

Chapter 9:

Leadership and HRM Strategies in Hotel Industry for Building Organizational Commitment and Emotional Well-being of Employees in the COVID-19 Crisis

Dr. Harvinder Soni, Dr. Yashwant Singh Rawal, Dr. Yakup Durmaz

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This chapter aims to evaluate the impact of COVID-19 on the emotional well-being and organizational commitment of employees in the hotel industry. The chapter also analyses whether the employees are satisfied with the leadership and human resource management strategies of their management to combat the challenges posed by the pandemic. Further, an attempt has been made to assess the changes brought about by the hotels in their health and safety policies to meet the risks of the crisis. A structured questionnaire based on Likert's 5-point scale was used to assess the impact of COVID-19 on the jobs, salary, employee commitment, health, hygiene, and safety policies of the hotels together with the mental and emotional well-being and work performance of the employees in this sector. Data was collected from 300 employees working in four and five-star hotels. One sample t-test was applied to test the hypothesis of the study. Cronbach's Alpha was applied on 30 items to check the reliability of the questionnaire. Analysis revealed that employees of the hotel industry are satisfied with leadership strategy and the HRM practices adopted by the hotel for managing the COVID-19 crisis. It has been found that hotels have adopted appropriate safety measures to safeguard against the threats of COVID-19. Employees in the hotel industry are significantly affected by the threats caused by the coronavirus, as the mean score for the emotional well-being factor was significantly low. The organizational commitment of employees has been impacted due to apprehensions about job security and uncertainty associated with their compensation. The sample mean for organizational commitment was significantly low, which shows employees' commitment was not very high. This chapter is confined to four-star and five-star hotels in India. Hence, the results cannot be generalized to hotels outside the selected category. Moreover, this research is based on a quantitative methodology. The validity of the results can be increased by adopting qualitative tools such as in-depth interviews and focus groups. This chapter has contributed a novel perspective to the literature as it seeks to analyze the changes incorporated in the leadership and human resource strategies of the hotel industry in the wake of COVID-19. Additionally, the study has focussed on assessing the emotional health and organizational commitment of hotel employees during the pandemic and the strategies designed to combat the adverse effect of the present crisis.

1 Introduction

COVID-19 which originated in Wuhan city of China and spread rapidly in almost the entire part of the world has left the countries and people across the globe stranded (Zhu & Niu, 2020). Since the outbreak of the pandemic in December 2019, the number of cases of coronavirus disease increased drastically within a few months in many countries of the world (Ahorsu *et.al*, 2020). The hospitality sector is one of the many sectors hit hard by the pandemic as the Governments across the world sealed the international borders and suspended domestic and international flights (Aljazeera, 2020). The international hotel sector is confronted with the detrimental and long-term impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. (Jiang & Wen, 2020). According



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to the World Travel and Tourism Council's Annual Economic Impact Report (2021), the pandemic resulted in 62 million job losses in 2020, representing a drop of 18.5% leaving just 272 million employed across the sector globally, as compared to 334 million in 2019. The hotel industry is expected to shrink significantly due to the pandemic and the prospects for investors and employees seem to be grim (Taylor,2020). With the hotel industry experiencing the ripple effects of COVID -19 (Netscribes.com,2020) a great concern has arisen about the jobs of employees working across the sector, emotional well-being including their health and safety at the workplace.

Purcell & Ahlstrand (1994) contend that HRM strategies are devised based on decisions taken at all three levels of management and the competence and ability of the leaders to adapt to the organizational goals in the context of environmental changes. Bamberger & Phillips (1991) model the linkage between environment, HR strategy, and business strategy and assert that HR strategies are impacted by environmental factors like market conditions, technology, socio-economic factors, and government policies. According to Beer *et al.*, (1984), HR policies should be aligned with the strategy of the organization in the competitive environment together with the contextual business conditions. Mohamed A. Nassar (2018) in his study on four-star and five-star hotels of Egypt found that HRM practices influence the organizational commitment of hotel employees. -Hall & Hall(1988) suggested that HRM practices applied systematically lead to a sustainable performance by enhancing employee motivation and commitment.

In such an uncertain environment, it is necessary to devise the right kind of leadership and human resource strategies to build the organizational commitment of employees by giving them the necessary support in this crisis time. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine the level of employee satisfaction with the leadership strategy and the HRM practices adopted by the hotels for managing the COVID-19 crisis. At the same time organizational performance, profitability, and market share of any business are dependent on the performance of its human resources. In this context, focus on building an emotionally balanced, physically fit, and committed workforce becomes imperative. Another important objective of this research hence is to assess the impact of COVID-19 on the organizational commitment of employees in the hotel industry.

