dissatisfied with their current positions or organizations’’. (Kim et al, 2015, p.72)

For the abovementioned discussion in general a pronounced level of turnover in the relevant work context is another intrinsic source of stress in the hotel industry.

PART 2: UNCERTAINTY, STRESS AND CRISIS IMPACT ON HUMAN RESOURCES

It must be said that, in general, today's economic scenario is dominated by uncertainty and that uncertainty has important repercussions in terms of human resource management and not only in terms of profitability and continuity of supply. Working in a context of uncertainty has led corporate strategy to abandon organizational paradigms based on standardization processes in favor of a very high degree of flexibility. Nowadays, the focus is on a very high degree of flexibility, which has led management, not only of human resources, to pursue the path of rapid change and adaptability to the context. In the field of human resource management, these processes certainly lead to cost optimization, but at the same time to the destruction of value. Value in terms of relationships, experiences and, above all, in terms of employee motivation. (Maeran 2004)

2.1. Possible sources of stress, uncertainty and crisis

From the discussion conducted so far it has emerged, on the one hand, how important an employee in the hotel industry is to the hotel, being the basis of its competitive advantage, and on the other hand, how such important resources are subjected to very high levels of

stress, due to working dynamics, seasonality and turnover, all intrinsic factors of the industry.

Given the importance of employees and the stress levels to which they are subjected, it is necessary to analyse the impact of stress, uncertainty and crisis on them.

In recent months, with the outbreak of the pandemic, we are experiencing a health, humanitarian and economic crisis situation unprecedented in recent decades.

This situation has catastrophic psychological, social, economic and work-related impacts on every person.

In the tourism sector, which, as we will see later in the discussion, has suffered huge economic losses, there is an air of uncertainty about the future and stress for both employers and employees.

In the following discussion, hypotheses are presented that relate the stress of the employees of the sector with resilience, well-being and commitment.

Hypotheses will be presented that relate more specifically also to the Covid19 crisis and the impacts this may have had on employees, being a source of stress and uncertainty.

The Covid crisis in particular will be analyzed in detail in the next paragraphs.

PART 3: THE NEW CRISIS: SPREAD OF COVID19

In the following paragraphs will be take into consideration the spread of the new crisis: the Sars-Covid19.

It's fundamental to deeper analyze this crisis to understand the nowadays context in which the hotel sector, and more specifically, the human resources of it, are experiencing.

The Covid situation is analysed in a separate section also because it allows us to understand why it can be a source of stress for employees in the hotel sector and why pre and post Covid situations were compared in the research.

3.1. Data of the recent crisis and the impact on jobs

Recently, the European Commission published the December 2020 edition of its quarterly review of employment and social developments, in which it analyses the effects of the

coronavirus pandemic on employment and incomes. The report indicates that the measures taken have mitigated the impact of the Covid19 crisis: employment has fallen less than GDP in recent months, while unemployment has remained stable. However, problems remain to be overcome. The impact of the crisis on young people is very severe and unemployment may increase in the coming months.

The analysis also indicates that the Coronavirus crisis has caused an unprecedented loss of labor income. The impact has been particularly hard on already disadvantaged workers, such as youth and workers on temporary contracts. Measures to compensate for lost wages have helped soften the blow and support low-paid workers who have been disproportionately affected.

The entire tourism sector, which relies predominantly on interaction between people, is actually in crisis as the World Tourism Organization (WTO) calculated for 2020 a losses of around \$300-450 billion with a major negative impact on small and medium-sized businesses, which account for around 80% of the tourism sector. As of early April 2020 according to the Organization, 96% of all destinations worldwide have implemented travel restrictions in response to the pandemic.

3.2 Loss on the touristic sector

As we just saw, one of the sectors most damaged by the Covid-19 emergency is undoubtedly the tourism sector and with it a fundamental aspect: tourism is us, we are born travelers and the change that will invest this sector will have very strong repercussions also on our individuality, on our very feeling as tourists.

As already pointed, the tourism sector constitutes 13% of Italy's GDP and generates 4.2 million people employed in the sector; in October 2019 alone, international traveler spending reached 40 billion, a 6% growth. Given that 2018 had closed with the figure of 41 billion, in January - just before the crisis - it was hoped that the previous year would be significantly exceeded. It was seen in 2020 as the propitious year for the new objective that had been set, that of "diversifying" the offer by focusing on other types of tourism, in particular cultural tourism.

According to ENIT data published on April 27, 2020, Italy recorded a drop in airport arrivals of -38.2% in January-March 2020 compared to the same quarter in 2019, with

losses of -56.7% for the period from January 1 to April 12 and a drop of -84.6% in bookings for the period from April 13 to May 24. The recovery in arrivals that will allow us to return to 2019 levels is not expected until 2023.

We are therefore witnessing a serious demand crisis, the causes of which are varied and all dependent on the lockdown. To name but a few: the reduction in the number of vacations, as these have been used by the various agencies and bodies to cover the period of inactivity with a consequent reduction in the spending capacity of employees, which could lead travelers to turn towards cheaper tourism, or to not consider travel in the short term; the risk of long-haul travel, as it could be difficult to return to Italy should the epidemic emergency reoccur. Due to the new security measures, airlines admit fewer passengers on each flight, with a consequent reduction in the booking window. Moreover, some airlines, already in the first period of Covid-19 emergency, have returned their routes certain that, once normality is restored, they will not be able to restart. Others, instead, like Easy Jet, have decided to allow booking with free cancellation, considering a possible refund as a minor damage compared to a missed income and the same happened for the hotels.

Last summer, soon after the reopening of operations, many hotels found themselves having to change their cancellation policies in order to provide a greater incentive to customers, who were afraid of further closures and hesitant to book to avoid losing money.

Then, of course, the crisis of public spaces. Tourism in itself develops precisely in these, just think that the fulcrum of our tourist offer in the world are the cities, specifically Venice, Rome and Florence, with their monuments but also above all with their squares. Let's think about tourism as we have always known it, in a city like Rome, but in a context still influenced by the virus. How can one think of visiting a Spanish Steps or St. Peter's while keeping a safe distance? It will be necessary to find solutions to make the tourist offer equally attractive, as similar as possible to the one we are used to but taking into account safety measures. For this reason, urban planning will certainly change, and with it our way of thinking about the city and open spaces.

In Italy, the impact of the spread of Covid 19 on tourism began to be felt in the first phase, in which the virus was widespread only in China. (Horwath HTL 2020)

When contagions began to be present in Italy, the impact on tourism became even more relevant, affecting all foreign tourist flows without distinction: many countries blocked flights to Italy and the fear of contagion caused a surge in requests for cancellation of stays already booked by foreign tourists (Horwath HTL 2020).

International tourism has been increasingly important to the industry. In 2018, foreign presences accounted for about half of the total flows recorded, for a value of about 217 million presences (Centro studi Confindustria 2020). The main countries of origin of foreign tourism in Italy are European countries and the United States, i.e. the areas currently most affected by the contagions.

98.6% of hoteliers stated that they had experienced a real block in bookings and many stated that they had had to reimburse clients in any case while waiting for the measure of vouchers for reimbursements that arrived too late, causing major liquidity problems for budgets that were already in difficulty (Horwath HTL 2020).

The hotel investment sector is also increasingly interconnected with foreign markets, especially if we look at the transactions that have taken place in the last five years. Between 2015 and 2019, there were transactions in the hotel market for € 8.6 billion involving 43,000 rooms for a total of 263 transactions (Horwath HTL 2020) Compared to the total transactions highlighted, € 5.9 billion involved foreign investors. Total value-added investments (value add), which involve repositioning of facilities through direct investment in real estate assets, represented around 20% of the total over the five-year period (Horwath HTL 2020).

Quite likely, tourism will not suddenly return to 2019 levels, unfortunately. The revival will be slow, gradual, tied to progressive loosening to restrictions. Vaccines may dictate the speed of recovery but seeing them widely deployed will take time. 2021, then, may not be a stable year. Fluctuations in the infection curve and uncertainty in general will continue. Now, however, in contrast to months ago, we have more awareness of how demand may go and what the new buying behaviors will be. The virus will accelerate many of the changes that were already underway in the industry and create new ones, but it will not stop tourism for long. Italians miss travelling and can't wait to start doing it again, as shown by the spikes in flight searches - presented by eDreams. ODIGEO (2020) In attrition in 2020, we have learned about the meaning of the word 'staycation', a neologism born with the economic crisis of the last decade, and therefore actually already

used before, which with the pandemic has entered in its own right in the symbolic words of 2020 when talking about tourism. Composed of stay (at home) + vacation, it means a vacation in which one remains at home, a concept extended to one's own region or even nation. Proximity tourism in the broader sense, then.

Last summer, the phenomenon of staycation emerged strongly and led Italians to rediscover their own country. With the drastic reduction in foreign arrivals, domestic tourism saved the season for many accommodation facilities and destinations. Travel restrictions, the climate of uncertainty and lower spending budgets have brought the presence of Italians in vacation resorts to unprecedented percentages.

The fluctuation of contagions, the closing of borders will also lead in 2021 to a prevalence of proximity tourism and a low presence of foreigners. According to some forecasts, international tourists, and especially those from outside Europe, will not return until 2022. Short-haul destinations will prevail over more distant ones and, at times, Italians will remain within the confines of their own region or city.

3.3 Covid19 Crisis as a source of stress and uncertainty

The condition of national emergency due to the Covid19 pandemic is having a powerful impact on the psychological health of all individuals involved; if it is true, in fact, that the spread of epidemics can lead to high levels of stress, fear and anxiety, this is even more true in light of the forced quarantine to which the entire country has been subjected and it is likely that the health outcomes could, in some circumstances, be such as to overwhelm the individual (Brooks et al, 2020). Everyone reacts differently to stressful situations, and these reactions may be influenced by life experiences and personality traits, as well as the social context to which they belong. Moreover, a person's reaction to stress may vary over time and depending on circumstances (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020).

The WHO has reported that a large proportion of Europeans suffer from Pandemic fatigue. A feeling of exhaustion and fatigue, due to a prolonged state of crisis that leads to a tendency to feel unmotivated and challenged to follow the recommended behaviors to protect themselves and others from the risk of infection. The World Health

Organization calls it "the tendency to feel unmotivated in following recommended behaviors to protect oneself and others from the Sars-CoV-2 virus." At a recent conference, Hans Kluge, WHO director for the European region, announced that more than 60 percent of Europeans currently suffer from it.

