

Research article

Hospitality on the edge: Effects of occupational stress on the psychological wellbeing of hotel employees in Ghana

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ABSTRACT

Based on the Effort-Reward Imbalance theory, this study examines the influence of occupational stress on the psychological wellbeing of hotel employees in Ghana using survey data collected from 239 hotel employees. The findings reveal that occupational stress leads to deterioration in the psychological wellbeing of the hotel employees. Further, employees who experienced difficult physical work environment, organisational injustice, high job demand, and lack of reward are more likely to have poor psychological wellbeing than those who did not experience any of these types of occupational stress. The theoretical and practical implications of these findings are discussed.

KEYWORDS

diversity; employee recognition; inclusion; mental health; organisational injustice

Introduction

Occupational stress, defined as the adverse reactions arising from excessive pressures or demands placed on workers that exceed their coping capabilities and resources, represents the second most commonly reported work-related health problem globally, following only musculoskeletal disorders (Bekele et al., 2023; Ma et al., 2021; Salama et al., 2022). Within the hotel industry, work-related stress manifests at concerning prevalence rates, with studies documenting stress levels among hotel employees as high as 43.3 percent in some contexts (Bekele et al., 2023). The hotel work environment encompasses multiple psychosocial stressors including demanding workloads, unpredictable shift patterns, emotional labour inherent in guest interactions, low job control, role ambiguity, and inadequate managerial support (Ma et al., 2021; Salama et al., 2022). These stressors collectively create conditions that compromise the psychological wellbeing of hotel employees, characterized by diminished capacity for autonomy, environmental mastery, positive social relationships, and personal growth-dimensions essential to psychological health (Autthayotha et al., 2025). Psychological wellbeing encompasses a multidimensional construct comprising self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth (Adam et al., 2023). When occupational stress impedes these dimensions, hotel employees experience cascading negative outcomes including emotional exhaustion, burnout syndrome, depersonalization, and diminished personal accomplishment (Ayachit & Chitta, 2022; Salama et al., 2022). Recent international research reveals that burnout affects hospitality employees at alarming rates, with 76 percent of managers and 69 percent of shift workers reporting significant burnout symptoms, while 84 percent of hospitality employees globally report job-related stress directly impacting their wellbeing (Jung et al., 2023; Wallace & Coughlan, 2023). Furthermore, hotel employees demonstrate elevated rates of mental health challenges, with approximately one in five reporting severe work-related mental health issues and nearly one quarter requiring psychological support or medication (Baquero et al., 2025; Jung et al., 2023).

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HOW TO CITE: Adam, I., Bukari, S. & Amuquandoh, F.E. (2026). Hospitality on the edge: Effects of occupational stress on the psychological wellbeing of hotel employees in Ghana. African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure, 15(1), 68-78. <https://doi.org/10.46222/ajhtl.19770720.718>

ISSN: 2223-814X (Online) | © 2026 AJHTL



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The relationship between occupational stress and psychological wellbeing operates through both direct and indirect pathways. High occupational stress directly undermines psychological wellbeing by overwhelming coping resources and creating chronic physiological arousal (Appietu et al., 2025; Mensah et al., 2023a). Simultaneously, unmanaged occupational stress escalates into burnout, which mediates a cascade of psychological disturbances including anxiety, depression, and deepened psychological distress. Work-family conflict, inadequate work-life balance, and social fatigue from emotional labour further exacerbate this deterioration (Mensah et al., 2023b). Despite the significant prevalence of occupational stress in the hotel sector, comprehensive research examining of the relationship between occupational stress and psychological wellbeing amongst hotel employees remains limited. Studies on occupational stress in the hotel industry (Huang et al., 2018; Hwang et al., 2014; Yousaf et al., 2020) have focused on the relationship between occupational stress and work outcomes such as job satisfaction, job performance, and turnover intention with little emphasis on examining the influence of occupational stress on psychological wellbeing. Nonetheless, occupational stress does not only affect work outcomes but also directly affect the wellbeing of the employees, particularly psychological wellbeing. Even so, the relationship between occupational stress and psychological wellbeing of hotel employee remains largely unexplored. The overly researched focus of occupational stress and work outcomes amongst hotel employees limits the understanding of how occupational stress affects the psychological wellbeing of hotel employees. Hence, the objective of this study is to examine the influence of occupational stress on the psychological wellbeing of hotel employees in Ghana.

