



Routledge Research in Employment Relations

SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY AND THE EMPLOYEE

LABOR, EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS, AND THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

Piotr Zientara, Joanna Adamska, and Monika Bąk



“Hospitality employment is a minefield of ‘wicked’ issues, which have gained increased attention since the COVID-19 pandemic. This monograph provides a fresh, evidence-based analysis of labor-related issues in the hospitality sector and I welcome this as a valuable contribution to this important debate”.

Tom Baum, *PhD DLitt, Professor of Tourism Employment,
University of Strathclyde*

“This very timely publication highlights the importance of social sustainability and decent work in the hospitality industry. Examples of employer best practice and novel theoretical approaches make this book a great resource and source of inspiration for anyone who cares about hospitality work and workers”.

Anke Winchenbach, *PhD, Senior Lecturer in Tourism and Transport,
Surrey Business School, University of Surrey*



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Social Sustainability and the Employee

This research monograph delves into the pressing issue of employee-centered social sustainability in the hospitality industry. Through empirical studies and content analysis of CSR reports, it highlights the significant challenges faced by frontline hospitality workers – such as low wages, job insecurity, limited union representation, and employer resistance to unionization.

Offering a thorough, evidence-based examination, the monograph provides a comprehensive analysis of the employee dimension of social sustainability. It explores the critical role of organizational support, the fear of unionizing, and their impact on key outcomes like employee well-being and industry turnover intentions. The work also proposes a tailored framework for addressing employee needs at different stages of their careers, advancing the goal of “decent work” within the industry.

Ideal for scholars and researchers in workforce studies, hospitality, and tourism, this volume offers valuable insights into the complex dynamics of labor practices and social sustainability. It serves as a vital resource for those seeking to foster employee-centered CSR initiatives. Policymakers, industry professionals, and advocates for improved labor conditions in hospitality will also find this book informative and thought-provoking, with actionable strategies for promoting social responsibility across the sector.

Piotr Zientara is an associate professor of economics at the Faculty of Economics at the University of Gdansk, Poland.

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and the Hospitality Industry

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and Monika Bąk**

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Foreword

The hospitality industry is a global powerhouse, generating billions of dollars in revenue annually. Spanning hotels, restaurants, travel services, and entertainment venues, it plays a vital role in economies worldwide. Beyond financial impact, it provides employment opportunities for millions, ranging from frontline staff to management positions, contributing significantly to local and global employment rates. With its diverse offerings catering to leisure, business, and cultural tourism, the hospitality sector continues to evolve, adapting to changing consumer preferences and technological advancements to maintain its prominent economic and social influence.

Importantly, hospitality is a high-touch industry where frontline employees wield considerable influence over customer satisfaction and loyalty. The service they provide directly shapes the guest experience, impacting initial impressions, overall satisfaction with accommodations, and perceptions of service quality. Acting as ambassadors for their establishments, these employees offer personalized interactions that deeply affect guest perceptions and repeat business. Their ability to anticipate needs, promptly address inquiries, and efficiently resolve issues is crucial for maintaining high levels of customer satisfaction. Without a doubt, in this dynamic environment, where face-to-face interactions define the guest experience, frontline employees not only deliver service but also significantly contribute to their establishment's reputation and success in building lasting customer loyalty.

In this sense, hospitality employment can be engaging and offers opportunities for personal and professional growth. It enables employees to engage with a wide range of people, promoting cultural exchange and expanding one's insight into diverse viewpoints. This interactive setting also serves as a venue for improving language proficiency, as workers regularly interact with international guests, enhancing their ability to communicate effectively and provide high-quality customer service. Moreover, positions in hospitality frequently nurture robust problem-solving and multitasking skills, which are essential for both personal development and career advancement.

Nevertheless, hospitality employment is also characterized by demanding conditions and the pervasive issue of union-busting, especially in the United States and the United Kingdom. While low wages and limited work-related benefits seem to indicate a preference for maximizing shareholder value at the expense of worker

welfare, employer opposition to unionization exemplifies irresponsible corporate behavior. Given that the hospitality sector employs a significant number of women, migrants, and youth – or typical labor market outsiders – these issues carry profound ethical and social justice implications.

All this, while evoking the notion of “decent work”, assumes strategic significance since the hospitality industry is likely to be pivotal in the near future, given the increasing trend of global travel and tourism. As more people travel and holiday abroad, the need for a fair, supportive, and sustainable work environment in hospitality becomes increasingly important. Furthermore, with the growing number of foreign-born individuals finding employment in this sector, ensuring that their rights are respected is critical. Hence, our monograph emphasizes the crucial role that employee-centered social sustainability can play in improving the hospitality workplace. As the findings from our empirical studies attest, the industry can mitigate many of the idiosyncratic challenges faced by its workforce by showcasing fairness and support with a view to enhancing employee well-being. This, in turn, will not only enhance overall job satisfaction and retention but also ensure the industry can meet the fast-growing demands of a global clientele.

This monograph, which incorporates empirical studies and strives to integrate evidence-based insights with robust theoretical foundations, seeks to shed new light on these critical aspects, advocating for ensuring decent work and, by extension, a more equitable and sustainable future in hospitality employment. By doing this, it seeks to stimulate discussion on the realities of hospitality work – especially, the high incidence of anti-union tactics in US and UK workplaces – and inspire further research in this important yet somewhat overlooked area. Fundamentally, this book represents the culmination of our dedicated efforts to explore and highlight the complexities of working in the hospitality industry. Many of the themes and issues explored in this book have previously been addressed in our articles published in scientific journals. Now, they are comprehensively brought together in this single monograph.



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1 Introduction and overview

Setting the stage for exploration

1.1 Hospitality as an integral part of the travel and tourism industry

The hospitality sector stands as a cornerstone of the global travel and tourism industry ([Legrand et al., 2016](#)), which is a significant driver of economic activity in many countries, particularly those with rich cultural heritage, natural attractions, or vibrant urban centers ([Croes et al., 2024](#)). It fuels economic growth through tourism expenditure, infrastructure development, and ancillary services ([Goeldner & Ritchie, 2006](#)). As of 2023, the travel and tourism industry contributed approximately 10.4% to the world's GDP (nearly \$10 trillion), which per se accentuates its critical role in the global economy. In the same year, it provided jobs to around 319 million people, which equates to roughly 10% of total global employment ([WTTC, 2024](#)).

Importantly, in 2023, the global job market within the travel and tourism industry saw a significant boost, with the creation of 27 million new jobs ([WTTC, 2024](#)). This marked a 9.1% increase compared to the previous year, bringing employment levels to just 1.4% below those seen before the pandemic in 2019. Domestic visitor spending also showed a robust recovery, rising by 18.1% in 2023 and surpassing the levels recorded prior to the outbreak of the coronavirus crisis. However, international visitor spending, while experiencing a substantial 33.1% increase in 2023, still remained 14.4% below the total recorded in 2019, indicating a continued recovery trajectory in global tourism ([WTTC, 2024](#)). Specifically, in 2024, the UK's travel and tourism market is expected to generate revenues of approximately \$41.29 billion, while in the United States – \$214.40 billion in 2024.

Box 1.1a Publicly listed hospitality companies

The largest and most well-known companies in the hospitality sector are often listed on major stock exchanges around the world, such as the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE), London Stock Exchange (LSE), Tokyo Stock Exchange, Hong Kong Stock Exchange, or NASDAQ. By that, they play a crucial role not only within their industry but also in the broader financial markets. Their performance often serves as a barometer for the health of the

2 Social Sustainability and the Employee

travel and tourism sector, reflecting consumer confidence, spending trends, and global economic conditions. These companies drive significant employment, support local economies, and contribute to the development of tourism infrastructure worldwide. Moreover, as publicly traded entities, these hospitality giants are subject to the scrutiny of investors, analysts, and regulatory bodies, which compels them to maintain transparency, financial discipline, and robust governance practices.

Among publicly listed companies worldwide, over 14% are listed on stock exchanges located in the United States (NASDAQ and NYSE), followed by 12% on the Tokyo Stock Exchange, 8.5% on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange, 6.6% on the National Stock Exchange of India, 6.5% on the Australian Stock Exchange, over 4% on the Taiwan Stock Exchange, and 3% on the LSE. A similar distribution applies to companies' main headquarters: over 12% are based in the United States, followed by almost 12% in Japan, and 6% each in India, Australia, and Hong Kong ([LSEG Eikon, 2024](#)).¹

According to the Global Industry Classification Standard (GICS), the largest share belongs to companies in the hotels, resorts, and cruise lines sector (43%), followed by restaurants (32%), casinos and gaming (14%), and leisure facilities (11%). Publicly listed companies within this sector are typically classified under the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) codes 721 for Accommodation and 722 for Food Services and Drinking Places. Breaking this down into subsectors according to NAICS, almost 60% are companies in the accommodation and food services sector, including 27% from hotels (except casino hotels) and motels, and 25% from restaurants and other eating places. Almost 16% are companies classified in the arts, entertainment, and recreation industry, including, among the most common, gambling industries, amusement and theme parks, casinos, fitness and recreational sports centers, and golf courses and country clubs ([LSEG Eikon, 2024](#); Figure 1.1).

- Tokyo Stock Exchange
 - The Stock Exchange of Hong Kong Ltd
 - Australian Stock Exchange Ltd
 - NASDAQ
 - NYSE Consolidated
 - BSE Ltd
 - National Stock Exchange of India
 - The Stock Exchange of Thailand
 - London Stock Exchange
 - Taipei Exchange
 - Indonesia Stock Exchange (formerly Jakarta SE)
 - Colombo Stock Exchange
- (a)

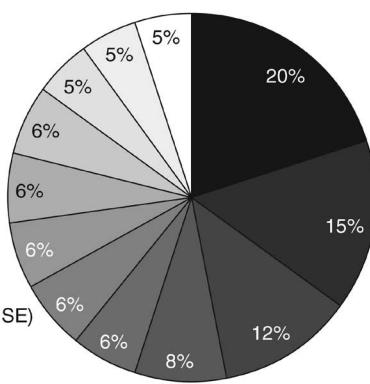


Figure 1.1 Percentage of listed companies by stock exchange and GICS sector

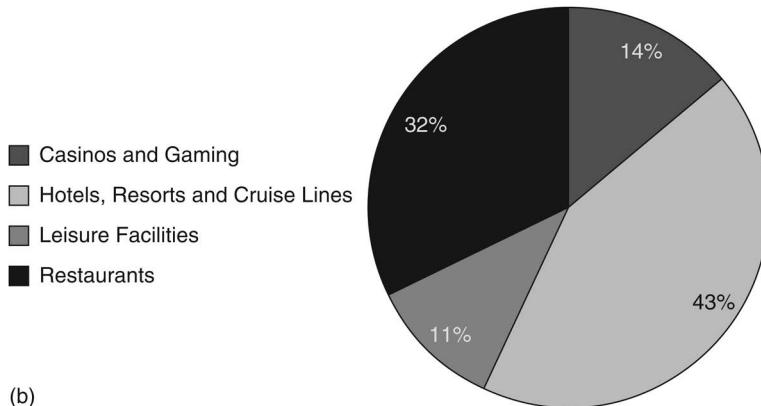


Figure 1.1 (Continued)

As regards the hospitality sector per se, it is estimated that a new job opens up approximately every 2.5 seconds ([Pearson, 2024](#)). Symptomatically, it employs about 3% of the global workforce, with nearly half of these employees being under the age of 25, and up to 70% being women (however, union representation within the industry remains low, with less than 10% of workers being unionized). In the United Kingdom, it stands as the seventh largest employer, accounting for 7.1% of all jobs in the economy ([Hutton et al., 2022](#)). In economies heavily dependent on tourism, such as Greece, Turkey, or Spain, the hospitality sector generates an even greater proportion of employment opportunities.

Box 1.1b Publicly listed hospitality companies

Among publicly listed companies, market capitalization is a key metric for differentiating firms in the hospitality sector. As of 2023, the average market capitalization of hospitality firms worldwide was \$1.6 billion. By market capitalization, companies are typically classified into categories ranging from large-cap, with market capitalizations exceeding \$10 billion, to small-cap, valued at less than \$2 billion. Despite the fact that large-cap firms, such as McDonald's Corp, Booking Holdings, Starbucks, Meituan, Chipotle Mexican Grill, and Airbnb, constitute only about 3% of publicly listed companies, they dominate the industry with their extensive global operations, strong brand recognition, and significant influence over market trends. Among the largest companies, over 60% are based in the United States. In contrast, mid-cap and small-cap firms, while smaller in scale, play crucial roles within niche markets or specific geographic regions. Companies like Aramark, Light & Wonder, Accor SA, Haidilao International Holding Ltd., Wynn Resorts, and Caesars

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Entertainment represent this segment, offering unique value propositions that cater to specific customer demographics.

In addition to their economic impact, publicly listed hospitality firms are also at the forefront of addressing global challenges such as sustainability and corporate social responsibility (CSR). As leaders in a highly visible industry, they are increasingly expected to implement eco-friendly practices, reduce carbon footprints, and engage in ethical business operations. Their ability to innovate in these areas not only enhances their brand reputation but also sets industry standards, influencing smaller players and contributing to the global push toward sustainable development.

It is clear that by providing jobs in substantial numbers, hospitality supports countless livelihoods. Moreover, the remittances sent by many foreign-born workers back to their home countries serve as a crucial lifeline for families and communities in impoverished regions ([Bullock et al., 2024](#)). These funds provide vital financial support, helping to cover essential needs such as healthcare, education, and housing. Beyond individual benefits, remittances also contribute to broader economic stability by boosting local economies and enhancing the quality of life (cf. [Basnyat et al., 2022](#)). This financial inflow can stimulate economic activity and development, creating a ripple effect that extends far beyond the immediate recipients. However, despite the positive impact of job creation, there remain questions about whether these jobs genuinely provide sustainable and fulfilling employment (e.g., [Baum et al., 2016](#); [Kronenberg & Fuchs, 2022](#)) – a key issue explored in this monograph

1.2 The structure of the hospitality industry

The hospitality industry is a vast and diverse sector that encompasses a wide range of businesses, from small, family owned establishments and event management companies to expansive, globally recognized hotel chains and cruise lines. At one end of the spectrum, there are small mom-and-pop restaurants and boutique hotels. These intimate establishments are often deeply rooted in their local communities, offering personalized services and unique culinary experiences that reflect regional flavors and traditions ([Gamage et al., 2023](#)). The charm of these small businesses lies in their attention to detail and their ability to create a warm, home-like atmosphere for their guests. They are often family run, with generations working together to maintain the quality and character of the business ([Valeri, 2022](#)). These establishments play a vital role in preserving local culture and providing authentic experiences that larger chains might not be able to replicate.

On the other hand, the hospitality industry also includes upscale hotel chains with a global presence, such as Marriott, Hilton, and Accor ([Zientara & Bohdanowicz-Godfrey, 2018](#)). These giants of the industry offer a standardized level of luxury and comfort, ensuring that guests receive a consistent experience no matter where

in the world they stay ([Whitla et al., 2007](#)). These hotels boast a wide array of amenities, including fine dining restaurants, spa services, and business centers, catering to both leisure and business travelers. Their global reach and strong brand recognition allow them to attract a diverse clientele, from international tourists to corporate clients, and they often set industry standards for quality and service ([Moro et al., 2020](#)).

Between these two extremes, the hospitality industry also includes mid-range hotels, casual dining chains, bed and breakfasts, and niche establishments such as eco-resorts and theme hotels. This middle segment caters to a broad audience, offering a balance of affordability and quality. Mid-range hotels, for instance, provide comfortable accommodations with essential amenities, making them popular choices for families and budget-conscious travelers ([Rauch et al., 2015](#)). Casual dining chains offer consistent and accessible dining experiences, often becoming staples in their communities.

It is important to keep in mind that online travel agencies (OTAs) like Expedia, [Booking.com](#), and Airbnb are crucial stakeholders, too. These platforms facilitate the booking of accommodations, flights, and other travel services, significantly impacting consumer choices and market dynamics. Airbnb, in particular, has revolutionized the vacation rental market by offering a wide range of private accommodations, from entire homes to individual rooms, appealing to travelers seeking unique and personalized experiences ([Statista, 2024d](#)). Tour operators and cruise lines also contribute to the industry's vibrancy. Companies such as TUI and Royal Caribbean International offer package holidays and cruise experiences, respectively ([Ariza-Montes et al., 2021](#)). These operators play a crucial role in organizing and providing comprehensive travel packages, including transportation, accommodations, and activities. The diverse range of stakeholders highlights the complexity of hospitality industry and the interplay between various sectors and service providers.

Without a doubt, the diversity within the hospitality industry is a testament to its adaptability and responsiveness to the varying needs and preferences of consumers. Whether it is the personal touch of a small bed and breakfast, the luxurious offerings of a five-star hotel, or the reliable service of a mid-range chain, the hospitality industry continues to expand by catering to a wide array of tastes and budgets. This is despite – or perhaps precisely because of – the coronavirus pandemic, which severely disrupted the operations of the hospitality industry.

1.3 The coronavirus pandemic and the hospitality industry

Without a doubt, the coronavirus pandemic, which broke out in March 2020, had a profound impact on the hospitality industry, leading to unprecedented challenges and disruptions ([Baum et al., 2020](#); [Croes et al., 2021](#); [Hutton et al., 2022](#)). As global travel restrictions and lockdowns were implemented to curb the spread of the virus, hotels, restaurants, and other hospitality businesses – which, by definition, are contact-intensive workplaces – faced severe declines in occupancy rates, revenue losses, and temporary closures (it is estimated that the travel and tourism industry experienced a cumulative loss of \$492 billion between March and

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December 2020; Croes et al., 2021, p. 2). These measures, while necessary for public health, disrupted the core operations of the industry, which relies heavily on the physical presence and interaction of guests and staff. In fact, the coronavirus crisis, by confining people indoors and restricting their ability to spend on dining out or live entertainment, led to a shift in consumption from services to goods. What is more, lockdowns hampered both the economy's ability to supply goods and its consumers' willingness to buy them (Zientara et al., 2024a).

Importantly, the pandemic forced most hospitality establishments to adapt quickly, implementing enhanced health and safety protocols to protect both employees and customers (Croes et al., 2021; Rathjens et al., 2023). This included frequent sanitization, social distancing measures, and the use of personal protective equipment. In addition, many businesses pivoted to takeout and delivery models to continue serving customers despite dining room closures. This shift not only helped sustain some revenue streams but also required significant changes in operations and logistics. Indeed, embracing digital solutions for contactless service became essential, with many establishments adopting online ordering systems, digital menus, and virtual check-ins to reduce physical contact and enhance convenience for customers (Rathjens et al., 2023).