HYPOTHESIS

For the analyses, that will be run in this paper, the first variable to be referred to is resilience and its relationship to stress. As Näswall, Kuntz and Malinen (Naswall et al, 2015) pointed out we live in a world in which we are experiencing an increasing volatility and uncertainty and one of the greatest assets an organization can have is the agility to survive unexpected crisis. Surviving at crisis such as the Covid one, thrive in the face of potentially terminal events, try to find opportunity and reinventing businesses during this period, an example can be a restaurant that equips itself with delivery apps or an hotel that try to sell its rooms as places in which people can work (smart working situations), are a decisive aspects for the survival or non-survival of an organisation. For these reasons and given the crisis we are experiencing, it is interesting to focus on the resilience of workers in the hotel sector. In accordance with Näswall et al (2015) their definition of employee resilience is in line with the contemporary view of resilience as a transformational process in which individuals not only cope and successfully deal with change but also learn from it and adapt accordingly to thrive in the new environment (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2011; Richardson, 2002; Baird et al., 2013). The development of this capacity means that employees can utilize past experiences with change and adversity to be more flexible and adaptable in the future (Avey, Luthans & Jensen, 2009; Tugade & Fredrickson, 2004), which in turn facilitates successful negotiation of challenges.

The focus on resilience, made by Näswall et al., as something that can be developed, rather than a stable trait, also suggests that the organisational environment influences the level of employee resilience through the provision of enabling factors.

In general, as Näswall, Kuntz and Malinen (2015) said "resilience in organizations and among employees is relevant in any context which introduces challenges and change and transcends a post-disaster context". (Naswall et al, 2015, p.741)

For the authors “resilience makes the most of the human capital that characterizes the modern organization and offers one of the greatest prospects for differentiating the successful organization on the world stage”. (Naswall et al, 2015, p.741)

Research, made by the authors above mentioned, suggests that there is a direct correlation between work-related stress, caused by uncertainty and job insecurity among other factors, and the resilience levels of employees and, individuals who are more resilient cope better with change.

Resilience it is an attitude that involves effectively managing crises in order to achieve organizational goals. Resilience allows organizations to go beyond simply overcoming periods of organizational instability and adversity, learning instead to capitalize on change.

As also highlighted by Bardoel et al (2014), the concept of resilience as applied to workers in organizations is receiving increasing attention in the literature and has specific profiles in the field of human resource management (HRM). According to Bardoel et al. the concept of resilience can be specified from a theoretical point of view, and moreover there are some HR practices that improve resilience have the potential to contribute to the psychological capital of employees, and therefore, as mentioned above, to the performance of the company.

In general, employees in the hotel sector, given the work dynamics, turnover and seasonality to which they are constantly subjected should be very resilient since by the nature of the work they do they are always in contact with change and uncertainty.

As a first hypothesis we will therefore test relationship between resilience and stress.

Do those with higher resilience in the pre-Covid period cope better with stress?

What is expected is that those who are more resilient will cope better with the stress resulting from the Covid crisis.

Hypothesis 1a: Higher levels of pre-COVID resilience are negatively associated with stress

Again, with regard to stress, it is intended to test how this influences the well-being of employees.

It is expected that a higher level of stress has a negative influence on well-being.

It is considered that well-being is a fundamental variable in the working environment. So it is of fundamental importance to take well-being into consideration and to test it, because employees with high well-being perform better, bearing positive fruits not only for themselves but also for the organisation in general. Effective HRM directed at employee well-being is associated with higher performance, higher job satisfaction and higher organisational commitment (Guest et al, 2017). Such "outcomes" of high well-being are fundamental for optimal work performance and for achieving desired performance results since human resources, as mentioned, are the basis of competitive advantage.

As Guest points out (Guest et al, 2017): "There is a strong ethical case for focusing on employee well-being. In addition, changes at work and in the conditions surrounding work risk eroding work-related well-being with harmful consequences for employees and, potentially, for organisations".

In the historical period in which we live, employees have to face intense changes, both in their private and working life, and this can affect their well-being.

As the authors point out (Guest et al, 2017), the pressures at work and in society make it necessary to analyze employees' well-being more and more.

Well-being can also be influenced by a lack of optimism regarding the future (Guest et al, 2017) and as psychologists also point out, cited in the Gest et al paper (Ryff, 1989), a sense of progress and an attractive future are essential for individual well-being.

In such a situation, characterized by uncertainty about the future, changes at work and in life, it is therefore expected that a higher level of stress, also due to the Covid19 crisis, will lead to a lower level of well-being.

The WHO in the 1946 stressed the importance of personal well-being at physical, mental and social levels.

With regard to work-related well-being Warr in 1987 defined well-being as "the overall quality of an employee's experience and functioning at work" (quotes reported by Guest et al, 2017).

In general, work-related well-being has been studied since the 1930s (Mayo E., 1933) and there are ample definitions of work-related well-being depending on the discipline (Warr P., 1990).

As shown by Hyett and Parker (2015), research on the well-being of individuals in the workplace has a number of important implications with respect to physical and mental health. Thus, measuring well-being in the workplace is, as just said, topic of considerable importance in studies of organizations, which has led to the development of several measurement tools.

Hyett and Parker specifically studied the instrument known as the Workplace 31-item Well-being Questionnaire (WWQ), developed to address this area of study, and identified four factors that could explain most of the variance.

The overmentioned four factors are: work satisfaction, organizational respect for the employee, employee care and the intrusion of work into private life.

Based on the results obtained in the study, the WWQ can now offer greater accuracy in measuring workplace well-being across genders, ages, and types of work.

These factors can be used also to measure the well-being in the hotel sector among employees of different hotels, with different environments and different working situations. Discover the work-related well-being in the hotel sector is important because as Orsila et al. (Orsila et al, 2011) pointed out, there is a negative association between an increased level of perceived work-related stress and employees' overall levels of subjective well-being and the hotel environment, as said, has many intrinsic sources of stress at which we should add the stress deriving from the Covid19 crisis.

Hypothesis 1b: Higher level of perceived stress is negatively associated with well-being

Coming to the relationship between employee commitment and stress levels, it was decided to analyze this relationship given the importance of commitment in organisations and in particular in the hotel sector.

In general, commitment leads to higher firm performance, as evidenced by the study conducted by McClean et al (McClean et al, 2011). In this study it was confirmed that HR practices that lead to high commitment for employees lead also to higher performance for the firm.

Going into the specifics of the hotel sector it is evident that commitment is of paramount importance. As repeatedly stressed in this research, the hotel is mainly made up of human resources and it is they who make the difference in performance and customer service.

Indeed, as stated by Chen et al (Chen et al, 2017) "the hotel industry is a people business". The hotel industry is made up of people who provide a service, the employees, and people who pay for it and receive it, the guests.

Service quality and guest satisfaction are the basis of revenue and success for a hotel.

As highlighted by Liao et al (1994) and reported by Chen et al (2017) "facing highly diverse and rapidly changing customer needs and expectations, service employees in the hotel industry often have to deal with non-routine encounters with costumers" and "to ensure successful service delivery, these employees often need to go beyond formalized work roles to elicit proactive costumer service performance (PCSP) which is defined as service employees self-stated, long-term oriented and persistent service behavior" (Chen et al, 2017 p.95).

The authors (Chen et al, 2017) identified that proactive costumer service performance that leads to higher quality service delivery and therefore higher overall performance for the hotel is closely linked with individual commitment and HR commitment practices.

As mentioned above, hotel employees have to constantly adapt to a changing environment and changing consumers and analyzing their commitment in this historical period is of paramount importance as there are changes at work per se and changes in customers and their demands.

General changes at work level because with Covid, the work and social dynamics have changed, in a sector where sociality is at the very basis of business. There has also been a change at the level of the clientele, both in terms of their demands, with clients now more attentive for example to cleanliness or the space they have available, and changes in the type of clientele, since there are far fewer foreign tourists, and as we will see in the next sections, proximity tourism has been experienced. This tourism has brought customers to tourist areas close to their homes, and perhaps these types of customers are not the same as pre-Covid customers for the hotel, and once again the employee must adapt.

A very high level of employee commitment is needed to be successful.

The hypothesis, however, is that given the period of stress and constant change, commitment is negatively affected by this situation of stress, crisis and uncertainty.

The general definition of commitment as ‘‘a force that binds an individual to a course of action of relevance to one or more targets’’ is given by Meyer and Herscovitch (2001, p.301).

Other definitions that underline the importance of commitment have been given by various authors including: "Porter who in 1976 defined organisational commitment as the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organisation or by Mowday et al (1982) who conceive commitment as an attitude that reflects the nature and quality of the bond between an employee and an organisation" (Vakola et al, 2005)

Or again as Vakola reports according to Buchanan's 1974 definition commitment is "a state in which an individual identifies with a particular organisation and its goals and wishes to maintain membership in order to facilitate these goals. It is argued that commitment often establishes an exchange relationship in which individuals attach themselves to the organisation in exchange for certain rewards from the organisation". (Vakola et al, 2005)

The just mentioned definitions of commitment underline the importance of it.

The scale of Allen and Meyer (1991) for measuring commitment through three basic dimensions: affective, continuance, and normative commitment is the most used and famous scale for measuring commitment.

Jaros' (2007) study confirmed that the three-component model developed by Meyer and Allen (1991, 1997) dominates organizational commitment research. Meyer and Allen's model proposes that organizational commitment is experienced by the employee as three mindsets comprising affective, normative, and continuance organizational commitment. Affective commitment refers to the commitment that is based on the emotional bonds that the employee accrues with respect to the organization through positive work experiences. Normative commitment is based on the perceived obligation to the organization, while continuance commitment is based on the perceived costs, both economic and social, associated with the eventual choice to leave the organization.

As pointed out by Culpepper (Culpepper et al, 2000) although the Allen and Meyer scales measure three-component commitment reliably and validly, several criticisms of this tool have been made in the literature. The author therefore examined five published sets of factor model coefficients from exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses, showing that

a substantially improved measure of the construct is achievable with relatively modest scale revisions. As is also evident in the model reference cited above, employee engagement is negatively correlated with a perception of tenure that is unable to develop feelings of affection related to satisfying work experiences.

As the author suggest, given the popularity of the three component commitment construct, and its apparent potential in explaining turnover and other organizational behavior, is interesting to use the scale and analyze commitment since the hotel industry can be characterized by high rates of turnover and see how the commitment is influenced by stress and this period of crisis.

This model in fact, is used by researchers to predict employee behavior, for example in relation to turnover, performance levels, absenteeism, and tardiness. (Jaros et al, 2007).