This study stands to make valuable contribution to the literature and practice. Regarding its contribution to literature, previous studies have mostly focused on occupational stress and work outcomes amongst hotel employees while neglecting the effect of occupational stress on psychological wellbeing. Therefore, the findings of this study provide valuable insights by bridging this knowledge gap and thus enriching the literature on occupational stress and employees' psychological wellbeing in the hotel industry. Also, this study is focused on Africa, specifically Ghana, one of the under-researched regions in the world with regard to occupational stress and psychological wellbeing in the hotel industry (Adu-Ampong & Mensah, 2021). Even so, African and Ghana have unique socio-cultural context that directly and indirectly impacts hotel operations and associated occupational stress and its effects on the psychological wellbeing of employees. In terms of practice, the findings of this study will provide insights that will guide the design and implementation of workplace policies, programmes and initiatives to deal with occupational stress and the psychological wellbeing of employees in the hotel industry. The findings will guide the development of industry specific inclusive practices as well as psychological support mechanisms in the hotel industry.

Literature review

Occupational stress

Occupational stress has emerged as one of the most pressing challenges confronting the hotel industry, with profound implications for employee well-being, organizational performance, and the future viability of the sector (Kaushal & Srivastava, 2021; Nimri et al., 2021). Unlike many professions where stress may be episodic or context-dependent, hotel work exposes employees to a relentless constellation of psychosocial demands that permeate nearly every aspect of their employment experience (Li et al., 2021; Rosemberg et al., 2025). The lived reality of these workers, from the front-desk clerk facing customer hostility to the housekeeping attendant navigating physical demands and chemical exposures, reflects a workplace environment fundamentally shaped by effort-reward imbalance, chronic role conflict, and systemic undervaluation (Al-Romeedy & Khairy, 2024; Chela-Alvarez, Bulilete et al., 2021; Krause et al., 2010). The magnitude of the occupational stress crisis in hotel settings is staggering and increasingly difficult to ignore. Research consistently demonstrates that between 84% and 93% of hospitality workers report elevated stress levels directly attributable to their employment (Bekele et al., 2023; Hunger & Seibt, 2022; Saah et al., 2021). In Ghana, specific studies have documented stress prevalence rates of 85.2% among hotel employees, while investigations in India reported rates as high as 93.33%, underscoring the global nature of this phenomenon (Bekele et al., 2023; Mensah, 2022).

Hotel employees navigate an exceptionally complex constellation of stressors that extend well beyond the conventional understanding of workplace pressure (Baquero et al., 2025; Ntanjana, Maleka, Tshipala, & Du Plessis, 2018). Frontline staff in particular face competing and contradictory demands from multiple stakeholders, creating what researchers describe as a 'mass of conflicting expectations and services' (Bansal et al., 2025; Gao et al., 2025; Krause et al., 2010; Wong et al., 2025). Room attendants encounter chemical exposures, poor ergonomic conditions, workplace discrimination, sexual harassment, low wages, job insecurity, and minimal autonomy. These represent a toxic combination that leaves them particularly susceptible to psychological distress and burnout (Feaster et al., 2019; Rosemberg et al., 2025). Structural

factors compound these interpersonal stressors. Hotel work is characterized by irregular schedules, shift work, seasonal fluctuations, and unpredictable workload spikes that prevent employees from establishing stable routines or planning their personal lives with certainty (Rosemberg et al., 2025). Wages remain persistently low across most hotel positions, creating financial precarity that itself becomes a source of chronic stress; many workers cannot meet basic living expenses, let alone build savings or plan for the future (Mohammad, 2023; O'neill & Davis, 2011). The consequences of sustained occupational stress in hotels manifest across the full spectrum of human health, encompassing immediate physical symptoms, emerging psychological conditions, and long-term chronic disease (El-Said et al., 2024; Salama et al., 2022). Hotel employees experiencing high stress report frequent headaches, backaches, gastrointestinal distress, and generalized weakness (Bekele et al., 2023; Krause et al., 2010). Sleep disturbances and insomnia represent particularly pervasive complaints, as the psychological arousal associated with chronic workplace stress interferes with the restorative sleep necessary for physical and mental recovery (Giousmpasoglou, 2024; Rosemberg et al., 2025; Xiang et al., 2022).