The industry's workforce also experienced significant strains, with layoffs and furloughs becoming widespread as businesses struggled to manage reduced operations (Baum et al., 2020; Zheng et al., 2022). As the pandemic's disruptive and stressful effects persisted, most hospitality companies had to balance the need to reduce costs with the desire to retain skilled staff for eventual recovery (Bonfanti et al., 2021; Giousmpasoglou et al., 2021). Meanwhile, driven by anxiety and the industry's bleak prospects, many workers decided not only to quit their jobs but also to change careers, permanently leaving the hospitality sector (Chen et al., 2021; Lopes & Sargent, 2024; Zheng et al., 2022; Zientara et al., 2024a). In the United Kingdom, for example, this led to a decrease of 90,000 workers, or 3.6%, in the hospitality sector between 2020 and 2021 (Hutton et al., 2022). Similarly, in the United States, around 700,000 hospitality workers quit each month on average in 2021, resulting in a reduction of 1.3 million workers in hotels, bars, and cafes ("Why workers", 2022).

It should be emphasized in this context that, in response to the pandemic, the United States and the United Kingdom adopted different approaches to support their economies and labor markets. In the United States, the government's response focused on protecting workers rather than specific jobs (Croes et al., 2021). The primary method of assistance was through direct payments to individuals, known as "stimulus checks", which provided immediate financial relief to millions of Americans. These payments were part of a broader pandemic stimulus framework that included expanded unemployment benefits, aiming to help those who lost their jobs or faced reduced income due to the economic downturn. This approach allowed workers the flexibility to seek new opportunities or transition between industries without the immediate pressure of financial instability.

In contrast, the UK government implemented a furlough scheme designed to preserve existing jobs within businesses (Zheng et al., 2022). Under this scheme,

businesses received financial support from the government to retain employees, even if there was no work for them to perform due to lockdowns and reduced economic activity. Employers could place employees on furlough, with the government covering a significant portion of their wages. This approach aimed to maintain employment relationships and ensure that businesses could quickly resume normal operations once restrictions were lifted. Undoubtedly, by focusing on job preservation, the United Kingdom sought to minimize long-term unemployment and protect the stability of the labor market (Hutton et al., 2022).

Yet the pandemic not only spotlighted the industry's vulnerability to global crises but also exposed and exacerbated pre-existing inequalities, disproportionately affecting people in irregular work, low-paid workers, and younger individuals (Baum et al., 2020; Zheng et al., 2022). Put another way, it hit particularly hard those at the bottom of the income spectrum. The abrupt loss of employment for many in the hospitality industry initially led to significant economic hardships and heightened uncertainty about the future (Baum et al., 2020; Croes et al., 2021). As noted above, although the US and UK governments adopted slightly different approaches to managing the crisis, it is now evident in hindsight that these policies were instrumental in mitigating its impacts and assisting vulnerable populations in navigating the economic challenges they faced (Hutton et al., 2022). Consequently, there is some force to the argument that this period also underscored the vital role of government intervention in effectively addressing and alleviating the effects of such “black swan” events.

Crucially, the pandemic catalyzed several transformative changes within the travel and tourism industry. One notable shift is the rise of the *bleisure* travel market, which combines business and leisure travel. With the increase in remote work and flexible work arrangements, many professionals are extending business trips to incorporate leisure activities. This trend is gaining momentum, with the *bleisure* market anticipated to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 19.5% from 2024 to 2034 (Future Market Insights, 2024). Another notable trend in the hotel market is the shift toward online sales. By 2029, it is expected that 80% of the total revenue in the hotel market will be generated through online channels (Statista, 2024a). This shift highlights the growing importance of digital platforms in the booking and management of hotel services, as more consumers turn to online methods for convenience and a broader range of options.²

1.4 The post-pandemic situation in the hospitality industry

As the world began to emerge from the pandemic in late 2022 and early 2023, restrictions were gradually eased, which allowed travel and tourism to restart. This reopening played an important part in revitalizing the hospitality sector, as people's renewed interest in traveling spurred a surge in demand for accommodation, dining, and recreational activities – a phenomenon termed “revenge tourism”. With borders reopening and travel restrictions lifting, the hospitality industry saw a significant rebound, leading to increased bookings, revenue, and job creation (“The war on tourism is often self-harming”, 2024, July 29). Not coincidentally, also the

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aviation industry bounced back robustly, with passenger numbers soaring and airlines reporting strong financial performance ([IATA, 2023](#)).

Although the hospitality industry as a whole benefited from this post-pandemic resurgence in travel and tourism – for example, the UK hotel sector is projected to reach a market volume of \$21.40 billion in 2024 (Statista, 2024b) and to generate \$110.60 billion in revenue in the same year ([Statista, 2024c](#)) – it was the luxury hotels that flourished during this period. According to Grand View Research cited by *The Economist*, travelers were expected to spend \$1.5 trillion on luxury trips in 2024 (by 2030, this figure could rise to \$2.3 trillion) ([Luxury Hotels Are Having a Glorious Moment, 2024](#), July 29). A significant portion of this was forecast to go toward upscale accommodation, with the number of luxury rooms expected to increase to 1.9 million in 2024 from 1.6 million in the previous year. Given these circumstances, it is no surprise that top international hotel chains and upscale independents performed exceptionally well financially ([Statista, 2024a](#)). For instance, in 2023, revenues at Accor, the French owner of luxury brands such as Fairmont, went up by 20% to \$5.4 billion, while its gross operating profit surged by 50% to \$1.4 billion ([Luxury Hotels Are Having a Glorious Moment, 2024](#), July 29).

Cruise holidays also made a comeback, with around 36 million passengers expected to choose this type of leisure in 2024, marking a 6% increase compared to 2019, before the pandemic ([From Taylor Swift to Star Trek, Niche Cruises Are on the Rise, 2024](#), August 15). To attract new clientele, major cruise operators doubled down on offering themed trips. Some themed cruises revolve around popular TV shows, like Star Trek: The Cruise and the Golden Girls Cruise, while others, such as The Kiss Kruise and the Beach Boys Good Vibrations Cruise, focus on bands. There are also cruises dedicated to specific music genres, including country music cruises, reggae, rock, and jazz ([Cashman, 2021](#)). All told, this period of recovery not only boosted economic activity but also saw a rise in niche tourism segments, marking a significant turnaround for a sector deeply impacted by the pandemic.

1.5 The hospitality industry and the environment

The post-pandemic surge in tourism and the resulting growth of the hospitality sector also brought its environmental impacts into sharper relief. While this monograph does not focus on (efforts to reduce) the environmental footprint of the sector, it is worthwhile to acknowledge this aspect to achieve a well-rounded perspective. In fact, hospitality is a significant contributor to carbon emissions, waste generation, and resource depletion, particularly in areas with high tourist traffic ([Sloan et al., 2009](#)). Hotel operations, including energy consumption, water usage, and waste disposal, can strain local ecosystems and exacerbate environmental degradation ([Hawkins & Bohdanowicz, 2011](#); [Styles et al., 2015](#)). Besides, the construction and operation of large-scale tourism infrastructure, such as resorts and theme parks, can lead to habitat destruction, loss of biodiversity, and disruption of fragile ecosystems.

Thus, many hospitality companies have, in recent years, redoubled their efforts to mitigate their environmental impacts (e.g., [Cantele & Cassia, 2020](#); [Martínez-Martínez et al., 2019](#); [Pham et al., 2019](#)). These include energy-efficient building

designs, waste reduction and recycling programs, water conservation measures, and support for local conservation projects. Notably, top international hotel chains have implemented sophisticated sustainability performance measurement systems ([Searcy, 2012](#)). These high-tech tools play a crucial role in helping management effectively reduce the environmental impact of their hotels' operations ([Zientara & Bohdanowicz-Godfrey, 2018](#)). They provide, among other things, precise metrics, enabling managers to monitor and enhance the environmental performance of each facility. This proactive approach not only aligns with its environmental goals but also enhances operational efficiency and sustainability practices across the organization. Crucially, hospitality companies are supported in their sustainability efforts by environmentally focused entities such as the Sustainable Hospitality Alliance and the International Hotel Environmental Initiative.

These initiatives also underscore a rising consumer awareness regarding the significance of eco-friendly travel choices, resulting in an increased preference for sustainable accommodations and experiences ([Hall et al., 2017](#); [Miao & Wei, 2016](#)). However, it must be acknowledged that, despite the growing awareness and initiatives aimed at promoting organizational greening within the hospitality sector, there remains a gap between environmental values and actual behaviors among tourists ([Hergesell, 2017](#)). While many individuals may prioritize environmental responsibility in their daily lives, their behavior often diverges when they are on vacation ([Dolnicar, 2015](#)). These environmentally unfriendly actions may include excessive water usage, energy-intensive transportation methods, littering, and damage to natural habitats through activities such as snorkeling, hiking, or wildlife viewing.

Numerous factors contribute to this discrepancy in behavior. The novelty and excitement of travel can lead tourists to prioritize convenience and indulgence over sustainability considerations. In addition, cultural differences, language barriers, and unfamiliarity with local customs and regulations may hinder tourists' ability to make environmentally responsible choices. Furthermore, the perception of being on "holiday mode" or detached from one's usual routine can lead individuals to justify behaviors that they would otherwise consider unacceptable ([Wu et al., 2021](#)).

Besides, there has recently been an anti-green backlash, with a growing number of people in Europe and the United States expressing frustration with eco-friendly regulations and limitations ([The Global Backlash against Climate Policies Has Begun, 2023](#), October 11). While the necessity of embracing sustainable practices is undeniable, the continuous inundation of eco-conscious messaging, along with the increasing imposition of green mandates and regulations, appears to have engendered a tangible feeling of exhaustion and a perceptible undercurrent of resistance. This phenomenon can be explained by psychological reactance theory ([Brehm, 1966](#)), which suggests that people highly prize their freedom of behavior. When this sense of autonomy is threatened or curtailed, they are driven to reclaim it, often reacting with defiance. In light of all these arguments, it is fair to say that minimizing the environmental impact of the hospitality sector is likely to be a major challenge in the foreseeable future. At the same time, there is no gainsaying that the tough realities and working conditions within the hospitality industry are also pressing concerns.

Box 1.2 Hospitality and environmental performance: ESG scores

According to the LSEG Eikon database, which provides Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) scores and ratings, as for 2023, the average “E” score for hospitality companies listed on stock exchanges and reporting ESG performance reached the level of 45 out of 100 ([LSEG Eikon, 2024](#)). At the same time, the average emission score, which measures a company’s commitment and effectiveness in reducing environmental emissions during production and operational processes, was 49.95. The average resource use grade, reflecting a company’s performance and capacity to reduce the use of materials, energy, or water and to implement more eco-efficient solutions, was 52.11 among hospitality firms. Only 16% of major hospitality companies listed on stock exchanges and reporting ESG performance data achieved an “E” grade above 75, indicating excellent environmental practices (equivalent to a grade of A+, A, or A–). Approximately 52% of firms scored between 50 and 75, reflecting good or satisfactory environmental practices (grades B and C). However, over 30% of major companies scored below 25, suggesting poor environmental performance (grade D) and highlighting significant room for improvement in their environmental impact ([LSEG Eikon, 2024](#)). Only 10% of these firms report having an environmental management team. Around 7% declare to have a policy aimed at reducing emissions and improving energy efficiency, and approximately 6% a policy focused on enhancing water efficiency and incorporating their supply chain into efforts to reduce the company’s overall environmental impact (see also [Chapter 4](#)).

1.6 Application of artificial intelligence in the hospitality industry

The COVID-19 crisis and the subsequent recovery have fueled growing interest in artificial intelligence (AI), a trend further accelerated by the launch of ChatGPT in November 2022 ([Dwivedi et al., 2024](#)). Crucially, AI is increasingly recognized as a transformative force within the hospitality industry, offering a number of applications that enhance operational efficiency, customer engagement, and overall service quality ([Doborjeh et al., 2022; Dwivedi et al., 2024; Huang et al., 2022; Khalil et al., 2022; Law et al., 2024; Mariani & Borghi, 2021; Pillai & Sivathanu, 2020; Saydam et al., 2022](#)). AI in hospitality encompasses a broad range of technologies, including service robots, chatbots, predictive analytics, and personalized recommendation systems ([Dwivedi et al., 2024; Law et al., 2024](#)).

The strategic integration of AI is increasingly recognized not only as a tool for cost reduction – achieved through automation that lowers headcount and payroll – but also as a vital catalyst for innovation and competitiveness in industries where customer satisfaction is paramount ([Mariani & Borghi, 2021](#)). Specifically, AI technologies are being deployed to automate booking processes, manage customer inquiries through virtual agents, and even personalize marketing efforts based on

sophisticated data analysis (Huang et al., 2022). Indeed, AI enables hotels and other hospitality businesses to deliver highly personalized experiences by analyzing vast amounts of data to understand customer preferences and behaviors. For instance, AI can be used to predict customer needs based on previous interactions, leading to tailored recommendations and services that enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty (Doborjeh et al., 2022). In addition, AI technologies like ChatGPT are revolutionizing customer service by enabling more natural and intuitive interactions between guests and virtual agents, which can handle complex inquiries and provide 24/7 support (Dwivedi et al., 2024).

However, despite the potential benefits, the adoption of AI in the hospitality sector is fraught with challenges that need to be carefully managed (Dwivedi et al., 2024). Arguably, one of the most significant concerns is the impact of AI on employment (Limna, 2023). As AI technologies, such as service robots and automated systems, become more prevalent, there is a growing fear of job displacement, particularly in roles that are traditionally labor-intensive and low-tech (which are abundant in the hospitality industry). This shift not only raises ethical questions but also contributes to a sense of job insecurity among employees, which can lead to higher industry turnover intentions (Khaliq et al., 2022).

Another major challenge is the issue of trust and acceptance of AI technologies by both customers (Mariani & Borghi, 2021; Saydam et al., 2022). While AI-powered chatbots and service robots can enhance customer experiences by providing quick and efficient service, there is still a significant portion of the market that prefers human interaction (Pillai & Sivathanu, 2020). Furthermore, the integration of AI brings about concerns related to privacy, security, and the ethical use of autonomous systems, particularly in how data are collected, processed, and utilized to drive AI decisions (Dwivedi et al., 2024).

While concerns about AI's impact on jobs remain valid, the prevailing view is that its benefits can outweigh the downsides, provided it is implemented thoughtfully and responsibly (Ruel & Njoku, 2020). Some researchers contend that, although AI-powered service robots may replace certain roles, such as receptionists or waitstaff (Khaliq et al., 2022), a future where AI and human workers coexist harmoniously is conceivable. This coexistence could enhance both business operations and customer experiences. AI has the potential to relieve human employees of tedious and repetitive tasks, potentially improving their job satisfaction by making work less burdensome. However, the full impact of AI on the hospitality industry remains to be seen. For now, it is likely that most hospitality jobs will continue to be performed by humans, which brings the focus back to the importance of improving working conditions in the industry.

1.7 The specificity of hospitality work

There is compelling evidence that the industry is plagued by systemic problems such as low wages, precarious working conditions, and violations of workers' rights (e.g., Baum et al., 2023; Dudley et al., 2022; García-Rodríguez et al., 2021; Zientara et al., 2024b). Indeed, most line-level hospitality workers – many of whom work as part-timers or temps – endure inadequate compensation, job insecurity, and

limited access to training. Symptomatically, instances of modern slavery among migrant workers have been recently identified within the UK hotel sector (Bullock et al., 2024). This not only savors unethical and irresponsible corporate behavior but also tends to exacerbate inequalities (Dudley et al., 2022) and perpetuate cycles of poverty since employment practices impact not only employees but also have broader societal repercussions (Greenwood & van Buren, 2017). These adverse trends are especially noticeable in major cities, where the cost of living is high. In this context, it is worthwhile to note that, in July 2024, unionized employees at Disneyland in Orlando, Florida, went on strike and demanded higher wages, citing the high cost of housing.

The challenges of irregular schedules compound difficulties for employees, making it difficult for them to plan their careers and establish stable work routines (Díaz-Carrión et al., 2020). Relatedly, the prevalence of unsocial working hours further complicates matters, disrupting traditional work-life balance (WLB) and creating obstacles for workers to maintain a healthy equilibrium between professional responsibilities and personal commitments (Deery & Jago, 2015). At the same time, the constant requirement for emotional labor imposes an additional burden on frontline staff (Lee & Ok, 2014). Indeed, workers must manage their emotions and provide exceptional service, sometimes to inconsiderate or even rude clients, regardless of their personal circumstances or feelings (Raza et al., 2021). This, in turn, leads to complaints of fatigue, stress, and burnout (Darvishmotevali & Ali, 2020) and prompts many to leave their jobs or even the industry (Zientara et al., 2024a). An implicit corollary to this is that, as vacancies persist, a shrinking workforce faces an increasing workload, intensifying strain and resulting in further turnover in a self-perpetuating cycle. Consequently, remaining employees shoulder added job responsibilities, heightening stress and fatigue. These factors largely explain why a long career in hospitality is often considered a contradiction in terms (Mooney et al., 2016) and why high labor turnover has persistently troubled the sector (Kang et al., 2018) – issues to which we will pay particular attention in this monograph.

The situation is aggravated by the widespread prevalence of anti-union practices within the industry. Indeed, many employers, especially in the United States and the United Kingdom, actively discourage or even retaliate against attempts to unionize (Logan, 2023; Papadopoulos et al., 2021; Zientara et al., 2024b), leaving some workers feeling powerless and disenfranchised (which is also true of US subsidiaries operating in Europe and other parts of the world; Royle, 2002; Royle & Urano, 2012). This lack of representation exacerbates existing issues (Papadopoulos et al., 2021). Arguably, without the protection and support of a union, hospitality workers are left to navigate these challenges on their own, further perpetuating the cycle of exploitation and inequality within the sector (Dudley et al., 2022). This is especially true for migrant workers, who, often unaware of their rights and uncertain of their position in the labor market, fall victim to abuse by unscrupulous employers – a phenomenon identified by Bullock et al. (2024) as the “(in)conspicuous exploitariat”. Moreover, the use of anti-union tactics not only exacerbates power imbalances between employers and workers (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1977) but also tends to undermine trust within companies (Zientara et al., 2024b).

All this matters greatly for two interrelated reasons. On the one hand, hospitality is recognized as a high-touch industry where frontline employees hold significant sway over customer satisfaction and the cultivation of loyalty (Han et al., 2011). The quality of service they deliver directly shapes the guest experience, influencing initial impressions, overall satisfaction with accommodations, and the perception of services provided (Han & Back, 2008). These employees act as de facto ambassadors for their establishments, offering personalized interactions that profoundly impact guest perceptions and repeat patronage. Their ability to anticipate needs, respond promptly and courteously to inquiries, and efficiently resolve issues plays a vital role in maintaining consistently high levels of customer satisfaction (Lee et al., 2009), which refers to the customer's cognitive and affective evaluation of a product or service (Zeithaml et al., 2006). In this dynamic setting, where face-to-face interactions define the guest's journey, frontline employees not only provide service but also contribute significantly to the establishment's reputation and its ability to foster enduring customer loyalty³ (Han et al., 2011; He & Li, 2011; Martínez & Rodríguez del Bosque, 2013), defined as "a deeply held commitment to re-buy or re-patronize a preferred product or service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same-brand or same brand-set purchasing, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behaviour" (Oliver, 1997, p. 392).

