

PANDEMIC-INDUCED CRISES IN TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY – AN INDIAN CONTEXT

Bindi VARGHESE 

CHRIST - Deemed to be University, School of Business and Management, Bengaluru, Karnataka, India, e-mail: bindi.varghese@christuniversity.in

Jitendra Mohan MISHRA ^{*} 

Indira Gandhi National Tribal University, Department of Tourism Management, Amarkantak, Madhya Pradesh, India, e-mail: jitenban@gmail.com

Smitha BABOO 

CHRIST - Deemed to be University, School of Business and Management, Bengaluru, Karnataka, India, e-mail: smitha.baboo@christuniversity.in

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Abstract: This paper aims to examine the pandemic-induced crises psychological and physical distress experienced by the employees during the Covid19 pandemic and the implications on job loss and job characteristics from all domains of the hospitality industry in India. The study is designed to explore the pandemic-induced tourism crisis along with emotional, mental, and physical effects. An in-depth qualitative exploration was used and a tool comprising of data sets include representatives from aviation, resorts and hotel segments, tour operators, and travel agents. The researchers used a semi-structured questionnaire that had two sections and explored industry concerns, HR strategies, and employee distress through a multi-stage process involving coding and content analysis. The study analyzed the pandemic-induced crises at the micro and macro levels and grouped them under three essential dimensions such as; organizational and industry concerns, organizational HR policies, and employees' psychological distress. The subthemes under these dimensions can contribute to scale validation. The subthemes grouped under the three major dimensions have come out as a theoretical model of how the pandemic has affected professionals at these three levels. The findings as items can be validated through descriptive research in quantitative terms forming the future scope. The study analyzed the perceptions of professionals in the tourism and hospitality business amid the pandemic and concludes that a proactive HR policy can minimize employees' psychological distress.

Key words: Psychological distress, job loss, job insecurity, covid-19, HR Strategies

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INTRODUCTION

Job loss and job security are the key elements that affect the psychological and physical function of a person. The Covid -19 outbreak has generated a crisis of epic proportions which has affected almost all the industries. Psychological distress has been identified as an important trigger in the mental health and emotional distress among the employees of hospitality businesses (Drapeau et al., 2012; Mirowsky and Ross, 2003; Payton, 2009). Inadequate insurance and compensation also lead to psychological distress (Tam et al., 2004).

The global implication of COVID-19 on the tourism industry is destructive (Ghosh, 2020). Due to the sudden spike of COVID-19, international travel restrictions started to widen geographically. With this, people started to cancel and drop their travel plans considering the high level of uncertainty in both safety and restrictions (Donthu and Gustafsson, 2020). Tourism was the first to be affected and the last to recover among the industries. Furthermore, the imposition of lockdown measures to stop the spread of the deadly virus, made the situation worse (Chaudhary, 2020). The global economy plunged into a recession from early 2020 until the end of 2021, dampening the confidence of tourists.

With zero growth expectations, the economy of Asia-Pacific reached a new low in the past sixty years (Ugur and Akbiyik, 2020). The economy of the top ten countries with high tourism receipts has declined by 6.8 percent. Business in the tourism sector has been drastically reduced, with all jobs in the tourism sector being impacted badly (Hoque, et.al. 2020). Millions of employees with a stable revenue pre-covid are at risk of going into poverty (Kaushal and Srivastava, 2021). The tourism sector has the most informal way of working (Sharma and Nicolau, 2020), more than three out of four workers in the tourism sector are found to be working in the informal category (Niewiadomski, 2020). Survival strategies are being implemented by most of the companies that led to layoffs and reduction in salary (Solanki, 2020). The psychological implications due to unemployment, especially at the time of a crisis like COVID-19, can include increased stress levels, exhaustion, anxiety, depression, and suicidal thoughts (Lord, 2020). Unemployment may cause a rise in mortality because of ensuing health problems that stand as the biggest impact (Carroll, 2007).