Psychological wellbeing

Psychological well-being refers to a complex state of existence that encompasses a multitude of emotional, mental, and social aspects of overall health and life experience (El-Sherbeeny et al., 2024; Khalid et al., 2024; Weerakit et al., 2025; Yoo, 2023). It represents how individuals perceive their lives in a holistic and multifaceted manner and includes several critical facets such as life satisfaction, the presence of positive moods, and importantly, the absence of negative emotions that can profoundly impact one's quality of life (Adam et al., 2023; Ryff & Keyes, 1995; Weerakit et al., 2025). In the context of the workplace, particularly within the high-pressure environment of the hotel industry, psychological well-being is absolutely crucial for a variety of reasons. This is due to the sector's inherently demanding nature, which frequently leads to increased stress levels and significant burnout among employees who work tirelessly to meet the high expectations of guests and management alike (Abdou, 2025; Kosnin et al., 2024). Coupled with long and demanding working hours that often extend beyond the normal expectations, as well as a fast-paced and frequently stressful environment, these conditions create a multifaceted landscape for employees (Rabiul et al., 2023). Such factors significantly impact employees' emotional and mental health, leading to a much greater risk of psychological distress (Kimbu et al., 2023). The hotel industry presents a wide array of unique and intricate challenges that can significantly and adversely affect the psychological well-being of its employees (Wong et al., 2025; Yu et al., 2020). The combination of long and gruelling working hours, coupled with high customer service demands and the pervasive nature of job insecurity, contributes to markedly increased levels of psychological distress among employees in this sector (Baquero, 2023). This distress not only impacts individual employees but can also lead to alarmingly high turnover rates, which poses a significant and pressing concern for hotel management teams (Mbane & Ezeuduji, 2016). Leadership and management styles play a crucial role in influencing psychological health, especially within the hotel sector, where interactions and service quality are paramount (Samat et al., 2024). The impact of different leadership approaches on employee well-being can vary significantly. However, it has been observed that supportive management practices, when coupled with strong interpersonal relationships among colleagues, are absolutely vital for cultivating a positive and constructive work environment (Singha, 2024).

Theoretical framework

The Effort-Reward Imbalance (ERI) model, developed by Johannes Siegrist, serves as a framework for analyzing the influence of occupational stress on psychological well-being of hotel employees. This model posits that stress arises from a mismatch between the efforts employees exert in their work and the rewards they receive in return (Siegrist, 1996, 2016). The ERI model identifies three essential components: effort, reward, and the imbalance that occurs when these two factors (effort and reward) are not aligned. Effort encompasses the physical, emotional, and cognitive demands placed on employees within the work environment (Siegrist, 2016). In the context of hotel employees, this can include long working hours, high workloads, emotional labour, and the need to manage customer expectations (Siegrist, 2017). For instance, hotel staff may face long shifts, high guest turnover, and multitasking, which can significantly increase their perceived effort. Rewards, on the other hand, can be classified into monetary and non-monetary categories. Monetary rewards include salaries and bonuses, while non-monetary rewards encompass recognition, career development, and job security (Siegrist, 2016, 2017). Additionally, recognition and support from management can significantly impact employees' perceptions of reward. If hotel employees do not feel valued or acknowledged for their work, they may experience a sense of imbalance that contributes to stress and decreased psychological wellbeing (Bakker et al., 2005). The core of the ERI model is the concept of imbalance, which occurs when the perceived effort exceeds the rewards received (Bakker et al., 2005). The Effort-Reward Imbalance model provides a robust framework for examining occupational stress and

psychological well-being among hotel employees in Ghana (Bakker et al., 2005; Porru et al., 2021). By assessing the balance between efforts and rewards, stakeholders can implement effective strategies to reduce stress levels and enhance employee wellbeing.

Methodology

Study setting

The study setting is Accra, the capital city of Ghana. Ghana is located in the tropics with warm tropical climate with sandy beaches and thus attractive to tourists from temperate regions, specifically Western Europe and North America (US and Canada). Ghana's tourism product offerings include eco-attractions such as the Kakum National Park, Mole National Park as well as heritage attractions based on the remnants of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade (Cape Coast and Elmina castles) and cultural attractions based on the rich ethnic diversity of the country. Accra as the capital city of Ghana serves important administrative, commercial and industrial functions. Accra hosts the only international airport in Ghana and therefore serves as the main gateway for most international tourists. Also, it is endowed with numerous national monuments and heritage sites including the Kwame Nkrumah Museum, the National Museum, Independence Arch, Black Star Square, and the Arts Centre amongst others. The vibrant night life in Accra especially in popular tourist district like Osu attracts tourists to the city. As a result, Accra has the highest number of hotels in all categories in Ghana.