Thus, since the success of hospitality businesses relies heavily on the dedication and service quality of their employees, it is problematic to expect members of staff to consistently deliver their best to clients if they are not treated fairly and valued by their employers. When employees feel respected and appreciated, they are more motivated to provide exceptional service and go the extra mile for guests (Karatepe, 2012). Undoubtedly, fair treatment and recognition create a positive, supportive work environment where employees are committed to upholding the establishment's standards and enhancing the guest experience. Conversely, when employees feel undervalued or mistreated, morale and motivation can decline, potentially leading to diminished service quality and lower customer satisfaction (Zientara et al., 2024b). That is why fostering a workplace culture that prioritizes fairness, respect, and well-being seems instrumental in sustaining high levels of service excellence in the hospitality industry.

On the other hand, working in the hospitality industry does offer certain undeniable advantages, such as extensive interaction with diverse individuals, which promotes cultural exchange and broadens one's understanding of different customs and perspectives (Yurur et al., 2021). This dynamic environment provides a platform for enhancing language skills, as employees frequently communicate with international guests, thereby improving fluency and customer service capabilities (Rabiul & Yean, 2021). Moreover, hospitality roles often cultivate strong problem-solving and multitasking abilities, essential for personal and professional growth (Liu et al., 2021). The opportunity to build a robust network, gain versatile experience, and develop a resilient, adaptable work ethic makes, in theory, hospitality employment an interesting career choice. It is unfortunate, therefore, that certain pluses associated with hospitality employment appear to be overshadowed by the aforesaid drawbacks.

Given this reasoning, it is all the more necessary to improve the hospitality workplace through sustainable employment practices (Baum, 2018; Mooney et al., 2022). In other words, the focus should be on ensuring “decent work” (García-Rodríguez et al., 2021; Wang & Cheung, 2024), which is defined as work that is productive and carried out in conditions that ensure freedom, fairness, security, and dignity, with adequate pay and social protection (ILO, 1999). Crucially, this aligns with UN Sustainable Development Goal 8, which aims to foster “economic growth and decent work” (Wang & Cheung, 2024).

1.8 Sustainability and CSR: Contextual implications for hospitality

While the concept of sustainability – or corporate sustainability (CS) when applied to the business setting (Strand, 2014) – inherently carries a future-oriented perspective, often representing a “tomorrow” aspect, it is equally embedded in the present moment. This means that alongside our aspirations for a better future, there exists, given the aforesaid realities of hospitality work, there is an urgent need to address the pressing issues facing today’s hospitality workforce (Baum, 2018; Baum et al., 2016; Mooney et al., 2022). Hence the relevance of employee-centered social sustainability, which aims to foster a supportive workplace environment that not only promotes equality and diversity but also prioritizes high standards of work and the holistic well-being of employees.

Arguably, such a conceptualization of employee-centered social sustainability overlaps with the principles of employee-oriented CSR (González-De-la-Rosa et al., 2023). Despite their distinct historical roots and conceptual backgrounds, sustainability and CSR share a common goal of advancing society (Montiel, 2008). Therefore, by extension, the employee-centric dimensions of both social sustainability and CSR can be seen to converge toward the common objective of improving the workplace and the lot of employees.⁴ Without a doubt, employee-oriented sustainability/CSR assumes special significance in liberal market economies (LMEs), such as the United States and the United Kingdom (on which we will predominantly focus in this monograph).

This is because employers operating in LMEs, as opposed to coordinated market economies found in Continental Europe (Whitley, 1999), are not legally obliged by labor regulations to offer various work-related benefits, such as paid vacation, paid time off, or health care coverage (Freeman, 2007). Consequently, the situation for American or British workers often appears less favorable compared to their counterparts in Continental Europe, where such benefits are commonly mandated by labor legislation (in other words, the lesser protection afforded by labor legislation and fewer obligations imposed on employers in LMEs (Blindheim, 2015) lead to the heightened vulnerability of workers in the labor market). This disparity in regulatory frameworks underscores the differing levels of social protection and support afforded to workers across these economic systems, contributing to variations in the quality of work and overall job security experienced by employees in different regions (Papadopoulos & Ioannou, 2023). For obvious reasons, this is especially

important for those working in low-wage, low-productivity industries, such as hospitality (García-Rodríguez et al., 2021; Ioannou & Dukes, 2021).

Accordingly, employers in the United States and the United Kingdom have greater flexibility in handling labor-related matters, consistent with Matten and Moon's (2008) implicit-explicit CSR framework. This flexibility theoretically allows US and UK employers to adopt a more compassionate and equitable approach to managing their workforces, thereby fulfilling – at least, in part – the role played by the state in Continental Europe (Delbard, 2011). Given these considerations and the unique challenges associated with hospitality work, it is evident, therefore, that employee-oriented sustainability/CSR has a special role to play within this industry (Bohdanowicz & Zientara, 2008). While certain downsides like irregular working hours and the demand for emotional labor in dealing with inconsiderate clients may be, by definition, impossible to eradicate entirely (Radic et al., 2020; Raza et al., 2021), there are other aspects that can be improved upon. For example, by showcasing organizational support, fostering a culture of respect, and rooting out abusive practices, hospitality companies can enhance employee well-being, job and career satisfaction, and organizational commitment (Baum, 2018; García-Rodríguez et al., 2021).

Considering the relationship between how staff are treated and the quality of service delivered by frontline employees, and recognizing the critical importance of service quality to the success of hospitality businesses, it is in the sector's best interests to prioritize the well-being and fair treatment of its workforce. This becomes even more crucial given the industry's aforesaid challenges with high turnover rates and severe staffing shortages (Li et al., 2021). Research underscores that employees who experience job dissatisfaction and perceive unfair treatment or lack of support are not only at risk of disengagement and reduced productivity but also of leaving their positions, potentially exiting the industry altogether (Zientara et al., 2024a). This, clearly, represents one of the most fundamental and pressing challenges facing the hospitality industry.

1.9 The monograph's objectives and structure

This book, designed as a research monograph, focuses on labor-related issues in the hospitality sector. Its primary aim is to shed new light on the challenges facing both line-level hospitality employees and employers, particularly in the United States and the United Kingdom, within the broader context of ensuring decent work and the overall sustainability of the hospitality industry (Wang & Cheung, 2024). The work places special emphasis on the role of labor unions and issues related to unionization (e.g., Lucas, 2009; Wood, 2020). In other words, the monograph seeks to provide new insights into the dynamics of the industry, highlighting their ethical and social justice implications. Notably, it focuses on underexplored or overlooked topics, such as the factors influencing an individual's intention to leave the industry altogether, rather than just their current job (Chen et al., 2021; Lopes & Sargent, 2024), and the effects of the fear of unionizing on employee outcomes (Murphy, 2016; Roy, 1980).

As a result, the monograph adopts a dual perspective. On the one hand, it examines the experiences of hospitality employees, exploring through empirical investigation how they perceive their workplace realities and how this affects their attitudes and intentions. On the other hand, we illustrate how things appear from the perspective of employers – as indicated by ESG ratings and depicted in CSR reports – highlighting how they address labor-related challenges and their efforts to ensure decent work. We hope that this approach ensures that the monograph is not one-sided, providing a balanced understanding of both employee and employer viewpoints (still, there is no getting around the fact that it is employers who inherently hold a position of power in the employment relationship and that with this power comes a significant responsibility).

Our analysis is grounded in the conceptual frameworks and discourses found in the literature on human resource management (HRM), employment relations, sustainability, and CSR within the hospitality industry. Moreover, we draw on data collected in 2024 through online questionnaire surveys ([Evans & Mathur, 2005](#)) conducted with hospitality workers in the United Kingdom and the United States. We also performed a content analysis ([Neumann, 2003](#)) of CSR reports published by major hospitality companies in both countries. The empirical studies presented in this monograph, along with the findings from the content analysis, offer data-driven insights and a real-world perspective, enriching the narrative with greater depth and complexity. Accordingly, readers will gain new, evidence-based insights and a more nuanced understanding that goes beyond a superficial examination of these challenges.

While the issue of organizational greening is undeniably important, the situation of employees in this sector also deserves special attention (e.g., [Baum, 2018](#); [Ladkin et al., 2023](#); [Mooney et al., 2022](#); [Royle, 2002](#)). Put another way, although environmental concerns in hospitality are significant in the fight against climate change and environmental degradation, they sometimes seem to divert attention from worker issues ([Font & Lynes, 2020](#); [Guliani & Rizwan, 2016](#); [Legrand et al., 2022](#)). We believe that the conditions of those working in hospitality companies warrant equal consideration. This is especially relevant given, as noted earlier in this chapter, the likely boom in the industry due to fast-growing tourist activity in the near future. Moreover, an increasing number of hospitality jobs are expected to be filled by migrant workers, who are inherently more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation ([Bullock et al., 2024](#)). This, once again, accentuates the importance of addressing the treatment of hospitality workers and ensuring sustainable employment practices.

The rest of the monograph is structured as follows: [Chapter 2](#) establishes the conceptual foundation for the monograph by focusing on its theoretical underpinnings. This chapter defines key concepts central to the discussion and examines the main tenets of several relevant theories, including psychological contract theory, organizational support theory, the theory of organizational socialization, and the psychology of working theory. It also analyzes the relationship between CS and CSR and discusses related yet distinct concepts such as corporate social irresponsibility. The overarching objective of this chapter is to anchor the forthcoming discussions within a robust theoretical framework.

Chapter 3 focuses on the realities of hospitality work and industry-specific HRM issues. In particular, it addresses the primary challenges encountered by hospitality workers, such as low wages, job insecurity, and problems with WLB. Following these discussions, the chapter presents an empirical study, which examines how perceived organizational support (POS) – which shares some common ground with employee-centered social sustainability/CSR – influences employees’ well-being, career commitment, sense of WLB, psychological capital, and industry exit intentions. The chapter concludes by discussing the theoretical contributions and practical implications of the findings.

Chapter 4 aims to explore how hospitality companies enhance the workplace and promote decent work for their employees. It begins by defining the concept of ESG and its relationship with CSR, highlighting the connection between ESG ratings and CSR reporting. The chapter then focuses on the hospitality industry, particularly examining the “Workforce” component within the “Social” dimension of ESG. Following this, it details the methodological approach and procedures used in the content analysis of workforce-related sections from the sustainability/CSR reports of selected hospitality companies in the United States and United Kingdom, aiming to identify best practices. In particular, six key dimensions were identified that integrate the core elements of POS, employee-oriented CSR initiatives, sustainable employment practices, and the concept of decent work. The reports were then analyzed through this lens. The chapter concludes by presenting a framework for addressing employee needs at different stages of their career, ensuring a tailored approach based on where employees are in their journey with the hospitality company.

Chapter 5 focuses on employment relations within the hospitality industry, beginning with an exploration of the factors behind the industry’s low unionization rates and the growing influence of alternative labor unions. It then examines the various forms of employer anti-unionism, highlighting the underlying motives and emphasizing how these tactics are essentially designed to intimidate pro-union workers and obstruct organizing efforts. Crucially, it includes an empirical study that explores the impact of employees’ fear of unionizing – stemming from exposure to anti-union practices – on key employee outcomes like well-being and trust in management. The chapter wraps up by outlining the theoretical contributions and practical recommendations.

Chapter 6 brings together the key findings from the studies presented in this monograph, highlighting their theoretical contributions and practical implications. The chapter critically examines employee-focused CSR initiatives within the context of hospitality employers’ hostility to unionization. Specifically, it exposes the inherent contradiction and hypocrisy in hospitality companies that publicly commit to promoting decent work and fair treatment while simultaneously using anti-union tactics that go against these very principles. By spotlighting this disparity, the chapter underscores the need for hospitality companies to align their CSR efforts with genuine support for improved working conditions. The chapter concludes with a call for more critical and in-depth research into labor issues within the hospitality sector.

Notes

- 1 LSEG Eikon (2024), data obtained from the LSEG Refinitiv based on a cooperation agreement signed by the University of Gdańsk and the LSEG (Refinitiv).
- 2 Also worth mentioning is the fact that the pandemic accelerated the growth of online food delivery services (EHL Insights, 2023). As social distancing measures and restrictions on dining out became common, consumers increasingly turned to digital platforms for food delivery. This trend is expected to continue, with online food delivery becoming a permanent fixture in the consumer landscape. Undoubtedly, the sector's expansion is driven by technological advancements and a growing preference for convenience and contactless transactions (Pearson, 2024).
- 3 It is hardly in dispute that trust is a key factor in sustaining long-term relationships between consumers and companies, particularly in the hospitality sector. As Reichheld and Schefter (2000) point out, "to earn customer loyalty, you must first earn their trust" (p. 107). Trust is made up of two essential components: performance or credibility (or competence) trust and benevolence trust. In the hotel industry, competence trust refers to the customer's belief in the hotel's infrastructure, and employee skills and knowledge, as well as the hotel's capability to deliver the expected services and information when customers arrive and stay. Benevolence trust, on the other hand, is the customer's confidence in the hotel's care, concern, and honesty. It reflects the belief that the hotel will not only act competently and reliably but will also consider the customer's well-being and interests when making service decisions (Martínez & Rodríguez del Bosque, 2013, p. 91).
- 4 For the sake of simplicity and clarity, we will use the terms "employee-centered social sustainability" and "employee-oriented CSR" interchangeably throughout this text or, alternatively, the phrase "employee-centered sustainability/CSR".

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2 Theoretical foundations of the monograph

2.1 Definitions and conceptualizations of sustainability

There are numerous similar-sounding definitions of corporate sustainability, differing only by nuances of meaning. Thus, for instance, [Strand \(2014, p. 688\)](#) defines CS as “the integration of economic, environmental, and social considerations on the part of corporations”. [Pearce et al. \(2013, p. 248\)](#) conceptualize it as “organizational approaches aimed at achieving a balance between short-term organizational goals and long-term enterprise and social responsibility”. [Lo \(2010, p. 311\)](#) claims that CS is “the integration of financial benefit, environmental protection, and social responsibility into business operations and management protection, and social responsibility into business operations and management”. According to [Schmiedeknecht \(2013\)](#), CS is “a business approach that creates long-term shareholder value by embracing opportunities and managing risks deriving from economic, environmental, and social developments”. Given the focus of this monograph, it is noteworthy that [Legrand et al. \(2016, p. 26\)](#) discuss the concept of sustainable hospitality, which they define as “hospitality operations managing resources considering the economic, social, and environmental costs and benefits to meet the needs of present generations while protecting and enhancing opportunities for future generations”.

The complexity deepens as some businesspeople interpret corporate sustainability as merely a firm’s ability to survive and endure. Essentially, this understanding reduces CS to the long-term viability of enterprises. In light of this, [Rego et al. \(2019, p. 134\)](#) conclude that “the field of CS is characterized by definitional diversity, ambiguity, controversy, and confusion”. Not surprisingly, [Diesendorf \(2000, p. 27\)](#) proposed avoiding the notion of CS altogether “because its most obvious meaning is simply a long-lived corporation” and long-lived corporations “do not necessarily produce an ecologically sustainable planet and a socially equitable society”. While stating this today might be an exaggeration – considering that nowadays the majority of social scientists and managers associate CS with environmentalism and social considerations – it effectively underscores the inherent challenge.

Crucially, there is a general consensus among academics that sustainability has evolved from the concept of sustainable development, which is defined as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” ([World Commission on Environment](#)

and Development, 1987, p. 49). Moreover, sustainability lies at the core of the triple bottom line (TBL) concept (Milne & Gray, 2013), which posits that the objectives companies set for themselves are intertwined with the societies and environments in which they operate. Consequently, failure to consider the social and environmental impacts that typically accompany the pursuit of profit is likely to render such business operations unsustainable (untenable) in the long term (Elkington, 1997). In essence, sustainability refers to a scenario in which firms behave in a manner that is economically viable, environmentally friendly, and socially responsible.

Given the focus of this monograph, of special interest is social sustainability, which involves “respecting human rights and equal opportunities for all in society. It requires an equitable distribution of benefits, with a focus on alleviating poverty. There is an emphasis on local communities, maintaining their life support systems, recognizing and respecting different cultures and avoiding any form of exploitation” (UNEP & UNWTO, 2005, p. 9). When applied within the organizational context, social sustainability extends to establishing an environment where the rights of employees are upheld, and equal opportunities are extended to every individual within the organization. This entails fostering a workplace culture that respects diversity, ensures fair treatment, and promotes inclusivity at all levels (of which more further in the chapter).

That being said, the practice of corporate sustainability – in hospitality as well as in other sectors – is far from unproblematic. Indeed, CS presents various challenges that “manifest themselves in terms of trade-offs involving stakeholders, organizational operations, as well as financial and intangible assets” (Pryshlakivsky & Searcy, 2017, p. 337). For example, a company determined to green its operations must invest in new energy-efficient technologies, which may, at least in the short term, impact the bottom line. This investment might be viewed unfavorably by some investors, even though such initiatives typically result in savings and lower operating costs in the long run. Thus, to assist firms in navigating these trade-offs, Aras and Crowther (2009, p. 282) came up with an integrative model encompassing four aspects related to sustainability-centric business operations: (1) societal influence (which concerns “the impact that society makes upon a company in terms of the social contract and stakeholder influence”), (2) environmental impact (which highlights how a company affects its geophysical environment), (3) organizational culture (which centers on the complex relationship between the organization and its deeply ingrained values and unique attributes, as well as its internal and external stakeholders), and (4) finance (which refers to the “adequate return for the level of risk undertaken”).

Among these four aspects, organizational culture stands out as particularly crucial (Smircich, 1983). It encompasses a collective set of underlying assumptions and beliefs that are mostly implicit, acting as a cohesive force that binds the organization together socially and normatively (Ravasi & Schultz, 2006). This is because when a company chooses to prioritize CS within its organizational culture, sustainability permeates all organizational processes and influences managerial decision-making. Such a strategic shift also signals to employees that their company takes environmental and social considerations

seriously. Since culture “serves as a platform for sensegiving by providing organizational members with a range of cues for reinterpreting and reevaluating the defining attributes of the organization” (Ravasi & Schultz, 2006, p. 451), a CS-centric organizational culture encourages staff to actively engage in sustainable practices. This is important, as effective greening of operations and advancement of societal welfare cannot be achieved without staff involvement (Sarkis et al., 2010).

However challenging the pursuit of sustainability may prove to be on the ground, there is little doubt that, in today’s socio-economic landscape, CS should be an integral aspect of conducting business, or even deemed an “imperative” (Stoughton & Ludema, 2012, p. 501). This sentiment is further underscored by the mounting pressure placed on companies, particularly by socially and environmentally conscious investors and individuals leveraging social media platforms, to operate responsibly in alignment with the principles of CSR. While there is a growing tendency to equate CSR with CS, this approach warrants further clarification (van Marrewijk, 2003) – a topic that will be explored in the following subchapter.