The COVID-19 pandemic caused the global crisis and had imposed larger emotional and psychological distress. The crisis and vulnerability of jobs in tourism and aviation demand a much more strategic outlook on its psychological impacts and depression (Bubonya et al., 2017). Primarily hospitality sector employees face panic and anxiety, due to global

* Corresponding author

uncertainties (Price et al., 1998). Global health worries and quarantine process, overburdened with financial pressures, created mental blocks. Folks from different walks of life; were facing psychological issues in the testing times (Abal et al., 2018). The restrictions imposed in the global crisis situations impacted the economy across the globe (Blustein et al., 2020). Communities that were more volatile were impacted the most (Joyce and Xu, 2020).

Study Settings

Earlier studies while narrating the impact of the pandemic on the tourism and hospitality sector, have failed to address the employee's distress as a product of sectoral and organizational issues. This study primarily aimed at the psychological and physical impact of job loss on an employee in India. The vulnerability in the work and considering the worst affected industry, the hospitality industry members are emotionally, mentally, and physically impacted. The data sets include representatives from aviation, resorts and hotels, tour operators, and travel agents from India. This investigation triggers extreme vulnerability witnessed among the tourism and hospitality business from an Indian perspective (Kulakhmetova et al., 2022). The study revealed the major socio-psychological challenges at multiple levels navigating newer dimensions to handle the tourism business. Human resource management operations are a crucial part of the entire organization, especially during the current situation of the pandemic (Prayitno et al., 2022). It is significant that recognizing and executing proper HR policies and smart approaches to remote working have become the biggest and most important challenge. Pandemic has revised and initialized various new practices and is seeking new models to break the glass of ideas for survival (Dwomoh et al., 2020). Forward-looking leadership is very significant to concentrate more on mutual wellbeing. It will develop a scenario where employees and consumers will become more helpful and productive (Caliguri et al., 2020). The companies are changing the HR policies by the way of flexible work plans, protecting their employees with healthcare facilities, and improvising the local management like temporary closure, allowing work from home, and providing safety equipment, the culture of open communication at all levels, and, cross-cultural training (Joseph et al., 2021). Seasonality and vulnerability are the fundamental behavior of the tourism industry affecting every aspect of the contemporary hospitality industry (Donthu and Gustafsson, 2020).

METHODOLOGY

Research Setting

An in-depth qualitative method was implied to explore the experiences of the tourism and hospitality personnel who have been severely affected due to the Pandemic. The qualitative method examined employees' experiences and measured the perspectives. To achieve the purpose of the study, telephonic interviews were conducted with the managers, operational, sales, and contracting head, customer service officer of the hospitality and the aviation sectors from India. This study considered a purposive sample wherein a group of people was specifically sampled (Creswell, 2007).

The researchers assessed the diverse group of officers across the country. To restrict generalizations, participants were deliberately interviewed based on the profile of the work (Brewis, 2014; Robinson, 2014). Literature substantiated (Okumus, 2004; Olsen, 2004; Rumelt, 2012) and themes were developed. A semi-structured questionnaire with two sections was developed to measure the objectives of the study. The primary segment consists of ten questions measuring the experiences of psychological distress, challenges, and concerns, the commitment of the organization, support systems, HR strategies and policies, financial stability, and the traumatic experience of the employees due to the Covid 19 pandemic. The second segment of the schedule reported the demographic characteristics of tourism and hospitality personnel.

Sample and Data Collection

Purposive sampling was adopted to reach out to the respondents from tourism and hospitality. The purposive sampling technique was used considering the 'a priori' (Robinson, 2014). The qualitative approach used indicated statistical assessment on the scale. The salient characteristics of a qualitative method implied precision and rigor. Firstly, participants were from the tourism and hospitality segment. Secondly, the participants narrated perceptions and experiences (Bernard, 2002). Besides, the sample was drawn considering their demographics and backgrounds.

To connect with the participants, the snowball sampling method was applied. To complete the scientific procedure, the duration was three months from June 2020 to August 2020. The respondents involved in the study include representatives, who are occupied in a strategic role in the business such as; group sales heads of aviation, resorts and hotels, travel agency & tour operation businesses. Overall, 24 personnel from the tourism, hospitality, and aviation sectors were covered as the sample (Table 1). At this number, the data saturation was noticed, and further, no add-on information was observed in the dataset (Fusch and Ness, 2015).

