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What influences company attachment and job performance in the COVID-19 era?: Airline versus hotel employees

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A B S T R A C T

Airline and hotel employees are experiencing multiple forms of precariousness amid the COVID-19 pandemic, which have increased workers’ distrust of their respective airline/hotel businesses and affected job performance and retention. This research builds and tests two sturdy theoretical frameworks to explain airline and hotel employees’ job performance and behavior during the COVID-19 pandemic. The frameworks, developed using a quantitative method, adequately account for employees’ company attachment and job performance by using their perceived job insecurity, life satisfaction, and job satisfaction as the key antecedents; while employees’ perceived job insecurity influences the formation of attachment to the company and job performance. The mediating nature of life and job satisfaction is also examined alongside the moderating role of two different industry types (airline versus hotel). The results show that the process of generating job performance differs between airline and hotel employee groups. The research implications and value are discussed.

1. Introduction

COVID-19 has caused serious changes and disruption to jobs in diverse businesses (Bufquin, Park, Back, de Souza Meira, & Hight, 2021; Carnevale & Hatak, 2020; Sigala, 2020). Airlines and hotels are among the sectors that have suffered most as a result of the pandemic (Gossling, Scott and Hall, 2020; Maneenop & Kotcharin, 2020). Airline and hotel employees are experiencing multiple forms of precariousness, as they undergo a volatile shift in working hours, and experience pay cuts (or no wage), welfare-benefit reductions, shift/position changes, or temporary/permanent dismissal (Maneenop & Kotcharin, 2020; Zhang, Xie, & Morrison, 2021). These difficult situations are raising workers’ distrust of their respective airline/hotel businesses, affecting job performance and employee turnover intention (Bufquin et al., 2021; Sobieralski, 2020; Wong, Kim, Kim, & Han, 2021). As a result, businesses need to find new ways to keep employees content, in the hope of restoring job performance and employment status during the pandemic (Amankwah-Amoah, 2020; Zhang et al., 2021).

Companies need to develop new and effective ways to elicit employees’ attachment to their company and boost their performance at work, especially when airline and hotel businesses’ survival is on the line during the pandemic. Company attachment has long been a key facet in employees’ approach response/behavior toward a firm (Kim, Bonn, Lee, & Kim, 2019; Meyer, Becker, & Vandenberghe, 2004; Rosso, Dekas, & Wrzesniewski, 2010), and employees’ job performance is a requisite for successful business operations (Ng & Allen, 2018; Shields et al., 2015). Decreased company attachment and job performance can force companies into a dangerous corner, as they create uncertainties for businesses that can challenge the overall survival and sustainability of the organization (Kim et al., 2019; Ng & Allen, 2018). For airline and hotel companies, enhancing the levels of company attachment and job performance are plausible strategies for efficiently preparing their businesses for the post-COVID-19 era. To this end, this study was an empirical investigation of employees’ perceptions of job insecurity during the pandemic, which also took employees’ life satisfaction and job satisfaction into account in explaining the process of generating company attachment and job performance in airline and hotel industries.

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This research developed two frameworks providing an explanation of the formation of airline and hotel employees’ attachment to a company and job performance during the COVID-19 pandemic. In particular, we aimed to (1) explore the influence of perceived job insecurity, life satisfaction, and job satisfaction; (2) determine the mediation mechanism for the study variables; (3) assess the relative importance of the study variables in driving company attachment and job performance; and (4) improve the developed theoretical framework by taking the impact of industry type (airline versus hotel) into account. The following sections provide a review of the extant literature, the research methods employed, the study results, and the implications for both theory and practice.

2. Literature review

2.1. Transactional theory of stress in person-environment relationships

This study uses the key tenets of the transactional theory of stress in person-environment relationships, and proposes a conceptual model of stress-appraisal-emotion (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, 1987). This theory takes a metatheoretical approach to emotion and argues that the valence and intensity of emotions are influenced by the relationship between a certain environment and the person who reacts to that environment. When a person negatively perceives a person-environment relationship, based on their cognitive appraisals, the relationship causes stress, which also induces negative emotions (e.g., fear or anger). On the other hand, positive emotions can also emerge from person-environment relationships, such as happiness and relief (Lazarus & Folkman, 1987). These emotions in turn influence a person’s performance (Folkman & Lazarus, 1985).

The theory offers a conceptual model of the emotional process, consisting of multiple variables and mediators. The causes of stress in a person-environment relationship are a mixture of personal and environmental factors (Lazarus & Folkman, 1987). Environmental conditions include disasters or threats to a person’s physical and emotional well-being, whereas personal factors include individuals’ beliefs and goals. According to the theory, neither personal nor environmental factors function independently in producing human responses; instead, the theory posits that both entities interact with one another, undergoing a transaction to produce an assessment of a situation, as Lazarus and Folkman (1987) explain:

[Both the person and environment] are conjoined and considered at a new level of analysis. By this we mean that in the relationship their independent identities are lost in favor of a new condition or state. Threat, for example, is not solely a property of the person or of the environment; it requires the conjunction of an environment having certain attributes with a particular kind of person who will react with threat when exposed to those environmental attributes. The concept of threat actually loses its meaning when applied to an environment without regard to the persons who react to it; or when it is applied to persons without regard to what it is about the environment that is threatening to them. (p. 142).

A person makes an evaluation of the environment by using information about it. This process is called a cognitive appraisal, which produces “the implications of that information for one’s personal well-being” (Lazarus & Folkman, 1987, p. 145). There are two forms of cognitive appraisals—primary and secondary. A primary appraisal allows one to evaluate one’s stake (threat/benefit) in a given situation/encounter: a transactional variable formed by the tension between one’s personal goals and the imposing environment relevant to the particular goal (Lazarus & Folkman, 1987). The primary appraisal is a process in which one evaluates the surface-level relevance of what is happening, which can be further categorized into three main types of stressors: harm, threat, and challenge. Harm is a stressing event that a person has already experienced; threat refers to an anticipated harm that may occur but has yet to transpire, and challenge is a hurdle that the person needs to cope with to attain a positive outcome, otherwise known as benefits (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, 1987). The person-environment transaction does not necessarily result in a detrimental outcome (i.e., a threat); it may also open possibilities for positive ones (i.e., benefits). A secondary appraisal is also involved, which layers in an additional judgement above the primary that allows one to make evaluative judgements about whether the primary appraisal is worth pursuing, allowing one to formulate and strategize appropriate coping mechanisms (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, 1987).