2.2 Overlap between sustainability and CSR

As is widely acknowledged, there is a significant amount of overlap between CS and CSR (Ahmad et al., 2024). In the words of van Marrewijk (2003, p. 102), “In general, corporate sustainability and CSR refer to company activities – voluntary by definition – demonstrating the inclusion of social and environmental concerns in business operations and in interactions with stakeholders”. To reiterate, this convergence of usage has led some to treat these terms as interchangeable – a trend reinforced by the common practice of using CS and CSR interchangeably in corporate terminology. Companies, for instance, often put either sustainability or CSR at the core of their strategies and produce either sustainability or CSR reports (Holcomb et al., 2007), among other materials (of which more in Chapter 4).

Indeed, a comparison of the definitions of CS and CSR reveals a significant amount of overlap. According to the European Commission (2001, p. 6), CSR is defined as “a concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns into their business operations and interactions with stakeholders on a voluntary basis” (European Commission, 2001). Similarly, Cacioppe et al. (2008, p. 684) assert that “socially responsible companies not only strive to be economically sustainable and profitable but also seek to collaborate with their employees, families, local communities, and nation-states to enhance quality of life in ways that are both ethical and sustainable with respect to society and the environment”. This suggests that both CS and CSR represent a notable shift in the relationship between business and society (see also Garavan & McGuire, 2010). Consequently, it is increasingly argued that Corporate Social Responsibility and CS are directed toward “the same future” (Montiel, 2008).

Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that the origins of both concepts can be traced to different theoretical foundations. As noted above, CS has emerged from the concept of sustainable development. In contrast, CSR is conceptually grounded

in business ethics, which is defined as “a specialized study of moral right and wrong. It concentrates on moral standards as they apply particularly to business policies, institutions, and behaviors” (Velasquez, 1998, p. 13). Morality and ethics typically revolve around issues with potential impacts on others (Taylor, 2003). Therefore, pro-social behavior, defined as “a broad category of acts that are defined by some significant segment of society and/or one’s social group as generally beneficial to other people” (Penner et al., 2005, p. 366), tends to be perceived as ethical.

2.3 The core principles of CSR

The implication is that CSR, in essence, has a lot to do with altruism, which is defined as “a selfless display of giving one’s personal resources to benefit another” (Furnham et al., 2016, p. 359). In other words, altruism refers to a voluntary and intentional act focused on improving someone else’s well-being without any expectation of external reward or personal gain (Simmons, 1991). Not coincidentally, McWilliams and Siegel (2001, p. 117) assert that CSR involves “actions that appear to advance the social good, *beyond* the interests of the firm” [our italics]. This echoes the central premise of social contract theory, which holds that the legitimacy¹ of an organization’s existence hinges on its positive contributions to society (Donaldson, 1989).

Given this, much has been made of strategic CSR, which involves incorporating CSR as a core value within a company’s organizational culture and strategy (Werther & Chandler, 2011). Advocates of strategic CSR argue that it should be regarded as intrinsic to a company’s identity and, consequently, needs to be ingrained into its organizational culture. As Heslin and Ochoa (2008) put it, CSR can become strategic when leaders integrate CSR into the very fabric of corporate culture by clearly articulating their commitment to a company’s CSR initiatives. In practical terms, this means that CSR – analogically to CS – underpins all managerial decisions and pervades all organizational processes.

In contrast, a non-strategic (or non-integrated) approach to CSR treats CSR as an “add-on” or “bolt-on” activity, detached from core business processes and strategic goals (Swanson, 2014). In essence, companies adopting a non-strategic approach to CSR may engage in socially responsible initiatives that are not deeply rooted in their day-to-day operations but are rather easily publicized (e.g., charitable donations). Critically, such companies may do so simply because it is considered unfavorable to be perceived as indifferent toward societal and environmental concerns, implying a superficial (if not insincere) commitment to CSR (Holcomb et al., 2007). Such a conceptualization of CSR overlaps, to some extent, with what Ashforth and Gibbs (1990) term symbolic CSR (as opposed to substantive CSR). Indeed, in contrast to substantive CSR, which involves concrete actions taken by companies to directly tackle social and environmental issues, symbolic CSR focuses on PR strategies used to improve corporate reputation, often without resulting in substantial changes.

However, the situation is more complex than the above description implies. As Bice (2017) highlights, there are a number of ideological-cum-teleological

approaches to CSR. These include (1) business case approaches, which view CSR as a means to achieve competitive advantage and create win-win outcomes; (2) ethical approaches, which assert that a company should regard its social responsibilities as a moral obligation “above any other consideration” (Garriga & Melé, 2004, p. 53); (3) stakeholder approaches, which posit, in line with the central premise of stakeholder theory, that a company bears responsibilities toward all its stakeholders and should not prioritize “the interest of shareholders” (Laplume et al., 2008, p. 1153); and (4) new institutionalist approaches, which conceive CSR as “an identifiable pattern of activities influenced by social norms concerning firms’ social, environmental, and economic behaviors and impacts” (Bice, 2017, p. 20).

When viewed through a new institutionalist lens, CSR comes across as a process embedded within a multifaceted social context, manifesting as an interactive interplay among various actors across multiple levels (Aguilera et al., 2007). In essence, an individual engaged in CSR operates within an organization, which, in turn, operates within a broader milieu, with interactions occurring among these three levels (Athanasopoulou & Selsky, 2015). It follows that “CSR needs to be understood as a particular and contextual form of business-society interactions that reflects and reveals certain institutional and cultural conditions, particular relations of power, and a given ideological and value grounding” (Djelic & Etchanchu, 2017, p. 644). Thus, to extend the argument further, CSR exhibits all the characteristics of a dynamic and adaptive phenomenon driven by a company’s capacity to respond to signals originating from the social context, reflecting collective values and public expectations (Matten & Moon, 2008). One of the consequences of this is that CSR “requires organizations to fundamentally rethink their position and act in terms of the complex societal context of which they are a part” (van Marrewijk, 2003, p. 97).

It follows that, given the presence of information asymmetry (Akerlof, 1970), companies must effectively communicate their commitments and efforts to promote the public good. This is usually done through CSR reporting, which serves as a key tool for sharing their actions with stakeholders and members of the public. This highlights the relevance of communication theory (Craig, 1999), which illuminates the rhetorical and narrative techniques companies use to engage with the public, and signaling theory (Spence, 1973), which examines how a company addresses specific issues in its reporting. The way a company reports on particular topics can reveal how much importance it assigns to them (Roth & O’Donnell, 1996). For example, a lack of detail or minimal coverage might suggest that the company either does not prioritize the issue or is concealing information. Conversely, providing detailed and comprehensive reporting signals that the company views the matter as significant (Connelly et al., 2011). This also applies to how the company treats its employees.

2.4 The key focus areas of employee-oriented CSR

There is a growing societal expectation for companies to act responsibly toward their workforces. In other words, society’s expectations for corporate responsibility toward employees are steadily rising, emphasizing fair treatment, safe working

conditions, and opportunities for growth and development (Jones & Rupp, 2018). Thus, the primary objective of employee-oriented CSR is to demonstrate care² and support for employees – mirroring the concept of POS – and address their needs and concerns across multiple dimensions (García-Rodríguez et al., 2021; Kim et al., 2018). Therefore, key focus areas include promoting health and achieving a healthy WLB, facilitating opportunities for training and development, as well as fostering diversity, equality, and inclusion (DEI) (Farooq et al., 2014).

Yet, at its core, employee-oriented CSR – when genuinely embraced and reflecting substantive CSR (Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990) – carries an inherent democratizing and egalitarian nuance. This means ensuring a more equitable distribution of corporate profits, allocating a larger share to employees rather than stockholders (Mejia et al., 2022), and empowering employees to have a say in matters that concern their work and the organization as a whole. On the one hand, emphasizing a more equitable sharing of profits reflects a widely held social expectation of fairness³ (Cropanzano & Stein, 2009). On the other hand, valuing employee voice underscores the importance of participation and engagement – including through labor unions – in decision-making processes, reflecting a broader commitment to democratic principles within the workplace (Cooke, 1994; Müller-Jentsch, 2008). There are echoes in this of normative stakeholder theory (as distinct from instrumental stakeholder theory), which holds that workers (as well as other stakeholders) have “a right to be treated as an end in itself, and not as means to some other end” (Donaldson & Preston, 1995, p. 73).

In light of these considerations, it is clear that employee-oriented CSR initiatives⁴ not only naturally align with certain HRM functions⁵ (Baum, 2018; González-De-la-Rosa et al., 2023; Lado & Wilson, 1994) but also contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 8, which, as noted in Chapter 1, aims to ensure decent work.

2.5 Psychology of working theory and the concept of decent work

The concept of decent work is steeped in psychology of working theory (PWT) (Wang & Cheung, 2024). PWT explores the role of work in people’s lives, particularly focusing on marginalized groups and those in precarious employment situations (Duffy et al., 2016). Specifically, this theory emphasizes the significance of access to decent work, which – echoing the ILO’s (1999) aforementioned definition – is conceptualized as work that offers not only economic stability but also social connection, purpose, and personal fulfillment (Blustein et al., 2016). PWT highlights how contextual factors such as socioeconomic status, discrimination, and access to resources influence one’s ability to secure meaningful work and, consequently, one’s overall well-being at work.

Crucially, García-Rodríguez et al. (2021) identified a number of dimensions of decent work. These include (1) adequate income (which refers to how workers perceive their earnings, emphasizing the key role of the aforesaid perception of fairness in remuneration); (2) productive work (which concerns employees’ perceptions of their performance and ability to utilize their skills effectively);

(3) dignified working conditions (which includes formal aspects of employment such as working hours and contract types); (4) intrinsic employment quality (which focuses on the nature of the work and the work environment, including skill requirements and workplace autonomy); (5) work-life balance (which reflects the ability to manage work and personal life effectively); (6) healthy and safe working environment (which addresses physical and health risks in the workplace); (7) employment stability and security (which pertains to the likelihood of continued employment); (8) diversity and equal opportunity (which involves treating staff members fairly regardless of individual differences); (9) lifelong learning (which refers to providing training and personal development opportunities); (10) social dialogue (which relates to the representation of workers, typically by unions, and the advocacy for their interests); and (11) technological adaptation (which involves integrating new technologies into the workplace).

All of this is highly relevant to the hospitality industry, which, as discussed earlier in the text, is characterized by numerous low-paid positions, often involving repetitive tasks, demanding schedules, and temporary or part-time contracts due to seasonal fluctuations. Additionally, the industry typically offers limited access to training and healthcare, and it has a reputation for managerial disrespect and aggressive anti-union practices (e.g., Baum et al., 2020; Bullock et al., 2024; Logan, 2023; Papadopoulos et al., 2021). This last aspect, in particular, brings to mind the concept of CSI.

2.6 Conceptualizations of corporate social irresponsibility

The literature frequently debates what constitutes CSI and how it differs from related concepts like corporate misconduct, wrongdoing, or unethical behavior (Clark et al., 2022; Iborra & Riera, 2023; Lin-Hi & Müller, 2013; Murphy & Schlegelmilch, 2013). Like CSR, the definitions of CSI vary in nuance and emphasis (Armstrong, 1977; Lange & Washburn, 2012). Scholars have grappled with defining the boundaries of CSI, questioning whether it should be viewed as a distinct category or overlapping with other forms of unsavory corporate behavior (Greve et al., 2010). Iborra and Riera (2023) argue that CSI involves corporate actions that intentionally cause harm (to stakeholders and society at large), while corporate misconduct refers to behaviors that are simply wrong. The analysis level also differs: CSI focuses on companies, while corporate misconduct concerns individuals, groups, professions, or companies. In CSI cases, stakeholders judge the actions socially or legally, whereas a social-control agent imposes sanctions for corporate misconduct (Greve et al., 2010).

Moreover, while CSI and unethical behavior are closely related, they differ primarily in focus and implications. In fact, CSI involves intentional or grossly negligent actions by a company that bring about harm, reflecting a deliberate disregard for societal well-being (Armstrong, 1977). In contrast, unethical corporate behavior encompasses a broader range of actions that violate moral or ethical standards but may not always result in direct harm or have the same level of intentionality (Kaptein, 1998; McLeod et al., 2016).

Much attention has also been given to exploring the relationship between CSI and CSR (Clark et al., 2022; Murphy & Schlegelmilch, 2013). Initially, CSI was seen as the opposite of CSR (Campbell, 2007). However, recent scholarship views CSI as a stand-alone construct, not just the antithesis of CSR (Clark et al., 2022). This debate revolves around concepts of continuity and orthogonality (Iborra & Riera, 2023). Continuity suggests a direct link between CSR and CSI, with CSR practices influencing the occurrence of CSI. In this sense, some researchers argue that CSR and CSI are opposite ends of a spectrum, where a company's actions range from highly responsible to highly irresponsible (Campbell, 2007). Orthogonality implies independence between CSR and CSI, indicating that CSR's presence does not necessarily prevent or mitigate CSI instances, and both can co-exist within the same company (Jackson et al., 2014).

Given the above definition of CSI, it could be argued that employers' use of anti-union tactics is a form of CSI. These tactics, which often include intimidation and misinformation (Roy, 1980), undermine employee well-being and trample on the rights of workers, who are key stakeholders in the company. In other words, by actively seeking to prevent the formation of unions – recognized stakeholders as well (Delbard, 2011) – employers de facto inhibit workers' ability to advocate for fair wages, better working conditions, and job security. This not only negatively impacts the employees but can also have broader societal implications by perpetuating inequality and reducing overall economic stability (Greenwood & van Buren, 2017). Thus, such anti-union actions align with the concept of CSI as they reflect deliberate corporate behaviors that harm both stakeholders and society at large (for similar reasons, exploiting foreign-born workers – especially those who are undocumented and thus more susceptible to mistreatment – bears all the hallmarks of CSI, too). This naturally raises the question of what motivates employers to engage in union-busting (an issue discussed in detail in Chapter 5), which, by extension, bears upon the theoretical foundations of employer anti-unionism.

2.7 Theoretical underpinnings of employer opposition to unionization

Historically, employers' efforts to stay “union free” have been classified as either union substitution or union suppression activities or policies (Beaumont, 1987). While union substitution refers to the impact that positive employer practices, whether intentional or not, have on diminishing the reasons for unionism (Fiorito, 2001), union suppression, or union-busting, seeks to discourage employees from unionizing through various tactics, including anti-union propaganda and intimidation, such as threatening to dismiss pro-union workers (Roy, 1980). In practice, the distinction between union substitution and union suppression often becomes unclear and blurred, causing employees to perceive that management is strongly opposed to or disapproves of unionization in their workplace (Zientara et al., 2024).

This reflects a deeply rooted anti-union sentiment within certain segments of US and UK societies – a phenomenon that can be explained through framing theory (Budd & Bhave, 2008). A frame of reference, or cognitive frame, is a conceptual lens that shapes an individual's perception, interpretation, and response to their environment (albeit similar in meaning, a frame of reference is not the same as an

ideology, which is a consistent set of beliefs about how the social world should function; [Georgallis, 2017](#)). Crucially, a distinction is made between the neoliberal-egoist, unitarist, pluralist, and critical frames ([Budd et al., 2022](#)). For our purposes, the first two are particularly noteworthy.

The neoliberal-egoist frame, rooted in neoclassical economic theory ([Friedman, 2002](#)), views the market as the primary force in shaping employment relationships and sees unions as unwelcome interference that hinders employers' ability to manage their enterprises and relationships with workers ([Cullinane & Dundon, 2014](#)). In contrast, the unitarist frame perceives the employment relationship as one of shared interests and co-operation ([Fox, 1974](#)). This perspective views the company as a mutually beneficial entity without conflicting goals, seeing unions as unnecessary third parties that could disrupt the harmony between management and staff. Ultimately, union-busting is employed to maintain control and prevent the formation of unions, which are viewed as threats to employer authority and flexibility in managing labor relations ([Fiorito, 2001](#)). As will be explored in detail in [Chapter 5](#), fear is central to this tactic, as it is thought to effectively deter employees from seeking union representation.

2.8 Psychological contract theory

Considering its inherent nature, union-busting can also be seen as undermining a psychological contract. This concept lies at the heart of the employee-employer relationship, as suggested by the psychological contract theory ([Shore & Tetrick, 1994](#)). A psychological contract refers to the unwritten set of expectations between employees and employers regarding mutual obligations ([Robinson & Morrison, 2000](#)). Unlike formal contracts, a psychological contract encompasses perceived promises related to job security, career development, recognition, and respect, fostering a sense of mutual trust and commitment ([Robinson et al., 1994](#)). In the hospitality sector, where service excellence and guest satisfaction are paramount, maintaining a “healthy” psychological contract is crucial.

However, tough working conditions – such as long and irregular hours, high-stress levels, physically demanding tasks, inadequate breaks and, as noted above, fear-inducing anti-union practices – can severely compromise this contract. In fact, when employees feel that the demands of their job exceed their capacity or that their rights are trampled on, or that their well-being is neglected, their perception of fairness and reciprocity may be eroded ([Robinson & Morrison, 2000](#)). This dissonance can result in feelings of betrayal, reduced morale, and disengagement, ultimately diminishing overall service quality and prompting some employees to consider quitting.

2.9 Organizational support theory and the theory of organizational socialization

This, in turn, highlights the relevance of organizational support theory (OST), which holds that “employees form a generalized perception regarding the extent to which the organization values their contributions and cares about their wellbeing” ([Kurtessis et al., 2017](#)).

Central to this theory is the above-mentioned concept of POS. Therefore, when an organization demonstrates support and care for its employees, it can mitigate some of the drawbacks of hospitality employment and, crucially, help fulfill the implicit promises of a psychological contract. In other words, employees who feel valued and supported are more likely to believe that their organization is upholding its part of the psychological contract, fostering mutual trust and making them less likely to disengage or consider quitting.

The last aspect matters greatly since, to reiterate, the hospitality industry has long been beset by high labor turnover and acute staffing shortages (Li et al., 2021). This situation underscores the importance of the theory of organizational socialization (Schein & Van Maanen, 1979), which provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how new employees adapt and integrate into an organization. In this sense, this theory is intrinsically linked to the concept of onboarding, as both aim to facilitate the integration of new employees into an organization. Specifically, organizational socialization is a comprehensive process through which newcomers learn and adapt to the values, norms, and behaviors required to function effectively within the company (Schein, 1965). Onboarding is the practical application of this theory, involving structured programs and activities designed to acclimate new hires. By focusing on training, cultural integration, and relationship building, effective onboarding programs help employees acquire necessary knowledge and skills, understand organizational culture, and establish crucial connections (see also Goh & Baum, 2021). This alignment between theory and practice is particularly vital in addressing high labor turnover and staffing shortages, as it ensures that new employees feel supported and prepared, ultimately enhancing retention and productivity.