Data Analysis

Each author primarily examined and administered the interview questions and developed specific categories based on the existing studies (Flint et al., 2013). 'Member checking' was applied first for the accuracy of transcripts and for data validation (Birt et al., 2016). The authors consented by cross-examining the coded themes; whenever there was a disagreement. For the study, a blended approach was used, which is theoretically driven and has inductively oriented the data analysis. The data was then manually analyzed as the authors used their expertise and experience in the data assessment process for an interpretative approach. The data analysis process implied a 'five-phase model' (Watkins, 2017).

Primarily, a data table was created, and the authors individually reviewed the data and noted the experiences of different participants due to the pandemic. Once the initial review was completed, overall research questions have been formed:

- A. What are the different experiences faced as an employee amid Covid 19?
- B. What are the concerns and challenges associated with job loss/job insecurity?
- C. What are the strategies adopted to overcome psychological distress and other related concerns?

The Authors cross-examined the tables and had consented in the making of a consolidated table. In the next stage, the consolidated table indicated open codes. In order to reach the abstract realm of inquiry; authors connected the open codes and cross-connected with the theoretical concepts. In the last phase after contemplating on the individual findings, the conceptual frame that emerged from the data set led to different themes. In the following section, the findings are presented with the supporting evidence of the participants.

Table 1. Profile of participants

Code	Age / Gender	State Sector	Position in the Organization	Years of experience
Participant 1	41 / M	Kerala	Hospitality, Sales Head	18
Participant 2	42 / F	Madhya Pradesh	Aviation, Operations Executive	20
Participant 3	40 / M	Karnataka	Hospitality-Holidays, GM	18
Participant 4	41 / F	Tamil Nadu	Senior Manager, Inbound	17
Participant 5	42 / M	Kerala	Head of Contracting, DMC	18
Participant 6	38 / F	Maharashtra	Team Leader – Holidays	15
Participant 7	26 / F	Maharashtra	Customer Service Officer – Aviation	2
Participant 8	25 / M	Kerala	CRE, Leisure Travel Outbound	3
Participant 9	44 / M	Maharashtra	Deputy GM, Aviation	15
Participant 10	40 / F	Karnataka	Team Leader – Holidays	15
Participant 11	36 / M	Gujarat	Manager – Holidays Inbound	11
Participant 12	33 / M	Rajasthan	Manager – Contracting Leisure	10
Participant 13	25 / F	Delhi	Customer Service Manager – Hotel	3
Participant 14	28 / M	Delhi	Front Office Executive	6
Participant 15	39 / M	Karnataka	Associate Vice President, MICE	17
Participant 16	26 / M	Tamil Nadu	Assistant Manager, Holidays	6
Participant 17	27 / F	Karnataka	Assistant Manager, Inbound	6
Participant 18	33 / M	Karnataka	Manager, Leisure Travel	12
Participant 19	47 / M	Karnataka	Managing Director	26
Participant 20	24 / M	Madhya Pradesh	Assistant Manager, Holidays	3
Participant 21	26 / M	Tamil Nadu	Assistant Manager, Outbound	6
Participant 22	42 / M	Delhi	Managing Director	19
Participant 23	37 / M	West Bengal	Deputy Manager, Holidays	15
Participant 24	33 / F	Kerala	Hotel Sales	11

Findings and Discussion

The data revealed that the travel professionals faced enormous pressure due to the pandemic and the tourism business taking a toll with economic downfall. Further, the experience of the stakeholders was governed by the feeling of temporariness and the hope that situations will get back to normalcy. The in-depth interviews indicated some of the emerging patterns as discussed below.

I. Key Organizational and Industry Concerns

All participants expressed personal and fond memories of their work experience and a pandemic shift scenario and dissonance with the organizational decisions affecting their carrier and personal life. Further, the service industry professionals were sharing their hope of travel business getting back in shape in the post-Covid scenario.

“Most of us are aware that this is the worst thing that happened to the humanity and tourism is the first affected and last to be recovered”- (Participant 1)

The employees categorized themselves as the worst affected group and expressed a state of helplessness at this juncture. Many of them have shared their thoughts on the present and about the relieved employees and were concerned about the tourism industry as a whole.