Taking these key theoretical premises into account, this study proposes that the relationship between the pandemic (an environmental factor) and employees (personal factor) accounts for employees’ cognitive appraisal of their work environment, causing stress in the form of potential harms, threats, and challenges. Hospitality and tourism employees can anticipate harm to their well-being if they lose their job under COVID-19. Given that a secure and stable form of work is central to one’s social and occupational identity (Lee, 2021; Sidoti, 2015), it is likely that the pandemic has complicated and caused such employees’ form of work to become highly precarious and insecure. Such a stress is likely to cause employees to project negative responses toward life, work, job performance and attachment to their company, which leads to the conceptual development and hypothesis formation of the current paper.

2.2. Job insecurity perception and its influence on life satisfaction

Job insecurity refers to a subjective estimation of employees’ chances of losing their job (Kinnunen, Feldt, & Mauno, 2003). It is an indication of precariousness and perceived dispensability (Sidoti, 2015; Standing, 2021). Described as workers’ cognitive apprehension about a threat/potential threat causing instability in their current job (Shoss, 2017), job insecurity can pose a serious threat to individuals’ social stability and subjective mental health/well-being (Böckerman, Ilmakunnas, & Johansson, 2011; Kinnunen et al., 2003), which is critical to employees’ life satisfaction. Studies have indicated that hospital employees’ perceived job insecurity can cause a decline in mental health through forms of stress, lowering employees’ life satisfaction and decreasing their organizational commitment (Van Zyl, Van Eeden, & Rothmann, 2013). Using examples from retail stores, institutions, information technology and healthcare, Griepp et al. (2021) showed that job insecurity and mental health were significantly related. Decreased life satisfaction and work involvement/performance are pertinent to employees’ perceptions of job instability (Shoss, 2017).

Drawing from the theoretical premises of the transactional theory of stress (Folkman & Lazarus, 1985; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, 1987), this study conceptualizes the pandemic as an environmental stressor causing employees to (re)evaluate their perceived job insecurity. Given that a secure and stable form of work is central to one’s social and occupational identity (Lee, 2021; Sidoti, 2015), the pandemic is likely to have detrimental impacts on perceived job stability, which could reduce employees’ overall life satisfaction and well-being (Buquín et al., 2021; Carnevale & Hatak, 2020; Gössling et al., 2021; Standing, 2021; Zhang et al., 2021). Extant studies on employee behavior have indicated the importance of perception of job insecurity as a determinant of life satisfaction and well-being both prior to the pandemic (Böckerman et al., 2011; Griepp et al., 2021; Van Zyl et al., 2013) and during the pandemic (Buquín et al., 2021; Wong et al., 2021). When workers perceive that their job is at risk of potential loss, they often feel less satisfaction in their everyday life, become weakly engaged at work, and display poor performance in the workplace (Aguirar-Quintana, Nguyen, Araújo-Cabrera, & Sanabria-Díaz, 2021; Buquín et al., 2021; Griepp et al., 2021; Shoss, 2017; Van Zyl et al., 2013).

Informed by the transactional theory of stress in person-environment relationships and the aforementioned literature, the following hypothesis was proposed:
H1. Job insecurity perception is significantly associated with life satisfaction among airline employees (H1–1) and among hotel employees (H1–2).

2.3. Life satisfaction and its influence on job satisfaction, company attachment, and job performance

In the human resource literature, life satisfaction is a crucial construct closely related to workers’ behaviors in a workplace (Qu & Zhao, 2012; Zhao, Ghiselli, Law, & Ma, 2016). A few studies in both the hospitality and travel industries have found an important association between life satisfaction and employees’ workplace behaviors. For instance, Qu and Zhao (2012) showed that employee life satisfaction positively affects employee job satisfaction and overall well-being, implying that employees facing less conflict between life and work are more likely to project positive aspects from their daily lives into the workplace. This relationship is also reciprocal (e.g., Zhao et al., 2016). For example, in the airline sector, Tang, Chang, Wang, and Lai (2020) showed how airlines’ internal marketing strategies can help enhance their flight attendants’ happiness by changing their work-family interface. Specifically, the study showed that a flight attendant’s overall compensation package had no significance influence on their overall happiness, in contrast to the influence of different company support systems (communication, welfare systems, and management support), as these aspects aid in reducing work-life discrepancies (Tang et al., 2020). In this regard, personal life/well-being is one of the crucial factors that influence employees’ job satisfaction and positive behaviors (Ariza-Montes, Arjona-Fuentes, Han, & Law, 2018).

Furthermore, employees’ daily life pleasures and subjective well-being (i.e., life satisfaction) serve as a key constituent of their responses/behaviors toward their work (Tharikh, Ying, & Saad, 2016; Wang, Xu, Zhang, & Li, 2020). Indeed, workers who positively evaluate overall well-being in their lives are likely to have a favorable attitude toward their work and feel satisfied, which ultimately results in increasing job attachment, job performance/productivity, and retention (Ariza-Montes et al., 2018; Heller, Judge, & Watson, 2002; Qu & Zhao, 2012; Tharikh et al., 2016). The literature review led to the following hypotheses:

H2. Life satisfaction is significantly associated with job satisfaction among airline employees (H2–1) and among hotel employees (H2–2).

H3. Life satisfaction is significantly associated with company attachment among airline employees (H3–1) and among hotel employees (H3–2).

H4. Life satisfaction is significantly associated with job performance among airline employees (H4–1) and among hotel employees (H4–2).