Hence, the theory of organizational socialization and the concept of onboarding are, naturally, germane to the hospitality industry. In fact, effective socialization processes can help new hires quickly adapt to the fast-paced and customer-centric environment of hospitality companies. By providing structured training, mentorship programs, and clear communication of organizational values and standards, hospitality companies can enhance employee engagement, job satisfaction, and performance (Riggle et al., 2009). Moreover, these effects can be amplified by robust organizational support, which ensures – in line with the central premise of OST – that staff feel valued and taken care of (Kurtessis et al., 2017). Therefore, considering the unique aspects of hospitality employment, all these theories – along with the previously mentioned insights on sustainability, CSR, PWT, normative stakeholder theory, and framing theory – are especially relevant for the management of those who work in hotels, bars, restaurants, and theme parks.

Notes

- 1 Organizational legitimacy refers to the “alignment between the social values associated with or implied by [the firm’s] activities and the norms of acceptable behavior in the larger social system” (Dowling & Pfeffer, 1975, p. 122).
- 2 Organizational care is defined as “an organisation-level and organisation-centred phenomenon reflecting perceptions regarding the broad provision of care by the organisation to all employees” (McAllister & Bigley, 2002, p. 895).

- 3 It should be stressed that “fairness” and “justice” were once considered synonymous. However, recent research distinguishes between the two. Specifically, “justice is defined as the perceived adherence to rules that reflect appropriateness in decision contexts [...]. Fairness is defined as a global perception of appropriateness. In this formulation, fairness is theoretically ‘downstream’ from justice” ([Colquitt and Rodell, 2015](#), p. 188). Crucially, fairness is further divided into procedural, distributive, interpersonal, and informational fairness.
- 4 We should remember that employees are not just recipients of CSR benefits but also active contributors to CSR efforts ([Coles et al., 2013](#)). In fact, it is the employees who are directly involved in activities like tree planting or volunteering at care homes. It is argued, therefore, that employees bear the primary responsibility for putting ethical corporate behaviors, such as CSR initiatives, into action, with the success of these efforts largely depending on their willingness to participate ([Collier & Esteban, 2007](#)). [McShane and Cunningham \(2012\)](#) similarly describe employees as “ambassadors” and “enactors” of their organization’s CSR efforts.
- 5 This has led to the emergence of the concept known as “socially responsible HR practices”.

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3 Hospitality employment

Labor-related challenges and HRM issues

3.1 The realities of hospitality work

Hospitality stands out as a high-touch industry where frontline employees are instrumental in shaping customer satisfaction and fostering loyalty ([Martínez & Rodríguez del Bosque, 2013](#)). As mentioned previously, the quality of service provided by these employees directly influences the guest experience, impacting everything from initial impressions to overall satisfaction with accommodations and services ([Han & Back, 2008](#)). In this sense, it is fair to say that frontline staff serve as de facto ambassadors for the establishment, offering personalized interactions that can make a significant difference in guest perceptions and repeat business. Their ability to anticipate needs, handle inquiries promptly and courteously, and resolve issues efficiently contributes immensely to maintaining high levels of customer satisfaction ([Martínez & Rodríguez del Bosque, 2013](#)). The corollary is that, in this dynamic environment where face-to-face interactions define the guest's experience, frontline employees serve not just as service providers but as crucial contributors to the establishment's reputation and success in building long-term customer loyalty ([Lee et al., 2009](#)).

Furthermore, employment in the hospitality industry presents distinct advantages, including frequent interaction with diverse individuals that promotes cultural exchange and enriches one's appreciation of different traditions and viewpoints. This interactive setting also facilitates the improvement of language skills through regular communication with international guests, enhancing fluency and customer service skills ([Deng et al., 2013](#)). Moreover, hospitality roles nurture strong problem-solving and multitasking capabilities, which are crucial for personal and professional development. In sum, the chance to build a diverse network, acquire varied experience, and cultivate a resilient, adaptable work approach theoretically makes hospitality employment an appealing career option (simply put, work in hospitality has many things going for it).

Yet, at the same time, there is no getting around the fact that hospitality employment comes with significant downsides that impact the well-being and livelihoods of workers (e.g., [Kronenberg & Fuchs, 2022](#); [McGinley et al., 2017](#)). As discussed in [Chapter 1](#), one of the most glaring issues is the prevalence of low wages, which persist across various roles within the industry ([Baum et al., 2023](#); [García-Rodríguez et al., 2021](#); [Hutton et al., 2022](#)). Many hospitality workers, including servers,

housekeepers, and kitchen staff, struggle to make ends meet due to meager hourly pay and often rely on tips to supplement their income¹ (Mejia et al., 2022). This financial instability impacts their ability to afford basic necessities, particularly in large cities with high living costs.

Relatedly, job security is a persistent concern. Many hospitality workers face the uncertainty of part-time or temporary positions, which offer little stability or benefits (Díaz-Carrión et al., 2020). This precarious employment situation leaves workers vulnerable to sudden layoffs or shifts in scheduling, exacerbating financial stress and insecurity (Darvishmotevali & Ali, 2020). Moreover, the absence of job security, coupled with limited access to training – particularly for part-timers and temps – can impede career advancement and create a cycle of instability for those striving for long-term employment stability and personal growth (Dudley et al., 2022).

Emotional labor is another significant challenge faced by hospitality workers (Lee & Ok, 2014). The nature of the job often requires employees to maintain a cheerful and accommodating demeanor, even in the face of demanding or inconsiderate customers. This constant emotional strain can lead to burnout, mental health issues, and overall dissatisfaction with the job (Radic et al., 2020; Raza et al., 2021). Furthermore, long, unsocial hours are also common issues faced by hospitality workers, particularly those in roles requiring evening, weekend, and holiday shifts (which leads to work-to-life conflicts) (McGinley et al., 2017).

This often results in physical and emotional exhaustion, leading to high-stress levels and burnout among employees (Chen & Eyoun, 2021; Darvishmotevali & Ali, 2020), as well as a significant rise in “quiet quitting” (Karrani et al., 2024). It refers to a situation whereby employees fulfill only their assigned duties without taking on any extra tasks beyond their job description. Put another way, “quiet quitting” indicates a lack of deep engagement in work activities, leading employees to exert minimal effort in their tasks and show no desire to go beyond the basic requirements of their roles (Formica & Sfodera, 2022). This can, in part, be explained by the equity theory (Adams, 1963), which suggests that people feel motivated when they perceive fairness in their workplace. It states that employees compare their inputs, such as effort, skills, and time, to their outcomes, like salary, benefits, and recognition. If they feel that it is unfair and may become demotivated, potentially reducing their effort or considering leaving their job.

3.2 Mechanisms behind an individual’s decision to leave the hospitality industry

These industry-specific challenges are thought to be the driving factors behind the high employee turnover and persistent staffing shortages that plague the industry (Li et al., 2021; Mooney et al., 2016). An implicit corollary to this is that, over the last two decades, a considerable share of hospitality employees may have regularly quit the industry for good. This means that the issue may not only involve employees moving from one hospitality company to another but also transitioning out of the hospitality sector entirely. According to the theory of organizational equilibrium (March & Simon, 1958), labor market conditions facilitate this transition. In fact, it

is generally easier to secure employment in a different sector during periods of economic growth and low unemployment (see also Engbom, 2021). During such times, employers are more inclined to hire and train candidates with limited experience or qualifications due to the limited pool of potential candidates (Zientara et al., 2024). While a decision to leave the industry is not made lightly, as it entails retraining and assimilating into a new work environment (onboarding) in a new sector with its own idiosyncrasies – as suggested by the implications of the aforementioned theory of organizational socialization (Schein & Van Maanen, 1979) – the potential long-term benefits for one's career could outweigh the short-term inconveniences.

This is all the more so when a prospective employer in a different industry actively tries to lure someone who is already employed by offering attractive work-related benefits. For example, there is evidence indicating that, in the post-pandemic period, some US non-hospitality companies, such as Amazon and Target, were poaching “hospitality staff by offering non-cash perks like subsidised college education, parental leave and career advancement” (Why Workers Are Fleeing the Hospitality Sector, 2022). The implication is that perceived organizational support may play a vital role in employee retention and transition. Indeed, an existing employer demonstrating support and fairness can naturally “persuade” employees to remain with the company, while a prospective employer may attract a hesitant employee to leave their current position – or even the industry – to pursue new opportunities. This issue will be the focus of the next section.

3.3 Antecedents and consequences of POS

The concept of POS, being central to organizational support theory (Kurtessis et al., 2017), reflects workers' overall sense of care (McAllister & Bigley, 2002) and concern for their well-being (Guchait et al., 2015). Hence, not coincidentally, key antecedents of POS encompass organizational fairness, leadership support, and “soft” HR practices (Eisenberger et al., 2020). In practice, POS takes many forms, including offering opportunities for professional growth, acknowledging and rewarding employee contributions, and fostering a positive, fairness-focused work environment (Eisenberger et al., 2020; Kurtessis et al., 2017). This means providing employees with access to training programs, mentorship, and career advancement paths (which also demonstrates the organization's investment in employees' futures) as well as recognizing hard work and achievements through promotions, bonuses, public acknowledgments, and other incentives (it is essential that these rewards should be based on clear, consistent criteria to ensure fairness and meritocracy).

Importantly, POS was found to be positively associated with key employee outcomes, such as job satisfaction, well-being, organizational commitment, job performance, and reduced turnover intentions (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Kurtessis et al., 2017, Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Riggle et al., 2009). Table 3.1 presents our literature review (Grant & Booth, 2009) on the antecedents and outcomes of POS, covering both the hospitality industry and other sectors. Given all this, it could be reasonably argued that there is a considerable amount of overlap between POS and the principles of employee-oriented social sustainability/CSR as well as

Table 3.1 Literature review on the antecedents and outcomes of POS

<i>Author(s)</i>	<i>Article title</i>	<i>Journal</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Main findings</i>	<i>Sector</i>
Ahmed et al.	Perceived organizational support and its outcomes A meta-analysis of the latest available literature	<i>Management Research Review</i>	2015	Meta-analysis of 112 studies from 2007 to 2014. POS had a strong positive impact on employee engagement, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. The impact of POS on organizational citizenship behavior and turnover intentions was found to be moderate.	Multiple sectors
Afsar & Badir	Person-organization fit, perceived organizational support, and organizational citizenship behavior: The role of job embeddedness	<i>Journal of Human Resources in Hospitality & Tourism</i>	2016	POS mediated the relationship between person-organization fit and organizational citizenship behavior. The relationships between person-organization fit and organizational citizenship behavior, and the relationship between POS and organizational citizenship behavior were stronger among employees who were more embedded into their jobs.	Hospitality
Atingabili et al.	Teamwork and physician burnout: The moderating role of perceived organizational support	<i>Health</i>	2021	POS was found to play a vital role in improving teamwork while reducing burnout among physicians.	Healthcare

(Continued)

Table 3.1 (Continued)

<i>Author(s)</i>	<i>Article title</i>	<i>Journal</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Main findings</i>	<i>Sector</i>
Chen & Eyun	Do mindfulness and perceived organizational support work? Fear of COVID-19 on restaurant frontline employees' job insecurity and emotional exhaustion	<i>International Journal of Hospitality Management</i>	2021	Restaurant frontline employees' fear of COVID-19 was found to be positively associated with both job insecurity and emotional exhaustion. Fear of COVID-19 had an indirect effect on employees' emotional exhaustion via job insecurity. POS was found to intensify the positive relationship between job insecurity and emotional exhaustion.	Hospitality
Cheng et al.	Tour leaders' job crafting and job outcomes: The moderating role of perceived organizational support	<i>Tourism Management Perspectives</i>	2016	Individual and collaborative job crafting had a positive effect on job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and job performance. POS moderated the relationship between job crafting and job outcomes.	Travel & tourism
Chiang & Hsieh	The impacts of perceived organizational support and psychological empowerment on job performance: The mediating effects of organizational citizenship behavior	<i>International Journal of Hospitality Management</i>	2012	POS and psychological empowerment were found to positively affect organizational citizenship behavior. POS did not positively influence job performance.	Hospitality

(Continued)

Table 3.1 (Continued)

<i>Author(s)</i>	<i>Article title</i>	<i>Journal</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Main findings</i>	<i>Sector</i>
Dai et al.	Perceived organizational support and employee engagement: Based on the research of organizational identification and organizational justice	<i>Open Journal of Social Sciences</i>	2016	POS was found to be positively related to employee engagement. POS was also found to impact employee engagement through organizational identification.	Multiple sectors
Eisenberger et al.	Perceived organizational support	<i>Journal of Applied Psychology</i>	1986	Development of the POS scale. POS was found to increase employees' affective attachment to the organization and their expectancy that greater effort toward meeting organizational goals would be rewarded.	Manufacturing and education
Eisenberger et al.	Perceived organizational support: Why caring about employees counts	<i>Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior</i>	2020	Fairness, support from leaders, human resource practices, and work conditions were found to be major antecedents of POS. The average level of POS in the United States was found to have modestly increased over the past three decades. POS was found to have stronger positive outcomes in Eastern cultures compared to Western cultures.	Multiple sectors

(Continued)

Table 3.1 (Continued)

<i>Author(s)</i>	<i>Article title</i>	<i>Journal</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Main findings</i>	<i>Sector</i>
El Akremi et al.	How do employees perceive corporate responsibility? Development and validation of a multidimensional corporate stakeholder responsibility scale	<i>Journal of Management</i>	2015	Development and validation of the corporate stakeholder responsibility scale. The higher-order corporate stakeholder responsibility construct was found to be positively and directly related to organizational pride and POS. It was also found to be positively and indirectly related to organizational identification, job satisfaction, and affective organizational commitment.	Multiple sectors
Guchait et al.	Psychological contracts perceived organizational and supervisor support: Investigating the impact on intent to leave among hospitality employees in India	<i>Journal of Human Resources in Hospitality & Tourism</i>	2015	POS increased employee perceptions of organizational support. POS increased relational psychological contracts but not transactional contracts, and only relational contracts had a significant effect on employees' intent to leave.	Hospitality
Joo & Lee	Workplace happiness: work engagement, career satisfaction, and subjective well-being	<i>Evidence-Based HRM</i>	2017	Employees were found to be highly engaged in their work, satisfied with their careers, and to feel a greater sense of well-being in their lives when they had higher POS and psychological capital. POS had an indirect effect on subjective well-being through career satisfaction.	Multiple sectors

(Continued)

Table 3.1 (Continued)

<i>Author(s)</i>	<i>Article title</i>	<i>Journal</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Main findings</i>	<i>Sector</i>
Karatepe	Perceived organizational support, career satisfaction, and performance outcomes: A study of hotel employees in Cameroon	<i>International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management</i>	2012	POS influenced service recovery performance and job performance via career satisfaction.	Hospitality
Kim et al.	Perceived organizational support and affective organizational commitment: Moderating influence of perceived organizational competence	<i>Journal of Organizational Behavior</i>	2016	Perceived organizational competence was found to strengthen the relationship between POS and affective organizational commitment. This association was found to be carried over to extra-role performance.	Multiple sectors
Kleine et al.	Thriving at work: A meta-analysis	<i>Journal of Organizational Behavior</i>	2019	Meta-analysis of antecedents and outcomes of thriving at work. Thriving at work was associated with psychological capital, proactive personality, positive affect, and work engagement. Positive associations were also found between thriving at work and relational characteristics, including supportive co-worker behavior, supportive leadership behavior, and perceived organizational support.	Multiple sectors

(Continued)

Table 3.1 (Continued)

<i>Author(s)</i>	<i>Article title</i>	<i>Journal</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Main findings</i>	<i>Sector</i>
Kurtessis et al.	Perceived organizational support: A meta-analytic evaluation of organizational support theory	<i>Journal of Management</i>	2017	Meta-analysis of 558 studies. Organizational support theory was generally successful in predicting both the antecedents of POS, including leadership, employee-organization context, human resource practices, and working conditions, as well as its consequences, such as employees' orientation toward the organization and work, performance, and well-being.	Multiple sectors
Lamm et al.	Empowering employee sustainability: Perceived organizational support toward the environment	<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>	2015	Perceived organizational support toward the environment was found to be positively related to organizational citizenship behaviors toward the environment, job satisfaction, organizational identification, and psychological empowerment. Perceived organizational support toward the environment was found to be negatively related to turnover intentions. Psychological empowerment was found to partially mediate the relationship between perceived organizational support toward the environment and the dependent variables.	Multiple sectors

(Continued)

Table 3.1 (Continued)

<i>Author(s)</i>	<i>Article title</i>	<i>Journal</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Main findings</i>	<i>Sector</i>
Li et al.	Nurses' intention to stay: The impact of perceived organizational support, job control and job satisfaction	<i>Journal of Advanced Nursing</i>	2020	Job control, POS, and job satisfaction significantly and directly affected nurses' intention to stay.	Healthcare
Maan et al.	Perceived organizational support and job satisfaction: a moderated mediation model of proactive personality and psychological empowerment	<i>Future Business Journal</i>	2020	POS had a positive effect on psychological empowerment and job satisfaction. The relationship between POS and job satisfaction was found to be weaker when employees' proactive personality was higher rather than lower.	Multiple sectors
Nazir & Islam	Enhancing organizational commitment and employee performance through employee engagement: An empirical check	<i>South Asian Journal of Business Studies</i>	2017	POS had a positive effect on employee performance and affective organizational commitment. Employee engagement moderated these relationships.	Education
Ni et al.	The impact of perceived organizational support and core self-evaluation on employee's psychological well-being	<i>Journal of Human Resource and Sustainability Studies</i>	2015	An employee's core self-evaluation and their POS were found to be positively related to their reported psychological well-being. Core self-evaluation was also found to moderate the relationship between POS and well-being.	Multiple sectors

(Continued)

Table 3.1 (Continued)

<i>Author(s)</i>	<i>Article title</i>	<i>Journal</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Main findings</i>	<i>Sector</i>
Paillé & Raineri	Linking perceived corporate environmental policies and employees eco-initiatives: The influence of perceived organizational support and psychological contract breach	<i>Journal of Business Research</i>	2015	A weak effect of perceived psychological breach on eco-initiatives was found among employees who perceived high support from their organization. Among those who perceived low organizational support, there was a negative effect of breach on their willingness to perform eco-initiatives.	Multiple sectors
Rhoades & Eisenberger	Perceived organizational support: A review of the literature	<i>Journal of Applied Psychology</i>	2002	A review of 70 studies on POS. POS was conceptualized in terms of fairness, supervisor support, and organizational rewards and favorable job conditions. It was found to be associated with job satisfaction, positive moods, affective organizational commitment, performance, and reduced withdrawal behavior.	Multiple sectors
Ridwan et al.	Improving Employee Performance Through Perceived Organizational Support, Organizational Commitment and Organizational Citizenship Behavior	<i>Systematic Reviews in Pharmacy</i>	2020	POS, organizational commitment, and organizational citizenship behavior had a positive effect on job performance.	Education

(Continued)

Table 3.1 (Continued)

<i>Author(s)</i>	<i>Article title</i>	<i>Journal</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Main findings</i>	<i>Sector</i>
Riggle et al.	A meta-analysis of the relationship between perceived organizational support and job outcomes: 20 years of research	<i>Journal of Business Research</i>	2009	A meta-analysis of 167 studies from 1986 to 2006 examining the effects of POS. POS had a strong, positive effect on job satisfaction and organizational commitment, a moderate, positive effect on employee performance, and a strong, negative effect on the intention to leave. The effects were more pronounced for non-frontline employees.	Multiple sectors
Saks	Antecedents and consequences of employee engagement revisited	<i>Journal of Organizational Effectiveness</i>	2019	Job characteristics and POS were found to be significant predictors of work engagement. Work engagement predicted job satisfaction, organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behavior, and intentions to quit, and mediated the relationship between the antecedents and the consequences.	Multiple sectors
Tang et al.	The relationship between psychiatric nurses' perceived organizational support and job burnout: Mediating role of psychological capital	<i>Frontiers in Psychology</i>	2023	Psychological capital and POS were found to be adversely related to job burnout. Psychological capital mediated the relationship between POS and job burnout.	Healthcare

(Continued)

Table 3.1 (Continued)

<i>Author(s)</i>	<i>Article title</i>	<i>Journal</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Main findings</i>	<i>Sector</i>
Treglown et al.	Intention to quit and the role of dark personality and perceived organizational support: A moderation and mediation model	<i>PLOS ONE</i>	2018	POS was found to play mediating and moderating roles on individual differences and the intention to quit.	Healthcare
Utomo et al.	Investigating the role of innovative work behavior, organizational trust, perceived organizational support: An empirical study on SMEs performance	<i>Journal of Law and Sustainable Development</i>	2023	POS had a positive effect on organizational trust and job performance	Multiple sectors
van Woerkom et al.	Accumulative job demands and support for strength use: Fine-tuning the job demands-resources model using conservation of resources theory	<i>Journal of Applied Psychology</i>	2016	Employees who were actively encouraged to utilize their personal strengths on the job were found to be better positioned to cope with job demands.	Healthcare
Wayne et al.	Perceived organizational support and leader-member exchange: A social exchange perspective	<i>Academy of Management Journal</i>	1997	POS and leader-member exchange were found to have unique antecedents and to be differentially related to outcome variables.	Multiple sectors
Zhong et al.	Job engagement, perceived organizational support, high-performance human resource practices, and cultural value orientations: A cross-level investigation	<i>Journal of Organizational Behavior</i>	2016	High-performance HR practices were directly related to job engagement as well as indirectly related through POS.	Multiple sectors

the concept of decent work. Indeed, all these notions emphasize the importance of fostering a fairness-centric work environment, valuing and supporting employees, and ensuring their well-being and development.