Blythe & Brown (2020) opine that in case of a crisis of any nature, the leaders should be competent enough to frame strategies for managing the crises successfully and depict high ethical standards, honesty, and integrity to overcome the situation. For managing crises, the leaders should first and foremost be compassionate about the needs of their employees and focus on their well-being and extend the necessary support to them. They should shoulder responsibility and be transparent and effective in their communication with all the affected parties. Leaders are required to influence the emotions, cognition, and behavior of others. The emotional well-being of employees hence becomes an important area of concern for leaders and HR professionals especially in the hotel industry where hospitality and emotional skills in dealing with guests is a priority. (Lin Gensing -Pophal, 2020) According to Nancy Reardon, Chief Strategy and Product Officer at Maestro Health, a health and benefits company based in Chicago, the mental well-being of employees has become a top concern for employers as working adults are facing emotional issues due to the uncertainty caused by a coronavirus. There has been a spike in the emotional challenges faced by employees in the COVID-19 crisis The third important objective of this research, therefore, is to understand the impact of COVID-19 on the emotional well-being of hotel employees.

Moreover, the employees are exposed to health and safety risks during the pandemic which necessitates the management to bring about changes in the health and safety practices of their hotels. According to Xiaowen Hu *et al.*(2020), it is not only the responsibility of the organization to protect the employees from the virus but also the survival of the organization itself during COVID-19 crises depends on the employee safety

measures during the pandemic. Diep Ngoc Su *et al.* (2020) have emphasized the adoption of appropriate health and safety measures in their proposed framework of HR practices for motivating and supporting employees during the crises of COVID-19. Hence, an attempt has been made in this study to identify the measures taken by hotels to safeguard employees' health.

Our study is relevant and significant as it seeks to analyze the changes made in the leadership and HRM strategies of the hotel industry to combat the pandemic. The physical and emotional well-being of the employees in this crisis needs to be taken care of by the leaders, and human resource strategies play a vital role in this respect. This research, therefore, adds to the existing literature by assessing the impact of COVID-19 on the emotional well-being of employees working in the hotel industry. Another significant contribution of this research is that it assesses how far the leadership and HRM strategies have been able to withstand the adverse effect of the pandemic on the employees and build up their organizational commitment. Furthermore, the previous studies have focused on employee issues such as work engagement, health and safety, layoffs, and the psychological contract during the pandemic but none of these studies have focused on analyzing the organizational commitment of employees in the hotel industry during COVID-19. Moreover, the leadership and HRM strategies designed to combat the adverse impact of the pandemic combined with the efforts made for safeguarding the physical and emotional well-being of employees have not been researched extensively.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Impact of Covid-19 on HRM Strategies in Hotel Industry

According to Lamba, Datta, & Mohan (2020) Indian hospitality is undoubtedly facing a tough time during the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak. The Indian government has suspended the visas and has imposed section 144, having serious implications for the hospitality Industry. All this is adversely affecting the life of the people working in the hotel. Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 prohibits the gathering of four or more people in a specified area. According to Boley (2020), many hotels resorted to layoffs and temporarily cut off their staff due to the current pandemic. On the other hand, a few hotel groups have taken the initiative to support their staff by providing funds. Some of the companies have created a page on their official website with a title like "Go Fund me". MGM resort has set up an emergency employee fund to pay their staff during this lockdown period. During this pandemic, American Hotel & Lodging Association (AHLA) is offering free training courses for the employees working in the hotel industry so that employees can enhance their skills. Sogno (2020) studied the upside and downside of the HR strategies of retention and downsizing. It was analyzed that majority of the hotels are reducing their staff. However, if employee loyalty has to be built up, hotels should include caring for employees as an integral part of their corporate values. For example, an international brand, Marriott mentioned that "They take care of employees and the employees take care of their customers". Dealing with worker associated issues could determine if the psychological contract is perceived as being kept or breached. Mishandling employee issues would not only impact their performance and motivation but would also damage the goodwill of the employers. Sen and Bhattacharya (2019) discussed the need to focus on service excellence in the hotel industry for enriching customer experience especially during COVID-19, which in turn is dependent on the competency of employees as they are the ones who interact with customers. They emphasized the importance of devising such HRM practices and treating the employees in a manner that enhances their competence level. Baumet *et al.*, (2020) highlighted the impact of COVID-19 on the hospitality workforce during the period ranging from April-June 2020. The researchers focused on the impact of this pandemic on the three levels including macro (government, global, policy), meso (organizational), and micro (employee). Based on tentative conclusions, the authors also tried to find out from the various stakeholders

such as government, consumers, and industry whether the present crisis brought about any change in their attitude towards hospitality work and employees in this sector.

It is unfortunate that hospitality sector workers have been hit by the COVID-19 crisis and it is not merely a coincidence that in many countries due to the lockdown and government restrictions and depreciating demand, this sector was the first to downsize the workforce (Flaming and Burns, 2020).