2.4. Job satisfaction and its influence on company attachment and job performance

Many studies in the extant literature provide empirical/theoretical implications for the essential role of job satisfaction in increasing employees’ attachment/loyalty to their firm and job performance (Choudhary & Saini, 2021; Heimerl, Haid, Benedikt, & Scholl-Grissemann, 2020; Scanlan & Still, 2019; Tharikh et al., 2016). Gobas, Kelleci, and Dogan (2008) indicated that job satisfaction is workers’ emotional state and behavioral expression, derived from the evaluation of their job and its value. In his seminal work, Edwin Locke (1969) defines job satisfaction as “the pleasurable emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job as achieving or facilitating the achievement of one’s job values” (p. 316). One’s ‘job values’ derive from one’s inherent ‘value standards,’ which are then subjected to one’s perceived judgement of the job’s existents (p. 316–317). In other words, Locke (1969) posits that job satisfaction is a complex appraisal of one’s work based on a job’s entailing existents and one’s ability to formulate judgements about different existents or a combination of existents relative to one’s personal values. Existents are not only associated with pay, but also with numerous other considerations (Tan, Sim, Goh, Leong, & Ting, 2020). For example, Heimerl et al. (2020) noted that job satisfaction entails numerous aspects such as assigned work hours, salary packages, career development opportunities, working atmosphere, leadership and management considerations, the nature of the work, and the job’s underpinning infrastructure. These elements, to varying degrees, become aspects that determine an employee’s overall contentment with their job (Heimerl et al., 2020; Yang, 2010). In this regard, it is essential for companies to know the key determinants and outcome variables of employees’ job satisfaction to ensure success in business (Choudhary & Saini, 2021; Heimerl et al., 2020).

Many researchers agree that job satisfaction is critical in eliciting employees’ approach/response/behavior with their firm and in determining their productivity in the workplace (Heimerl et al., 2020; Zhao et al., 2016). Tharikh et al. (2016) found that job satisfaction, built on job attitude, significantly increased workers’ organizational citizenship behavior and loyalty. Enhancing employees’ satisfaction is critical as it significantly lowers employees’ turnover decisions (Hsiao, Ma, Lloyd, & Reid, 2020; Scanlan & Hazelton, 2019). Workers who are satisfied at work tend to have favorable thoughts/ perceptions/images of their company, have strong attachment and loyalty to the company, and perform better (Scanlan & Hazelton, 2019; Scanlan & Still, 2019; Tharikh et al., 2016).

An employee’s attachment to the company and their job performance are two crucial constituents of a firm’s successful operation and profit generation (Jeong & Lam, 2016; Ng & Allen, 2018). Company attachment indicates a steady psychological force that bonds a worker to the organization (Meyer et al., 2004; Ng & Allen, 2018). It is regarded as a stable response/reaction by the worker to the overall job situation and company (Koch & Steers, 1978; Rosso et al., 2010). Company attachment represents the perception that an individual and their organization are tied strongly (Morrow, 2011), which is derived from careful judgement about a worker’s relationship with an organization (Meyer et al., 2004; Rosso et al., 2010). In this sense, company attachment is an important measure of a firm’s performance, specifically pertinent to human resource management, and is a crucial behavioral outcome of job satisfaction (Koch & Steers, 1978; Ng & Allen, 2018; Rosso et al., 2010).

The other key outcome variable of life satisfaction and job satisfaction is employees’ job performance. Job performance refers to the means to achieve a set of work-related goals within a company (Campbell, 1990; Shields et al., 2015). The essential determinant of job performance is how effectively a worker performs their duties (Anitha, 2014; Campbell, 1990; Chen, Eberly, Chiang, Farh, & Cheng, 2014). Thus, to exhibit high job performance, an individual should effectively accomplish responsibilities defined in the official job requirements (Chen et al., 2014; Shields et al., 2015). When hospitality employees are content with their job, they are likely to perform better by delivering quality service to customers and cooperating with colleagues (Kim, Tavitiyaman, & Kim, 2009). As eliciting high job performance from employees directly contributes to an organization’s success (Anitha, 2014; Ng & Allen, 2018), a successful company makes a variety of efforts to operate in a way that fulfills the needs/wants of its workers (Jeong & Lam, 2016). Such efforts often result in better job performance as satisfied workers deliver a quality service to patrons and are more pro-active in the workplace (Jeong & Lam, 2016; Prentice & Thaichon, 2019).

Based on the aforementioned literature, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H5. Job satisfaction is significantly associated with company attachment among airline employees (H5–1) and among hotel employees (H5–2).

H6. Job satisfaction is significantly associated with job performance among airline employees (H6–1) and among hotel employees (H6–2).
2.5. Industry type as a moderator

It is largely understood that individuals’ decision formation, performance, and behaviors can vary with industry type (Han, Chua, Ariza-Montes, & Untaru, 2020; Han, Yu, Chua, Lee, & Kim, 2019). The existing hospitality and tourism literature shows the convoluted relationships between the constituents of such decision formation, performance, and behavior across different service types. In a restaurant context, Hlee, Lee, Yang, and Koo (2019) examined the moderating effect of restaurant type (casual versus luxury) on patrons’ behaviors and showed that patrons’ utilitarian and hedonic evaluation processes have a significant moderating influence related to restaurant type. Lin and Kim (2020) researched diversification strategy and its comparative dominance in hotel business failure and found a difference between chain and company-operated business types. In the case of the airline industry, the process of generating individuals’ behavioral intentions toward a company, comprising individuals’ cognitive, emotional, and conative dimensions, differs depending on industry type (full-service versus low-cost carriers) (Han et al., 2019). Such empirical studies were consistent with Böhm’s (1999) earlier assertion that both workers’ and patrons’ responses/behaviors differ across service business sectors.