The significance of POS is even more apparent in light of the controversies and criticisms surrounding contemporary HRM. In the words of [Greenwood and Van Buren \(2017, p. 671\)](#), “It has been argued that the soft rhetorics of care, inclusion and employee participation hide a hard reality of use and disposal of humans as resources of HRM ([Keenoy, 1990](#)). HRM has been famously criticized for a yawning gap between its rhetoric and reality ([Legge, 1995](#)): that what is said about HRM and what it purportedly looks like can be very different to what is experienced about HRM by the ‘human resources’ themselves”. Importantly, this mirrors the controversies surrounding CSR, where many companies, despite claiming a strong commitment to CSR, engage in superficial or symbolic CSR practices ([Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990](#)) or, even worse, corporate hypocrisy ([Wagner et al., 2009](#)) (discussed further in [Chapter 6](#)).

Boiled down, the idea is that there seems to exist a noticeable contrast between the HRM- and CSR-inspired rhetoric of organizational support and care, and its actual implementation. In fact, there is a growing perception that many companies fail to deliver on these promises in practice. This disconnect can lead to a range of negative outcomes, including decreased trust and low morale. In fact, employees who perceive a gap between what is promised and what is experienced may feel undervalued and exploited, which undermines the intended benefits of supportive HRM or CSR practices. This discrepancy not only affects individual well-being but can also impair overall organizational effectiveness and employee engagement.

Arguably, addressing this gap requires a fundamental shift in how organizations approach the issue of employee treatment and how they implement HRM practices ([Baum, 2018](#)).

Hence, to bridge the divide between rhetoric and reality, companies – operating both in hospitality and beyond – should ensure that they adhere to the principles of workplace fairness and that their support systems are not just symbolic but genuinely impactful ([Croppanzano et al., 2003](#)). In essence, this involves aligning employment practices more closely with stated values. As we will argue further in the text, such alignment is likely to foster a more committed and motivated workforce, which is strategically significant in the hospitality sector. Given this line of argument, it is particularly worthwhile to ascertain how hospitality workers perceive support in their workplaces and how it influences their attitudes and intentions.

3.4 The interplay between POS and employee outcomes

3.4.1 POS and industry exit intentions

As highlighted in the previous section, POS is widely recognized as a positive workplace influence with beneficial effects on key employee outcomes, including organizational commitment and turnover intentions ([Eisenberger et al., 1986](#),

Kurtessis et al., 2017; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Riggle et al., 2009). Hospitality research also bears this out (Afsar & Badir, 2016; Chiang & Hsieh, 2012; Gu-chait et al., 2015). Indeed, these studies show that hospitality workers who receive strong support from their employing organization are less likely to leave their jobs. Consequently, it follows that POS can play a crucial role in employee retention and their decision to quit a job and, by extension, to transition to another industry. As we recall from Chapter 1, this issue took on special significance and substantial proportions during the pandemic (Chen & Chen, 2021). The consensus view is that people do not make the decision to leave their industry or profession lightly as it involves retraining and adapting to a new work setting in a different sector with its own unique characteristics (Lopes & Sargent, 2024).

Considering the conceptual and practical similarities between quitting a job and leaving an industry or profession, the theory of organizational equilibrium (March & Simon, 1958) provides useful insights here. It suggests that when considering their future career options, employees weigh the desirability of leaving the organization against the ease of moving to a new one. The former largely depends on job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Mowday et al., 1982), while the latter relates to employability – which encompasses a combination of skills, knowledge, experience, and personal attributes (i.e., one's human capital) that enhance a person's suitability for the job market – and the overall labor market situation (Carsten & Spector, 1987).

Therefore, switching to a different industry is generally easier for individuals who are dissatisfied with their current job, lack strong commitment to their current employer, and possess transferable and/or sought-after skills, especially during periods of low unemployment and labor shortages. Indeed, when employers face staffing challenges (usually, at a time of low joblessness), they are not only interested in hiring individuals with the right skills but are often also more willing to recruit and onboard candidates who may not possess the exact experience or skills initially required (Zientara et al., 2024). Therefore, such a situation is particularly advantageous for workers looking to change industries (as was the case when the data for this study were collected).

Given the aforesaid key role of job satisfaction and organizational commitment, the behavior of the employing organization toward its staff becomes crucial (Avey et al., 2011). For a hesitant employee considering quitting, experiencing organizational care and support can tip the balance in favor of staying (Kurtessis et al., 2017). This suggests that POS can significantly influence an employee's decision to remain in their current job and industry (Afzal et al., 2019). Conversely, if an employee consistently perceives a lack of support, this perception can serve as a push factor, especially when external conditions (i.e., low unemployment) make transitions between industries more feasible. Hence, we propose the following hypothesis:

H1. There is a negative relationship between POS and the intention to leave the industry.

3.4.2 POS and career commitment

POS reflects the extent to which an employee believes their organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger et al., 2020; Kurtessis et al., 2017). This support often includes tangible elements such as opportunities for professional development, fair compensation, and recognition programs. These components are essential for fostering career commitment, as they provide employees with the resources and incentives needed to grow and thrive in their roles. As previously noted, research indicates that employees who experience organizational support report greater job satisfaction, stronger organizational commitment, and reduced turnover intentions (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Kurtessis et al., 2017; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Riggle et al., 2009). Fundamentally, POS bolsters employees' sense of job security and belonging, making them feel integral to the organization's success. This sense of integration and value positively impacts their overall career commitment, as they perceive a clear path for career advancement and personal growth within the organization (Joo & Lee, 2017; Karatepe, 2012).

In addition, a supportive organizational environment tends to reduce occupational stress and burnout, further enhancing an employee's sense of career fulfillment (Karatepe, 2013). Moreover, when employees feel recognized and valued, they are more likely to invest their time and effort into their roles and the organization's long-term goals. This commitment not only enhances their own career satisfaction but also contributes to improved organizational performance (Joo & Lee, 2017). Conversely, employees who do not feel valued or supported are less likely to see a future with their current employer, leading to diminished career commitment and increased turnover (Zientara et al., 2024). Given this reasoning, we hypothesize that:

H2. There is a positive relationship between POS and career commitment.

3.4.3 Career commitment and industry exit intentions

It is widely acknowledged that the demanding nature of the hospitality industry, characterized by long hours, pervasive stress, and unstable working conditions, creates significant obstacles to sustaining long-term career commitment. As our argumentation in the previous section implies, these barriers can be further reinforced by a lack of POS, which can manifest as poor access to stress management initiatives, limited opportunities for growth, and inadequate recognition of employees' contributions (Karatepe, 2012). Consequently, despite the appeal of a dynamic and people-centered environment, the combination of the challenges typically associated with hospitality employment and insufficient POS often leads to frustration, high turnover rates, and difficulty in maintaining long-term careers. Mooney et al. (2016) argue in this context that while employees may initially be drawn to the hospitality sector, the harsh realities of the work often result in a mismatch between their expectations and the actual career experience (this disconnect underscores the inherent contradictions in sustaining long-term career commitment within the industry). As a result, employees often become disillusioned, leading

them to seek more rewarding career paths elsewhere (Lopes & Sargent, 2024). Based on this understanding, we propose the following hypothesis:

H3. There is a negative relationship between career commitment and the intention to leave the industry.

3.4.4 POS and employee well-being

Given its inherent nature, POS has the potential to positively affect not only one's career commitment but also their well-being (Ni et al., 2015). It should be stressed that employee well-being encompasses both physical and psychological dimensions, which, as such, is particularly significant in the hospitality industry. Physically, it is influenced by factors such as workload, including not only the total number of hours worked but also any mismatches between preferred and actual working hours (Wooden et al., 2009). Hence, an excessive workload or significant working time mismatch, together with inadequate rest periods and lack of control over work schedules, can lead to physical exhaustion and stress, which, in turn, negatively impacts employees' health and overall job performance (Veld & Alfes, 2017). Research emphasizes that prolonged stress not only affects physical health but also leads to burnout and decreased job satisfaction, which are particularly detrimental in an industry reliant on consistent, high-quality service (Darvishmotevali & Ali, 2020). It is, therefore, evident that hospitality organizations ought to pay particular attention to these aspects to avoid overloading their staff, which can lead to a decline in service quality.

On the psychological side, employee well-being is closely associated with the perception of the meaningfulness of work, which refers to the value an individual assigns to a work goal based on their personal standards (Goh & Baum, 2021; May et al., 2004). When employees find their work meaningful, they are more likely to experience job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and engagement (Kahn, 1990). This sense of purpose is crucial in the hospitality industry, where employees often face demanding and repetitive tasks (Goh & Baum, 2021). In this sense, there are grounds for assuming that POS might be instrumental in enhancing psychological well-being. In fact, when employees feel valued and supported by their organization, they are more likely, *ceteris paribus*, to perceive their work as meaningful and fulfilling. In other words, even if the tasks themselves are routine, a supervisor's appreciation and recognition of how those tasks are handled can imbue a sense of purpose and significance to the work (Zientara et al., 2024). Accordingly, by fostering a supportive atmosphere, hospitality companies can help mitigate the negative impacts of stress, workload, and repetitiveness. This, in turn, can lead to improved service quality and greater customer satisfaction (Karatepe, 2012), creating a virtuous cycle of positive outcomes for the organization and staff members. Considering this line of argument, we propose the following hypothesis:

H4. There is a positive relationship between POS and well-being.

3.4.5 Employee well-being and industry exit intentions

Research demonstrates, too, that employee well-being is linked to industry exit intentions, with higher levels of well-being typically correlating with lower intentions to leave the industry (Zientara et al., 2024). Indeed, those who feel well at work tend to be more engaged and committed to their roles, which reduces their desire to seek opportunities elsewhere (in essence, improved employee well-being decreases the likelihood of industry exit). Conversely, employees whose well-being is compromised are more likely to consider leaving their current industry in search of a more supportive and rewarding environment (Lopes & Sargent, 2024; Mooney et al., 2016). Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H5. There is a negative relationship between employee well-being and the intention to leave the industry.

3.4.6 POS and WLB

POS entails the organization's recognition and appreciation of employees' needs, both professional and personal. When employees feel supported by their organization through flexible working hours, remote work options, or familyfriendly policies, they are better able to manage their work responsibilities alongside personal commitments (Kurtessis et al., 2017). This balance – for obvious reasons, of particular relevance to hospitality – reduces stress and burnout, leading to a more harmonious integration of work and life (Karatepe, 2013; McGinley et al., 2017). Studies show that employees who feel valued and supported by the employing organization report higher job satisfaction and lower levels of work-life conflict, indicating that POS plays a part in facilitating a balanced work-life dynamic (Karatepe, 2012).

At the same time, POS, as argued above, enhances employees' well-being, which per se is integral to achieving WLB (Deery & Jago, 2015). Supportive organizational practices, such as providing resources for stress management, access to counseling services, and promoting a healthy work culture, contribute to the psychological and emotional well-being of employees. It follows that, when employees feel their well-being is prioritized, they are more likely to experience a sense of equilibrium between their work and personal lives (Karatepe, 2013). This perception of support not only boosts their morale and productivity at work but also enables them to fulfill personal responsibilities more effectively (McGinley et al., 2017). It follows that the positive relationship between POS and employees' sense of WLB is rooted in the organization's role in creating an environment that acknowledges and supports the *holistic* needs of its workforce. In light of this reasoning, we propose the following hypothesis:

H6. There is a positive relationship between POS and WLB.

3.4.7 WLB and industry exit intentions

When employees experience poor work-life balance – as is often the case in the hospitality industry – they often face increased burnout, chronic fatigue, and diminished personal and family time (Deery & Jago, 2015). These adverse effects

can lead to a decline in job satisfaction and organizational commitment, prompting some to consider leaving the industry in search of more balanced and fulfilling employment opportunities. Pertinently, studies have shown that individuals who struggle to achieve a satisfactory WLB are more likely to exhibit higher industry turnover intentions, as they seek to escape the demanding nature of the hospitality sector (Lopes & Sargent, 2024; Mooney et al., 2016). Consequently, it is justified to assume that there is a negative relationship between WLB and the intention to leave the industry. In other words, as WLB deteriorates, the propensity for employees to exit the industry increases. Therefore:

H7. There is a negative relationship between WLB and the intention to leave the industry.

3.4.8 Psychological capital and industry exit intentions

As previously mentioned, the hospitality industry relies heavily on direct, personal interactions, making stress and negative emotions a constant presence. Employees often face high demands, tight deadlines, and the pressure to consistently deliver excellent customer service. This work environment requires staff to manage numerous challenges, from dealing with difficult guests to navigating busy, fast-paced settings, which frequently leads to anger, frustration, and irritation, making stress an inherent part of the job (Radic et al., 2020; Raza et al., 2021; Zientara et al., 2024). This points to the relevance of two theories: the cybernetic theory of stress, coping, and well-being (Edwards, 1992) and cognitive stress theory (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). While the former states that individuals are likely to develop stress when they perceive incongruence between their perception of the environment and their desires or goals, the latter implies that workers might regulate their emotions through methods like dissociation and emotional withdrawal or address the stressor directly by considering options such as leaving the job. Both theories underscore the importance of coping, which is influenced by three types of control: perceived (subjective) control, objective control, and experiences of control (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Skinner, 1996).

Perceived control, in particular, is considered one of the most effective personal resources for handling stressful events, difficulties, or failures (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Taylor & Stanton, 2007). In this sense, perceived control is conceptually related to psychological capital, which encompasses resources individuals use to achieve their life and career goals and deal with challenges (Luthans et al., 2007). Psychological capital is a higher-order construct that includes self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience (Luthans et al., 2008). Specifically, self-efficacy is the belief in one's ability to achieve goals and overcome difficulties. Optimism involves having a positive outlook and motivation for the future. Hope is the perseverance toward achieving goals, while resilience is the capacity to recover from setbacks and adapt to stressful situations.

Considering the high-stress situations, demanding customers, and unpredictable work environments characteristic of the hospitality industry, it is evident that psychological capital should be a central focus in discussions about working

conditions in this field. This is all the more so given that psychological capital is associated with key employee attitudes and behaviors. Research shows that it positively influences job satisfaction, work engagement, and job performance (Avey et al., 2011; Darvishmotevali & Ali, 2020; Harms et al., 2018; Huang et al., 2021; Larson & Luthans, 2006; Luthans et al., 2007, 2008). However, evidence regarding its impact on turnover intention is mixed and inconclusive. By and large, it is believed that employees with high psychological capital are better equipped to handle work-related stress and, consequently, may be less likely to leave their jobs (Avey et al., 2011). Indeed, some studies have found a negative relationship between psychological capital and turnover intention (Bouzari & Karatepe, 2017; Karatepe & Karadas, 2014). That said, other research has not borne out this link (Kang et al., 2018; Li et al., 2021).

The corollary is that psychological capital might also influence the intention to leave not just a job, but the entire industry or profession. As discussed earlier, such decisions, involving considerable effort, including retraining and acclimating to a new workplace, are not taken lightly. Yet, given its implicit focus on broadly understood success (Luthans & Avolio, 2007), psychological capital may encourage individuals to explore opportunities in other sectors. For instance, an optimist with high self-efficacy may be more willing to switch industries than a pessimist with low confidence in their ability to attain their objectives. Supporting this notion, research has established a strong link between psychological capital and entrepreneurial intention (Contreras et al., 2017). This suggests a parallel between the intention to start a business and the intention to pursue a different career. Therefore, in the absence of unequivocal evidence regarding the nature of the association between psychological capital and industry exit intentions, and staying with the theoretically and empirically derived arguments above, we formulated the following hypotheses:

H8. There is a positive relationship between psychological capital and the intention to leave the hospitality industry.

H8a. There is a positive relationship between self-efficacy and the intention to leave the hospitality industry.

H8b. There is a positive relationship between resilience and the intention to leave the hospitality industry.

H8c. There is a positive relationship between optimism and the intention to leave the hospitality industry.

H8d. There is a positive relationship between hope and the intention to leave the hospitality industry.