“In the long run, I don’t see the travel industry picking up in the next 2 years. My friends in the industry are all suffering. Many lost their jobs and some have pay cuts. Condition is so bad in travel fraternity” – (Participant 10)

Hospitality sector personnel shared the current situation as 75% of the workers were asked to leave the position and the other workers were left with a 50% salary cut. They also feared that this 50% salary is what they may get for three more months and after which it would be uncertain and expected a letter of termination at any point of time asking them to leave.

“The salary for the March month is paid. The company will be in a position to pay us the 50% salary for around 3 more months. After which I don’t think that there will be any money left in the bank. It becomes extremely difficult for the company to look after even the employees on the payroll” – (Participant 15)

In the airline sector too, the majority of the people were asked to leave the organization. The frontline staff in aviation experienced a lot of stress as they were directly exposed to the passengers, and considered a threat to life itself. In the aviation sector, the layoff of staff usually happened at a low level and is also based on performance. However, this pandemic brought higher-level employees too into the risk of losing jobs.

“Looking at the threat, pandemic itself is a great threat for our life as an employee's life and the passengers also because we don't know from where we are affected” (Participant -7)

“Initially they started with lower levels. One of the reasons why they lay off is they will look into the performance. So, if they are taking their jobs casually not meeting the responsibility of a particular post then they would target them. They have moved to entry-level and senior-level employees. They have given targets to remove people” (Participant -13).

Table 2. Number of Times the Responses Occurred from the Participants

Emergent Sub Themes Broad Queries	Critical Concerns – A	Key Challenges – B	Industry Learning – C	Employee Distress – D	Organization s' Impact – E	Crisis Management – F	Workforce Continuation – G	Way Ahead for Future Employees – H
Global Scenario (I)	23	21	16	24	24	24	18	09
Helplessness (I)	21	24	-	24	12	19	-	-
Uncertainty (I)	24	-	19	24	18	19	24	19
Troublesome Thoughts (II)	23	21	06	24	16	21	24	21
Future Consequences (I)	21	12	09	23	18	12	12	18
Ethical Practices (II)	19	10	04	-	15	14	17	08
Ethical Flaws (II)	21	14	08	13	18	11	05	-
Retention (II)	23	18	05	17	09	12	06	05
Personal (II)	19	23	10	14	17	11	09	11
Commitments (III)	21	08	11	21	12	23	17	12
Proactive Thoughts (III)	05	07	11	17	09	17	08	10
Alternatives (III)	11	09	-	06	-	-	08	08

Broad Queries – Questions Posed to the Participants

A – What were the critical concerns that you dealt with when you lost your job amid the global pandemic?

B – What were the key challenges you encountered with the industry during the crisis?

C – What are the HR policies and commitment of your organization for the employees?

D – Do you see the workforce in psychological & physical distress amid the current global pandemic?

E – What are the key challenges for the industry due to this crisis?

F – What are the personal challenges faced during the crisis? How did you strategize to overcome it?

G – Do you see the workforce becoming redundant if the pandemic effects continue for long? What alternatives do you have with your organization's HR policy?

H – What are the expected measures taken by your organization to cope with the pandemic?

Note: I= Key Organizational and Industry Concerns; II= Human Resource Management; III= Psychological Distress

The literature on the Covid-19 pandemic suggests that pandemic is a natural phenomenon, (Zenker and Kock, 2020), however, the issue of complexity in tourism regarding the effects of the pandemic is still not well-established (Pennington-Gray, 2018). Literature such as; chaos theory and system theory (Faulkner et al., 2007) are distinctive narratives on the effect of the pandemic. System theory focuses on the economic, political, and societal systems as non-linear, spontaneous, and highly interrelated structures. The dynamics of the tourism system are inevitably random or disordered (Speakman and Sharpley, 2012). The tourism industry for instance often suffers from innovative capabilities for crises recovery (Hjalager, 2002). The small-time tour operators and hotels considered the backbone of the industry, are volatile (Sundbo et al., 2007). During the Covid -19 pandemic, both macro level and micro level collaborations are required, and collaborative action is of strong importance in the hospitality business during and post-Covid 19 (Johannisson and Olaison 2007). Many of the participants expressed that the tourism industry is affected first and last to recover.