While the existing studies center on the effect of different service types by comparing restaurant type (Hlee et al., 2019), hotel operational style (Lin & Kim, 2020), and accommodation type (Suess, Kang, Dogru, & Mody, 2020), comparisons between different industry types remain scarce in human resource management. Very few studies consider industry type influences the relationships between employees’ job insecurity perception, life and job satisfaction, attachment to a company, and job performance as major theoretical and practical concerns with high validity and applicability were adopted from existing studies, using a seven-point scale. A list of items comprising five constructs was developed through a thorough literature review. To measure job insecurity perception, a total of five items were extracted from previous studies (Han et al., 2021; Hwang, Lee, Park, Chang, & Kim, 2014; Wong et al., 2021), including “unstable job environment”, “concern about layoffs”, “forced unpaid leave”, “forced advanced annual leave”, and “forced labor policies”. In addition, three items for life satisfaction (e.g., “I am satisfied with my life”) were derived from a previous study (Zhao et al., 2016). Three items for job satisfaction (e.g., “I am happy to have this job in this airline/hotel”) were borrowed from previous studies (Hwang et al., 2014; Wong et al., 2021). To measure company attachment, three items (e.g., “I feel emotionally attached to this airline/hotel”) were adopted from previous studies (Kucukusta, Denizci Guillet, & Chan, 2016). Lastly, job performance was evaluated with four items (e.g., “I have initiated better ways of doing my core tasks”), which were extracted from previous studies (Griffin, Neal, & Parker, 2007).

A pilot test was conducted with hotel and airline practitioners. The first draft of the questionnaire was modified based on the results of the pilot test. The amended version of the questionnaire was further improved following hospitality and tourism academics’ reviews.

H7a–f. The associations among research variables (i.e., job insecurity perception, life satisfaction, job satisfaction, company attachment, and job performance) are significantly moderated by industry type (airline versus hotel).

Fig. 1 illustrates the hypothesized models that embrace job insecurity perception, life satisfaction, and job satisfaction as major theoretical variables for company attachment and job performance. The proposed models for airline employees and hotel employees also integrate the moderating effect of industry type (H7a–f).

3. Methods

3.1. Questionnaire development

The questionnaire for this study comprised three segments: an introductory section, questions relating to research variables, and questions about demographics. To evaluate research constructs, measures with high validity and applicability were adopted from existing studies, using a seven-point scale. A list of items comprising five constructs was developed through a thorough literature review. To measure job insecurity perception, a total of five items were extracted from previous studies (Han et al., 2021; Hwang et al., 2021), including “unstable job environment”, “concern about layoffs”, “forced unpaid leave”, “forced advanced annual leave”, and “forced labor policies”. In addition, three items for life satisfaction (e.g., “I am satisfied with my life”) were derived from a previous study (Zhao et al., 2016). Three items for job satisfaction (e.g., “I am happy to have this job in this airline/hotel”) were borrowed from previous studies (Hwang et al., 2014; Wong et al., 2021). To measure company attachment, three items (e.g., “I feel emotionally attached to this airline/hotel”) were adopted from previous studies (Kucukusta, Denizci Guillet, & Chan, 2016). Lastly, job performance was evaluated with four items (e.g., “I have initiated better ways of doing my core tasks”), which were extracted from previous studies (Griffin, Neal, & Parker, 2007).

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![Fig. 1. The proposed theoretical model.](image-url)
3.2. Data collection

A sample of airline employees was collected in Hong Kong and South Korea. Two approaches to data collection were used. The first approach was to employ an online questionnaire created using the Qualtrics program and send it via email or social media platforms, such as Instagram, Facebook and WhatsApp messenger, to airline employees who were known to a former flight attendant with a 10-year working career and a current executive in an airline. The second approach was to recruit a current ground staff member, who disseminated paper-based questionnaires to his colleagues in his workplace. A total of 374 questionnaires, including 240 from the electronic data collection method and 134 from the distribution of paper questionnaires, were returned. After ruling out 24 questionnaires due to insincere answers, such as having multiple missing values, ticking only one number serially, and completing the questionnaire in a hurried manner, the final number of questionnaires used for further data analysis was 350.

To collect a sample of hotel employees, two methods including an online survey and a paper-based questionnaire were adopted. Firstly, the online survey was conducted by sending an online link with a QR code to hotel employees who were affiliated with the Hotel Employee Union Association. The second sample of hotel employees was collected through one of the author’s personal networks. In this second sample, the questionnaire was sent via email, by personal contact, or by sending an online link with a QR code. Diverse methods were applied to distribute questionnaires to hotel employees, considering the pandemic environment. An incentive of an e-gift equivalent to US$2 was provided to those who completed the questionnaire. It was assumed that responding to the questionnaire took approximately 10 min. A total of 471 responses, including 271 from the first method and 200 from the second method, were collected, but 21 were deleted due to insincere answers including incomplete questionnaires with many missing values.

As both groups were sampled between July and December 2020, it was assumed that similar phases of the pandemic’s severity and evolution worldwide applied to the two samples, during which both hotels and airlines in most Asian countries underwent immense disruption due to the strict social distancing regulations imposed on international tourists (Bufquin et al., 2021; Gössling, Scott, & Hall, 2020; Maneenop & Kotcharin, 2020; Sigala, 2020). Since the two business sectors are closely linked to each other in the international travel industry, employees experienced common issues of stressors, job security and other outcomes attributed to the catastrophic pandemic (Baum et al., 2020; Han et al., 2021; Standing, 2021; Wong et al., 2021). Potential participants were requested to respond to the questionnaire by clicking the link sent via e-mail or mobile devices.

3.3. Sample characteristics

Of the 350 airline employees, 67.7% were women and 31.7% were men. In terms of age, 58.3% indicated they were aged between 30 and 49 years, followed by those less than 30 years of age (25.7%). Approximately 60% were college graduates, followed by those who held two-year college diplomas or less (26.3%). In terms of airline type, 76.3% reported that they were currently working for full-service carriers, while approximately 60% were college graduates, followed by those who held two-year college diplomas or less (26.3%). In terms of hotel type, 52.4% indicated that they were currently working at chain hotels, while 47.1% reported that they were working at independent hotels. Among the 450 respondents, 39.8% described themselves as supervisory-level hotel workers, followed by managerial-level workers (38.0%) and entry-level workers (22.2%).

