



Anxiety Due to COVID-19 and the Role of Obsession, Job Location Selection and the Number of Children in Hospitality Employees

Konstantinos Krikonis¹
Ioannis Konstantaras²

Received: November 20, 2022

Accepted: January 23, 2023

Published: June 12, 2023

Keywords:

Coronavirus anxiety;
Obsession with COVID-19;
Job location selection;
Hospitality employees



Creative Commons Non Commercial CC BY-NC. This article is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-Non-Commercial 4.0 License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>) which permits non-commercial use, reproduction and distribution of the work without further permission.

Abstract: *Under the framework of the Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping, stress is formulated ultimately from our interaction with the situations we find ourselves in. During COVID-19, hospitality workers experienced high levels of stress due to instability and the constant lack of infection. This survey examines the moderating role of “job location selection” and “number of children” on the direct effect of “obsession with COVID-19” on “Coronavirus anxiety”. To address the above, we utilized “Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM)” on collected data from 403 hospitality employees working seasonally in Greece. The results uncovered the dynamic of “job location selection” in reducing the stressor “obsession with COVID-19”, moderating its effect on “Coronavirus anxiety”. Moreover, the “number of children” can negatively affect this relationship adding more anxiety to workers. Such insights can offer practical implications to each worker individually.*

1. INTRODUCTION

December 2019 marked the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, which caused great disruption to humanity as it affected several sectors, including workers in the tourism industry. Hospitality workers faced extremely difficult conditions as countries around the world restricted travel to slow the spread of COVID-19. These conditions posed a significant threat to the mental health of hospitality workers due to uncertainty about their employment and the fear of being infected with Covid-19 (Duarte Alonso et al., 2020; Filimonau et al., 2020; Yan et al., 2021).

It has been reported that working adults, particularly hospitality workers, face mental health challenges, including anxiety, depression, loneliness, and obsessive-compulsive behavior due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Calderwood et al., 2022; Graham et al., 2021; Murray, 2020; Zhang et al., 2020). Several employees were concerned about the negative effects of potentially dangerous working conditions. Also, unsafe workplace and exposure to hazardous working conditions was one of the most common reasons for changing their work environment (Demirović Bajrami et al., 2021).

Meanwhile, during the COVID-19 pandemic, workers in the tourism and hospitality sector were identified as particularly vulnerable to Covid-19 (Chinazzi et al., 2020). The state of global panic caused by the threat of disease spread accompanied by the introduction of strict security measures, causes anxiety and frustration (Mao et al., 2021), especially among hospitality workers. Fear was one of the dominant emotions during the pandemic, as the biology and implications of COVID-19 remained unknown (Al-Hanawi et al., 2020). Such emotions were even more acute in remote overcrowded tourist attractions, where there was restricted access to health facilities. Therefore, to overcome workplace dread, during the pandemic, several individuals chose jobs

¹ Department of Business Administration, University of Macedonia, Thessaloniki, Greece

² Department of Business Administration, University of Macedonia, Thessaloniki, Greece

in locations where sanitary facilities and low viral load are available. Subsequently, our first hypothesis is based on whether job selection location can moderate workers' anxiety over COVID.

Undoubtedly, the global pandemic COVID-19 can be a stressor, particularly for workers who are parents and have increased responsibilities. For example, in several countries, the pandemic caused a severe burden on mental health (e.g., Marazziti et al., 2020; Pierce et al., 2020), especially on parents increasing levels of anxiety and depression.

In addition, the uncertainty caused by the pandemic among workers, especially in families facing significant financial pressure, further increased stress levels. Therefore, the second hypothesis mentions that family responsibility (number of children) can exacerbate the impact of obsession with anxiety over COVID.

To sum up, the present study explores the factors that contributed to the increased levels of anxiety due to the pandemic obsession, while examining the factors that mitigate the stressor (anxiety).