***Hypothesis 1c:** Higher level of perceived stress is negatively associated with affective commitment*

As we have just seen for hypothesis 1, sections A, B and C, stress was taken into account as a variable that negatively influences respectively: resilience, well-being and affective commitment.

In this section we will discuss some aspects of stress in general and the hypothesis that perceived job stress after Covid is higher than perceived stress before Covid because, as we will see later, Covid and the crisis that followed it can be a great source of stress for people and specifically for workers in the hotel sector.

With the spread of the Covid crisis, many organisations, and in particular hotel organisations, found themselves having to reorganize in order to cope with a change in work dynamics, methods, timing and much more.

Studies have shown that organisational change can cause increased stress in employees. Stress and organisational change can be major problems for organisational life.

According to Coch and French (1948) and as reported by Vakola et al (Vakola et al, 2005) organisational change "challenges the way things are done and as a result, individuals experience uncertainty and starts having fears about potential failure in coping with new situations". (Vakola et al, 2005, p. 160 ss.)

The authors also argue that "Stress at work is a well-known factor for low motivation and morale, decrease in performance, high turnover and sick-leave, accidents, low job satisfaction, low quality products and services, poor internal communication and conflicts. (Schabracq and Cooper, 2000; Murphy, 1995; McHugh, 1993). Moreover, Chusmir and Franks (1988) argued that all the aforementioned problems are related, directly or indirectly, to stress and they have an effect on overall organisational efficiency and effectiveness". (Vakola et al, 2005)

As pointed out by the above-mentioned studies, stress has negative consequences on organisational efficiency and effectiveness and can be an obstacle to organisational change.

For the historical situation in which we find ourselves, organisational change and stress are undoubtedly the protagonists. It is therefore interesting to test the hypothesis that there will be more perceived stress after the Covid, probably due to the pandemic situation itself and all the changes that come with it.

A higher level of post-Covid stress is therefore expected than the stress levels perceived by the pre-Covid workers.

The Covid situation leads from a known situation to something unknown and this can be a source of stress for employees.

Stress can also arise in the hotel sector from all the work dynamics, seasonality and turnover discussed at the beginning of the paper.

Stress may increase do to changes or do to an increase in the intrinsic factors of the sector that are sources of stress.

It will also be interesting to analyze whether the current employment status, i.e. whether one is working or not, or the type of contract (a permanent contract gives more security than a permanent contract for example) influence stress levels.

In general, DeCotiis (DeCotiss, 1983) highlights that "the available evidence and common sense suggest that job stress contributes to health-related problems among workers and to organisational problems". (DeCotiis, 1983 p.160 ss.)

The author added that job stress has a human and monetary cost which make it important the analysis of variables related to stress.

A model study of job stress, as it has been said in previous paragraphs, was presented in the important study by the same author (DeCotiis, 1983). In this research, job stress is

conceived as an outcome of the organization and the work; it is also described as a feeling of discomfort that is separate and distinct from other "second level" outcomes or consequences of job stress (levels of satisfaction, organizational commitment, motivation and performance).

In previous researches has been found that there are some stressors such as the work itself, organizational characteristics, role in organization, relationships, career development, external commitments and responsibilities that can cause job stress at the first level and second levels outcomes such as organizational commitment, job satisfaction, avoidance behavior, job performance.

The analysis conducted by DeCotiis reveals that job stress is multidimensional. Two distinct dimensions of job stress are identified: time stress and anxiety. Both dimensions of job stress were significantly related to each of the five organizational stress categories in the model.

Since it was therefore found by DeCotiis (DeCotiis, 1983) that stress can be multidimensional might be also expected that stress arising from time or stress arising from anxiety would help to explain the relationship between stress and the other variables in different ways. In conclusion so there are situations of stress in any kind of work and the Covid19 crisis might have added a not inconsiderable load of stress over the existing ones.

Job stress by itself may represent a problem for human resources and organizations in general and this need attention.

The today crisis of Covid19 may contribute to add load to the environmental factors, which is one of the prospective in which stress has been studied (cf. Ivancevich & Matteson, 1980) that can cause stress.

The actual crisis or in general the working conditions of hotel sectors' employees can cause a "deviation from normal or self-desired functioning in the work place as the result of opportunities, constraints, or demands relating to potentially important work-related outcomes" (DeCotiis, 1983, p.160 ss.).

Another important tool for measuring perceived work-related stress is Sheldon Cohen's historic Perceived Stress Scale. The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) (Cohen 1983) is the most widely used psychological tool for measuring perceptions of stress, measuring the degree to which situations in one's life are rated as stressful. The scale measures

respondents' perceptions of having an "unpredictable, uncontrollable, and overloaded" life, with a series of direct questions about the levels of stress experienced by the recipients. The questions are general in nature and thus are relatively free of content specific to any subpopulation group.

Hypothesis 2: Post-Covid perceived stress is higher than pre-Covid perceived stress

ANALYSIS

METHODOLOGY

Going to the analysis section, in order to test the hypotheses described above, statistical analysis was carried out, which will be presented in the following paragraphs.

Sample and procedures

The data for this research was collected using a professional online program: Qualtrics. Once the questionnaire was generated using the above platform, it was shared via a link. The research sample consisted of employees in the hotel industry who are currently working, not working or have worked in the hotel industry in Italy.

The link was sent to potential participants. It has been made a convenience sampling procedure. All the potential participants have been contacted through my personal network since I'm working in this sector.

Data were collected on a voluntary basis and anonymously.

Participants were informed that the questionnaire would be used for a master's thesis research with the general purpose of investigating the attitude of human resources in the hotel sector. The objective of the research and the relationship of the responses to stress, resilience, commitment or well-being were deliberately not specified in detail so as not to influence the participants in answering.

The questionnaire was administered in Italian to ensure full comprehension of the text by participants who, as mentioned, work in Italy. The questionnaires were collected during the first two weeks of February of the current year.

The total number of returned questionnaires were 318.

108 responses were eliminated due to missing data, incomplete information and a response progress rate of less than 100%.

There were therefore 210 responses that could be used for the analysis, with a response rate of 66.03%.

Of the 210 respondents, about 64% were men and about 36% were women. The majority of the respondents, about 45%, are aged between 35-54 years.

On the basis of my work experience and knowledge, several hotels, all 4-star, were included as alternatives to the question "in which hotel are you working" and about 38% worked/work at the Golf Hotel in Punta Ala, a hotel located in Tuscany in the province of Grosseto, while the rest of the sample worked in other hotels.

Measures

All items in the questionnaire, unless otherwise indicated, are on a 5-point Likert scale ranged from 1 (in some cases corresponding to "completely disagree" and in others "never") to 5 ("completely agree" or "always").

Some items were tested in reverse to the original scales and the scores were inverted before creating the summary indicators.

From the original scales from which the individual items were taken, summary indicators were created and the mean of each was calculated.

Resilience:

To test resilience and the hypotheses related to it, the scale developed by Naswall et al (2015) was used and a single indicator (RESIL_TOT) was constructed from these items. The scale was constructed by the authors with "the aim for organisations to use the scale to monitor resilience levels in their staff and identify areas that contribute to the development of employee resilience. The scale can also be used by researchers examining

links between employee resilience and other theoretically and practically relevant constructs" (Naswall et al, 2015, p. 1)

Some of the items used were for example: "I effectively collaborate with others to handle unexpected challenges at work"; "I successfully manage a high workload for long period of time"; "I resolve crises competently at work"; "I learn from mistakes at work and improve the way I do my job"; "I re-evaluate my performance and continuously improve the way I do my work"; "I effectively respond to feedback at work, even criticism".

After constructing the single resilience indicator, the average was calculated. (*See Tab. 1*).

Since resilience was positively formulated with the rating scale from 1 to 5 where 1 indicates "never" and 5 "always" the higher the score the more resilient the person is. For the resilience indicator, has been observed an alpha value of 0.777. In general, can be said that higher values of Cronbach's alpha are better. Stated differently, a Cronbach's alpha of 1.0 represents perfect consistency in measurement, while an alpha value of 0.0 represents no consistency in measurement. What constitutes a good level of internal consistency differs depending on what source you refer to, although all recommended values are 0.7 or higher (DeVillis, 2003; Kline, 2005). Other researchers have provided acceptable lower limits of acceptability for Cronbach's alpha, Hair et al. (Hair et al, 2010) provide that while a value of 0.70 is generally agreed upon as an acceptable value, and values as low as 0.60 may be acceptable for exploratory research. Additionally, George and Mallery (2003) suggest a tiered approach consisting of the following: " $\geq .9$ - Excellent, $\geq .8$ - Good, $\geq .7$ - Acceptable, $\geq .6$ - Questionable, $\geq .5$ - Poor, and $\leq .5$ - Unacceptable" (p. 231). For all these reasons we can state that $\alpha = 0.777$, the value of resilience's indicator is an acceptable value tending towards good. (*See Tab.1*)

Well-being:

The items on the scale developed by Hyett et al (Hyett et al, 2015) were used to measure well-being.

The development of the Workplace Well-being questionnaire (WWQ) sought to identify and explore the various factors underlying employees' individual well-being in the workplace. (Hyett et al, 2015)

The WWQ allows those who are employed, or recently employed, to measure their level of well-being on the dimensions of (1) job satisfaction, (2) organisational respect for the employee, (3) employer care, and (4) intrusion of work into private life.

From the original scale five items were taken which can be divided into two groups, those referring to "employer care" (How well does the company care for you? Are you treated as you would like to be treated in the company? In a moment of difficulty, would the company be willing to listen to you?) and those referring to 'intrusion of work into private life' (Do you find yourself thinking negatively about work outside working hours? (Do you find yourself thinking negatively about work outside working hours?).

It should be noted that a small change was made to the original items that referred to the "boss" and not to the company/organisation as a whole.

The reason for this change lies in the very structure of hotel organisation charts. The employee is not always able to identify one and only one "boss" as he may have as reference figures, for example, the head of department, the manager or the owner. To avoid confusion and difficulties in answering, the company was referred to generically.

Well-being was measured only once and not also post Covid.

To begin the analysis, indicators were constructed for the well-being of employer care (WELL_BEING_EMPCARE), the well-being of work intrusion into private life (WELL_BEING_INTRWP) and total well-being (WELL_BEING_TOT), and the average was found. (See Tab. 1)

With regard to the reliability of the indicators mentioned above, we observe the following alpha values: well-being employer care's alpha = 0.913; well-being intrusion of work into private life's alpha = 0.599. So, according to the theory mentioned in the paragraph above, we can state that the first indicator is "excellent" in terms of reliability and the second one which is equal to 0.599 is considered "poor" but still at the limit of acceptability for exploratory research, according to Hair (Hair, 2010). (See Tab. 1)

Affective Commitment:

To test the affective commitment hypothesis, items from Mayer and Allen's original 1990 scale in Appendix B of the study conducted by Culpepper et al. were used (Culpepper, 2000).