4. Results

4.1. Measurement model for airline employees

The measurement models for airline and hotel employee groups were respectively examined using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). AMOS 22 and SPSS 22 were used as analytic tools. The CFA result for airline employees revealed acceptable goodness-of-fit statistics ($\chi^2 = 323.429, df = 125, p < .001, \chi^2/df = 2.587, RMSEA = 0.067, CFI = 0.955, IFI = 0.955, TLI = 0.944$). All observed factors were significantly loaded to their associated latent factor ($p < .01$). The measures included a satisfactory degree of composite reliability, which ranged from 0.830 to 0.947. The values exceeded the threshold of 0.7 (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010). As reported in Table 1-1, the average variance extracted (AVE) values surpassed the threshold of 0.5 (Hair et al., 2010), ranging from 0.504 to 0.856. When compared to the between-construct corrections (squared), these values of AVE were all greater. Therefore, convergent and discriminant validity of the construct measures was demonstrated.

4.2. Measurement model for hotel employees

The CFA result for hotel employees indicated satisfactory goodness-of-fit statistics ($\chi^2 = 329.940, df = 125, p < .001, \chi^2/df = 2.640, RMSEA = 0.060, CFI = 0.958, IFI = 0.958, TLI = 0.948$). All items were significantly loaded to their linked latent variable ($p < .01$). The construct measures encompassed an acceptable level of reliability that ranged from 0.848 to 0.891. As reported in Table 1-2, all values exceeded the minimum cutoff of 0.7 (Hair et al., 2010), demonstrating the internal consistency of the measures. The values of AVE exceeded the minimum threshold of 0.5 (Hair et al., 2010), ranging from 0.534 to 0.700. The values of AVE were also greater than the between-construct corrections (squared). Hence, convergent and discriminant validity were established.

4.3. Structural model for airline employees

Structural equation modeling (SEM) was then performed for the airline employee group. The results showed an acceptable level of goodness-of-fit statistics ($\chi^2 = 334.589, df = 129, p < .001, \chi^2/df = 2.594, RMSEA = 0.068, CFI = 0.953, IFI = 0.953, TLI = 0.944$). The proposed model had a satisfactory level of predictive power for company attachment and job performance. About 61.0% and 20.6% of the total variance in company attachment and job performance were accounted for by their antecedent variables, respectively. The detailed results of the SEM are presented in Table 2-1 and visualized in Fig. 2.

Hypothesis 1–1 was supported as the proposed association between job insecurity perception and life satisfaction was significant ($\beta = -.178$, $p < .01$). Our results showed that life satisfaction exerted a significant influence on job satisfaction ($\beta = .561$, $p < .01$). However, its influence on company attachment ($\beta = -.019$, $p > .05$) and job performance ($\beta = .095$, $p > .05$) was not significant. Thus, Hypothesis 2–1 was supported whereas Hypotheses 3–1 and 4–1 were not supported. The hypothesized impact of job satisfaction on company attachment ($\beta = .792$, $p < .01$) and on job performance ($\beta = .394$, $p < .01$) was significant, which supported Hypotheses 5–1 and 6–1.

Next, the indirect influence of the research variables was assessed. As shown in Table 2-1, life satisfaction had a significant indirect impact on company attachment ($\beta = .444$, $p < .01$) and on job performance ($\beta = .221$, $p < .01$). In terms of total impact, job satisfaction had a greater influence on company attachment ($\beta = .792$, $p < .01$) compared to that of life satisfaction ($\beta = .425$, $p < .01$) and job insecurity perception ($\beta = -.076$, $p < .05$). Similarly, job satisfaction had a greater influence on
Table 2-1
Measurement model evaluation (n = 350 [airline employee group]).

| Hypothesized paths                   | Coefficients | t-values |
|--------------------------------------|--------------|----------|
| H1–1: Job insecurity perception → Life satisfaction | -0.178       | -2.974** |
| H2–1: Life satisfaction → Job satisfaction | 0.561        | 10.418** |
| H3–1: Life satisfaction → Company attachment | -0.019       | -0.382   |
| H4–1: Life satisfaction → Job performance | 0.095        | 1.385    |
| H5–1: Job satisfaction → Company attachment | 0.792        | 13.444** |
| H6–1: Job satisfaction → Job performance | 0.394        | 5.283**  |

Indirect effect on company attachment:

β Life satisfaction = 0.444**
β Job satisfaction = 0.792**
β Job insecurity perception = -0.076

β Life satisfaction = 0.425**
β Job insecurity perception = 0.315
β Life satisfaction = -0.076

β Job insecurity perception = 0.221**
β Life satisfaction = -0.056

Total effect on job performance:

* p < .05, **p < .01

Explained variance

R² (company attachment) = 0.610
R² (job performance) = 0.206
R² (job satisfaction) = 0.132
R² (life satisfaction) = 0.112

Note. Goodness-of-fit statistics for the structural model: χ² = 334.589, df = 129, p < .001, χ²/df = 2.594, RMSEA = 0.068, CFI = 0.953, IFI = 0.953, TLI = 0.944.

Table 2-2
Measurement model evaluation (n = 450 [hotel employee group]).

| Hypothesized paths                   | Coefficients | t-values |
|--------------------------------------|--------------|----------|
| H1–1: Job insecurity perception → Life satisfaction | -0.104       | -2.057** |
| H2–1: Life satisfaction → Job satisfaction | 0.504        | 10.014** |
| H3–1: Life satisfaction → Company attachment | -0.008       | -0.280   |
| H4–1: Life satisfaction → Job performance | 0.083        | 1.040    |
| H5–1: Job satisfaction → Company attachment | 0.733        | 12.444** |
| H6–1: Job satisfaction → Job performance | 0.376        | 5.028**  |

Indirect effect on company attachment:

β Life satisfaction = 0.418**
β Job satisfaction = 0.763**
β Job insecurity perception = -0.076

β Life satisfaction = 0.425**
β Job satisfaction = 0.315
β Life satisfaction = -0.076

β Job insecurity perception = 0.221**
β Life satisfaction = -0.056

Total effect on job performance:

* p < .05, **p < .01

Explained variance

R² (company attachment) = 0.610
R² (job performance) = 0.206
R² (job satisfaction) = 0.132
R² (life satisfaction) = 0.112

Note. Goodness-of-fit statistics for the structural model: χ² = 329.940, df = 125, p < .001, χ²/df = 2.640, RMSEA = 0.060, CFI = 0.958, IFI = 0.958, TLI = 0.948.

job performance (β = 0.394, p < .01) compared to that of life satisfaction (β = 0.316, p < .01) and job insecurity perception (β = -0.056, p > .05).