Data collection

Data were collected from hotel employees in the Accra metropolis using questionnaires from 15th August 2024 to 17th October 2024. The Kobo Toolbox was used to administer the questionnaire. The Kobo Toolbox is a digital data collection software developed by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Harvard Humanitarian Initiative and the International Rescue Committee for humanitarian use. It can be deployed both online and offline and thus makes it suitable for settings with unreliable internet connectivity in many parts of Ghana including Accra. A list of registered and licensed hotels in the metropolis was obtained from the Ghana Tourism Authority (the body responsible for registering and licensing of hotels in Ghana). Afterward, all the general managers of 178 registered and licensed hotels were contacted and the study explained to them. Also, the consent of the hotel through the general managers was solicited. Consequently, 132 out of the 178 hotels that were contacted consented to allowing their employees to participate in the study. Based on the limited number of hotels that consented to participate in the study, all the 132 were considered for the study. The list of employees together with their contact details (telephone number and/or email) in each of the hotel was obtained. The contact details were given to the research team after permission and consent had been obtained from the employees by the general manager on behalf of the research team. However, each employee had the option of opting out in case he/she did not want to participate in the study or telephone/email given out. Through this process, the contact details of 1,238 employees were obtained from the 132 hotels. The research team reached out to the employees through WhatsApp messages and emails. The message introduced the research and asked for their consent to participate in the study. Verbal informed consent was obtained from each respondent who participated in the study. Consequently, 1,023 employees consented to participate in the study after this stage. Subsequently, the link to the questionnaire on Kobo Toolbox was sent to them through WhatsApp and email. The research team sent weekly reminders over WhatsApp and email to the employees to complete the questionnaire. Overall, 239 questionnaires were returned and deemed useful for analysis. The questionnaire was structured into three sections. The first section measured the occupational stress of the employees. Occupational stress was measured based on the Korean Occupational Stress (KOSS), an eight-dimensional validated measure of occupational stress (Chang et al., 2005). The eight dimensions of the KOSS include difficult physical environment (3 items), high job demand (8 items), insufficient job control (5 items), inadequate social support (4 items), job insecurity (6 items), organizational injustice (7 items), lack of reward (6 items), and discomfort in occupational climate (4 items). The items on occupational stress were measured on a five-point Likert Scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree (Table 1). The second section of the questionnaire measured the psychological wellbeing of the employees. Psychological wellbeing was measured based on items adapted from Kimbu et al. (2023). The psychological wellbeing items were measured with a dichotomous response namely 'Yes' for those who are experiencing any of the issues reflected in any of the statements and 'No' for those who do not experience any of those issues related to their psychological wellbeing (Table 2). The third and last section of the questionnaire captured the demographic and work characteristics of the employees.

Table 1: Occupational stress of the employees

| Occupational stress | % in agreement | Skewness | Kurtosis |
|--|----------------|----------|----------|
| <i>Difficult physical environment</i> | | | |
| My workplace is not clean and comfortable | 49.8 | 1.03 | 1.62 |
| I am exposed to dangerous work and possibility of high risk of accidents | 66.8 | 1.32 | 1.73 |
| I have to work for a long time in uncomfortable posture | 46.5 | 1.06 | 1.85 |
| <i>High job demand</i> | | | |
| Due to many things to do, i always feel time pressure | 70.9 | 1.07 | 1.83 |
| I am asked to do another work before finishing the work i am doing | 78.8 | 1.05 | 1.69 |
| My job has become increasingly overloading | 82.3 | 1.21 | 1.93 |
| I feel i am responsible for my co-workers and subordinates | 70.7 | 1.17 | 1.91 |
| My work requires a long-lasting concentration | 90.3 | 1.31 | 1.98 |
| I have to do various jobs simultaneously | 93.4 | 1.16 | 2.05 |
| <i>Insufficient Self Control</i> | | | |
| My work requires creativity that i sometimes lack | 76.8 | 1.02 | 0.33 |
| Work-related things (i.e., work schedule, workload, meeting times, etc.) tend to change without notice | 78.2 | 1.08 | 0.79 |
| My work requires a high level of skill or knowledge | 60.7 | 1.01 | 0.38 |
| I can control my work pace and schedule | 77.3 | 1.11 | 0.83 |
| <i>Inadequate social support</i> | | | |
| My supervisor is not helpful in getting the job done | 55.3 | 1.01 | 0.64 |
| My co-workers are not helpful in getting the job done | 60.1 | 0.23 | 1.06 |
| I don't have people who understand my difficulties at work | 53.8 | 0.19 | 0.43 |
| My co-workers are not ready to share in my work problems | 59.9 | 0.34 | 1.03 |
| <i>Job insecurity</i> | | | |
| I can't easily get a new job when i quit my job | 70.8 | 0.53 | 1.06 |
| I can't easily find a new job equal to the condition of the current job | 60.2 | 0.53 | 0.96 |
| My future is uncertain because the current situation of my company is unstable | 52.5 | 0.54 | 0.97 |
| I can easily be fired or be unemployed | 60.2 | 1.09 | 0.33 |
| <i>Organisational injustice</i> | | | |
| The organisational policy of my company is not fair and unreasonable | 64.8 | 0.54 | 1.01 |
| My company does not provide me with sufficient organisational support | 70.4 | 1.02 | 1.06 |
| I am not given the opportunity to express my ideas | 71.9 | 0.57 | 1.09 |
| I am discriminated when it comes to my promotion on the job | 73.7 | | |
| My current status is below my education qualification and career experience | 40.7 | 0.89 | 0.77 |
| <i>Lack of Reward</i> | | | |
| My salary is not appropriate to my effort and work performance | 80.5 | 1.11 | 1.21 |
| I am not respected by my colleagues and superiors | 60.2 | 1.07 | 0.49 |
| My organisation does not acknowledge hard work | 82.1 | 1.03 | 0.99 |
| I don't believe that i will be given more rewards from my company if i work hard | 83.9 | 0.57 | 1.06 |
| <i>Discomfort in occupational climate</i> | | | |
| I am asked to do my work with irrational principle or inconsistency | 48.1 | 1.09 | 1.07 |
| My company climate is authoritative and hierarchical | 86.7 | 0.82 | 1.56 |
| I take disadvantages since i am a woman (man) | 38.6 | 0.92 | 1.31 |