3.4.9 POS and psychological capital

Given that psychological capital is considered a personal resource *par excellence*, of relevance is also the conservation of resources theory, which posits that individuals strive to acquire, maintain, and protect resources they value

(Hobfoll, 2001). This has two important implications. For one thing, employees are likely to seek to preserve and enhance their psychological capital. For another, it can be developed through organizational efforts (Mao et al., 2021). The implication is that the overall work environment in general and specific labor practices in particular can significantly influence employees' psychological capital (Avey et al., 2011; Mao et al., 2021; Sameer et al., 2019; Wu & Nguyen, 2019). In other words, the manner in which an organization treats its employees can affect their levels of optimism, hope, self-efficacy, and resilience. For instance, if an employee views their organization as unsupportive or indifferent, it can lead to a decline in their self-efficacy and optimism. This is particularly concerning in the hospitality industry, where, as previously noted, irresponsible labor practices and unethical managerial behaviors are prevalent. On the other hand, when the employing organization demonstrates care and support for its employees, it can have a positive impact on their psychological capital. It follows that this supportive environment is likely to foster higher levels of self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience. Crucially, this assumption is borne out by recent research (Wu & Nguyen, 2019). Based on this reasoning, we propose the following hypotheses:

H9. There is a positive relationship between POS and psychological capital.

H9a. There is a positive relationship between POS and self-efficacy.

H9b. There is a positive relationship between POS and resilience.

H9c. There is a positive relationship between POS and optimism.

H9d. There is a positive relationship between POS and hope.

3.4.10 *Mediation effects*

Considering how we developed and formulated our hypotheses, it is reasonable to interpret our conceptual model through the lens of mediation. This interpretation is further supported by previous research, which identified some of the variables in our model as mediators. It should be noted in this context that mediation occurs when an independent variable significantly impacts a dependent variable while also affecting a mediator, which in turn influences the dependent variable (Hair et al., 2010). Thus, our mediation hypotheses can be articulated as follows:

H10a. WLB mediates the relationship between POS and the intention to leave the industry.

H10b. Psychological capital mediates the relationship between POS and the intention to leave the industry.

H10c. Career commitment mediates the relationship between POS and the intention to leave the industry.

H10d. Employee well-being mediates the relationship between POS and the intention to leave the industry.

3.5 Research method

3.5.1 Procedure and data collection

For both studies presented in this chapter, data were collected using an online self-report questionnaire from December 2022 to April 2024. Respondents were recruited through Prolific, a specialized website that provides tools for online research. Platforms like Prolific and mTurk are commonly used to recruit participants for online studies, especially in the behavioral sciences, as they are considered appropriate for obtaining samples for workforce-related research, including among hospitality employees (Hauser & Schwarz, 2016; Hight & Park, 2019; Palan & Schitter, 2018; Peer et al., 2021). These platforms offer several advantages, such as the reliability of responses compared to traditional methods, as participants are compensated for their participation and are thus more likely to carefully read and answer questions (in addition, these platforms allow researchers to include multiple attention check questions, which help to filter out responses from participants who did not carefully read the questions). Furthermore, they typically provide more demographically diverse samples than other internet samples (Buhrmester et al., 2011). Importantly, Prolific maintains a panel of respondents specifically for academic research. Compared to mTurk and other crowdsourcing platforms, Prolific participants are perceived as more attuned to scientific research and more honest (Peer et al., 2021). Data collected via Prolific often outperforms those obtained from other online platforms (Peer et al., 2017).

Our participants were asked to rate items on a seven-point Likert scale (1 – strongly disagree, 7 – strongly agree), with the exception of psychological capital, which was measured with a six-point Likert scale (in line with the original version of the 12 Item PsyCap Questionnaire; see also below). All who completed the questionnaire received compensation, which was in the average range recommended by Prolific.

3.5.2 Measures

POS was measured using a slightly adjusted 16-item version of the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (Eisenberger et al., 1986) ($\alpha = 0.964$). Psychological capital (PsyCap) was assessed with the 12-item short version of the PsyCap Questionnaire (Luthans & Avolio, 2007), for which we obtained official permission. To evaluate WLB, we selected the dimension “Work interference with personal life” (WIPL) from Fisher et al. (2009) ($\alpha = 0.904$). Career commitment (CC) was measured using a seven-item scale borrowed from Blau (1989) ($\alpha = 0.809$). Employee well-being was measured using a scale for employee workplace well-being (WWB) from Zheng et al. (2015) ($\alpha = 0.904$). Finally, the intention to leave the hospitality industry (ILI) was measured using three items adapted from Hackett et al. (2001) ($\alpha = 0.905$). We also controlled for age, gender, workplace, country, and job tenure.

3.5.3 Sample

A total of 310 responses were collected for the study. After a thorough analysis and data cleaning process, 305 valid responses remained, as five participants did not correctly answer the attention-check question. All respondents were currently residing in the United Kingdom ($n = 197$) and the United States ($n = 108$). Of the respondents, 58.4% were female ($n = 177$). Over 38% were aged between 25 and 34, and 22% were between 35 and 44 years old. Approximately 60% of the respondents held a university degree ($n = 186$). More than 59% had over five years of experience working in the hospitality industry ($n = 182$). Specifically, 36% were employed at a restaurant or catering company ($n = 112$), 23.9% at a hotel or another lodging facility ($n = 73$), 14.4% in a company offering tourism services and attractions ($n = 44$), 10.5% in a company involved in recreation, entertainment, and event organization ($n = 32$), and 6.6% in a travel and transportation company ($n = 20$) (Table 3.2).

Table 3.2 Demographic characteristics of the respondents (n = 305)

<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>Descriptive statistics</i>	
	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Gender		
Male	177	58.0
Female	126	41.3
Age		
18–24	49	16.1
25–34	116	38.0
35–44	67	22.0
45–54	45	14.8
55–64	21	6.9
65 or more	7	2.3
Education level		
Secondary	101	33.1
University	186	61.0
Other	18	5.9
Workplace		
Restaurant or catering	112	36.7
Hotel or other lodging facility	73	23.9
Recreation, entertainment, events	32	10.5
Tourism services and attractions	44	14.4
Travel and transportation	20	6.6
Other	24	7.9
Work experience		
< 1 years	8	2.6
1–3 years	76	24.9
3–5 years	39	12.8
> 5 years	182	59.7

3.5.4 Data analysis

We analyzed our data using PLS-SEM with Smart PLS 4 software. PLS-SEM is commonly used to assess complex models without requiring distributional assumptions on the data, even with relatively small samples (Chin, 1998). Additionally, PLS-SEM can handle both reflective and formative measurement models, making it versatile for various research scenarios, as is the case in our study. Furthermore, PLS-SEM utilizes bootstrapping to test the significance of path coefficients, providing a robust method for hypothesis testing without relying on distributional assumptions (Hair et al., 2022). It is also noteworthy that hospitality researchers frequently use PLS-SEM in their research (e.g., Ahmed et al., 2021; Chen et al., 2022).

Following the recommendation of Hair et al. (2022), we implemented a two-stage process. First, we conducted confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to assess the convergent and discriminant validity of the measurement model. Next, we applied PLS-SEM to test the causal relationships between constructs. Initially, the PsyCap construct was modeled as the second-order reflective-formative model and assessed using a two-stage approach (Hair et al., 2022). However, to deepen our understanding of the relationships studied, we later separated the dimensions within the PsyCap construct, treating them as first-order constructs.

Before applying the measurement model, we took several steps to address potential common method bias (CMB). First, we conducted Harman's single-factor test, which showed that a single factor explained 41.3% of the variance – below the recommended threshold of 50% (Podsakoff et al., 2003). We also checked for multicollinearity using the variance inflation factor (VIF), with all values being less than 5, indicating that multicollinearity was not a significant issue (Hair et al., 2022). Moreover, the correlations among all constructs were below 0.8, suggesting that CMB was not a significant concern (Bagozzi et al., 1991). These measures ensured that our measurement model was free from significant biases, thereby enhancing its reliability and validity.

3.5.5 Measurement models

The measurement model was initially assessed for the first-order reflective constructs. The analysis revealed that several items had loadings below the recommended threshold of 0.7, with values ranging between 0.4 and 0.7. Following Hair et al. (2022), each case was carefully reviewed. The decision was made not to delete these items as their removal did not significantly enhance the validity and reliability of the constructs and the composite reliability for all latent variables exceeded the recommended value of 0.7 (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). Next, we evaluated the convergent and discriminant validity. Composite reliability for all factors was above 0.7. For convergent validity, the average variance extracted (AVE) ranged from 0.61 for CC to 0.90 for intention to leave the industry. Table 3.3 presents the standardized loadings, Cronbach's α , AVE, and CR.

Table 3.3 Confirmatory factor analysis: Items, standardized factor loadings, Cronbach's α , AVE, and CR

Construct	Item ^a	Standard loading	CR	AVE
<i>Psychological Capital first order:</i>	SE1 SE2 SE3	0.916 0.914 0.812	0.916	0.777
Self-efficacy (SE)				
(Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.860$)				
<i>Psychological Capital first order:</i>	RE1 RE2 RE3	0.770 0.878 0.798	0.867	0.667
Resilience (RE)				
(Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.757$)				
<i>Psychological Capital first order:</i>	OP1 O2	0.867 0.927	0.892	0.806
Optimism (OP)				
(Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.763$)				
<i>Psychological Capital first order:</i>	HO2 HO3 HO4	0.877 0.901 0.814	0.895	0.683
Hope (HO)				
(Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.847$)				
Intention to leave the industry (ILI)	ILI1: I'm thinking about quitting the hospitality and tourism industry and finding a job elsewhere ILI2: I intend to quit the hospitality & tourism industry. ILI3: I expect to move into another industry in the future.	0.957 0.968 0.924	0.965	0.902
(Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.946$)				
Perceived organizational support (POS)	POS1: The organization I work for values my contribution to its well-being. POS 2: If the organization I work for could hire someone to replace me at a lower salary it would do so. (R) POS 3: The organization I work for fails to appreciate any extra effort from me. (R)	0.850 0.578 0.700	0.968	0.656
(Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.964$)				

(Continued)

Table 3.3 (Continued)

<i>Construct</i>	<i>Item^a</i>	<i>Standard loading</i>	<i>CR</i>	<i>AVE</i>
	POS 4: The organization I work for strongly considers my goals and values.	0.843		
	POS5: The organization I work for would ignore any complaint from me. (R)	0.822		
	POS6: The organization I work for disregards my best interests when it makes decisions that affect me. (R)	0.790		
	POS7: Help is available from the organization I work for when I have a problem.	0.787		
	POS8: The organization I work for really cares about my well-being.	0.914		
	POS9: Even if I did the best job possible, the organization I work for would fail to notice. (R)	0.798		
	POS10: The organization I work for is willing to help me when I need a special favor.	0.802		
	POS11: The organization I work for cares about my general satisfaction at work.	0.886		
	POS12: If given opportunity, the organization I work for would take advantage of me. (R)	0.719		
	POS13: The organization I work for shows very little concern for me. (R)	0.850		
	POS14: The organization I work for cares about my opinions.	0.885		
	POS15: The organization I work for takes pride in my accomplishments at work.	0.863		
	POS16: The organization I work for tries to make my job as interesting as possible.	0.812		
<i>Work-life balance: Work interference with personal life (WIPL)</i>	WIPL1: I come home from work too tired to do things I would like to do.	0.838	0.954	0.806
(Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.940$)	WIPL2: My job makes it difficult to maintain the kind of personal life I would like.	0.913		
	WIPL3: I often neglect my personal needs because of the demands of my work.	0.901		

(Continued)

Table 3.3 (Continued)

Construct	Item ^a	Standard loading	CR	AVE
	WIPL4: My personal life suffers because of my work.	0.933		
	WIPL5: I have to miss out on important personal activities due to the amount of time I spend doing work.	0.901		
Career commitment (CC) (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.891$)	CC1: I like this career too well to give it up	0.908	0.916	0.613
	CC2: If I could go into a different profession which paid the same, I would probably take it (R)	0.719		
	CC3: If I could do it all over again, I would not choose to work in this profession (R)	0.697		
	CC4: I definitely want a career for myself in this profession	0.911		
	CC5: If I had all the money I needed without working, I would probably still continue to work in this profession	0.693		
	CC6: I am disappointed that I ever entered this profession (R)	0.665		
	CC7: This is the ideal profession for a life's work	0.843		
Employee workplace well-being (WWB) (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.936$)	WWB1: I am satisfied with my work responsibilities	0.781	0.950	0.761
	WWB2: In general, I feel fairly satisfied with my present job	0.908		
	WWB3: I find real enjoyment in my work.	0.912		
	WWB4: I can always find ways to enrich my work	0.870		
	WWB5: Work is a meaningful experience for me	0.857		
	WWB6: I feel basically satisfied with my work achievements in my current job.	0.897		
Second order-constructs		Loadings	Weights	Significance
Psychological capital, second-order construct PsyCap	Self-efficacy (SE) Resilience (RE) Optimism (OP) Hope (HO)	0.829 0.743 0.790 0.898	0.335 0.137 0.357 0.377	*** *** *** ***

^a In accordance with the research permissions, the specific items included in the PsyCap construct cannot be disclosed.

Items denoted with (R) are reversed.

*** p < 0.01: Significance levels for the weights on the second-order formative constructs.

Table 3.4 Assessment of discriminant validity: Fornell and Larcker

<i>First-order constructs</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>RE</i>	<i>OP</i>	<i>HO</i>	<i>POS</i>	<i>WIPL</i>	<i>CC</i>	<i>WWB</i>
SE	0.882							
RE	0.573	0.817						
OP	0.439	0.505	0.898					
HO	0.687	0.620	0.576	0.827				
POS	0.419	-0.109	0.451	0.457	0.810			
WIPL	-0.214	-0.127	-0.246	-0.241	-0.438	0.898		
CC	0.355	0.170	0.388	0.376	0.558	-0.563	0.783	
WWB	0.445	0.222	0.532	0.510	0.764	-0.491	0.731	0.872

Boldface values show the square roots of AVE.

To evaluate discriminant validity, we employed the Fornell and Larcker (1981) approach alongside the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio (Henseler et al., 2015). The square root of the AVE for each construct exceeded its correlations with all other constructs. Additionally, all HTMT ratios were below the 0.9 threshold. Consequently, discriminant validity was confirmed (Tables 3.4 and 3.5).

As regards the second-order reflective-formative construct (i.e., PsyCap), the first-order constructs (self-efficacy, resilience, optimism, hope) were modeled as reflective, while the second-order construct (PsyCap) was modeled as formative. The first-order reflective constructs, as part of the second-order constructs, were acceptable in terms of item loadings, composite reliability, AVE (Table 3.4), and discriminant validity (Table 3.5). For the second-order formative construct, no multicollinearity problems for the lower-order constructs were detected (all VIFs were below 3). The construct weights on PsyCap were 0.34 for self-efficacy, 0.14 for resilience, 0.36 for optimism, and 0.38 for hope. All weights were statistically significant, indicating the appropriateness of the second-order constructs (Table 3.3).

Table 3.5 Assessment of discriminant validity: HTMT

	<i>SE</i>	<i>CC</i>	<i>HO</i>	<i>OP</i>	<i>POS</i>	<i>RE</i>	<i>WIPL</i>	<i>WWB</i>
SE								
CC	0.394							
HO	0.807	0.416						
OP	0.538	0.460	0.700					
POS	0.438	0.598	0.481	0.513				
RESI	0.720	0.206	0.793	0.610	0.114			
WIPL	0.224	0.608	0.256	0.286	0.461	0.145		
WWB	0.479	0.792	0.560	0.624	0.802	0.259	0.519	

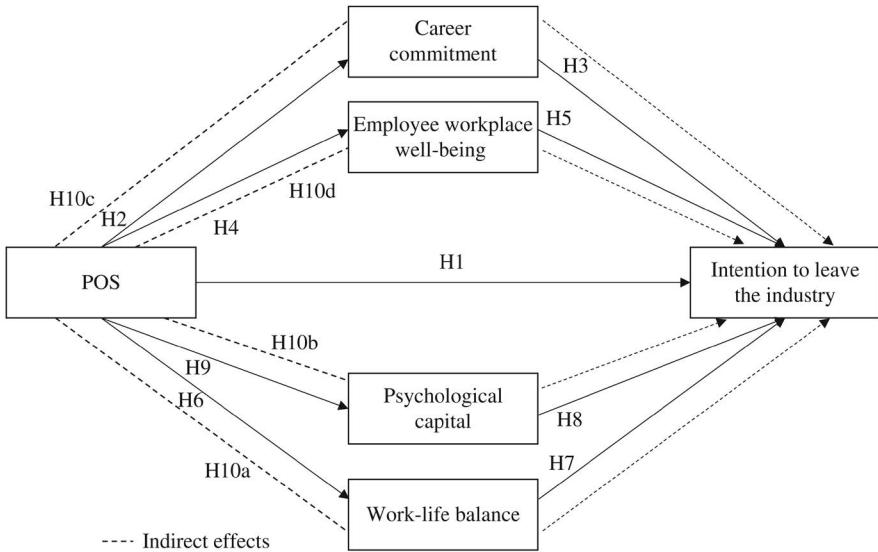


Figure 3.1 Presentation of our conceptual model

3.5.6 Structural model

In the subsequent phase, the proposed relationships (Figure 3.1) were evaluated using PLS-SEM. In particular, we utilized the SmartPLS 4. Before assessing the structural model, we checked the collinearity to ensure it did not bias the results. VIF values for the inner model ranged between 1 and 3.865, thus were below the recommended value of 5.0 (Hair et al., 2022). Then, we assessed the model's explanatory power by means of the coefficient of determination (R^2). For our main endogenous construct (i.e., the intention to leave the industry), R^2 was 0.699. Therefore, it was considered to be satisfactory.

To determine the significance of the path coefficients, we employed bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples, a resampling technique that enhances the reliability of the results by estimating the sampling distribution and providing confidence intervals for the parameters. Table 3.6 presents the standardized path coefficients, along with the corresponding t-values and significance levels of the hypothesized paths.

Above all, our results indicate that the relationship between POS and the intention to leave the industry was significant and positive ($t = 2.601, p = 0.009$), thereby supporting H1. Besides, we found significant and positive relationship between POS and career commitment ($t = 12.947, p = 0.000$), employee WWB ($t = 27.461, p = 0.000$), and psychological capital ($t = 11.647, p = 0.000$), which supports H2, H4, and H9. Furthermore, the relationship between POS and WLB, operationalized and measured as WIPL, was also significant. The negative sign indicates that work interferes with personal life, thereby reducing WLB ($t = 9.411, p = 0.000$). This, in turn, supports H6.

Table 3.6 Hypotheses testing

Hypotheses	Path coefficient (Sample Mean)	t-value	Results
H1 POS → ILI	-0.143	2.601***	Significant
H2 POS → CC	0.560	12.947***	Significant
H3 CC → ILI	-0.550	10.653***	Significant
H4 POS → WWB	0.764	27.461***	Significant
H5 WWB → ILI	-0.106	1.530	Non-significant
H6 POS → WIPL	-0.445	9.411***	Significant
H7 WIPL → ILI	0.164	3.622***	Significant
H8 PsyCap → ILI	0.144	4.044***	Significant
H9 POS → PsyCap	0.501	11.647***	Significant

* p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01; *** p < 0.001

As for factors directly affecting the intention to leave the industry, with one exception, all variables in question were significant predictors of the intention to leave, as expected a priori. Specifically, career commitment ($t = 10.653$, $p = 0.000$), WLB (again operationalized and measured as WIPL, $t = 3.622$, $p = 0.000$), and psychological capital measured as a single construct ($t = 4.044$, $p = 0.000$) were significantly and positively related to the intention to leave the industry, supporting H3, H7, and H8 (the inverted sign for H7 is due to the nature of the WLB measure, as just mentioned). However, contrary to our expectations, employee WWB was not significantly related to the intention to leave the industry ($t = 1.520$, $p = 0.126$), making H5 the only hypothesis that was not supported.