4.4. Structural model for hotel employees

SEM was also conducted for the hotel employee group. The results revealed satisfactory goodness-of-fit statistics (χ² = 352.455, df = 129, p < .001, χ²/df = 2.732, RMSEA = 0.062, CFI = 0.954, IFI = 0.954, TLI = 0.945). The hypothesized model also contained a sufficient level of anticipatory power for company attachment and job performance. Approximately 72.7% and 33.1% of the variance in company attachment and job performance were accounted for by the predictors, respectively. Table 2-2 and Fig. 2 display the outcomes of the SEM.

The proposed link between job insecurity perception and life satisfaction was significant (β = -0.332, p < .01), which supported Hypothesis 1-2. Regarding the influence of life satisfaction, the results indicated that life satisfaction had a significant impact on job satisfaction (β = 0.722, p < .01) and job performance (β = 0.485, p < .01). However, its effect on company attachment (β = 0.025, p > .05) was not significant. Therefore, Hypotheses 2-2 and 4-2 were supported but Hypothesis 3-2 was not supported. Our findings indicated that job satisfaction had a significant impact on company attachment (β = 0.834, p < .01). However, its impact on job performance was not significant (β = 0.118, p > .05). Thus, Hypothesis 5-2 was supported whereas Hypothesis 6-2 was not supported.

Then, the indirect effect of the study constructs was examined. As reported in Table 2-2, life satisfaction had a significant indirect effect on company attachment (β = -0.603, p < .01). In addition, job insecurity perception had a significant indirect effect on job performance (β = -0.189, p < .05). Regarding the total effect, job satisfaction had the greatest influence on company attachment (β = 0.834, p < .01),
model (airline group): \( \chi^2 = 334.589, df = 129, p < .001, \chi^2/df = 2.594, \text{RMSEA} = .068, \text{CFI} = .953, \text{IFI} = .953, \text{TLI} = .944 \)

Note1. Goodness-of-fit statistics for the proposed structural model (airline group): \( \chi^2 = 334.589, df = 129, p < .001, \chi^2/df = 2.594, \text{RMSEA} = .068, \text{CFI} = .953, \text{IFI} = .953, \text{TLI} = .944 \)

2.594, RMSEA = .068, CFI = .953, IFI = .953, TLI = .944

Note2. Goodness-of-fit statistics for the proposed structural model (hotel group): \( \chi^2 = 352.455, df = 129, p < .001, \chi^2/df = 2.732, \text{RMSEA} = .062, \text{CFI} = .954, \text{IFI} = .949, \text{TLI} = .943 \).

*\( p < .05, **p < .01 \)

Table 2-2

| Hypothesized paths | Coefficients | t-values |
|--------------------|--------------|----------|
| H1-2: Job insecurity perception \(\rightarrow\) Life satisfaction | -0.332 | -6.095** |
| H2-2: Life satisfaction \(\rightarrow\) Job performance | 0.722 | 14.262** |
| H3-2: Life satisfaction \(\rightarrow\) Company attachment | 0.025 | 0.420 |
| H4-2: Life satisfaction \(\rightarrow\) Job performance | 0.485 | 5.888** |
| H5-2: Job satisfaction \(\rightarrow\) Company attachment | 0.834 | 11.993** |
| H6-2: Job satisfaction \(\rightarrow\) Job performance | 0.118 | 1.563 |

Indirect effect on company attachment:
- Total effect on company attachment: Explained variance (R^2) (company attachment) = 0.727
- Total effect on job performance: Explained variance (R^2) (job performance) = 0.522

4.5. Test for metric invariance between airline and hotel groups

To test the proposed moderating impact of industry type (airline versus hotel), a metric invariance test was conducted. A baseline model was generated, which contained both the airline employee group (n = 350) and the hotel employee group (n = 450). Within the baseline model, all loadings across groups were constrained in an equivalent manner. The outcomes showed that the model had satisfactory goodness-of-fit statistics (\( \chi^2 = 739.528, df = 271, p < .001, \chi^2/df = 2.729, \text{RMSEA} = 0.047, \text{CFI} = 0.949, \text{IFI} = 0.949, \text{TLI} = 0.943 \)). Then, this model was compared to nested models in which a specific linkage of interest was restricted to being equal by using a chi-square test. Table 3 and Fig. 3 provide the details related to the baseline model evaluation results and the chi-square test.

The results showed that the linkage between job insecurity perception and life satisfaction (\( \Delta \chi^2 [1] = 1.867, p > .05 \)) was not significantly different between the airline and hotel groups. However, the links from life satisfaction to job satisfaction (\( \Delta \chi^2 [1] = 6.188, p < .05 \)) and to job performance (\( \Delta \chi^2 [1] = 18.770, p < .01 \)) differed significantly between groups. Therefore, Hypothesis 7c was not supported, while Hypotheses 7b and 7d were supported. The results showed that the path from job satisfaction to company attachment was not significantly different between groups (\( \Delta \chi^2 [1] = 0.324, p > .05 \)).

5. Discussion

The conceptual models constructed for the airline and hotel sectors provided an understanding of the process of generating airline and hotel employees’ company attachment and job performance in the COVID-19 era. The developed models took the effects of job insecurity perception, life satisfaction, and job satisfaction into account and considered the interrelationships among these variables. The present study provided evidence that perceived job insecurity plays a key role in airline and hotel employees’ life satisfaction, job satisfaction, company attachment, and job performance. This means that job insecurity perception and its impact on the outcome variables is crucial when explaining airline and hotel employees’ fulfillment in their everyday life and their approach responses/behaviors toward the company.