Table 2: Psychological wellbeing of the employees

| Psychological wellbeing | Yes (%) | No (%) |
|---|---------|--------|
| I have lost much sleep as a result of my current workload | 70.2 | 29.8 |
| I am unable to play my part in my family due to my work schedule | 76.7 | 23.3 |
| I am now under constant pressure because of my work | 72.3 | 27.7 |
| I am always worried about the amount of work I have to do | 80.3 | 19.7 |
| I feel anxious when I think about my work | 81.1 | 18.9 |
| I feel unhappy because my work environment is not the best for me | 76.2 | 23.8 |
| I feel exhausted because my work doesn't reward me enough | 82.1 | 17.9 |

Data analysis

The data were analysed with the binary logistic regression using STATA version 12. The binary logistic regression is suitable for categorical independent and dependent variables (Kimbu et al., 2023) and thus suitable for this study since both the predictor (dimensions of occupational stress) and outcome (psychological wellbeing) variables are categorical. The binary logistic regression was used to assess the influence of occupational stress on employees' psychological well-being. To undertake the binary logistic regression analysis, composite variables were generated for all the eight dimensions of occupational stress, namely difficult physical environment, high job demand, insufficient self-control, inadequate social support, job insecurity, organizational injustice, lack of reward and discomfort in occupational climate. Subsequently, each of the generated composite variable was recoded into a binary format. Specifically, 'strongly agree' and 'agree' were recoded as 'agree' to indicate the presence of each dimension of occupational stress and given the value of one (1), while 'strongly disagree' and 'disagree' were recoded as 'disagree' to indicate the absence of each dimension of occupation stress and assigned the value of zero (0). All the responses of uncertainties were deemed redundant to the analysis and not included (Kimbu et al., 2023). For each of the dimensions of occupational stress, the proportion of midpoint responses did not exceed 10% of the valid responses of the sample of 239 and hence retained. The retained data were still considered large enough for the binary logistic regression (Adam et al., 2023). Further, a composite variable on the outcome variable (psychological wellbeing) was generated and recoded into a binary form. All cases of 'Yes' were recoded as one (1) indicating a respondents' experience of deteriorating psychological wellbeing while responses of 'No' were recoded as zero (0) to denote the absence of deteriorating physiological wellbeing.

Results

Profile of the sample

About half of the employees are females (50.2%) while a little less than half (49.8%) are males (Table 3). Majority of the employees (60.2%) are unmarried. Regarding age, those aged between 24 to 30 years were in the majority (39.7%) followed by those aged between 35 to 40 years (31.9%). Over two-thirds of the

employees (75.5%) have obtained bachelor/diploma educational qualifications. A little over half of the employees (55.2%) were floor employees with only 10.7% of them being in managerial role. More than half of the employees (58.5%) have obtained professional training on their job, and the rest (41.5%) have no professional training. The majority of the employees (53.7%) are the only employed members of their households.

Table 3: Demographic and work characteristics of the employees

| Demographic/work characteristics | n | Percent |
|----------------------------------|-----|---------|
| Gender | | |
| Male | 114 | 49.8 |
| Female | 115 | 50.2 |
| Marital status | | |
| Married | 91 | 39.8 |
| Unmarried | 138 | 60.2 |
| Age (years) | | |
| 24-30 | 91 | 39.7 |
| 31-34 | 30 | 13.1 |
| 35-40 | 73 | 31.9 |
| 41+ | 35 | 15.3 |
| Educational attainment | | |
| Secondary education | 44 | 19.2 |
| Bachelor/Diploma | 173 | 75.5 |
| Postgraduate | 12 | 5.2 |
| Rank in organization | | |
| Floor employee | 126 | 55.2 |
| Supervisor | 78 | 34.1 |
| Manager | 25 | 10.7 |
| Professional training status | | |
| Professionally trained | 134 | 58.5 |
| Not professionally trained | 95 | 41.5 |
| Employed household member | | |
| Member employed | 106 | 46.3 |
| No member employed | 123 | 53.7 |

Influence of occupational stress on psychological wellbeing

The binary logistic regression model on the influence of occupational stress on psychological wellbeing is a good predictor as shown by the Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients ($\chi^2_{(13)} = 121.02$; $p < 0.001$) and the Hosmer and Lemeshow Test ($\chi^2_{(5)} = 9.73$; $p = 0.201$). Occupational stress predicted 39.5% of the psychological wellbeing of the hotel employees. Four occupational stress measures significantly influenced the psychological wellbeing of the employees. These include difficult physical environment, high job demand, job insecurity and lack of reward (Table 4).