This study was conducted "to improve prediction of critical organisational events,

particularly turnover, by taking into account a broader spectrum of employees' psychological attachments to the organisation". (Culpepper, 2000)

The original scale tests affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment.

Since all the items used in the questionnaire refer to the category of affective commitment, reference is made specifically to affective commitment and not to commitment in general. The three items taken from this scale were: "I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career in this hotel"; "I do not feel "part of the family" in this hotel"; "I feel that the hotel's problems are mine", with an inversion in the second item of the original scale.

The rating scale within the questionnaire is from 1 to 5, where 1 indicates "completely disagree" and 5 "completely agree", so those who scored higher have more commitment to the establishment they work in.

For the following analysis, a single commitment indicator (COMM_TOT) was created by combining the 3 items and averaging them. (*See Tab. 1*)

The alpha value for the affective commitment's indicator is equal to 0.639 so is slightly below the value of 0.7 and according to Hair (Hair, 2010) is a "poor" value but still acceptable for exploratory research. (*See Tab.1*)

Stress:

For the measurement of stress the scale created by DeCotiis was used. (DeCotiis, 1983) Five stress items were used, forming the original scale, three of which fall into the sub-category of time-related stress ("Working here leaves little time for other activities"; "I feel like I never have a day off"; "I have too much work and too little time to do it") and the other two relate to stress and anxiety ("I feel guilty when I take time off from work"; "I have felt agitated or nervous because of my work").

The stress scale was used to measure pre-Covid and post-Covid stress. Has been asked to the respondents to think about their working situation pre Covid and then to the actual one so during the Covid.

The questions concerning post-Covid stress were displayed only by those who answered "yes" to the question whether they were working at the moment (a total of 99 respondents, so 47.14% are working at the moment).

First the average total pre-Covid stress (of the 5 items) was calculated

(PRESTRESS_TOT) and then the averages of time-related stress (PRESTRESS_TIME) and anxiety (PRESTRESS_ANXIETY), constructing synthetic indicators of these items. The same thing was done for post-Covid stress, constructing a total indicator of post-Covid stress (POSTSTRESS_TOT), one with reference to time (POSTSTRESS_TIME) and one concerning anxiety (POSTSTRESS_ANXIETY).

Averages were calculated for all the above-mentioned indicators. (*See Tab. 1*)

To verify the reliability of the indicators above mentioned we can look at their alpha values which are respectively: Perstress_tot 0.767, good reliability; Perstress_anxiety 0.272 is below 0.5 so is considered unacceptable; Perstress time 0.776 good reliability; Poststress_tot 0.842 meaning excellent reliability; Poststress_Anxiety 0.386 unacceptable value; Poststress_Timr 0.866 which is an excellent reliability.

So, to summarize, all the indicators have a good or excellent reliability with the exception for the indicators of anxiety which are ‘not acceptable’, for this reason these indicators of the stress’ subcategories will be excluded from the analysis. (*See Tab.1*)

Dependent variables:

The dependent variables used in the various analyses were respectively:

Resilience (RESIL_TOT), well-being in its two subcategories (WELL_BEING_EMPCARE ; WELL_BEING_INTRWP), total commitment (COMM_TOT) and total stress pre and post Covid (PRESTRESS_TOT ; POSTSTRESS_TOT).

Control variables:

The control variables that were tested referred to the employment status and the type of contract.

For the employment status it was asked whether the respondent was working or not at the moment, with the possibility of answering "yes" or "no". The answer "no" was taken as the reference category.

With reference to the type of contract under which they are working, or have worked, the possible options were: "fixed-term contract", "permanent contract", "training and work", "other".

The control variables were tested in relation to the other variables to assess whether those

with an open-ended contract behave differently from those with different types of contract. The category of contract "indefinite" was therefore taken as the reference.

Analyses

First, descriptive statistics were calculated for each variable (*See Tab. 1*) such as mean and standard deviation.

Pearson's linear correlation indices were calculated to assess the bivariate relationships between the various indicators and, to assess their reliability, so the internal consistency of each indicator, Cronbach's alpha was calculated for each of them, as shown in the previous paragraphs.

Linear and hierarchical regression models were used to test the various hypotheses, first with the control variables and then with the various steps. (*See Tables*)

RESULTS

As mentioned, first the indicators were calculated for each variable and some descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation were calculated.

As far as resilience is concerned, the minimum resilience was 2.13 so there were no respondents with a mean value of 1. The mean resilience is 4.13 so we have a sample of respondents with a high mean resilience.

The other averages greater than half (equal to 3), for the variables analysed, as well as for resilience, are for commitment with an average of 3.7 and for well-being employer care with an average of 3.5.

The average was also calculated for the indicators of stress both pre and post Covid total and for the two subcategories of stress.

The average of the total pre-Covid stress (of the 5 items) was calculated and then the averages of the stress for time and anxiety. These averages are 2.89 (prestress_tot); 2.78 (prestress_anxiety); 2.97 (prestress_time) respectively. It is therefore clear that the mean score for anxiety-related stress is slightly lower than that for time-related stress, and in both cases the mean is just before the intermediate scale score (which is 3).

The averages of post-Covid total stress, post-Covid time stress, and post-Covid anxiety

were also measured. The averages were respectively: 2.67 (poststress_tot); 2.71 (poststress_anxiety) and 2.65 (poststress_time). It is evident that at the descriptive level the mean scores, both total and of the two subscales, are lower in the post. Moreover, in the subscale of stress_time there is a greater reduction that leads in the post this variable to assume a mean value lower than that of anxiety (while in the pre-time the mean was higher than anxiety).

A normality test was performed to test both pre- and post-Covid stress. The number of valid cases is 99, since, as mentioned, the post Covid questions were only viewed by the respondents at this time, while the missing cases are 111. The descriptive statistics were therefore only conducted on these 99 respondents.

For more information on the descriptive statistics and the reliability scale please refer to table number 1, in this table the bivariate correlations for all indicators are also shown.

Regression models were constructed to test all the hypotheses and a table was constructed for each analysis.

With regard to resilience, a linear regression was conducted with total resilience as the dependent variable and all the control variables in order to test the hypothesis 1a "Higher levels of pre-COVID resilience are negatively associated with stress". In this case the stress was found to be statistically significant. The resilience positively affects the stress. As far as the control variables are concerned, none of them seem to influence the level of resilience of the respondents. (*see Tab. 2a*)

The significance of the data tells us that those with a higher level of resilience tend to have a lower level of perceived total stress on average and this leads us to confirm the initial hypothesis.

Testing the hypothesis 1b, concerning the well-being in which as been stated that "higher level of perceived stress is negatively associated with well-being", the two well-being indicators for the two subscales (employer care, intrusion of work into private life) were taken and a linear regression analysis was conducted for each subscale.

The results show a significant result where stress has a negative influence on employer care and a positive influence on work intrusion in private life. (*See Tab. 2b.1* for "well-being employer care" and *Tab. 2b.2* for "intrusion of work into private life")

Another interesting finding concerns the control variables. The contract type "training and work" is significant in the subcategory of welfare intrusion with a p-value of 0.039. Thus,

those who have this type of contract compared to those who have a permanent contract have on average a higher score on well-being intrusion, thus they perceive a greater intrusion of work in their private life.

This result can be explained by the age of those who tend to have this type of contract, who are very young, and not being used to the world of work may perceive it as more intrusive than an adult.

In summary, models were constructed for each subcategory of well-being. For well-being employer care we have step 1 with the control variables and step 2 in which total perceived stress was added, which was significant. (*See Tab. 2b.1*)

For the well-being regarding the intrusion of work in private life we have in the same way 2 models with control variables and total stress from which it was found to be significant the control variable regarding the type of contract "training and work". The perceived total stress was also significant. (*See Tab. 2b.2*)

Regarding the hypothesis that an higher level of perceived stress negatively influences well-being, has not been tested when considering well-being as a whole, that is, total well-being because the two subcategories of well-being have different relationships with the independent variables.

Therefore, with regard to the analysis of the two sub-categories specifically, it was found that for well-being employer care stress negatively influences this sub-category while for well-being with reference to the intrusion of work into private life we obtained a positive influence of stress on this sub-category. Thus, the more stressed the employee, the more intrusive he or she perceives work to be.

Well-being should therefore be treated as separate in the two sub-categories and with the formulation of two different hypotheses since the total is made up of two antithetical and contrasting results that compensate each other (positively employer care, negatively intrusion) giving a non-significant total result. Thus, higher positive employer care scores and lower intrusion scores are associated with better worker well-being.

In conclusion, keeping the two subcategories separate, with two different hypotheses (such as "stress is negatively associated with employer care" and "stress is positively associated with intrusion of work into private life") it is verified that stress influences positively intrusion of work into private life and negatively intrusion of employer care.

For the discussion so far the two separate hypotheses, if so formulated, should be

accepted.

To test the hypothesis 1c concerning commitment, so “higher level of perceived stress is negatively associated with commitment”, Commitment was used as the dependent variable and pre Covid total perceived stress as the independent variable (i.e., the section of stress that all respondents could answer because the post displayed only those who are currently working).

The variables were analyzed with a linear regression showing that there is a statistically significant relationship between the variables under study. People who have a higher level of pre-Covid stress tend on average to have a lower level of commitment because the regression coefficient is negative so there is a negative relationship between the level of stress and commitment. In fact, the regression coefficient is -0.316 so as the total perceived stress score 1 increases, on average the total engagement score decreases by 0.316.

It can be said that the level of commitment is determined by several elements and not only by stress. If we look at R^2 the value is 0.097 and this tells us that the closer this value is to 1, the better the independent variables in the model are able to explain the dependent variable. In this case the value is very close to zero and so we have, as mentioned, a statistically significant association between stress and commitment but 90% of the variability in engagement is not explained by the variability in stress (the independent variable). (See Tab. 2c)

In summary, two regression models were run for commitment, respectively with control variables were nothing was significant and perceived total stress which was significant. (See Tab. 2c) On the basis of what has just been said, we accept the initial hypothesis. Stress negatively influences commitment.