Two theoretical models across the airline and hotel contexts showed how job insecurity perception, life satisfaction, and job satisfaction drove company attachment and job performance among employees, which were positive for airline and hotel firms. The crucial moderating role of industry type (airline versus hotel) was demonstrated. The magnitudes of the association between life satisfaction and job
### Table 3
Invariance model assessment (airline vs. hotel).

| Paths                      | Airline employee group (n = 350) | Hotel employee group (n = 450) | Baseline Model (Freely estimated) | Nested Model (Constrained to be equal) |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| H7a: Job insecurity perception → Job satisfaction | -0.184, t-value = -3.066** | -0.327, t-value = -6.132** | χ²(271) = 739.528 | χ²(272) = 741.395 * |
| H7b: Life satisfaction → Job satisfaction | 0.566, t-value = 10.936** | 0.723, t-value = 15.356** | χ²(271) = 739.528 | χ²(272) = 745.716 b |
| H7c: Life satisfaction → Company attachment | -0.020, t-value = -0.398 | 0.024, t-value = 0.408 | χ²(271) = 739.528 | χ²(272) = 739.852 c |
| H7d: Life satisfaction → Job performance | 0.093, t-value = 1.349 | 0.483, t-value = 6.029** | χ²(271) = 739.528 | χ²(272) = 758.298 d |
| H7e: Job satisfaction → Company attachment | 0.792, t-value = 14.268** | 0.836, t-value = 12.907** | χ²(271) = 739.528 | χ²(272) = 740.028 b |
| H7f: Job satisfaction → Job performance | 0.393, t-value = 5.442** | 0.119, t-value = 1.571 | χ²(271) = 739.528 | χ²(272) = 743.902 t |

Chi-square difference test:
- \( \Delta \chi^2 (1) = 1.867, p < .05 \)
- \( \Delta \chi^2 (1) = 6.188, p < .05 \)
- \( \Delta \chi^2 (1) = 0.324, p < .05 \)
- \( \Delta \chi^2 (1) = 18.770, p < .01 \)
- \( \Delta \chi^2 (1) = 0.500, p < .05 \)
- \( \Delta \chi^2 (1) = 4.374, p < .05 \)

Note 1. Goodness-of-fit statistics for the baseline model:
- \( \chi^2 = 739.528, df = 271, p < .001, \chi^2 / df = 2.729, RMSEA = 0.047, CFI = 0.949, IFI = 0.949, TLI = 0.943 \)
- \( *p < .05, **p < .01 \)

### Fig. 3. Structural invariance model estimation.
Note. n = 350 (airline employee group); n = 450 (hotel employee group).

### 5.1. Theoretical implications

Based on the results, this research has several important theoretical implications. First, by adopting the transactional theory of stress in person-environment relationships (Folkman & Lazarus, 1985; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, 1987), this study conceptualized job insecurity as a threat—an anticipated harm directed toward hospitality and tourism employees’ well-being—which served as an essential predictor of their life satisfaction. Using this theoretical lens, the pandemic assumes the conceptual role of an environmental factor that forces a response in terms of how employees perceive their job insecurity. As Lazarus and Folkman’s (1987) theory postulates, a threat is only realized when a transaction between the person and environment is in place. On this basis, the concept of perceived job insecurity cannot arise solely in the presence of a pandemic; instead, it requires a human conjunction with the crisis to comprehend how the environment is threatening their job status, which in this study’s case was perceived job insecurity.

Second, and reinforcing the first point, this research shows the ripple effect of a person-environment transaction, in that airline and hotel employees’ perceived job insecurity may bleed into the ways in which they react to and/or cope with their life satisfaction and its consequences: job satisfaction, company attachment, and job performance. The current study builds on this research domain by showing that employees’ attitudes and behaviors become less favorable toward an
organization in the presence of pandemic-induced stress (Aguirar-Quin-tana et al., 2021; Bufquin et al., 2021; Carnevale & Hatak, 2020; Gösling et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2021). Although some studies linking job instability and employee behaviors exist (Bockerman et al., 2011; Grief et al., 2021; Van Zyl et al., 2013), this research is one of the first investigations to demonstrate the effect of job insecurity on life satisfaction and the subsequent outcomes under the impact of COVID-19.

Third, this study is also one of the first to explore the intricate relationships between life satisfaction, job satisfaction, and job performance, and how they compare between airline and hotel employees during COVID-19. The pandemic has rendered these areas two of the most impacted industries in the tourism and hospitality domain. This contribution adds to the existing body of work on similar and adjacent constructs (Ariza-Montes et al., 2018; Kim et al., 2009; Qu & Zhao, 2012; Tang et al., 2020; Zhao et al., 2016). Our results specifically suggest that at a similar level of job satisfaction, airline employees show a stronger level of job performance compared to hotel employees. Academics in the airline and tourism sector should acknowledge this dissimilarity regarding the relationships between research constructs across industry types. It is important to understand that airline employees’ and hotel employees’ life satisfaction have dissimilar levels of criticality with regard to job satisfaction and job performance, which adds to the extant literature suggesting that the hospitality and tourism industry is heterogeneous and should not be treated as a homogeneous mass sector (Han et al., 2019; Han et al., 2020; Hlee et al., 2019; Lin & Kim, 2020; Suess et al., 2020). This procedure is important in improving our understanding of employees’ job performance, which we expand upon in later practitioner-centric implications.

Fourth, this study disentangles the underlying mediation mechanisms underpinning company attachment and job performance. This research showcases the mediating mechanisms influencing hospitality and tourism industry employees’ attachment to their company and job performance. As shown in this study, life satisfaction and its relationship with job satisfaction play a crucial mediating role. Life satisfaction and job satisfaction demonstrated a mediation mechanism among research constructs in our models by significantly mediating the effect of perceived job insecurity on its outcome variables. From a theoretical perspective, this result implies that researchers need to account for the roles of life satisfaction and job satisfaction in future theorization of workers’ company attachment and job performance (Ariza-Montes et al., 2018; Kim et al., 2009; Qu & Zhao, 2012; Tang et al., 2020; Zhao et al., 2016). Paying attention to these variables will allow researchers to be more mindful of the intricate behaviors pertaining to employee behavior, especially in the post-COVID-19 era.