2. METHODOLOGY

For our analysis, we used an online platform with 7.000 members offering seasonal jobs in Greece collecting data from May to June of 2022. The representative sample consisted of 403 candidates and accounted for specialization, residence, age, and gender.

Finally, to examine the moderating role of “job location selection” and “number of children” on the direct effect of “obsession with COVID-19” on “Coronavirus anxiety” we used the “Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Model (PLS-SEM)”

3. RESULTS

The descriptive analysis returned that the majority of the candidates (N=203 50.0%) were graduates of professional studies in tourism or acquire a university degree, while most of the participants were single (N= 256, 63.5%). Regarding parenthood, levels of obsession and anxiety differ between people who have children and those who do not. Specifically, we observe that those with children had higher mean levels of obsession (7.8) and anxiety with Covid-19 (5.7). (Table 2)

Table 1. Sociodemographic characteristics of participants

Attribute	Categories	N	%
Gender	Female	190	47.1%
	Male	213	52.9%
	Total	403	100.0%
Educational Level	Elementary/High School graduate	43	10.7%
	High/Vocational high school graduate	103	25.6%
	Graduate of vocational studies (except the specialty of Tourism & Food)	53	13.2%
	Graduate of vocational studies in Tourism or Food (Cooks, Confectioners, Bakers, etc)	113	28.0%
	University Graduate (excluding Tourism and Food)	51	12.7%
	Graduate of School of Tourism (University)	40	9.9%
	Total	403	100.0%

Marital status	Not Married	256	63.5%
	Married	89	22.1%
	Divorced	42	10.4%
	Something else	16	4.0%
	Total	403	100.0%
Children in the family	No	297	73.7%
	Yes	106	26.3%
	Total	403	100.0%
Number of Children	1	44	41.5%
	2	39	36.8%
	3	22	20.8%
	>=4	1	0.9%
	Total	106	100.0%

Source: Own research

Table 2. Results regarding children

Do you have children?		N	Mean	SD	t	Sig.
Obsession COVID-19	No	297	3.2	3.3	-10.3***	<0.01
	Yes	106	7.8	4.2		
Coronavirus Anxiety Scale	No	297	4.0	3.6	-3.7***	<0.01
	Yes	106	5.7	4.3		

Source: Own research

While the choice of workplace has a negative correlation with both obsession and anxiety, candidates that can choose their workplace witness lower obsession and anxiety levels, due to Covid-19 (Table 3).

On the other hand, there is a positive correlation between the number of children and the level of Covid-19 obsession and anxiety. Therefore, the more children one has the higher levels of Covid-19 anxiety and obsession experiences (Table 3).

To elaborate more on the results of Table 3 we utilized the logistic regression method. In the first model, the dependent variable is “ Obsession “ and the independent variables are “number of children” and “ Choice of the job location in 2022”. While in the second, the dependent is “anxiety” examined under the same independent variables.

According to the moderation analysis, we observe that the number of children cannot act as a moderator on the effect of persistence on anxiety.

In contrast, the choice of workplace can act as a moderator on the effect of persistence on anxiety. Therefore, if individuals can choose where to work based on the criteria, they consider necessary, they can significantly reduce the occurrence of anxiety and obsession.

Table 3. Correlations

		Job location selection	Number of Children
Obsession with COVID-19 score	rho ¹	-.303**	.481**
	sig.	<0.01	<0.01
	N	403	403
Coronavirus Anxiety Scale score	rho ¹	-.540**	.234**
	sig.	<0.01	<0.01
	N	403	403

Source: Own research

Table 4. Logistic regression using obsession and anxiety

Obsession	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% C.I. for EXP(B)	
							Lower	Upper
Number of children	1.33***	0.17	64.86	1	<0.01	3.79	2.74	5.25
Choice of the job location in 2022 season?	-0.44***	0.10	21.26	1	<0.01	0.64	0.53	0.78
Constant	-0.38	0.33	1.34	1	0.25	0.68		