2.2 Emotional Well-being of employees

Emotional well-being refers to the emotional quality of an individual's daily experiences. It relates to the ability to manage stress, be resilient and generate emotions leading to positive feelings. Emotional skills enable people to recover quickly from negative experiences (Kahneman and Angus, 2010). Emotional well-being in China was reduced by 74% after the outbreak of coronavirus (Yang *et al.*, 2020). Mental health and physical health are very closely associated as problems like stress, anxiety, and depression can result in sleep disturbances, digestive disorders, and lack of energy. (Harvard, 2010). Wang and Xie (2020) investigated the effect of authentic leadership on the emotional labor of service employees in the chain of hotels in China. They concluded that managers in this industry should be authentic in their leadership and focus on enhancing the energy level of employees for the regulation of their emotions. Besides, while recruiting and selecting employees, their energy traits should be given due weightage. The research endeavors to provide insights on how hotel leaders can improve the ability of the employees to manage their emotions. According to a recent survey conducted by the Chartered Institute of Personnel Development in April 2020 in U.K. COVID-19 has made a direct impact on the mental and physical health of employees and around four out of ten workers feel that their mental and physical health has deteriorated after the pandemic. Khan *et al.* (2021) investigated the impact of the financial crisis and non-employability caused due to pandemic on the mental health of hospitality sector employees through perceived job insecurity. Results confirmed the mediating role of perceived job insecurity amongst the fear of economic crisis, non employability, and mental health of employees. Agarwal (2021) analyzed the human resource management practices adopted by hotels during the pandemic and the effect of the present crisis on the well-being of employees in the hospitality sector. It was found that employees were less stressed were their leaders and supervisors displayed authenticity and support in their behaviour towards them. Some hotels had also appointed counselors to help their people to cope up with mental health problems and stress arising due to COVID-19. Arja *et al.* (2019) emphasized the importance of employee well-being in hospitality due to the stressful nature of jobs in this industry which makes the employees highly vulnerable. They reiterated the relevance of high service quality for building the image of the hotel which in turn is dependent on the well-being of employees.

Lo & Nonnis (2012) contended that higher perceived job insecurity leads to a decrease and inconsistency in the emotional commitment of employees. Shin & Hur (2020) suggested that job insecurity impoverishes the physical, psychological and mental energy of employees which adversely affects their health and well-being.

COVID-19 pandemic has created stress, panic, and nervousness among people throughout the world (Ahorsu *et al.*, 2020). Psychological issues, panic attacks and anxiety has been encountered due to the understanding that there is no cure for this disease (Mazza, M *et al.*, 2020). The uncertainty and threat of unemployment arising due to the coronavirus disease had resulted in anxiety, fear, depression, burnout and low performance in the employees (Ivanov., 2020)

2.3 Health and Safety of employees

Leaders in organizations are According to Israeli *et al.* (2011) hotel leaders should be fully committed towards service safety and normalizing business operations for mitigating the adverse effects of market downturns and ensuring sustainability during the global crisis. Hu *et al.* (2020) explored the measures to be adopted by the hospitality industry for compliance with safety measures in context of COVID-19. The researchers identified two major environmental challenges confronted by organizations in the present context- firstly health threats due to COVID-19 and secondly the economic crisis in the hospitality industry causing the issues of organizational survival and job insecurity of the employees. The study suggests the adoption of safety strategy on a priority basis and running the business in a socially responsible manner even during crisis time. Bagnera *et al.* (2020) analyzed the impact of COVID-19 on hotel operations and suggested the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) for employees, increased emphasis on personal hygiene, physical distancing and communication of new COVID-19 protocols to guests and employees.

Leaders of an organization are the pivotal source of influence for the safety behaviour of employees. (Christian *et al.*, 2009; Clarke, 2013).

It is the responsibility of the hotel leaders to provide a safe work environment to the employees and provide sufficient resources for enabling employee safety behaviour. Moreover, proper care of the employee needs and their psychological state should be taken during the crisis. (Jiangchi Zhang, *et al.*, 2020)

2.4 Organizational commitment

The influence of a leader is depicted in the commitment level of employees. Organizational commitment plays a crucial role in the survival and sustenance of the organization, especially during the crisis period. Organizational commitment is “a state in which an employee identifies with a particular organization and its goals, and wishes to maintain membership in the organization (Miller 2003). The three factors of organizational commitment suggested by Porter *et al.* (1974) are:

- (i) Acceptance of goals and values of an organization,
- (ii) Desire to exert effort to achieve organizational goals,
- (iii) Desire to remain a member of the organization.

Filimonau *et al.* (2020) in their study on Spanish hotels found that organizational response to COVID-19 impacts perceived job insecurity of senior managers and determines their organizational commitment. In this respect, organizational resilience and CSR practices during crisis have a positive effect on the commitment level of senior managers. Channuwong (2016) contended that employees with high organizational commitment strive hard towards the achievement of organizational goals and contribute effectively in the growth and success of the company. Soni and Rawal (2016) researched to analyze and compare the organizational commitment of employees in the chain and non-chain hotels. A significant difference was found in the commitment level of employees working in the chain and non-chain hotels. Organizational commitment of chain hotel employees was much higher than those of non-chain hotels together with the significant positive correlation between organizational commitment and job satisfaction in chain hotels. Xiaoli Li *et al.*(2020) in their research conducted in four/five-star hotels in China concluded that effective HRM practices can reduce the emotional exhaustion of staff and can boost their organizational commitment.

If the employees perceive that the organization takes care of their needs, they reciprocate with a higher level of commitment towards their organization (Temblay et.al, 2019, Wayne et.al. 1997).

Therefore, hospitality organizations should show their commitment by supporting their employees and taking care of their well-being. This will positively influence the organizational commitment of employees. In the hospitality sector, perceived organizational support becomes all the important during the COVID pandemic where the employees are facing frequent layoffs and furloughs. In this crisis time, it is more significant that the employees feel that their organization cares for their well-being than in the earlier period when there was no pandemic (Stephanie Bae,2020).