“Tourism industry is first to hit and last to recover. Be it other industries like retail, IT, manufacturing, etc. even if they come back in 6 months, tourism will take 1-1.5 years is what I understand as of now” (Participant-5).

At this time the role of the company is very important. The employee is not looking for salary as the only thing from the Job, Yes salary is important but the eventual communication, that if the company tells the employees what is happening and the decisions are taken by the company it will help people to get clarity (Participant-20).

Looking into the pandemic-hit industry many of the business plans were abandoned because of the less revenue. The employees were skeptical about the revival, “even though we expect that things may change in the new season, it is just a hope. We have to wait for the time to come to see the reality”.

“We had a lot of plans and everything stopped because of no revenue. Maybe when the upcoming holiday season starts there will be passenger movement but still it is just a hope” (Participant -4).

Many were trying to move to academics but competition is higher in the academic sector also. People who have moved to academics also are not sure whether they will stick to this profession or not or whether to return back to the industry itself after the pandemic. There is a lot of competition during the pandemic (Participant-19).

There were concerns about the changing scenario as the b2b and b2c establishments from different countries and their business was affected. Corporates were contemplating new strategies as the market would be tougher and everything would start from scratch. The companies would then require sound investment for marketing to communicate about the changes to the customer.

“My main market is the Italian market. Now we know that even if we go and meet we know that 50% of their business is cut down. So they have to do B2C and then only we will get the business. So our marketing part is going to

be tough. We have to start from scratch. To bring in B2C we have to invest in money for marketing during this tough time but fear of COVID has to go” (Participant - 13).

Inbound tourism too was affected badly and the senior citizens would be afraid of traveling due to the pandemic. The other area of concern was domestic tourism and more specifically religious tourism. The incident that fourteen of the pilgrims at Tirupati were reported Covid positive, had affected the senior citizen's travel. The honeymooners too avoided travel since their parents would suggest them otherwise. As a whole, the tourism industry experienced a disastrous situation.

“The major set of domestic tourism is religious tourism. Now 14 people from Tirupati got affected and now nobody will go there. The same scenario will come to every place. Honeymoon travel mostly parents make decisions so they will not let the couple travel during this time. So it is difficult to develop again in the tourism industry” (Participant – 9).

Most of the people to lose jobs, were operational staff, airport staff, safari drivers, and excursion teams in the airline's sector. The organizations adopted the strategy of paying only 10% of the salary which was insufficient for someone who lived with families in the metropolitan cities. The way out from the loss for the company was to cut down the salary or layoffs. A ‘hope’ was the only yardstick for the ones who were psychologically down in this pandemic. The scenario also changed gradually till the end of 2021.

“So the management has categorically told us that we can only give you 10% of what we have said in the agreement because no passenger or customer is coming to the hotel. The psychology behind this is that in big cities like Delhi and Bombay people coming in the junior grade with less salary have to survive now they cannot have luxury life because they have their family commitments and all. These cities are expensive. If somebody is getting 45000 salaries in such big cities in which half of the salary is going for rent then remaining will go in other things. But when a company can give only 10% of the salary it is very difficult for staff to survive” (Participant-14).

II. Organisational HR Policies

Tourism is a people’s business. The success of the tourism business depends mostly on quality and experienced staff. Sound HR policies aimed at retention of experienced staff through the troubled times of pandemic would not only help the organization when the industry returns to business but also build confidence amongst clients as a trusted brand in the market. Most of the participants during the study were observed to have felt that the organization expressed commitment towards employees’ prospects and took appropriate measures for their survival. The organizations started adopting measures to take care of the employees by starting COVID centers, by ensuring that they were safe and protected. Conversely, to the above statement participant, 3 stated the flaws in the organization and shared the thoughts on the better practices of the organization.

“Management should have handled it in a better manner. In my scenario, I was informed that it was my last day working on the last day and I realized that my income stopped from that moment onwards. So I was not prepared, looking for other ventures or medical coverage. One fine day everything is stopped for you, which could have been better handled by HR or the organization” (Participant – 11).

“Organization could have given clarity about its operational intentions; as the company at the beginning of pandemic was very unclear and increased individual pressure ...as I was not sure if I had the job or are they going to abruptly stop my service... I felt it is important to give clarity to the employees as utmost priority. This helps to be prepared at the individual level” (Participant – 19).