Table 4: Influence of occupational stress on psychological wellbeing

| Occupational stress | Odds | Std error | Z-stat | P value | 95% confidence interval | |
|------------------------------------|------|-----------|--------|---------|-------------------------|-------|
| Difficult physical environment | | | | | | |
| Disagree (RC) | | | | | | |
| Agree | 4.08 | 0.41 | 4.76 | 0.007** | 1.02 | 4.70 |
| High Job demand | | | | | | |
| Disagree (RC) | | | | | | |
| Agree | 3.53 | 0.39 | 3.24 | 0.009** | 0.98 | 5.00 |
| Insufficient self-control | | | | | | |
| Disagree (RC) | | | | | | |
| Agree | 1.05 | 0.44 | 0.55 | 0.118 | 0.30 | 3.73 |
| Inadequate social support | | | | | | |
| Disagree (RC) | | | | | | |
| Agree | 1.12 | 0.41 | 0.89 | 0.221 | 0.65 | 3.89 |
| Job Insecurity | | | | | | |
| Disagree (RC) | | | | | | |
| Agree | 2.31 | 0.73 | 2.87 | 0.029* | 0.69 | 3.87 |
| Organisational injustice | | | | | | |
| Disagree (RC) | | | | | | |
| Agree | 2.46 | 0.85 | 2.93 | 0.027* | 0.42 | 4.11 |
| Lack of reward | | | | | | |
| Disagree (RC) | | | | | | |
| Agree | 3.57 | 0.98 | 3.87 | 0.009** | 0.87 | 5.32 |
| Discomfort in occupational climate | | | | | | |
| Disagree (RC) | | | | | | |
| Agree | 1.21 | 1.05 | 1.02 | 0.214 | 0.67 | 3.87 |
| Constant | 6.67 | 5.71 | 3.52 | 0.001** | 2.21 | 15.12 |

Note: **significant at $p \leq 0.010$; *significant at $p \leq 0.010$; $R^2 = 0.395$; RC= Reference category

Employees who agreed to having difficult physical work environment were about 4 times more likely to experience poor psychological wellbeing than those who did not have difficult physical work environment. Similarly, employees who indicate that they have high job demand were 3.53 times more likely to experience poor psychological wellbeing than their counterparts who did not have high job demand. In terms of job insecurity, employees who have job insecurity were 2.31 times more likely to experience poor psychological wellbeing than their counterparts who do not have job insecurity. Further, employees who encounter organisational injustice were 2.46 times more likely to experience poor psychological wellbeing compared to their colleagues who do not encounter organisational injustice. Employees who are not rewarded for their extra efforts by their organisations were 3.57 times more likely to experience poor psychological wellbeing compared to their counterparts who feel rewarded for their extra efforts by their organisations.

Discussion

This study presents novel findings on the influence of occupational stress on psychological wellbeing of hotel employees. Though previous studies (Adam et al., 2023; Baquero, 2023; Wong et al., 2025) have analysed the psychological wellbeing of hotel employees, they have largely been focused on personal and job outcome as predictors without focusing on occupation specific induced stress and its influence on psychological wellbeing. This study bridges this knowledge gap by de-emphasising the effects of the personal and job outcome on psychological wellbeing and highlight how occupation induced stress affects the psychological wellbeing of hotel employees. The findings of this study provide insights on how the nature of the hotel job induces stress and ultimately leads to deterioration in the psychological wellbeing of employees. This enriches the literature on psychological wellbeing in the hotel industry by focusing on occupation related stress and its effects on the psychological wellbeing of its employees with significant industry-wide implications for improving and safeguarding the psychological wellbeing of employees to ensure better working conditions. Similarly, the findings highlight how specific dimensions of occupational stress affects the psychological wellbeing of the hotel employees. In the context of psychological wellbeing, difficult physical work environment has the potential to strain and stress employees (Chela-Alvarez et al., 2021; Hunger & Seibt, 2022) and thus exert a negative effect on their psychological wellbeing. Difficult physical work environment increases the difficulty involved in tasks of the employees while at the same time making the work environment uncomfortable for the employees (Kosnin et al., 2024; O'neill & Davis, 2011). The associated discomfort with difficult physical work environment makes the work environment unproductive and thus increase the burden on the employee thereby leading to a deterioration in their psychological wellbeing (O'neill & Davis, 2011; Salama et al., 2022). In the context of the Ghanaian hotel industry the lack of appropriate working tools such as cleaning carts and trolleys, vacuum cleaners, linen carts and bins, dishwashers and luggage carts amongst others characterises the physical working environment of most hotels especially in small to medium sized hotels. The lack of or inadequacy of such appropriate working tools result in difficult physical work environment thereby making the hotel work difficult and uncomfortable which stresses the employees and ultimately contribute to deteriorating their psychological wellbeing.