3 Hypothesis Development

3.1 Research Gap

In the earlier studies conducted, employee issues such as work engagement, health and safety, layoffs, and psychological contract have been researched but most of these studies have been conducted in the workplaces and hotels of countries like China, America, and U.K. Not many studies have been conducted specifically in the Indian context as the work environment, impact of Covid-19, and expectations of employees in India are different from those of other countries. Moreover, none of these studies have focussed on the analysing organizational commitment of employees in the hotel industry during COVID-19 and the leadership and HRM strategies designed to combat the adverse impact of the pandemic combined with the efforts made for safeguarding the physical and emotional well-being of employees.

3.2 Research Questions

Based on the research gap identified from the extensive literature review, the following research questions were framed:

- Are the five-star and four-star category hotel owners in India focused on developing appropriate leadership strategies for survival in the wake of COVID-19?
- Are the employees finding it difficult to maintain their emotional balance due to job insecurity, changes in work systems, salary cuts, layoffs, and other problems during the pandemic?
- Are the hotels in India taking necessary measures for safeguarding the physical and emotional well-being of the employees especially in the context of the health risks brought about by COVID-19?
- Are the employees in this sector satisfied with the HRM and leadership strategy of their organization during the pandemic?
- In such circumstances, how far do the employees feel committed to their organization?

3.3 Hypothesis

After an in-depth literature review and analysis of the research gap, the research questions were framed. Then, for attaining the objectives of the study, the following hypothesis were formulated for conducting the research:

H01. Employees working in the hotel industry are not satisfied with the leadership strategy and the HRM practices adopted by the hotel for managing the COVID-19 crisis.

H02. The emotional well-being of employees in the hotel industry has not been affected due to threats caused by coronavirus.

H03. COVID-19 has not adversely impacted organizational commitment in Hotel Industry.

H04. Hotels have not made adequate provisions for safeguarding the health and safety of its employees during the pandemic.

4 Research Method

4.1 Data collection and Measures

A cross-sectional study was conducted through a structured questionnaire based on Likert's 5-point scale which was developed to assess the impact of COVID-19 on jobs, salary, employee commitment, health, hygiene, and safety policies of the hotels together with the mental and emotional well-being of the employees in this sector. The questionnaire was self-designed and items were created by the researcher after studying the relevant literature. For example, the statements for organizational commitment were designed after studying the factors that affect organizational commitment. 300 samples were collected through snowball sampling from employees working in the hotel industry. In this type of sampling, the existing subjects provide referrals to other probable samples. We contacted several employees in the hotels who could fill the questionnaire and requested them to fill it. During COVID-19 time most of the employees were not willing to be contacted, hence the employees who had already filled the questionnaire were requested to suggest few other employees who could give their opinion by filling the questionnaire. Then we approached the references given to us to fill the questionnaires and in this way, all the 300 completely filled questionnaires were received. To get 300 filled questionnaires we contacted almost 700 employees of the hotels, thus the response rate was 42.85%.

One sample t-test was applied to test the hypothesis of the study. Cronbach's Alpha was applied on 30 items to check the reliability of the questionnaire. It was found reliable with values of Factor 1: Leadership strategy and HRM practices in hotel industry = 0.919 Factor 2: Organizational commitment = 0.632, Factor 3 Emotional well-being = 0.794, F4 Safety Factor = 0.863.

Data was collected from the employees working in five-star and four-star category hotels located in various states of India like Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu. It is expected that five-star and four-star hotels relatively take greater care of the employees as compared to other non-star hotels and have more well-defined HR policies. Therefore, if the employees working in these hotels have been affected by the circumstances arisen due to COVID-19, then it indicates that the pandemic would have highly impacted employees working in non-star hotels as well. For this reason for five and four-star category hotels were selected for the purpose of research. Renowned hotels including Taj(n=24), Clarks(n=32), Fairmont (n=4), Marriott (n=30), Oberoi (n=25), Trident(8), Holiday Inn (n=6), Jaypee(n=9), Hilton (n=12), Le Meridien(n=7), Radisson Blu(n=18), Kohinoor Continental (n=12), Regenta Central (2), ITC (n=16), The Leela (n=30) Hayat (n=18), Sarovar(n=11) no response (n=36) have been included for research.

Respondents include hotel professionals at the assistant and supervisory level from major front-of-the-house departments of the hotel that are the front office, food and beverage service, and housekeeping. Primary data was collected between July to September 2020. Secondary data sources include various Scopus, SCI indexed journals and other reputed journals. Researchers also referred articles and reports available on various websites. Out of the total respondents, only 17.3% were females, and the remaining 82.6% were males. Factor Analysis using principal component method applying varimax rotation was applied. Before applying factor analysis, assumption checks for factor analysis was done which can be seen in table 1.

Table1: Bartlett's test of sphericity

Chi Square	4833.12
Df	351
Significance	*** (p<0.001)

4.1.1 Assumption Check for factor Analysis

This test checks whether the correlation matrix is significantly different from the identity matrix or not and test for the presence of correlation among variables. Test results show that the correlation matrix is different from the identity matrix ($p < 0.001$).