Going to calculate the medians for the two sub-dimensions of stress, anxiety and time, and comparing the pre- and post-Covid we note that with regard to anxiety the median remains unchanged at 3 while for the time from 3 drops to 2.6 so in the level of anxiety there are no changes while in time there is a decrease.

The decrease in total stress therefore comes from time and not from anxiety and this further confirms what was said earlier. Time and work dynamics are different between pre and post Covid.

This can be made even clearer by looking at the boxplot where we can make a two-by-

two comparison. (*See Graph 1*)

It can be seen that total pre and post stress decreases, anxiety remains unchanged and time stress decreases.

Overall, we see a decrease in the median stress level which is mainly due to a decrease of time stress and not from anxiety which remained exactly the same at the distribution level.

A non-parametric test of the samples for anxiety and time pre and post was also performed, as was done for total stress, and a p-value for anxiety of 0.295 was obtained, thus not statistically significant, while for time the p-value was < 0.001 and significant.

For the two sub-categories of stress, time and anxiety, descriptive statistics were calculated but these indicators were not used in the regression analyses because, as mentioned in the previous paragraphs, the anxiety indicator has an unacceptable reliability.

Regarding the normality test, which tells us whether the distribution is normal or not, i.e. if the p-value is > 0.05 or less than this value, we can observe from the Shapiro-Wilk section that all distributions are non-normal except for that of total perceived stress and this further justifies the use of non-parametric tests.

To see if the differences between pre- and post-Covid are statistically significant, a repeated measures comparison was made, comparing before and after scores. For the normality of the data distribution non-parametric calculations were made. Furthermore, the distribution of the indicators was found to be non-normal.

Therefore, the relevant sample was analyzed with a non-parametric test, as we are looking at respondents who gave an answer for both pre and post Covid.

As for the total stress pre and post Covid was tested, setting $\alpha=0.05$. The null hypothesis of this test is: "the median of the differences between pre and post Covid is zero.

With Wilcoxon's test we find that the median difference of the pre and post stress scores is statistically significant or <0.001 . We therefore confirm that there is a different median stress between pre and post Covid. The decision is therefore to reject the null hypothesis and the difference between the medians is statistically significant. The second hypothesis concerning the perceived pre and post Covid stress levels, based on the results obtained, must be rejected.

Graph 1. Boxplot of the pre and post stress indicators

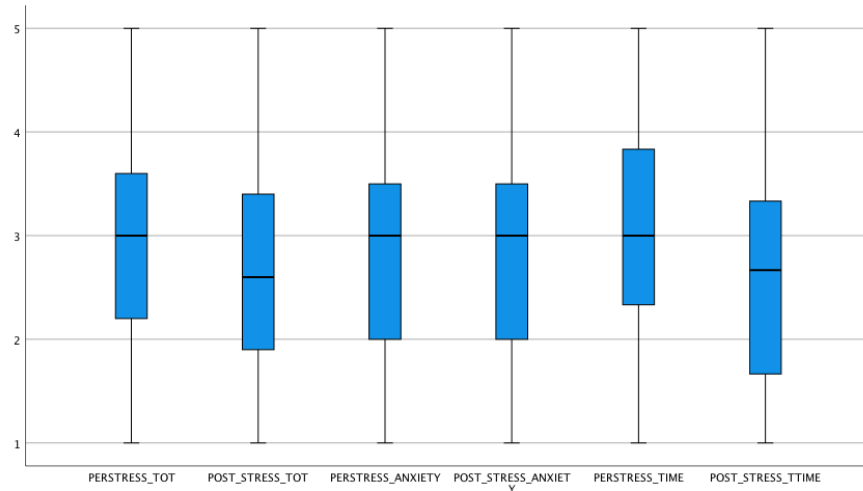


Table 1. Descriptive statistics, Cronbach's alpha (in correlation matrix diagonal) and correlations of the variables.

	Mean	SD.	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.
1.PERSTRESS_TOT	2,871	.89488	(.767)											
2.PERSTRESS_ANXIETY	2,810	.99732	.846**	(.272)										
3.PERSTRESS_TIME	2,913	.99403	.934**	.601**	(.776)									
4.POST_STRESS_TTIME	2,653	110.648	.657**	.517**	.624**	(.866)								
5.POST_STRESS_ANXIETY	2,717	104.286	.732**	.806**	.528**	.698**	(.386)							
6.POST_STRESS_TOT	2,679	100.074	.741**	.679**	.634**	.954**	.880**	(.842)						
7.COMM_TOT	3,708	.90740	-.312**	-.156*	-.363**	-.219*	-.216*	-.235*	(.639)					
8.WELL_BEING_EMPCARE	3,570	.99635	-.392**	-.279**	-.402**	-.258**	-.298**	-.296**	.675**	(.913)				
9.WELL_BEING_INTRWP	2,705	115.372	.506**	.334**	.535**	.256*	.282**	.287**	-.429**	-.481**	(.599)			
10.RESIL_TOT	4,131	.62083	-.259**	-.228**	-.236**	-.269**	-.348**	-.323**	.310**	.387**	-.266**	(.777)		

N = 99 - 210 ; *p<.05 ; **p<.01

Table 2a. Hierarchical linear regression model results for resilience

	Step 1	Step 2	
workcond	-.073	-.068	
DETERMINATO	-.035	-.041	
FORMAZIONE.LAVORO	-.095	-.092	
ALTRO	-.031	-.048	
PERSTRESS_TOT†		-.258	**
R ²	.013	.079	
F	.67	3.505	

Standardized regression coefficients are shown; N = 210 ; *p<.05 ; **p<.01

Table 2b.1. Hierarchical linear regression model results for well-being employer care

	Step 1	Step 2	
workcond	.060	.068	
DETERMINATO	.000	-.010	
FORMAZIONE.LAVORO	-.017	-.012	
ALTRO	-.004	-.029	
PERSTRESS_TOT†		-.396	**
R ²	.004	.160	
F	.200	7.755	

Standardized regression coefficients are shown; N = 210 ; *p<.05 ; **p<.01

Table 2b.2. Hierarchical linear regression model results for well-being intrusion of work into private life

	Step 1	Step 2	
workcond	.072	.062	
DETERMINATO	-.073	-.061	
FORMAZIONE.LAVORO	.134	.128	*
ALTRO	.062	.095	
PERSTRESS_TOT†		.506	**
R ²	.041	.296	
F	2208	17.136	**

Standardized regression coefficients are shown; N = 210 ; *p<.05 ; **p<.01

Table 2c. Hierarchical linear regression model results for commitment

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Step 1</i>	<i>Step 2</i>	
workcond	.055	.061	
DETERMINATO	-.121	-.129	
FORMAZIONE.LAVORO	-.059	-.056	
ALTRO	.010	-.010	
PERSTRESS_TOT†		-.315	**
Total R ²	.021	.119	
F	1.099	5.532	**

Standardized regression coefficients are shown; N = 210 ; *p<.05 ; **p<.01

Table 3. Hierarchical linear regression model results for total perceived stress post Covid

	<i>Step 1</i>	<i>Step 2</i>	
DETERMINATO	-.029	-.045	
FORMAZIONE.LAVORO	-.053	-.067	
ALTRO	-.018	.097	
WELL_BEING_EMPCARE		.047	
WELL_BEING_INTRWP		.019	
RESIL_TOT		-.111	
COMM_TOT		.053	
PERSTRESS_TOT†		.759	**
R ²	.003	.580	
F	.095	15.556	**

Standardized regression coefficients are shown; N = 99 ; *p<.05 ; **p<.01

Table 4. Hierarchical linear regression model results for Perceived Organizational Support post Covid

	<i>Step 1</i>	<i>Step 2</i>	
DETERMINATO	-.040	.032	
FORMAZIONE.LAVORO	-.114	-.003	
ALTRO	-.054	-.020	
WELL_BEING_EMPCARE		.221	*
WELL_BEING_INTRWP		.004	
RESIL_TOT		.033	
COMM_TOT		.093	
POS_TOT		.613	**
PERSTRESS_TOT†		-.076	
R ²	.014	.793	
F	.498	37.998	

Standardized regression coefficients are shown; N = 99 ; *p<.05 ; **p<.01

DISCUSSION AND LIMITATIONS

The main objective of this research is to test how stress, uncertainty and crisis, such as that resulting from the pandemic outbreak, affect employees in the hotel sector.

The results obtained above are extremely interesting and give an insight into the current state of employees in the sector.

Regarding hypothesis 1a that a “Higher levels of pre-COVID resilience are negatively associated with stress”, significance with the data has been found.

In general, with regard to resilience, the respondents were found to have relatively high resilience (mean 4.13). This result might be attributed to the fact that hotel employees are constantly exposed to factors of change, from work to the customers they constantly come into contact with, and this can lead them to be very resilient in nature, confirming what had been set out in theory and aspiration. In accordance with Naswall et al (2015) the more resilient employees are, the better they adapt to change. Furthermore, according to Naswall et al (2015) employees who are more resilient are more likely to cooperate with change and can learn from difficult situations. This bodes well for the recovery of the sector which, as has just been demonstrated, is made up of very resilient people who will be able to adapt quickly to the various changes that will result from the pandemic. Hotels and the tourism sector will have to face changes in many ways, starting with the way services are delivered. Once again it is the resilient and adaptable employees who will enable the industry to function well again. Once again they will be at the heart of the hotel industry's competitive advantage. What we have found is therefore totally in line with the literature previously set out.

With regard to hypothesis 1b, with reference to well-being, it was verified that stress negatively influences well-being in relation to employer care and positively that relating to the intrusion of work into private life.

The fact that the more stressed one is, the more one perceives work as intrusive in one's private life goes along with the theory that workers have to balance work and private life, and stress can influence this search for balance. As mentioned in the previous paragraphs, employees in the sector often cannot separate private and work life because of work rhythms and work dynamics.

It is interesting to underline again the significance of the control variable concerning the

type of contract "training and work". Those who have this type of contract, compared to those who have a permanent contract, have on average a higher score on welfare intrusion, thus perceiving a greater intrusion of work in their private life.

This result can be explained by the age of those who tend to have this type of contract, who are very young, and not being used to the world of work may perceive it as more intrusive than an adult. In general, following what has been set out in the literature, and in accordance with Guest et al (2017) the result that stress goes a long way in influencing the intrusion aspect of work into private life was predictable. Indeed, employees facing intense changes, both in work practices per se and the uncertainty of whether or not they will get the job, may spill the stress resulting from these changes into their private life, constantly thinking about work and perceiving it as intrusive.

As for the hypothesis relating perceived stress levels and affective commitment, the data shows a statistically significant relationship.