The efficiency of our proposed models is apparent in terms of clearly understanding company attachment and job performance among airline and hotel employees. Our research models can serve as a theoretical base when investigating the role of vital proximal or distal factors driving various employee approach decisions/behaviors that are beneficial for airline and hotel firms in the post-2020 era. In this increasingly precarious and uncertain job market, eliciting employees’ company attachment and job performance is a fundamental requirement for airline and hotel operations. Enriching the extant literature, this research helps academics and entrepreneurs better understand the complex process of employees’ approach behaviors for airline and hotel firms.

5.2. Practical implications

First, as this study’s results have shown, perceived insecurity can create drastic repercussions as they are negatively associated with employees’ company attachment and job performance. COVID-19 unfavorably obscures employees’ capacities to see or feel a sense of security in the future, causing their form of work to grow in precariousness and their jobs to become increasingly insecure (Baum, Mooney, Robinson and Solnet, 2020; Standing, 2021). Such perceived precariousness is likely to cause employees to project negative responses toward life, work, job performance, and attachment to their company. Perceiving their job as insecure can be a highly dehumanizing and torturous experience for employees (Bufquin et al., 2021; Coffey, Cook, Farrugia, Threadgold, & Burke, 2021; Sidoti, 2015). Because having a secure job allows employees to be certain of their future prospects, security, and adequate standards of living (Chan & Tweedie, 2015; Sidoti, 2015; Standing, 2021), the airline and hotel industry professionals should assess employees’ perceived insecurity by conducting small surveys or interviews and activate internal strategies to relieve employees’ perceptions of precariousness.

Second, practitioners need to recognize that employees from different industries require different levels of attention. Based on our results, it is empirically evident that airline employees and hotel employees have dissimilar levels of criticality regarding how their job performance is impacted by their pandemic-stress-induced job satisfaction. Specifically, our results suggest that at a similar level of job satisfaction, airline employees show a stronger level of job performance when compared to hotel employees, implying that hotel managers need to be on higher alert in their day-to-day operations. Measures need to be taken to mindfully alleviate hotel employees’ sense of job insecurity, especially when the global hotel workforce becomes increasingly skeptical about the permanency of their hotel careers (Baum et al., 2021; Coffey et al., 2021).

While our results show dissimilar impacts between airline and hotel employees’ job performances under the influence of pandemic-induced job satisfaction, we caution airline practitioners to not misinterpret our results as indicating that the airline industry has an advantage over hotel practitioners. Instead, airline managers need to continue to find ways to alleviate their employees’ sense of insecurity and all forms of plausible precariousness, especially when future crises lurk on the horizon. In many ways, airline and hotel companies need to be aware of and responsive to future predicaments, to ensure that a stable, content, and trusting workforce remains within the company’s repertoire of crisis defenses. On this note, our results provide important knowledge about the dynamic role of a firm’s endeavors to minimize employees’ perceptions of job insecurity in increasing employees’ life satisfaction and positive behaviors for the firm. Boosting employees’ perceived job stability and reducing any apprehension about possible threats to their continuing employment may be more essential than ever in the post-COVID-19 era.

The present research offers vital information indicating that dealing with life and job satisfaction in the pandemic era is a crucial way of minimizing the influence of airline and hotel employees’ perceptions of job instability on company attachment and job performance. During any environmentally induced chaos, employees will inevitably react in both positive and negative ways. Companies need to comprehend that such volatility is inevitable and must create company measures to respond to the environment to ensure their employees’ well-being, especially about safeguarding employees from perceived job insecurity.

5.3. Limitations and suggestions for future research

This research had limitations, which offer future research opportunities. First, the proposed theoretical models were effective in the airline and hotel contexts. However, the efficacy of the models in other employment sectors is not entirely certain. Hence, in future research, the applicability and effectiveness of the developed frameworks should be tested in other sectors. Second, the present research centered on employee behaviors and performance under pandemic conditions that have greatly lowered the number of travelers using airline and hotel products, and the demand for these products (Chua, Al-Ansi, Lee, & Han, 2021; Farzanegan, Gholipour, Feizi, Nunkoo, & Andargoli, 2021). Future research should investigate how the COVID-19 pandemic has influenced airline and hotel customers’ responses and behaviors. Making an empirical comparison between employee and customer behaviors...
in the COVID-19 era would be an interesting research investigation.

CRedit authorship contribution statement

Hae-seop Han: Conceptualization, Writing – original draft, Methodology. Kai-sean Lee: Conceptualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. Seongseop (Sam) Kim: Methodology, Writing – review & editing, Funding acquisition. Antony King Fung Wong: Methodology, Formal analysis. Hyoungeun Moon: Supervision, Writing – review & editing.

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Appendix. Measurement items

| Variables | Measurement items | References |
|-----------|-------------------|------------|
| Job insecurity perception | Unstable job environment. | Han et al., 2021; Hwang et al., 2014; Wong et al., 2021 |
| | Concern about layoffs. | | |
| | Forced unpaid leave. | | |
| | Forced advanced annual leave. | | |
| | Forced labor policies. | Zhao et al., 2016 |
| Life satisfaction | My life is close to ideal in most ways. | | |
| | My life conditions are excellent. | | |
| | I am satisfied with my life. | Hwang et al., 2014; Wong et al., 2021 |
| Job satisfaction | I am satisfied with my present line of work in this airline (hotel). | | |
| | I feel a great sense of personal satisfaction with my line of work in this airline (hotel). | | |
| Company attachment | I feel like a part of the family in this airline (hotel). | Kucukusta et al., 2016 |
| | I feel emotionally attached to this airline (hotel). | | |
| Job performance | I have initiated better ways of doing my core tasks. | Griffin et al., 2007 |
| | I have coordinated with my coworkers. | | |
| | I have suggested several ways to enhance the effectiveness of my work unit. | | |
| | I have presented a positive image of the organization to other people. | | |

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