High job demand is another contributor to poor psychological wellbeing of the hotel employees. The hotel industry is noted to be associated with intense work schedules which requires employees to work under pressure, long hours and on weekends and holidays (Yoo, 2023; Yousaf et al., 2020). The desire to constantly meet the demands of guests and provide quality services requires that the employees work extra hard and sometimes even overtime. These high job demands on the employees causes occupational related stress on the employees and thereby causing poor psychological wellbeing amongst them. Similarly, consistent high demand expectations on hotel employees because of the nature of the hotel job causes emotional exhaustion and reduced motivation (Baquero, 2023; Hunger & Seibt, 2022) which ultimately results in poor psychological wellbeing. Additionally, high job demand on the employees suggest that employees have little time to socialise with their families and friends (Baquero et al., 2025; Bekele et al., 2023). Such disruptions to the work-life balance of the employees causes conflicts with their family and social life hence resulting in poor psychological wellbeing. Another revelation points to the influence of job insecurity on psychological wellbeing of the hotel employees. Job insecurity leads to a state of worry, anxiety, and feeling of vulnerability and therefore results in stress (Baquero et al., 2025; Hunger & Seibt, 2022). The fear of losing one's job makes the employee worried about how to secure their future, meet their needs and thus constantly lost in thoughts as to what might happen in future (Chela-Alvarez et al., 2021; Yousaf et al., 2020). These situations cause worry and anxiety amongst the employees. Such worry and anxiety in turn leads to stress which ultimately affects the psychological wellbeing of the employees (Hunger & Seibt, 2022; Porru et al., 2021). Also, the fear of job loss leads to a situation where employees are constantly focused on thoughts regarding how to guarantee their future and thus do not view the current job as sustainable hence leading to decreased job motivation, performance and satisfaction which triggers a negative consequence on their psychological wellbeing. Psychologically, the fear of job loss also leads to a feeling of powerlessness as employees tend to be scared of saying or doing things that may be used as basis to lay them off. Such feeling of powerlessness could cause poor psychological wellbeing amongst the employees. Additionally, job insecurity could lead to difficulty to plan and organise employee's future due to the associated uncertainty which further leads to deterioration in the psychological wellbeing of employees. This is particularly so in the context of resource scarce economies like Ghana where unemployment is high and thus the thought of potentially losing one's job heightens uncertainty about the future and therefore leads to poor psychological wellbeing (Kimbu et al., 2023; Mensah-Ansah, 2014; Ryff & Keyes, 1995; Wong et al., 2025).

Regarding organisational injustice, the perception of being treated unfairly by the hotel can significantly lead to worry and anxiety and ultimately stress and poor psychological wellbeing. When employees feel they are unfairly treated by their hotels, it makes them feel unwanted and not included since policies and reward systems are applied in biased manner (Feaster et al., 2019; Krause et al., 2010). This therefore leads to decreased job motivation and satisfaction and increase stress and poor psychological wellbeing. Similarly, repeated and continuous unfair treatment in the hotel could lead to a situation where employees develop mistrust and cynicism at the workplace and ultimately feel disengaged from the work which often comes with poor psychological wellbeing. In the context of Ghana, such unfair treatment within the hotel setting may be driven by tribal, religious and class systems and associated acts of injustices usually manifest openly (Stacey, 2023; Zoogah et al., 2023). Such brazen acts of injustices along social markers of identity could lead to emotional exhaustion as the employee feels like there is no way to escape such treatments resulting in poor psychological wellbeing. Feeling of lack of reward for extra work or best of efforts within the hotel leads to decreased motivation as employees feel less valued and wanted at the workplace (Feaster et al., 2019; Samat et al., 2024). Also, employees who feel their efforts are not rewarded experience low confidence and sense of accomplishment which mostly result in frustrations and thereby leading to poor psychological wellbeing. This is especially so in the context of the hotel industry where employees work long hours and are expected to be both emotionally and physically fit to provide quality services to clients. Accordingly, employees expect that the physical and emotional exhaustion that come with hotel work are accordingly acknowledged and rewarded. When they feel such efforts are less acknowledged or rewarded, it frustrates them and lead to poor psychological wellbeing.