People who have a higher level of pre-Covid stress tend on average to have a lower level of commitment because the regression coefficient is negative so there is a negative relationship between the level of stress and commitment that goes to confirm the initial hypothesis. On the basis of what has been set out in the theoretical section, a decrease in commitment due to stress, in this historical period, can have very negative repercussions on the overall performance of the hotel in fact, Chen et al (Chen et al, 2017) identified that proactive customer service performance that leads to higher quality service delivery and therefore higher overall performance for the hotel is closely linked with individual commitment and HR commitment practices.

With regard to the second hypothesis concerning stress levels between pre- and post-Covid, the following occurred that the total perceived stress decreased between pre and post Covid.

We can accept this result by bringing to light a further reasoning. It is in fact understandable that less stress is perceived in the workplace because probably the pace of work in the sector, due to the many restrictions, is much lighter and with different schedules and workloads (think of the early closures of public places, hotels, restaurants and bars in Italy) and this leads us to observe slower work dynamics.

Probably all of this is still connected to the fact that in carrying out their work, stress has decreased due to lower demand, a slowdown in the pace, a change in working time (all

factors intrinsic to the industry that could contribute to increasing the stress of employees, as seen in the first section of this paper).

In conclusion, hypotheses 1a, 1c accepted and hypotheses 2 is rejected.

Concerning hypothesis 1b, as mentioned above, if two hypotheses are formulated, which allow the antithetic of the two subcategories to be overcome, these hypotheses, concerning the two subcategories, would both be accepted.

Another fact that in general is of fundamental importance to underline again is that 52.86% of the respondents are not working at the moment. More than half of the respondents to the questionnaire are not working.

This figure highlights the general crisis in the hotel and tourism sector and the difficult challenges we are facing for a quick recovery.

With regard to the limitations of this research, first of all it should be stressed once again that the sample to which the questionnaire was submitted is a convenience sample, i.e. based on personal knowledge, and this has clearly restricted the pool of testable users.

Also, since most respondents know me personally they may have been influenced in their response. In addition, many of the respondents work in the Tuscany region (about 38%). To overcome this limitation, it is necessary to expand the pool of users by testing every single region on Italian soil. It is also noted that due to the length of the questionnaire that was submitted the respondents may have responded in a careless manner as completion progressed.

During the questionnaire they were also asked to think about the work situation pre Covid and during Covid and the respondents may have paid little attention to this difference as the questions asked pre and during were the same.

Another limitation relates to the fact that the questionnaire was submitted a few months after the outbreak of the pandemic and this may have influenced the perception of the participants. However, this limitation can easily be mitigated by conducting a longitudinal analysis to validate the results of the research. For future research, it is suggested to widen the pool of users and test them by having them think in depth about the comparison between the pre and post Covid situations.

Certainly, research on the impact of the pandemic is still in its infancy and will be developed in the months to come, as it is an extremely topical issue that is still in the making.

Any findings from such investigations will be of fundamental importance to the restart of the industry. Such research can help companies understand the best ways to restart and support their employees to ensure that everyone, company and employee, is pulling in the same direction.

In general, this research has the added value of testing and verifying how employees in the hotel sector are feeling at this particular time, and being an ongoing phenomenon, it allows an initial exploration of the topic.

Certainly, being an ongoing phenomenon, many things will evolve, changes are daily, and it will be important to conduct future research to see, at the end of the pandemic, how all this has impacted on employees.

Learning from difficult situations can help to adapt better in the future.

CONCLUSION

The pandemic we are currently experiencing is leaving deep wounds at the health, economic and social levels that will have to be healed over time.

Some of these wounds are already strongly evident, the cure is clear but needs to be applied.

For other wounds, it is neither clear how deep they actually are nor what the cure is.

The wounds analysed in this research are those caused by stress, uncertainty and crisis and their repercussions on the resilience, well-being and commitment of employees in the hospitality industry.

Hospitality employees are the ones who make it possible for the industry to survive and are the basis of the competitive advantage of any organisation in the industry.

Understanding how stress, also resulting from this pandemic, affects them is of paramount importance in understanding how to act and how to heal the wound.

As we have seen in this research, having calm employees with a high level of commitment allows the organisation to increase both the performance of the structure and the satisfaction of the guests.

What emerged from this research is that, as expected, employees in this sector are very resilient and this enables them to cope better with stressful situations.

Resilience may, unfortunately or fortunately, have been developed because of the work they do.

It has been shown how many sources of stress underlie the work dynamics themselves. Very long working hours, high-intensity shifts (such as those in the kitchens or restaurants); the seasonality of demand that causes a succession of hirings and dismissals, altering the balance between the staff of the various hotel divisions.

The analysis showed that those with higher levels of pre-Covid resilience are coping better with stressful situations.

It was also found that stress is negatively influencing employee commitment and that they feel very much the intrusion of work into their private lives influencing so their well-being.

Already in normal times it was difficult for workers in the sector to separate work and private life and now with the pandemic, work itself, or the worry of having or losing it, is certainly affecting their lives.

After highlighting the importance of human resources throughout the paper, in conclusion, it is hoped that this research and all others to be conducted will bring the situation of the tourism sector and in particular its employees into focus and that the wounds of the pandemic will soon be healed.

It is hoped that we will soon return to normal, that we will return to travel, that we will revive a dying sector.

It is hoped that the hotel industry, based on relationships between people, will restart and ensure that in restarting it, at the center there will be all the people, those who use it and those who make it work.

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ABSTRACT

INTRODUCTION

In 2021 we are entering a special year, the year of uncertainty and a thousand questions. A year that leaves behind a 2020 that will go down in history. Covid19 exploded in China, and until March 2020. The Covid explosion caused hundreds of deaths a day, we experienced a worldwide lockdown for months, everything came to a standstill. The streets deserted, shops closed and hospital wards crowded, medical staff in a state of distress.

The impact of Covid on health is clear, the economic damage to date is as devastating as it is obvious, but what remains very uncertain and unclear is the near future.

All economic sectors have been hard hit by the crisis, but the tourism sector, based on contacts and interpersonal relations, on travels, exchange, in an era where social distancing is the basis for survival, has been hit harder than others by the crisis.

In fact, according to the European parliament, tourism is one of the sectors most affected by the Covid19 outbreak. The sector produces 9.5% of European gross domestic profit and provides 11.2% of employment in the EU. 22.6 million is the number of people working directly or indirectly in the tourism sector. (European Parliament, 2021)

In Italy, Istat certified for the fourth quarter of 2020 a 70% loss of turnover in accommodation services compared to the same period of the previous year.

At the beginning of 2021, the situation worsened further, with a drop in tourist numbers on Italian soil of 83% compared to the same month in 2020. (Federalberghi, 2021)

The situation is very serious throughout Europe and it is continuing. We continue to live amidst DPCM and restrictions, regional colour changes and proposals to extend school activities, resulting in the postponement of the start of the summer season. Holidays are cancelled, regions are closed, and tourism is slowly dying out. It dies out because there is no opportunity to travel, and it dies out because many of the small and medium-sized enterprises that make up tourism cannot cope.

The uncertainty about the future of this sector is overwhelming. Uncertainty experienced by the 22.6 million employees.

Economic and other difficulties impacting millions of people. But how do they impact?

How do the crisis, stress and uncertainty impact hotel employees?

This was the starting question for the development of this research.

Many studies have been carried out on stress, caused in a general sense by the working dynamics of the sector, to which we must add what is currently happening.

In fact, according to Jung et al “Stress among employees is inevitable in today’s rapidly changing organizational environment; excessive stress has an absolute adverse effect on efficiency (Karatepe & Uludag, 2008). This is because stress impacts an employee’s mental and physical health, negative effect on attitude, diminishing job satisfaction, and increasing turnover intent (Harris, James, & Boonthanom, 2005)”. (Jung et al, 2015, p. 2145)

Always according to Jung et al, (Jung et al, 2015) if an employee accumulates stress in the work environment this may lead to burnout which means psychological exhaustion.

We are currently experiencing a social, economic and health crisis that is unprecedented in recent decades and the impact of all this is bound to be a path that remains to be discovered.

Slow summer reopenings, which seemed to have brought us back to normality, albeit modified by distances and masks, and then again the increasingly intense restrictions.

Working in the sector myself, I felt it was vital to investigate in more detail how stress, crisis and uncertainty impact on employees in the hotel industry. I experienced all this as a student, worker and enthusiast in the sector, and day after day the questions about the impact all this was having on the people close to me grew stronger.

There has been a lot of discussion in recent months about the impact on hotels, on business in general, and I therefore felt it necessary to analyze the situation from the employee's point of view. Human resources are indeed the basis of competitive advantage in a business based on human relations.

Therefore, starting from the centrality of human resources for the competitive advantage of the hotels, the intent is to understand how stress, uncertainty or crisis, such as the current one resulting from the ongoing pandemic, affects these resources.

There is a big concern about the economic losses that the tourism sector is facing in recent months and the challenges for future recovery, but much less is said about the psychological aspect of the employees working in it. Understanding how stress and crisis affect their well-being or commitment can allow the company itself to react better to

change. Hence, the following study, based on a sample of more than 200 people, aims to analyze the impact of crises such as Covid19, stress and uncertainty on the resilience, well-being and commitment of employees in the hotel industry.

The studies conducted so far, have shown that employees with a high level of commitment or well-being perform better. (Guest et al, 2017)

The contribution of the research is therefore addressed to managers, HR departments and hotel managers with the hope that, by giving more insight into the employees who work for them, we can see a revival of tourism that has at its heart the well-being of the staff itself, which through commitment and well-being, can help to increase the performance of the structures.

LITTERATURE REVIEW

As is well known, the tourism-hotel sector represents one of the main economic drivers in our country. In Italy, tourism contributes to the realization of 13% of the GDP and employs 15% of the national workforce (Centro Studi Confindustria 2020). In fact, it is a sector that is strongly interconnected with much of the national economy.

The tourism sector is one of the basic sectors of the Italian economy and is currently in a very difficult situation. This situation affects all operators and employees in the sector. For a better recovery, it is necessary to focus on the problems faced by these human resources so that the performance and recovery of the organisations themselves can be improved and the economy of such an important sector for the country can return to growth.

This sector has, by "definition", human resources at its core as a people-based business. Employees must be at the centre of attention because in order to be successful in the hotel and tourism industry, it is not enough to have a beautiful hotel, with excellent space, top quality linen and starred food, since all this does not automatically lead to any revenue if it is not managed in a manner appropriate to the company's objectives.