Table 2: *KMO measure of sampling adequacy*

MSA	0.783
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A Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test is used to determine the sampling adequacy of data that are to be used for Factor Analysis & given in Table 2. The KMO test allows us to ensure that the data we have are suitable to run a Factor Analysis and therefore determine whether or not we have set out what we intended to measure. KMO measure value for our data is 0.783 (> 0.700) which shows the adequacy of data for factor analysis.

Applying factor analysis three factors were extracted. Factor loading for each item along with the factor are given in the table 3 below.

Table 3: *Factor Analysis for Leadership and HRM Strategies in Hotel Industry for Building Organizational Commitment and Emotional Well-Being of Employees in the COVID-19 Crisis*

Factor	Statement	Factor Loading
F1	Hotel sanitizes all items and material before being admitted to the hotel premises.	0.799
	If any of the parameters for our colleagues are not normal, a medical examination and medical assistance are provided immediately.	0.762
	My organization conducted online learning and development programs which have enhanced my skills during the lockdown period.	0.761
	Electrostatic sprayers with professionally identified chemicals are being used to disinfect the hotel entrances, employee entrances, as well as various public areas.	0.710
	Masks and disposable gloves are being worn by all team members at all times and changed frequently.	0.704
	Updated and detailed cleaning checklists, including the use of professionally identified chemicals and agents for all areas, including laundry, are being followed and monitored closely.	0.694
	My hotel is strictly following the social distancing rules.	0.676
	Professional agencies and doctors are on standby for sanitization of all areas should there be anyone detected with a positive sign of COVID-19.	0.659
	Online training and development programs are being organized by my company during the lockdown.	0.644
	My organization has fully supported me in this difficult time.	0.622
My hotel is taking special care of employees during COVID 19 pandemic on safety and wellbeing.	0.613	

Factor	Statement	Factor Loading
	I believe that the leadership of my organization has the capability to lead the organization towards the path of recovery from the crisis.	0.610
	My company leaders communicated effectively with me in this time period.	0.600
	I have complete trust that the senior leadership will set the right course of action to deal with this crisis.	0.540
	Detailed Standard Operating Procedures are in place in case of a positive COVID-19 diagnosis where a colleague needs to be quarantined.	0.530
	My company is organizing online happiness management Programs/ Workshops to keep us motivated.	0.527
F2	My pay has not been affected during this time period.	0.639
	My hotel business has been adversely affected due to Corona Virus and lockdown.	-0.591
	I have no fear of loss of job in the COVID-19 crisis.	0.569
	I am not looking for another job at present.	0.505
	I am confident that my senior leaders will be able to effectively frame a strategy for business growth in COVID 19 crises.	0.462
	I am performing my duties at the workplace in a regular manner.	0.460
F3	I am feeling demotivated due to the problems caused by COVID-19 in my work life.	0.857
	The present uncertain environment may adversely affect my performance at work	0.801
	I am not able to concentrate on my work due to the problems faced by me and my hotel due to Lockdown and COVID-19.	0.748
	I feel that Coronavirus has derailed my career prospects in my company.	0.702
	I am feeling stressed due to the present uncertain environment.	0.527

Through factor analysis three major factors extracted were named as –(a) Leadership and the HRM strategy, (b) Organizational Commitment and (c) Emotional Well Being. Researchers also studied health and safety factor separately as it is very significant in the present pandemic.

5 Data Analysis & Results

The table no 4 depicts the mean values and ranking of the variables studied under Factor - Leadership Strategy and HRM Practices. It is evident from the mean scores that hotels are strictly following social distancing rules and proper precautions are being taken with respect to COVID-19 in terms of sanitization, wearing of masks and gloves, provision of medical assistance in case of symptoms or diagnosis of coronavirus in any employee. Moreover, electrostatic sprayers with professionally identified chemicals are being used to disinfect the hotel entrances, employee entrances, as well as various public areas. Hotels are maintaining updated and detailed cleaning checklists and standard operating procedures are in place in case of a positive COVID-19 diagnosis where an employee needs to be quarantined. Hence, the employees are

satisfied with special care being taken for their health and safety by their employers during COVID-19. As far as employee learning and development during a pandemic is concerned, the mean scores are slightly low and more towards the average ranking. Most of the respondents are confident that the hotel industry is going to be in boom again and have reposed their trust in strategies of senior leadership for business growth in the COVID-19 crisis.