Some of the participants stated that the decisions about the layoff were taken lightly by the organization. The decisions were mostly for the survival of the business than the employees. The organization won’t function without experienced employees considered to be the drivers in the business. The organization paid 50% salary for March and April 2020 and from June the decisions were made to have layoffs and with long leave options. These decisions favored those, who could survive without or with a 50% percent salary. There were decisions to lay off those employees first who were new and worked for less than 6 months in the organization, as for them, it could be easy to find a job.

“Lay off was based on their survival and not the targets achieved. Even if we protect people with a 50 % salary, maybe one day we will have to lay off. At the same time, people who joined 6 months back know that they can get jobs in other industries so they were asked to go first. We never wanted to send anyone outside but because of scenario we were forced to send” (Participant – 3).

Many of the participants were happy with the HR policies of their respective organizations for taking the appropriate decisions and expressing collegiality, as they were genuinely concerned about their organization's survival in the worst hit of the pandemic.

III. Employee’s Psychological Distress

Holistic perception of the global scenario was something very prominently expressed by the participants as the entire world witnessed the pandemic. Workers across the world experienced a salary cut or loss of job which caused huge stress on their pockets and family commitments (Fatoki, 2022).

“This is something which is a global pandemic. Everyone is impacted, not only the tourism industry, everyone's salary is impacted and their morale is low. What I suggest is there are lots of people who lost their jobs or got salary cuts. This has got huge pressure on them to take care of expenses, EMI, etc. People have been working with us for 4-5 years and these people have been working and having fun with us. This is a very difficult task to explain about why they are removed that is another level of stress” (Participant – 12).

“I tried maximum not to quit the Job and somehow survived the year 2020, was analyzing about the job crisis and I made up my mind that this pandemic will make the majority of the people jobless and the travel agencies have to face lots of job crisis” (Participant – 17).

Overall, the concerns, perceptions, and experiences of the employees due to the pandemic were alarming and the levels of stress and uncertain situations, emerged in the themes as outlined in the findings.

Table 3. The Coding Process

Exemplary Quotation	Code	Sub-Theme
“The worst thing happened to the humanity and tourism industry. Industry that is the first affected and last to be recovered” (Participant -1)	Key Organizational and Industry Concerns	Global Scenario
When the manager asked to leave the job it was difficult for me because I worked there for 9 years and all of a sudden they asked me to leave”.. (Participant -8)	Key Organizational and Industry Concerns	Helplessness
“..Not only me, even when I spoke to many of my friends in the tourism industry most of them have the same feeling, in the beginning, we thought it is for 3-4 months, but now the case is increasing, and we don't know when it is going to end and subside”..(Participant -3)	Key Organizational and Industry Concerns	Uncertainty
“The question is when I can start because in the tourism industry Apprehensive things will not be normal anytime soon. Maybe it will take another 1.5 year or 2 years it will take”(Participant -4)	Human Resource Management	Troublesome Thoughts
“..Also when you look for opportunities at this time there are not many openings because every industry is affected. Every industry is cutting down and my experience is fully in tourism Hmm”(Participant- 13)	Key Organizational and Industry Concerns	Future Consequences
“Almost 80% are local brands in Kerala which are locally grown and local entrepreneurs, unlike Taj and Hyatt. With 100% confidence I can say that 95% of them have said goodbye to all their employees” (Participant-14)	Human Resource Management	Personal
“There was so much of pressure built up on employees by the Organization to get sales, knowing the fact that the whole industry was shut. We were giving 100% efforts & dedication but there was no outcome.” (Participant-18)	Key Organizational and Industry Concerns	Helplessness
“We depleted personal assets to retain the employees. We part paid them for about 6-8 months & eventually had to let go few of them when there was no sign of revival in the near future (Participant-19)	Human Resource Management	Ethical Practices
“Company has a very decent HR structure. It's good enough HR Policies of the Organization and our HR is decent. They always try to understand the employees” (Participant-6)	Human Resource Management	Ethical Practices
“To help & sustain the employees we reimbursed the grocery bills of the teammates to support livelihood as weren't in a position to pay them salaries either full or part”(Participant – 22)	Human Resource Management	Ethical Practices
“..In my scenario, I was informed that it is my last working the last day and I realized that my income stopped from that moment onwards”(Participant – 12)	Human Resource Management	Ethical Flaws
“By June it's decided to lay off and long leave. The rest goes on with 50% salary. Our Decision was based on who are the people able to survive without salary or a 50% salary. I decided to leave because my husband is a government employee so I can sustain (Participant -5)	Human Resource Management	Sustenance
“As a sole bread earner I came from a rural environment to support my family financially. The company didn't even think once how these people will survive or manage commitments. Initially we worked without pay & there was no update on the job.” (Participant -20)	Human Resource Management	Ethical Flaws
“There is stress. People who worked for 18 years will have a lot of liabilities, like loan, credit card payments, school fees, and other repayments”(Participant -9)	Psychological Distress	Commitments
“It is a very tough time and which has to be handled efficiently” (Participant – 11)	Psychological Distress	Proactive Thoughts
“People who have asked to leave have started a partnership organization with 10 other employees who were laid off” (Participant – 7)	Psychological Distress	Alternatives
“Most colleagues who worked together have changed the stream but I want to continue in the same industry. I am positive that as soon as the industry revives there will be plenty of job openings” (Participant – 24)	Key Organizational and Industry Concerns	Future Consequences
“Initially we were asked to work from home without pay but after few months the company just decided to shut operations without any compensation” (Participant – 23)	Psychological Distress	Ethical Flaws
“As soon as the lockdown was declared the management announced about their temporary closure till Sep 2020. Thereafter there was no communication from them to restart the business.” (Participant – 21)	Psychological Distress	Ethical Flaws
“As my family wasn't dependent on me financially, I wasn't much affected but for few colleagues who were with commitments & single earning member were in high distress as the future of the industry was uncertain” (Participant – 16)	Psychological Distress	Helplessness
“Years of serving & contribution didn't matter to the organization. The management was selfish to look after their needs against their employees” (Participant – 17)	Human Resource Management	Ethical Flaws