Systemic uncertainty, on the other hand, imposes a continuous search for adaptability in the strategic management of human resources. The strategic importance of human resources, formed by the set of staff skills and competencies, can prove decisive in securing a competitive advantage.

The HR sector is the foundation of competitive advantage as a resource that can quickly learn the corrections or dynamics imposed/recommended by the head of each division saves cost and time. A human resource that makes good use of the resources at its disposal makes for great savings, and this happens in every division.

In fact, as pointed out by Péric ‘‘at the hotel as the primary provider of tourism, tourists and employees are directed to cooperate with each other in the realization of the service, and how successful their interaction will be depends largely on the abilities, knowledge and skills of the employees in providing the services’’. (Péric et al, 2019, p.26)

While emphasizing the importance of employees in a hotel, it is equally important to stress the need for best HR practices to ensure that employees work in a favorable climate and can perform their services to the best of their ability.

As Delmotte et al (2011, p.1500) point out, this is possible by introducing HR practices and processes that are relevant to the employees and this will allow HR staff to align business strategy and HRM.

Very often in hotels there is not even an HR department, unless it is a large hotel chain, and this can lead to less attention being paid to the needs of the employees.

An employee who feels that he or she is followed, understood and knows that he or she can refer to certain people to express problems can work more calmly, perform better and relate better to customers and so, above all, they can be more satisfied.

In fact, as has been highlighted by Péric et al ‘‘as employee knowledge and skills are intangible assets of any service organization, employee satisfaction has become one of the most significant issues facing the hotel and tourism industry (Matzler and Renzl, 2007). The quality of work of hotel and tourism employees depends first and foremost on their job satisfaction. Satisfied employees tend to be more productive, positive and creative’’. (Péric et al, 2019, p.26)

Workers in the hotel industry face various challenges including those common to all service industry jobs and those specific to the hotel industry which may generate stress. According to DeCotiis (1983) in general the term ‘‘work-related stress’’ is used to describe the feeling of a person deviating from normal or self-desired functioning in the workplace due also to elements outside the work context, but dependent on it in terms of psychological status.

There are some elements of uncertainty, and therefore of work stress, even in the sense we just assigned to the term, that are intrinsically correlated with the characteristics of the tourism-hotel sector such as the working dynamics, seasonality and turnover.

The working dynamics that characterize the tourist-hotel sector can intrinsically present risk profiles in the field of work-related stress. Stress is inherent in the very way of carrying out the work in each department of each division.

As pointed out by Wong et al “long working hours, shift duties and handling demanding and difficult customers in hotels has become a take-for-granted phenomenon in the hospitality industry”. (Wong et al, 2015, p.195)

In all work dynamics a good employee has to be able to put aside all the stress and frustration that comes from private life or work as it is not allowed to make the customer feel bad.

This point has been stressed also by Wong et al, in fact they affirm that “due to the phenomena of chronic labor shortage, role overload, long and irregular working hours exacerbated by considerable pressure over an extended time period, the prevalence of burnout is higher in service industries. This is so because one’s job involves a high degree of interaction with clients (Vallen, 1993)”. (Wong et al, 2015, p.197)

This type of dynamic and in general prolonged hours of work are neither healthy or productive. Obviously, all this has a decisive impact on stress levels and job satisfaction. In addition, one of the fundamental characteristics of the hospitality market is undoubtedly that of seasonality which can be a significant source of stress for the HR of the sector.

Seasonal work has been defined by Marshall (1999) as non-permanent paid work for those who have been recruited by hotels to cover their lack of employees in appealing to the needs and wishes of customers. Thus, their recruitment ends as soon as the high season has passed. (Alanazeh et al, 2015)

Seasonality has a negative impact as it puts any employee in a position of uncertainty and employment is affected directly and clearly by it. (Alanazeh et al, 2015)

Seasonality affects the employee who is hired only for the season since he or she will have the anxiety of being reappointed to a particular facility every year and the uncertainty of having to find alternative work during other periods.

Often during the peak season many employees are hired to cope with higher demand. As there is not always certainty about how the season will go and when and how the peak demand will be, employers often hesitate to hire more employees and do so close to the peak.

This leads to a lack of careful selection of employees, who are hired purely to meet demand.

All this can lead to the hiring of employees who become a big cost for both the company and the employees already working in the hotel.

The damage in terms of the company's point of view comes from the fact that often those who are hired during the peak have few skills, experience or qualifications and this reduces the quality of service and customer satisfaction. (Alanazeh et al, 2015).

From the point of view of the employees already working within the organisation this can generate stress as they have to work with other employees who are new to the organisation, who are not part of the team and who are probably less committed than they are.

In conclusion, there are negative results for the company, for the seasonally hired employee and for the team of employees already working in the hotel.

All these dynamics that generate stress for employees are intrinsic to the industry itself.

In the hospitality industry there is also a higher turnover rate than the national average and a greater prevalence of atypical contracts and this can influence the quality of services.

According to Koo et al, we have a turnover intention when an employee has the intention to leave his/her job. (Koo et al, 2019)

Stress resulting from turnover affects both employees and the facility itself. The structure part is of less interest here, since our focus is on human resources and their specific perspective; however, it must be said that turnover is a problem for a structure in terms of costs and reputation.

It is clear that, from the point of view of employees, an accentuated turnover in the composition of teams and work groups can affect the levels of sense of belonging to a community, and the feeling of identification with one's own work environment.

From the employee's point of view, the stress of turnover affects the search for and change of job and the performance of the work commitment itself.

For the abovementioned discussion in general a pronounced level of turnover in the relevant work context is another intrinsic source of stress in the hotel industry.

From the discussion conducted so far it has emerged, on the one hand, how important an employee in the hotel industry is to the hotel, being the basis of its competitive advantage, and on the other hand, how such important resources are subjected to very high levels of stress, due to working dynamics, seasonality and turnover, all intrinsic factors of the industry.

Given the importance of employees and the stress levels to which they are subjected, it is necessary to analyse the impact of stress, uncertainty and crisis on them.

In recent months, with the outbreak of the pandemic, we are experiencing a health, humanitarian and economic crisis situation unprecedented in recent decades.

This situation has catastrophic psychological, social, economic and work-related impacts on every person.

In the following discussion, hypotheses are presented that relate the stress of the employees of the sector with resilience, well-being and commitment.

Hypotheses will be presented that relate more specifically also to the Covid19 crisis and the impacts this may have had on employees, being a source of stress and uncertainty.

The Covid crisis in particular will be analyzed in detail in the next paragraphs.

The Covid crisis has put the tourism sector in a catastrophic situation.

The entire tourism sector, which relies predominantly on interaction between people, is actually in crisis as the World Tourism Organization (WTO) calculated for 2020 a losses of around \$300-450 billion with a major negative impact on small and medium-sized businesses, which account for around 80% of the tourism sector. As of early April 2020 according to the Organization, 96% of all destinations worldwide have implemented travel restrictions in response to the pandemic.

In addition, the condition of national emergency due to the Covid19 pandemic is having a powerful impact on the psychological health of all individuals involved; if it is true, in fact, that the spread of epidemics can lead to high levels of stress, fear and anxiety, this is even more true in light of the forced quarantine to which the entire country has been subjected and it is likely that the health outcomes could, in some circumstances, be such as to overwhelm the individual (Brooks et al, 2020).

HYPOTHESIS

For the analyses, that will be run in this paper, the first variable to be referred to is resilience and its relationship to stress.

As Näswall , Kuntz and Malinen (Naswall et al, 2015) pointed out we live in a world in which we are experiencing an increasing volatility and uncertainty and one of the grates assets an organization can have is the agility to survive unexpected crisis.

For these reasons and given the crisis we are experiencing, it is interesting to focus on the resilience of workers in the hotel sector. In accordance with Näswall et al (2015) their definition of employee resilience is in line with the contemporary view of resilience as a transformational process in which individuals not only cope and successfully deal with change but also learn from it and adapt accordingly to thrive in the new environment (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2011; Richardson, 2002; Baird et al., 2013).

In general, employees in the hotel sector, given the work dynamics, turnover and seasonality to which they are constantly subjected should be very resilient since by the nature of the work they do they are always in contact with change and uncertainty.

As a first hypothesis we will therefore test relationship between resilience and stress.

Do those with higher resilience in the pre-Covid period cope better with stress?

What is expected is that those who are more resilient will cope better with the stress resulting from the Covid crisis.

Hypothesis 1a: “Higher levels of pre-COVID resilience are negatively associated with stress”

Again, with regard to stress, it is intended to test how this influences the well-being of employees.

It is expected that a higher level of stress has a negative influence on well-being.

It is considered that well-being is a fundamental variable in the working environment.

So it is of fundamental importance to take well-being into consideration and to test it, because employees with high well-being perform better, bearing positive fruits not only for themselves but also for the organisation in general. Effective HRM directed at employee well-being is associated with higher performance, higher job satisfaction and higher organisational commitment (Guest et al, 2017).

In the historical period in which we live, employees have to face intense changes, both in their private and working life, and this can affect their well-being.

Discover the work-related well-being in the hotel sector is important because as Orsila et al. (Orsila et al, 2011) pointed out, there is a negative association between an increased level of perceived work-related stress and employees' overall levels of subjective well-being and the hotel environment, as said, has many intrinsic sources of stress at which we should add the stress deriving from the Covid19 crisis.

Hypothesis 1b: Higher level of perceived stress is negatively associated with well-being

Coming to the relationship between employee commitment and stress levels, it was decided to analyze this relationship given the importance of commitment in organisations and in particular in the hotel sector.

In general, commitment leads to higher firm performance, as evidenced by the study conducted by McClean et al (McClean et al, 2011).

Vakola reports according to Buchanan's 1974 definition commitment is "a state in which an individual identifies with a particular organisation and its goals and wishes to maintain membership in order to facilitate these goals. It is argued that commitment often establishes an exchange relationship in which individuals attach themselves to the organisation in exchange for certain rewards from the organisation". (Vakola et al, 2005) The hotel industry is made up of people who provide a service, the employees, and people who pay for it and receive it, the guests.

Service quality and guest satisfaction are the basis of revenue and success for a hotel.

A very high level of employee commitment is needed to be successful.

The hypothesis, however, is that given the period of stress and constant change, commitment is negatively affected by this situation of stress, crisis and uncertainty.

Hypothesis 1c: Higher level of perceived stress is negatively associated with affective commitment

In this section we will discuss some aspects of stress in general and the hypothesis that perceived job stress after Covid is higher than perceived stress before Covid because, as we will see later, Covid and the crisis that followed it can be a great source of stress for people and specifically for workers in the hotel sector.