Anxiety	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% C.I. for EXP(B)	
							Lower	Upper
Number of children	0.91***	0.15	35.45	1	<0.01	2.49	1.85	3.37
Choice of the job location in 2022 season?	-0.58***	0.13	20.34	1	<0.01	0.56	0.43	0.72
Constant	-0.80	0.38	4.36	1	0.04	0.45		

* p < .05, ** p < .01, ***p<.001

Source: Own research

Table 5. Moderation analysis

Number of children						
Variables	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	2.2	0.25	8.91	<0.001	1.73	2.7
Obsession with COVID-19	0.5	0.05	9.14	<0.001	0.37	0.57
Number of children	-0.8	0.4	-1.85	0.065	-1.54	0.05
Interaction	0.1	0.04	2.87	<0.001	0.04	0.21
Model summary	R-sq	F	p	R2-chng	F	p
	0.36	76.15	<0.001	0.013	8.24	<0.001

Job location selection						
Variables	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	3.6	0.49	7.39	<0.001	2.65	4.58
Obsession with COVID-19	0.9	0.08	11.48	<0.001	0.71	1.01
Choice of workplace	-0.4	0.13	-3.01	<0.001	-1.14	-0.76
Interaction	-0.2	0.02	-6.08	<0.001	-0.19	-0.99
Model summary	R-sq	F	p	R2-chng	F	p
	0.52	144.91	<0.001	0.044	36.99	<0.001

Source: Own research

The marginal analysis reveals that the relationship between hospitality workers' risk perception and the likelihood of experiencing anxiety is significantly different for workers whose choice of place of employment takes on greater value.

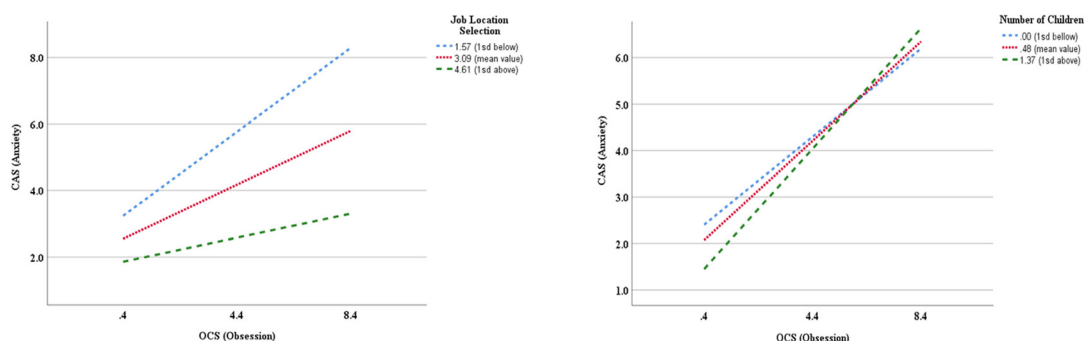


Figure 1. Interactive effects

Source: Own research

4. FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Future studies could focus on performance ratings to examine the impact of intense stress and obsession with Covid-19 on employees' productivity as well as their job satisfaction. Finally, future research could include hospitality workers working abroad and compare the results with the corresponding findings of this study.

5. CONCLUSION

The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic has caused great disruption in the tourism and hospitality sector, imposing harsh protection measures on workers. One of the main effects of the pandemic was an increase in stress due to uncertainty about the future of workers. It was a particularly stressful period for parent workers who had to manage family responsibilities.

Therefore, this study examined the factors that act as a moderator of anxiety over Covid-19 and cause stress on hospitality employees. The findings of the study revealed the potential of "job location selection" in reducing the stressor "obsession with COVID-19" by mitigating its effect on "Covid-19 anxiety". Finally, "number of children" was found to positively affect both obsession and anxiety.