Table 4: *F1 Leadership strategy and HRM practices in the hotel industry*

Statement	Mean	Rank
Hotel sanitizes all items and material before being admitted to the hotel premises.	4.25	5
If any of the parameters for our colleagues are not normal, a medical examination and medical assistance are provided immediately.	4.28	3
My organization conducted online learning and development programs which have enhanced my skills during the lockdown period.	4.08	9
Electrostatic sprayers with professionally identified chemicals are being used to disinfect the hotel entrances, employee entrances, as well as various public areas.	4.12	8
Masks and disposable gloves are being worn by all team members at all times and changed frequently.	4.29	2
Updated and detailed cleaning checklists, including the use of professionally identified chemicals and agents for all areas, including laundry, are being followed and monitored closely.	4.08	9
My hotel is strictly following the social distancing rules.	4.44	1
Professional agencies and doctors are on standby for sanitization of all areas should there be anyone detected with a positive sign of COVID-19	4.17	7
Online training and development programs are being organized by my company during the lockdown.	3.52	15
My organization has fully supported me in this difficult time.	3.82	13
My hotel is taking special care of employees during COVID 19 pandemic on safety and wellbeing.	4.07	10
I believe that the leadership of my organization has the capability to lead the organization towards the path of recovery from the crisis.	4.26	4
My company leaders communicated effectively with me in this time period.	4.01	11
I have complete trust that the senior leadership will set the right course of action to deal with this crisis.	4.00	12
Detailed Standard Operating Procedures are in place in case of a positive COVID-19 diagnosis where a colleague needs to be quarantined.	4.20	6
My company is organizing online happiness management Programs/ Workshops to keep us motivated.	3.61	14

Table 5: F2 Organizational commitment

Statement	Mean	Rank
My pay has not been affected in this time period.	3.11	6
My hotel business has been adversely affected due to Corona Virus and lockdown.	4.07	2
I have no fear of loss of job in the COVID-19 crisis.	3.35	5
I am not looking for another job at present.	3.75	4
I am confident that my senior leaders will be able to effectively frame a strategy for business growth in COVID 19 crises.	4.17	1
I am performing my duties at the workplace in a regular manner.	3.90	3

Respondents' pay has been affected in this period and they also apprehend loss of job in the COVID-19 crisis as their mean scores are not at a very high level in this respect. Employees agree (mean score: 4.07) that their hotel's business has been adversely affected due to coronavirus and lockdown. Overall organizational commitment in the hotel industry can be interpreted as moderate during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 6: F3 Emotional well-being

Statement	Mean	Rank
I am feeling demotivated due to the problems caused by COVID-19 in my work life.	2.16	1
The present uncertain environment may adversely affect my performance at work.	2.36	2
I am not able to concentrate on my work due to the problems faced by me and my hotel due to Lockdown and COVID-19.	2.55	3
I feel that Coronavirus has derailed my career prospects in my company	2.70	5
I am feeling stressed due to the present uncertain environment.	2.59	4

It can be interpreted from the table no 6 that most of the employees working in the hotel industry agree that they are feeling stressed due to the present uncertain environment. The problems caused by COVID-19 have demotivated the employees and have negatively affected their concentration and focus towards work. They also feel that coronavirus has derailed their career prospects in their company. Therefore, it can be assessed from the above data that COVID-19 has adversely impacted the emotional well-being of employees in the hotel industry.

Table7: Overall mean values and standard deviation of the factors

Factor	N	Mean	SD
Leadership Strategy and HRM Practice (F1)	300	4.08	0.60
Organizational Commitment (F2)	300	3.73	0.53
Emotional Well Being (F3)	300	2.47	0.84
Health and Safety of Employees	300	4.21	0.57

The table no 7 depicts the mean value of the four variables being explored in this research study. It can be interpreted that the respondents are most satisfied with the health and safety measures taken by their employers during the COVID-19 crisis followed by leadership and HRM strategies during this challenging time. However, it cannot be denied that the emotional well-being of the employees working in the hotel industry has been adversely affected as can be seen by their mean score of 2.47. The organizational commitment of the employees is also not very high in the present crisis due to certain factors specifically related to the impact of the present crisis of coronavirus.

5.1 Results

H1: Employees working in the hotel industry are not satisfied with the leadership strategy and the HRM practices adopted by the hotel for managing the COVID-19 crisis.

Table 8: Leadership strategy and HRM practices (F1)

Factor	N	Mean	SD	T	df
Leadership strategy and HRM practices (F1)	300	4.08	0.60	2.193	299

One sample t-test was applied to assess the satisfaction level of hotel manpower with leadership strategy and the human resources practices adopted by the hotels for managing COVID-19 crisis. Test Results as depicted in Table 8 show sample mean for Factor1 which is found significantly different from the test value of 4, which is assumed to be a high level.

This shows that employees were satisfied at a fairly high level with leadership strategy and the HRM practices taken up by their hotels for managing the COVID-19 crisis. Therefore, the null hypothesis, *H01*: "Employees working in the hotel industry are not satisfied with the leadership strategy and the HRM practices adopted by the hotel for managing COVID-19 crisis", is *rejected*.

Hence, the above analysis revealed that employees of the hotel industry are satisfied with the leadership strategy and the HRM practices adopted by the hotel for managing the COVID-19 crisis.

H02: The emotional well-being of employees in the hotel industry has not been affected due to threats caused by the coronavirus.

Table 9: Emotional well being (F2)

Factors	N	Mean	SD	T	df
Emotional Well Being (F2)	300	2.47	0.84	-32.61	299

Table 9 shows test results for *H02*, it is interpreted that employees in the hotel industry are significantly (highly) affected by the threats caused by the coronavirus, Employees in the hotel industry are significantly affected by the threats caused by the coronavirus, as the mean score for emotional well-being factor was significantly low. It shows that the emotional well-being of employees in the hotel industry has been affected due to threats caused by the coronavirus and *H02* is *rejected*.