With the spread of the Covid crisis, many organisations, and in particular hotel organisations, found themselves having to reorganize in order to cope with a change in work dynamics, methods, timing and much more.

Studies have shown that organisational change can cause increased stress in employees. Stress and organisational change can be major problems for organisational life.

stress has negative consequences on organisational efficiency and effectiveness and can be an obstacle to organisational change. (Vakola et al, 2005)

For the historical situation in which we find ourselves, organisational change and stress are undoubtedly the protagonists. It is therefore interesting to test the hypothesis that there will be more perceived stress after the Covid, probably due to the pandemic situation itself and all the changes that come with it.

A higher level of post-Covid stress is therefore expected than the stress levels perceived by the pre-Covid workers.

Hypothesis 2: Post-Covid perceived stress is higher than pre-Covid perceived stress

ANALYSIS

The data for this research was collected using a professional online program: Qualtrics. Once the questionnaire was generated using the above platform, it was shared via a link. The research sample consisted of employees in the hotel industry who are currently working, not working or have worked in the hotel industry in Italy.

The link was sent to potential participants. It has been made a convenience sampling procedure. All the potential participants have been contacted through my personal network since I'm working in this sector.

Data were collected on a voluntary basis and anonymously.

Participants were informed that the questionnaire would be used for a master's thesis research with the general purpose of investigating the attitude of human resources in the hotel sector. The objective of the research and the relationship of the responses to stress, resilience, commitment or well-being were deliberately not specified in detail so as not to influence the participants in answering.

The questionnaire was administered in Italian to ensure full comprehension of the text by participants who, as mentioned, work in Italy. The questionnaires were collected during the first two weeks of February of the current year.

The total number of returned questionnaires were 318.

108 responses were eliminated due to missing data, incomplete information and a response progress rate of less than 100%.

There were therefore 210 responses that could be used for the analysis, with a response rate of 66.03%.

Of the 210 respondents, about 64% were men and about 36% were women. The majority of the respondents, about 45%, are aged between 35-54 years.

On the basis of my work experience and knowledge, several hotels, all 4-star, were included as alternatives to the question "in which hotel are you working" and about 38% worked/work at the Golf Hotel in Punta Ala, a hotel located in Tuscany in the province of Grosseto, while the rest of the sample worked in other hotels.

For the statistical analysis, first descriptive statistics were calculated for each variable such as mean and standard deviation.

Pearson's linear correlation indices were calculated to assess the bivariate relationships between the various indicators and, to assess their reliability, so the internal consistency of each indicator, Cronbach's alpha was calculated for each of them, as shown in the previous paragraphs.

Linear and hierarchical regression models were used to test the various hypotheses, first with the control variables and then with the various steps.

The results of the research will be presented below.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The main objective of this research is to test how stress, uncertainty and crisis, such as that resulting from the pandemic outbreak, affect employees in the hotel sector.

The results obtained are extremely interesting and give an insight into the current state of employees in the sector.

Regarding hypothesis 1a that a "Higher levels of pre-COVID resilience are negatively associated with stress" significance with the data has been found.

In general, with regard to resilience, the respondents were found to have relatively high resilience (mean 4.13). This result might be attributed to the fact that hotel employees are constantly exposed to factors of change, from work to the customers they constantly come into contact with, and this can lead them to be very resilient in nature, confirming what

had been set out in theory and aspiration. In accordance with Naswall et al (2015) the more resilient employees are, the better they adapt to change. Furthermore, according to Naswall et al (2015) employees who are more resilient are more likely to cooperate with change and can learn from difficult situations. This bodes well for the recovery of the sector which, as has just been demonstrated, is made up of very resilient people who will be able to adapt quickly to the various changes that will result from the pandemic. Hotels and the tourism sector will have to face changes in many ways, starting with the way services are delivered. Once again it is the resilient and adaptable employees who will enable the industry to function well again. Once again they will be at the heart of the hotel industry's competitive advantage. What we have found is therefore totally in line with the literature previously set out.

With regard to hypothesis 1b, with reference to well-being, it was verified that stress negatively influences well-being in relation to employer care and positively that relating to the intrusion of work into private life.

The fact that the more stressed one is, the more one perceives work as intrusive in one's private life goes along with the theory that workers have to balance work and private life, and stress can influence this search for balance. As mentioned in the previous paragraphs, employees in the sector often cannot separate private and work life because of work rhythms and work dynamics.

It is interesting to underline again the significance of the control variable concerning the type of contract "training and work". Those who have this type of contract, compared to those who have a permanent contract, have on average a higher score on welfare intrusion, thus perceiving a greater intrusion of work in their private life.

This result can be explained by the age of those who tend to have this type of contract, who are very young, and not being used to the world of work may perceive it as more intrusive than an adult. In general, following what has been set out in the literature, and in accordance with Guest et al (2017) the result that stress goes a long way in influencing the intrusion aspect of work into private life was predictable. Indeed, employees facing intense changes, both in work practices per se and the uncertainty of whether or not they will get the job, may spill the stress resulting from these changes into their private life, constantly thinking about work and perceiving it as intrusive.

As for the hypothesis relating perceived stress levels and affective commitment, the data

shows a statistically significant relationship.

People who have a higher level of pre-Covid stress tend on average to have a lower level of commitment because the regression coefficient is negative so there is a negative relationship between the level of stress and commitment that goes to confirm the initial hypothesis. On the basis of what has been set out in the theoretical section, a decrease in commitment due to stress, in this historical period, can have very negative repercussions on the overall performance of the hotel in fact, Chen et al (Chen et al, 2017) identified that proactive customer service performance that leads to higher quality service delivery and therefore higher overall performance for the hotel is closely linked with individual commitment and HR commitment practices.

With regard to the second hypothesis concerning stress levels between pre- and post-Covid, the following occurred that the total perceived stress decreased between pre and post Covid.

We can accept this result by bringing to light a further reasoning. It is in fact understandable that less stress is perceived in the workplace because probably the pace of work in the sector, due to the many restrictions, is much lighter and with different schedules and workloads (think of the early closures of public places, hotels, restaurants and bars in Italy) and this leads us to observe slower work dynamics.

Probably all of this is still connected to the fact that in carrying out their work, stress has decreased due to lower demand, a slowdown in the pace, a change in working time (all factors intrinsic to the industry that could contribute to increasing the stress of employees, as seen in the first section of this paper).

In conclusion, hypotheses 1a, 1c accepted and hypotheses 2 is rejected.

Concerning hypothesis 1b, as mentioned above, if two hypotheses are formulated, which allow the antithetic of the two subcategories to be overcome, these hypotheses, concerning the two subcategories, would both be accepted.

Another fact that in general is of fundamental importance to underline again is that 52.86% of the respondents are not working at the moment. More than half of the respondents to the questionnaire are not working.

This figure highlights the general crisis in the hotel and tourism sector and the difficult challenges we are facing for a quick recovery.

With regard to the limitations of this research, first of all it should be stressed once again

that the sample to which the questionnaire was submitted is a convenience sample, i.e. based on personal knowledge, and this has clearly restricted the pool of testable users.

Also, since most respondents know me personally they may have been influenced in their response. In addition, many of the respondents work in the Tuscany region (about 38%). To overcome this limitation, it is necessary to expand the pool of users by testing every single region on Italian soil. It is also noted that due to the length of the questionnaire that was submitted the respondents may have responded in a careless manner as completion progressed.

During the questionnaire they were also asked to think about the work situation pre Covid and during Covid and the respondents may have paid little attention to this difference as the questions asked pre and during were the same.

Another limitation relates to the fact that the questionnaire was submitted a few months after the outbreak of the pandemic and this may have influenced the perception of the participants. However, this limitation can easily be mitigated by conducting a longitudinal analysis to validate the results of the research. For future research, it is suggested to widen the pool of users and test them by having them think in depth about the comparison between the pre and post Covid situations.

Certainly, research on the impact of the pandemic is still in its infancy and will be developed in the months to come, as it is an extremely topical issue that is still in the making.

Any findings from such investigations will be of fundamental importance to the restart of the industry. Such research can help companies understand the best ways to restart and support their employees to ensure that everyone, company and employee, is pulling in the same direction.

In general, this research has the added value of testing and verifying how employees in the hotel sector are feeling at this particular time, and being an ongoing phenomenon, it allows an initial exploration of the topic.

Certainly, being an ongoing phenomenon, many things will evolve, changes are daily, and it will be important to conduct future research to see, at the end of the pandemic, how all this has impacted on employees.

Learning from difficult situations can help to adapt better in the future.

CONCLUSION

The pandemic we are currently experiencing is leaving deep wounds at the health, economic and social levels that will have to be healed over time.

Some of these wounds are already strongly evident, the cure is clear but needs to be applied.

For other wounds, it is neither clear how deep they actually are nor what the cure is.

The wounds analysed in this research are those caused by stress, uncertainty and crisis and their repercussions on the resilience, well-being and commitment of employees in the hospitality industry.

Hospitality employees are the ones who make it possible for the industry to survive and are the basis of the competitive advantage of any organisation in the industry.

Understanding how stress, also resulting from this pandemic, affects them is of paramount importance in understanding how to act and how to heal the wound.

As we have seen in this research, having calm employees with a high level of commitment allows the organisation to increase both the performance of the structure and the satisfaction of the guests.

What emerged from this research is that, as expected, employees in this sector are very resilient and this enables them to cope better with stressful situations.

Resilience may, unfortunately or fortunately, have been developed because of the work they do.

It has been shown how many sources of stress underlie the work dynamics themselves. Very long working hours, high-intensity shifts (such as those in the kitchens or restaurants); the seasonality of demand that causes a succession of hirings and dismissals, altering the balance between the staff of the various hotel divisions.

The analysis showed that those with higher levels of pre-Covid resilience are coping better with stressful situations.

It was also found that stress is negatively influencing employee commitment and that they feel very much the intrusion of work into their private lives influencing so their well-being.

Already in normal times it was difficult for workers in the sector to separate work and private life and now with the pandemic, work itself, or the worry of having or losing it, is certainly affecting their lives.

After highlighting the importance of human resources throughout the paper, in conclusion, it is hoped that this research and all others to be conducted will bring the situation of the tourism sector and in particular its employees into focus and that the wounds of the pandemic will soon be healed.

It is hoped that we will soon return to normal, that we will return to travel, that we will revive a dying sector.

It is hoped that the hotel industry, based on relationships between people, will restart and ensure that in restarting it, at the center there will be all the people, those who use it and those who make it work.