Implications

The contribution of this research to the existing theories; is in the pattern of various sub-themes that can be examined as significant factors illustrating the concerns of pandemic hit in the organization and factors of employee distress and constraints. From the 12 sub-themes (Table 2) derived the participants' key responses on three major themes labeled as; key organizational and industry concerns; organizational HR policies, and employees' psychological distress.

The findings of the research would contribute to establishing the relationship between macro issues concerning the industry with organizational and individual distress. The success of the tourism business depends mostly on quality and experienced staff. Sound HR policies aimed at retention of experienced staff through the troubled times of pandemic would not only help the organization when the industry returns to business but also build confidence amongst clients as a trusted brand in the market.

Limitations and Future Research

The study was conducted during the peak days of the pandemic and the opinions of the respondents in the present study reflect the contemporary behavior. The responses thus may vary, as restrictions on mobility, are eased and travel resumed thereafter. However, the variables summarized from the study can help future researchers to verify them through quantitative research (Joseph et al., 2020). The industry is expected to bounce back in summer 2022, with new entrepreneurship replacing debt-burdened medium and small-sized companies. The present study would help in the HR planning and strategies of such new ventures in attracting and retaining experienced staff.



Figure 1. Conceptual Framework-on Post Crisis Organizational Climate (source: developed by the authors, 2021)

CONCLUSION

In the first quarter of 2022, it is unclear if the COVID-2019 is here to stay. The situation is dynamic and any future projection is short-lived in the pandemic scenario (Varghese et al., 2022). Any business strategy to recover from the slumber has to be a collective behavior of the industry through coordinated action taken at macro and micro levels. Here the findings of the present study can contribute, to a conceptual model having sub-themes arranged under industry concerns, organizational HR policies, and employees' distress. Organizational and industry concerns backed by appropriate business strategies have utmost importance for smooth functioning in tourism (Speakman and Sharpley, 2012).

Organizational strategies need to evolve with new dimensions for HR policies to bring in flexible work plans, and workforce management plans. The proactive HR strategies amidst the irrepressible effects of the pandemic would bring in newer dimensions for new norms in the work order as a future direction of research.

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