H03: COVID-19 has not adversely impacted organizational commitment in the hotel industry.

Table10: Organizational commitment (F3)

Factors	N	Mean	SD	T	df
Organizational Commitment (F3)	300	3.73	0.53	-9.002	299

Test Results depicted in the above table, show that the sample mean for organizational commitment was significantly different from the test value (4). It is significantly low, which shows employees' commitment was not at a significantly high level. It can be concluded that the organizational commitment of employees has been significantly adversely affected due to the coronavirus pandemic. Hence, null hypothesis H03: "COVID-19 has not adversely impacted organizational commitment in hotel industry" is *rejected*.

H04. Hotels have not made adequate provision for safeguarding the health and safety of its employees during the pandemic.

Table 11: Safety of employees

Factors	N	Mean	SD	T	df
Safety of Employees	300	4.21	0.57	6.40	299

Test Results show that the sample mean for health and safety factor was significantly different from test value (4) and it was at a significantly high-level denoting that employees are highly satisfied with the measures taken for safeguarding the health and safety of its employees during the pandemic. Thus, the null hypothesis H4 "Hotels have not made adequate provision for safeguarding the health and safety of its employees during the pandemic" is *rejected*.

6 Discussion and Implications

To minimize the adverse effects of COVID-19, appropriate strategies need to be devised by the leaders to enable the organization to deal effectively with the crisis situation. (Khalil et.al,2020). The present study investigated the impact of COVID-19 on the emotional well-being and organizational commitment of employees in the hotel industry. It also analyzed the changes adopted in the health and safety practices by hotels due to the pandemic. Together with this, employees' satisfaction with the leadership strategies and human resource management practices to mitigate the effect of COVID-19 was evaluated. Findings indicate that the overall HRM practices and leadership strategies adopted by the hotels during COVID-19 were appreciated by the hotel staff and H01 could not be supported.

However, the emotional well-being of the employees was highly affected by COVID-19 as depicted by research results for H02 . During a crisis, employees go through psychological and emotional distress and leaders need to give them emotional and interpersonal support.(Khalil et.al,2020). Due to the uncertainty caused by the pandemic, hotel employees are under stress and are getting demotivated. Their career prospects are being derailed in the present crisis. Although, online training programs and happiness management programs are being organized by hotels for learning and development and employee motivation still much remains to be done in this respect. Ensuring the well-being of the employees impacted by the pandemic is one of the core responsibilities of leaders. (Khalil et.al,2020). As the emotional well-being of the employees has been impacted significantly, hotel management should undertake special measures for happiness management at the workplace. Psychological counseling, meditation and fitness sessions, celebrating employee birthdays at the workplace, proper tea and lunch breaks, organizing happiness management workshops, team-building activities, would not only help mitigate the stress and anxiety of employees but would also enhance their productivity and prevent burn-out from routine and mundane schedule. These provisions can be made through online mode at present and later on a balanced blend of online as well as offline modes can be incorporated into the company policies.

For enhancing the skills of the employees and increasing their motivation and commitment organizations need to focus on rigorous training (Lengnick & Hall, 1988), Hoteliers need to pay proper attention to organizing learning and development programs to empower the employees with the necessary skills to cope up with the demands of the present environment. Training programs on Developing Emotional Intelligence, Communication Skills especially via electronic-media during ongoing pandemic, Stress Management, IT skills in the context of Work from Home policies, Negotiation skills, Change Management Skills, Developing High Performance -Orientation for self and organizational growth, Leadership Development Training, Training in Transactional Analysis, Transformational Leadership, Effective Leadership behavior and attitudes, Developing Persuasive Skills, Developing Social Intelligence for success, Time Management skills of employees, Soft Skills Training, Goal -setting, Self-management skills can be organized for different levels and groups of employees and managers after conducting TNA i.e. Training needs Analysis. Mohamed (2018).stated that when resources are limited, training will not only enhance the organizational commitment of employees but will also effectivize customer service.

Work from home which has become the new normal during COVID-19 should be continued for the job profiles which do not require a physical presence in the office. For some of the positions in the hotels like those of Reservation Sales Agent, Business Development Manager, E-Commerce Manager, Digital Marketing Manager, Revenue Manager, Travel Agents, Internal communications Manager, Customer Service Advisor, Guest Experience Specialist, Customer Success Manager, Lodging and Hospitality Associate, partial or full-time work from home should be allowed. Work from home is advantageous for organizations, people, society, and the nation as a whole to leverage the benefits of digitalization. It results in a win-win situation for the employees and the organizations as not only it saves the time and expenses incurred in commuting to the workplace but also saves the cost of the organizations in terms of electricity, facilities to be provided by the employer, office space required and health hazards especially in the present context. With a lesser number of people traveling for their jobs, it also reduces the number of vehicles on the road resulting in the minimization of environmental pollution which has become an alarming problem in metro cities of India. Besides, every organization can decide the days and timings when it requires the employees to be physically present in the office depending upon their work profile. Performance standards and accountability can be fixed for the employees so that organizational performance does not suffer due to such an arrangement.