References

- Al-Hanawi, M. K., Mwale, M. L., Alshareef, N., Qattan, A. M., Angawi, K., Alzubair, R., & Alsharqi, O. (2020). Psychological Distress Amongst Health Workers and the General Public During the COVID-19 Pandemic in Saudi Arabia. *Risk Management and Healthcare Policy, Volume 13*, 733-742. <https://doi.org/10.2147/rmhp.s264037>
- Calderwood, C., Breau, R., ten Brummelhuis, L. L., Mitropoulos, T., & Swanson, C. S. (2022). When daily challenges become too much during COVID-19: Implications of family and work demands for work-life balance among parents of children with special needs. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 27*(5), 516-527. <https://doi.org/10.1037/ocp0000333>
- Chinazzi, M., Davis, J. T., Ajelli, M., Gioannini, C., Litvinova, M., Merler, S., Pastore y Piontti, A., Mu, K., Rossi, L., Sun, K., Viboud, C., Xiong, X., Yu, H., Halloran, M. E., Longini, I. M., Jr., & Vespignani, A. (2020). The effect of travel restrictions on the spread of the 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. *Science, 368*(6489), 395-400. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aba9757>
- Demirović Bajrami, D., Terzić, A., Petrović, M. D., Radovanović, M., Tretiakova, T. N., & Hadoud, A. (2021). Will we have the same employees in hospitality after all? The impact of COVID-19 on employees' work attitudes and turnover intentions. *International Journal of Hospitality Management, 94*, 102754. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2020.102754>
- Duarte Alonso, A., Kok, S. K., Bressan, A., O'Shea, M., Sakellarios, N., Koresis, A., Buitrago Solis, M. A., & Santoni, L. J. (2020). COVID-19, aftermath, impacts, and hospitality firms: An international perspective. *International Journal of Hospitality Management, 91*, 102654. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2020.102654>
- Filimonau, V., Derqui, B., & Matute, J. (2020). The COVID-19 pandemic and organisational commitment of senior hotel managers. *International Journal of Hospitality Management, 91*, 102659. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2020.102659>
- Graham, M., Weale, V., Lambert, K. A., Kinsman, N., Stuckey, R., & Oakman, J. (2021). Working at home: The impacts of COVID 19 on health, family-work-life conflict, gender, and

- parental responsibilities. *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, 63(11), 938-943. <https://doi.org/10.1097/JOM.0000000000002337>
- Mao, Y., He, J., Morrison, A. M., & Andres Coca-Stefaniak, J. (2021). Effects of tourism CSR on employee psychological capital in the COVID-19 crisis: from the perspective of conservation of resources theory. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 24(19), 2716-2734. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2020.1770706>
- Marazziti, D., Pozza, A., Di Giuseppe, M., & Conversano, C. (2020). The psychosocial impact of COVID-19 pandemic in Italy: A lesson for mental health prevention in the first severely hit European country. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*, 12(5), 531-533. <https://doi.org/10.1037/tra0000687>
- Murray, E. J. (2020). Epidemiology's Time of Need: COVID-19 Calls for Epidemic-Related Economics. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 34(4), 105-120. <https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.34.4.105>
- Pierce, M., Hope, H., Ford, T., Hatch, S., Hotopf, M., John, A., Kontopantelis, E., Webb, R., Wessely, S., McManus, S., & Abel, K. M. (2020). Mental health before and during the COVID-19 pandemic: a longitudinal probability sample survey of the UK population. *The Lancet Psychiatry*, 7(10), 883-892. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s2215-0366\(20\)30308-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/s2215-0366(20)30308-4)
- Yan, J., Kim, S., Zhang, S. X., Foo, M.-D., Alvarez-Risco, A., Del-Aguila-Arcentales, S., & Yáñez, J. A. (2021). Hospitality workers' COVID-19 risk perception and depression: A contingent model based on transactional theory of stress model. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 95, 102935. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2021.102935>
- Zhang, J., Lu, H., Zeng, H., Zhang, S., Du, Q., Jiang, T., & Du, B. (2020). The differential psychological distress of populations affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. *Brain, Behavior, and Immunity*, 87, 49-50. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bbi.2020.04.03>