Conclusions and implications

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions are reached. Occupational stress negatively affects the psychological wellbeing of hotel employees. Occupational stress predicted about one-third of the psychological wellbeing of the hotel employees. Specifically, employees who experienced occupational stress had poor psychological wellbeing and thus suggest that job-induced stress results in poor psychological wellbeing amongst employees. Further, it is also concluded that high job demands including long working hours, high expectations and workload contribute to poor psychological wellbeing amongst hotel employees. High job demands puts pressure on employees which causes stress and ultimately affect their psychological wellbeing negatively. Also, difficult physical work environment within the hotel setting is a contributor to poor psychological wellbeing amongst hotel employees. Physical working environments characterised by lack of appropriate working tools and equipment, and work conditions directly impacts the psychological wellbeing. In addition, it is concluded that hotel employees who have a feeling of job insecurity experience poor psychological wellbeing. Job insecurity leads to a state of worry, anxiety and difficulty to plan for the future and therefore ultimately creates a psychological dissonance that results in poor psychological wellbeing. Moreover, lack of reward causes poor psychological wellbeing amongst hotel employees (Feaster et al., 2019). Lack of reward and recognition for extra efforts leads to low confidence, feeling of exclusion and therefore result in poor psychological wellbeing (Krause et al., 2010). Lastly, organisational injustice in hotels directly contributes to employees' negative psychological wellbeing. Organisational injustice results in a feeling of exclusion as well as not being valued by the organisation. This causes frustration and ultimately leads to a deterioration in the psychological wellbeing of the employees.

The findings and conclusions of this study have a number of theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, this study provides insights into various dimensions of occupational stress and how it impacts the psychological wellbeing of hotel employees within the context of a developing destination, Ghana. By so doing, this study enhances the understanding of psychological wellbeing in the context of the hotel industry. Previous studies (Hunger & Seibt, 2022; Li et al., 2021) have ignored the influence of occupational stress on psychological wellbeing in the hotel industry and have mostly studied psychological wellbeing from the context of work outcome and personal stress. The findings of this study therefore shows that work induced stress within the hotel industry has a direct influence on the psychological wellbeing of its employees and thus future studies on psychological wellbeing of hotel employees should delve deeper into understanding the role of occupational factors. Further, the findings of this study provide useful insights that inform organisational behaviour and human resource management practices. Regarding organisational behaviour, this study provides insights on how occupational stress shapes employee psychology and the effect of such influences on employees' behaviour within the hotel industry and how they relate to each other and interact with the organisation. In this regard, how the hotel's set up as an organisation induces work stress and how such work stress affects the employees' psychological wellbeing provide additional insights for conceptualising different dimensions of organisational behaviour. Also, this study provides insights on the scope of human resource management in hotels, especially in developing countries. The findings of this

study suggest that human resource management practices should take a comprehensive approach, taking into account how job induced stress affects the psychological wellbeing of the employee and hence all work and non-work related issues must holistically be considered in human resource management in hotels.

The findings of this study have a number of practical implications for the hotel industry. The findings imply that hotels should institute employee wellness programmes where employees can be offered opportunities to take paid holidays and breaks from work. Hotels can also develop leisure spaces within their workplaces where employees can take breaks and engage in interesting and stimulating activities. Such measures will reduce the negative consequences of high job demand on psychological wellbeing. Also, hotels should introduce flexible work arrangements to allow flexible scheduling that permit employees to switch schedules in order to allow them enough time to destress and recover from previous high job demands. Additionally, hotels should develop reward and recognition schemes to acknowledge and reward employees who engage in extra work schedules and other achievements. This can be in the form of annual or monthly awards and recognition schemes where such employees will be recognised and awarded. It could also be in the form of providing bonuses or days off for employees that do extra work or achieve milestones. Further, by offering employee engagement programmes, hotels could guarantee their employees of their job security and thus help to reduce the poor psychological wellbeing associated with job insecurity. Specific employee engagement initiatives such as valuing employee perspectives and contributions, continuous training and retraining opportunities and onboarding and transparent communication regarding happenings in the hotel would contribute to making employees feel valued and have a sense of job security. Lastly, hotels should engage in the development and implementation of inclusive policies since it would help to eradicate the feeling of organisation injustice. Inclusive policies developed along the principles of equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) would ensure that all employees are equally valued, respected, acknowledged and rewarded for their contributions to the hotel (Adam et al., 2025). Such policies will ensure that hotels implement fair policies, procedures and practices and equally ensure transparency as well as provide for employees who actively take part in decision making.

Limitations and future research

This study has a number of limitations that give opportunities to future studies. Though this study investigated the influence of occupational stress on employees' psychological wellbeing in hotels, a key variable that could moderate this causal relationship is employees' coping strategies with occupation stress. Nonetheless, employees' coping strategies with occupation stress was not captured in this study. Hence, future studies that examine the moderating role of employees' coping strategies with occupational stress on their psychological wellbeing will provide additional insights. Further, the measures employed to capture data in this study are self-reported. This means that the findings could have been influenced by respondent's biases hence the need for future studies to consider using more objective tools that will allow the researchers to observe the employees in their work settings.

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