Further, our study reveals that COVID-19 has impacted the organizational commitment of employees in the hotel industry. Employees are apprehensive about their job security and their compensation has also been affected in this time period. Hence H03 could not be supported. As far as the health and safety of employees is concerned, hotels have adopted appropriate safety provisions for the employees to safeguard their health, and H04 is rejected. Safety practices like sanitization, social distancing, wearing of masks and disposable gloves, disinfecting hotel entrance and employee entrance with electrostatic sprayers have been adopted by hotel management. Detailed Standard Operating Procedures are in place in most of the hotels covered under the study, in case of a positive COVID-19 diagnosis where an employee needs to be quarantined.

One of the reasons for an organizational commitment not being high is fear of loss of job and pay of the employees being adversely impacted during the COVID-19 pandemic. The organization should create confidence in the employees about their career prospects in the company by undertaking proper career planning and laying down the career path for various job positions. Leaders should provide the necessary support to them according to the feasibility of the organization. The hotel employees were found satisfied

with regard to the health and safety measures taken by their employers during COVID-19. However, it needs to be added that these measures should be continued in the long run and even in the post-COVID-19 scenario these should become an essential condition for ensuring a safe and hygienic work environment in their organization. For example, use of sanitizers and masks at the workplace, provision for regular medical check-ups, cleanliness at the workplace, separate provision for spittoons and dustbins, social distancing to avoid infectious diseases should become a way of work-life in hotels. These steps need to be taken for ensuring a hygienic working environment and preventing the spread of diseases which not only expose the workers to risk but also hamper the functioning of the organization. In this context, the principles of ergonomics can be also be applied for maximizing productivity and reducing fatigue and discomfort of the employees. The commitment of the management towards the health, safety and well-being of employees and allocating resources towards employees' safety needs develop a sense of safety and security among them and enhances their commitment to the organization (Xiaowen et.al, 2021).

Strategies signify cues to the employees and determine their affinity with the organization (Xiaowen et.al, 2021). The leaders should maintain transparency about all organizational policies and encourage employees to give their suggestions for developing business strategies for sustainability in this crisis. This would not only make the employees aware of organizational problems but would also enable them to understand the perspective of management on various issues. A sense of belongingness, loyalty towards the organization, and trust in leadership would be developed which would go a long way in building the organizational commitment of the employees. Organizations can support employees' overall wellbeing as they adjust their policies, workplaces, incentives, recognition, virtual events, and development programs to the new normal. A key factor lies in equipping managers to individualize to each person's situation and make an effort to provide customized support. A cafeteria plan can also be worked out for this purpose in which the employees can choose the benefits which fit their individual needs.

7 Conclusion

It can be concluded that the hotel industry and its employees have been highly impacted by COVID-19 and hotels have adopted the necessary provisions for safeguarding against the threats caused by coronavirus to the health and safety of their employees. However, still much remains to be done to ensure the emotional well-being of the employees as their personal and professional life has been hard hit by the circumstances caused due to the pandemic. The research results show that the employees working in this industry are feeling stressed and are quite apprehensive about various aspects of their job. Moreover, the organizational commitment of employees during the pandemic is at a moderate level only which may adversely impact their work performance. Therefore, hoteliers and HR professionals in hotels need to devise appropriate strategies and take timely measures to work on these issues if they do not want any compromise in the work performance of employees and build up their trust and loyalty towards the organization.

8 Declarations

8.1 Limitations and Future Research

This study has some limitations which provide scope for future research. Firstly, this research is confined to four-star and five-star hotels of India and hence the results cannot be generalized to hotels outside this category. Further, the results may not be applicable to other industries. Moreover, the respondents belong to the assistant and supervisory level only from major front-of-the-house departments of the hotel that are the front office, food and beverage service, and housekeeping. The opinion of the employees working at the other levels and those working in departments other than the above may vary. Future research may be conducted in all types of hotels and other industries to generalize the research findings. In hotel industry

itself, the opinion of the employees working at various levels may be taken into consideration for further research. The study was carried out with 300 samples of hotel employees out of the 700 employees contacted. Most of the responses were received from male employees and only 17.3 % of responses received were from females. For future study, a good number of sample size can be taken, and a higher percentage of females can be included in the sample. Moreover, this research is based on a quantitative methodology. The validity of the results can be increased by adopting qualitative tools such as in-depth interviews and focus groups. The study has been conducted during the COVID -19 period and it can be interesting to further research on emotional well-being and organizational commitment level of hotel employees post-COVID and analyze the variations and implications.

8.2 Competing Interests

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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Author's Detail

Dr. Harvinder Soni^{1*}, Dr. Yashwant Singh Rawal², Dr. Yakup Durmaz³

¹ Professor, Taxila Business School, Jaipur, Rajasthan, India

² Associate Professor, Parul Institute of Hotel Management & Catering Technology, Parul University, Vadodara, Gujarat

³ Department of Marketing, Hasan kalyoncu University, Faculty of Economics Administrative, Şahinbey-Gaziantep, Turkey

*Corresponding author

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