Regarding the control variables, gender, job tenure, workplace type, and country of residence were not significantly related to the intention to leave the industry ($t = 1.089$, $p = 0.276$, $t = 0.871$, $p = 0.384$, and $t = 0.318$, $p = 0.751$, $t = 1.041$, $p = 0.298$, respectively). In contrast, only age showed a positive relationship with the intention to leave the industry ($t = 2.335$, $p = 0.000$). This suggests that it is older individuals who are more likely to consider leaving the hospitality industry and seeking employment elsewhere.

3.5.7 Mediation effects

We then conducted a mediation analysis using the PLS-SEM approach once more. This method allowed us to test the relationships within the model, focusing specifically on the indirect effects. Through this analysis, we decomposed the total effects of the POS on the ILI into direct and indirect components, offering a more nuanced understanding of the underlying mechanisms. It is important to note that mediation occurs when an independent variable significantly affects a dependent variable and simultaneously influences a mediator, which in turn also affects the dependent variable (Hair et al., 2010).

To test the significance of these mediating effects, we employed bootstrapping procedures. To differentiate between full and partial mediation, we followed the criteria outlined by Hair et al. (2022). Specifically, partial mediation is indicated

Table 3.7 Mediation analysis: Hypotheses testing

Hypotheses	Path coefficient	t-value	Results
H10a POS → WIPL → ILI	-0.073	3.342***	Supported
H10b POS → PsyCap → ILI	0.072	3.756***	Supported
H10c POS → CC → ILI	-0.308	8.378***	Supported
H10d POS → WWB → ILI	-0.081	1.539	Non-supported

*** p < 0.001

when both the indirect and direct effects are significant; full mediation is indicated when only the indirect effect is significant and the direct effect is not. The results of the mediation analysis are presented in [Table 3.7](#).

Our results show that the negative direct effect of POS on the intention to leave the industry was significantly mediated by WLB, career commitment, and psychological capital ($t = 3.342$, $p = 0.000$; $t = 3.756$, $p = 0.000$; $t = 8.378$, $p = 0.000$, respectively), thereby supporting H10a, H10b, and H10c. Since the direct effect of POS on the intention to leave the industry was also significant, these variables acted as partial mediators. However, WWB was found to be a non-significant mediator in the relationship between POS and the intention to quit the industry ($t = 1.539$, $p = 0.124$), thus H10d was not supported.

3.5.8 Decomposition of the psychological capital construct

To enhance our understanding of how POS influences psychological capital and the impact of psychological capital on the intention to leave the industry, we disaggregated psychological capital into its constituent dimensions: self-efficacy, resilience, optimism, and hope. We then examined the relationships between each of these dimensions and POS, as well as their individual effects on the intention to leave the industry. This detailed analysis allowed us to explore how each specific dimension of psychological capital contributes to the decision to leave the industry and how POS shapes one's psychological capital. [Table 3.8](#) shows the results of the analysis.

Table 3.8 Relationships testing: Decomposition of psychological capital

Relationships	Path coefficient	t-value	Results
SE → ILI	0.117	2.179*	Significant
RE → ILI	0.009	0.249	Non-significant
OP → ILI	0.125	2.699**	Significant
HO → ILI	-0.060	1.227	Non-significant
POS → SE	0.422	7.602***	Significant
POS → RE	0.195	2.650**	Significant
POS → OP	0.450	8.737***	Significant
POS → HO	0.459	9.458***	Significant

* p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01; *** p < 0.001

Our results indicate that only two dimensions of psychological capital had a positive and significant effect on the intention to leave the industry, namely, self-efficacy ($t = 2.179$, $p = 0.029$) and optimism ($t = 2.699$, $p = 0.007$), while hope and resilience, surprisingly, turned out to be non-significantly related to the intention ($t = 1.227$, $p = 0.220$ and $t = 0.249$, $p = 0.803$, respectively). On the other hand, POS had a significant positive effect on all four dimensions of psychological capital (for self-efficacy, $p = 0.000$; for resilience $p = 0.008$; for optimism $p = 0.000$ and for hope $p = 0.000$).

3.6 Discussion of the findings

As anticipated, there was a negative relationship between POS and the intention to leave the industry (H1). This suggests that employees who view their organization as caring and supportive are less likely to consider leaving the hospitality sector. This finding aligns with previous research in the hospitality field. However, most studies have focused on the intention to quit a specific job rather than leaving the industry entirely, as research on the latter is relatively limited (Zientara et al., 2024). In addition, consistent with our initial assumptions, we observed a positive relationship between POS and career commitment (H2). It follows that individuals who feel supported and valued by their organization tend to show greater commitment to their careers, which echoes the findings from existing studies, albeit from outside the hospitality sector (Li et al., 2020). We also found a negative relationship between career commitment and the intention to leave the industry (H3). This indicates that employees who are committed to their careers are less likely to consider leaving the industry, reflecting both intuitive and research-supported findings. Furthermore, there was a positive relationship between POS and employee well-being (H4), reinforcing the well-established view in the literature that POS positively impacts the workplace and enhances employees' feelings about their work (Ni et al., 2015).

Despite the findings for the other hypotheses, H5 was not supported. Specifically, we found that the anticipated negative relationship between employee well-being and the intention to leave the industry was not statistically significant. In other words, our data did not show a significant link suggesting that employees with lower well-being are more likely to leave the hospitality industry. This result implies that while lower employee well-being could intuitively be expected to lead to a higher intention to leave the industry (Zientara et al., 2024), our study did not find a significant statistical connection between these two variables. This might suggest that other factors, beyond just employee well-being, are influencing employees' decisions to stay or leave the industry. For instance, aspects such as job security, career advancement opportunities, or external economic factors may play a more substantial role in determining employees' intentions to leave the hospitality sector (see also Lopes & Sargent, 2024).

We also found that POS was positively associated with employees' sense of WLB (H6). To clarify, since we measured WLB in terms of work WIPL, a positive relationship in our context is reflected by a negative sign, indicating less

interference. In other words, employees who felt valued and supported by their organization were more likely to perceive that their work did not significantly disrupt their personal lives, suggesting a healthier balance between work and personal activities. This finding indicates that employees who experience strong organizational support tend to report a better WLB, which is largely consistent with previous research ([Karatepe, 2013](#)). In essence, they feel that their work does not intrude excessively on their personal lives, which contributes to their overall sense of balance. Arguably, this underscores the importance of organizational support in helping employees manage their work and personal responsibilities effectively, thereby enhancing their well-being.

We also observed a negative relationship between employees' sense of WLB and their intention to leave the industry (H7). This means that employees who felt they had a good balance between work and personal life were less likely to consider leaving the hospitality industry. It follows that employees who perceive their work-life balance as satisfactory are less inclined to leave the industry (see also [Deery & Jago, 2015](#)). The corollary is that a positive work-life balance can be a significant factor in retaining employees, as it contributes to their overall job satisfaction and reduces their desire to exit the industry.

Furthermore, we found a significant relationship between psychological capital and the intention to leave the hospitality industry (H8). This result is consistent with the findings of [Bouzari and Karatepe \(2017\)](#) and [Karatepe and Karadas \(2014\)](#), but it contrasts with the research by [Li et al. \(2021\)](#) and [Kang et al. \(2018\)](#), contributing to the ongoing debate in the literature. It is important to note that our study focused on the intention to leave the industry as a whole, rather than the intention to quit a specific job or move to another company within the industry. This finding indicates that higher levels of psychological capital are associated with a greater intention to leave the hospitality industry. The implication is that employees with high psychological capital may be more confident in their ability to seek and secure alternative career opportunities outside the industry. The discrepancy with some previous studies could be attributed to the difference in focus: while our research looked at leaving the industry permanently, other studies may have concentrated on job-specific turnover or transitions within the hospitality sector. This underscores the need for further research to explore how psychological capital influences broader career decisions beyond individual job changes.

That said, when examining specific components of psychological capital, we found a significant relationship between self-efficacy and optimism and the intention to leave the industry (H8a and H8c). In contrast, the relationships between resilience and hope with the intention to leave were not significant (H8b and H8d). These findings suggest that among the components of psychological capital, self-efficacy, and optimism are particularly influential in shaping employees' intentions to leave the hospitality industry. Employees who feel confident in their abilities (self-efficacy) and maintain a positive outlook (optimism) may be more inclined to consider leaving the industry, possibly due to their belief in finding better opportunities elsewhere. On the other hand, resilience and hope did not show a significant impact on the intention to leave, indicating that the ability to bounce back from setbacks and a general sense

of goal-oriented motivation may not directly affect employees' decisions to exit the industry. This highlights that specific psychological traits can differently influence career decisions and hence calls for more research.

We also found a significant positive relationship between POS and psychological capital (H9). This finding is consistent with studies suggesting that a supportive work environment can enhance psychological capital ([Avey et al., 2011](#); [Mao et al., 2021](#); [Sameer et al., 2019](#); [Wu & Nguyen, 2019](#)). Additionally, there were positive relationships between POS and each component of psychological capital: self-efficacy (H9a), resilience (H9b), optimism (H9c), and hope (H9d). These results indicate that when employees perceive strong support from their organization, their overall psychological capital, as well as its individual components, are positively impacted. This means that a supportive work environment not only boosts employees' general psychological strengths but also enhances their specific traits such as confidence in their abilities (self-efficacy), ability to recover from setbacks (resilience), positive outlook (optimism), and motivation toward future goals (hope). This underscores the importance of fostering a supportive organizational culture to cultivate and strengthen the psychological resources of employees, which can contribute to their overall well-being and performance.

Finally, regarding the mediation hypotheses, we found support for H10a, H10b, and H10c. Specifically, WLB (H10a), psychological capital (H10b), and career commitment (H10c) mediated the relationship between POS and the intention to leave the industry. However, H10d, which posited that employee well-being would mediate the relationship between POS and the intention to leave the industry, was not supported. These findings highlight the crucial mediating roles of WLB, psychological capital, and career commitment in the relationship between POS and employees' intentions to leave the hospitality industry. This suggests that POS influences employees' decisions to stay or leave the industry through its positive impact on their work-life balance, psychological resources, and commitment to their careers. In contrast, employee well-being did not significantly mediate this relationship, indicating that while well-being is important, it may not be the primary pathway through which organizational support affects turnover intentions. This plays up the multifaceted nature of employee retention and the importance of addressing various aspects of employees' professional and personal lives to reduce turnover in the hospitality industry.

3.7 Summary and conclusions

3.7.1 Theoretical contributions

Our study offers several theoretical contributions to the field of organizational behavior and human resource management within the hospitality industry (e.g., [Afsar & Badir, 2016](#); [Chiang & Hsieh, 2012](#); [Karatepe, 2012](#)). First, we extend the existing literature on POS by focusing on its impact on the intention to leave the industry rather than just the intention to quit a specific job. This shift in focus is crucial as it broadens the understanding of employee retention at an industry-wide level,

a relatively unexplored area in hospitality research (indeed, most of the relevant studies are framed within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, relying on data gathered during that time; this unique period, being an anomaly, may distort the findings to some extent) (Chen & Chen, 2021; Lopes & Sargent, 2024; Zientara et al., 2024). Our findings that POS negatively correlates with the intention to leave the industry and positively correlates with career commitment and employee well-being reinforce the significance of organizational support in enhancing employee loyalty and satisfaction (Eisenberger et al., 2020). This, in turn, provides further evidence of the validity of OST (Kurtessis et al., 2017).

Furthermore, our study contributes to the psychological capital literature by highlighting its role in employees' career decisions (Luthans & Avolio, 2007; Luthans et al., 2007, 2008). We found that high psychological capital is associated with a greater intention to leave the industry, particularly emphasizing the influence of self-efficacy and optimism. This finding suggests that employees with strong psychological resources may feel more empowered to pursue opportunities outside the hospitality sector, a nuance that enriches the understanding of psychological capital's impact beyond job-specific turnover intentions. In addition, our research uncovers the nuanced relationships between the components of psychological capital and turnover intentions. While self-efficacy and optimism were significant predictors of the intention to leave the industry, resilience and hope were not. This distinction indicates that different psychological traits have varying influences on career decisions, calling for more targeted research on how specific components of psychological capital affect employee behavior.

3.7.2 Practical implications

From a practical standpoint, our findings suggest several strategies for hospitality organizations aiming to reduce turnover and enhance employee retention. First, enhancing POS can be a critical lever for retaining employees. By creating a supportive and caring work environment, organizations can foster greater career commitment and reduce employees' intentions to leave the industry. This can be achieved, among other measures, by instituting a fairness-centric organizational culture and putting into place employee recognition programs.

Second, improving employees' WLB emerges as a key factor in retention. Our study shows that employees who perceive a healthy balance between work and personal life are less likely to consider leaving the industry. Therefore, hospitality organizations should implement policies that promote WLB and wellness programs that help employees manage their professional and personal responsibilities effectively. However, given the idiosyncrasies of the hospitality industry, typical WLB measures can be difficult to implement, as the presence of an employee is fundamental to maintaining service quality and guest satisfaction. This necessity for on-site staff availability often leads to irregular and long working hours, making it challenging to balance work and personal life. Consequently, innovative and flexible approaches are required to address these unique challenges while still supporting employees' well-being.

Third, the role of psychological capital in turnover intentions highlights the importance of fostering employees' psychological resources. Training and development programs aimed at enhancing self-efficacy and optimism can empower employees to feel more confident and positive about their career prospects within the industry. However, given that higher psychological capital was associated with a greater intention to leave the industry, it is also important for organizations to align employees' career aspirations with opportunities within the sector to retain top talent. Lastly, our mediation analysis underlines the importance of career commitment, WLB, and psychological capital as pathways through which POS affects turnover intentions. This suggests that hospitality companies should adopt a holistic approach to employee retention that addresses multiple facets of the professional and personal lives of staff. In other words, by fostering a supportive work environment, promoting a healthy work-life balance, and enhancing employees' psychological resources, hospitality employers can create a more engaged and committed workforce, ultimately reducing turnover rates in the hospitality industry. Therefore, [Chapter 4](#) examines how hospitality companies pursue this objective in practice.

Note

- 1 We may note in passing that, in August 2024, Kamala Harris, a Democratic presidential candidate, announced in Las Vegas that she would eliminate income tax on tips earned by hospitality workers. This proposal followed a similar pledge made by Donald Trump, a Republican candidate.

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4 Employer approaches to improving the workplace

An ESG and CSR perspective

4.1 Corporate accountability through ESG ratings and CSR reporting

4.1.1 *The nexus between ESG and CSR*

Environmental, social, and governance (ESG) and CSR are closely related concepts that both focus on a company's commitment to sustainable and ethical business practices. While CSR traditionally represents a company's voluntary efforts to contribute positively to society and the environment ([van Marrewijk, 2003](#)), ESG expands on this by providing a more structured framework that includes specific criteria for evaluating these efforts. ESG encompasses the ESG factors that are critical to long-term sustainability, much like CSR, but with a stronger emphasis on measurable outcomes and accountability to investors and other stakeholders ([Lewis & Webley, 1994](#); [Méndez-Rodríguez et al., 2014](#)). Of course, the overlap between ESG and CSR is evident in their shared goals of promoting ethical business practices, but ESG's structured approach and integration into investment decision-making render it a more formalized extension of CSR principles.¹

Specifically, the “Environmental” aspect of ESG pertains to a company’s impact on the natural environment. As mentioned in [Chapter 1](#), this includes its efforts to reduce carbon dioxide emissions, manage resource use efficiently, and protect biodiversity. It follows that companies are evaluated on their environmental policies, such as energy efficiency, waste management practices, adoption of renewable energy sources, and adherence to environmental regulations.

The “Social” aspect of ESG focuses on how companies handle their relationships with employees, customers, communities, and society at large. This dimension covers issues such as labor practices, human rights, non-discrimination, product safety and quality, community involvement, and philanthropy. Given the focus of this monograph, of particular interest is the “Workforce” component of the “Social” dimension (which will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter).

“Governance”, by contrast, refers to the internal systems and processes by which companies are directed, controlled, and operated. Simply put, good governance ensures transparency and accountability throughout the organization. Key governance factors include board independence, executive compensation practices,

minority shareholder rights, anti-corruption measures, and, last but not least, adherence to regulatory requirements. It is widely accepted that strong governance structures play an important role in maintaining investor trust and reducing the incidence of CSI ([Pae & Choi, 2011](#); [Tang et al., 2015](#)).

Crucially, there needs to be a recognition that ESG ratings are externally assigned by independent agencies that evaluate and rate companies based on publicly available information, including sustainability/CSR reports, regulatory filings, news sources, and direct company communications. ESG ratings aim to provide investors and other stakeholders with an objective measure of a company's performance across ESG dimensions. These ratings can influence investment decisions, as they reflect how well a company manages risks and opportunities related to social and environmental sustainability. However, the methodologies and criteria used by different rating agencies can vary, leading to discrepancies in how companies are scored. Notwithstanding this, it is clear that, due to the global reach, environmental impact, and large workforce of the hospitality industry, ESG considerations are essential for companies managing hotels, restaurants, or cruise lines.

4.1.2 ESG and the hospitality industry

In light of the arguments presented earlier in this monograph, it is fair to say that the hospitality industry's labor-intensive nature and the physically demanding roles of line-level employees underscore the critical importance of the "Workforce" category within the "S" dimension of ESG. This means that hospitality companies are assessed based on their approaches to labor practices, employee well-being, and overall workforce management. Key metrics in ESG ratings of particular relevance to the hospitality sector include employee turnover rates, DEI policies, training and development programs, and health and safety standards. These metrics offer insights into how effectively companies manage their workforce. For example, as suggested by our empirical study in the previous chapter, high turnover rates may indicate dissatisfaction due to a lack of POS, leading to weakened loyalty. On the other hand, strong training programs and thorough safety protocols usually reflect a commitment to fostering employees' professional development and protecting their health.

Therefore, it is particularly insightful to examine the ESG ratings and scores of major public hospitality companies as a proxy – albeit an imperfect one – for the industry as a whole. Among approximately 1,200 hospitality firms listed on global stock exchanges, fewer than 300 have their relevant data collected and analyzed in [LSEG Eikon \(2024\)](#), primarily because these companies provide comprehensive CSR reports with the necessary data. According to the latest available figures, typically from 2023, the average workforce score was 52 out of 100 (based on [LSEG Eikon, 2024](#)). Nearly 28% of companies received an "A" rating (or grade) ("A+" to "A-"), indicating excellent working condition policies. Another 25% earned a "B", and 25% were rated "C", reflecting moderate to satisfactory employee conditions. However, over 22% were graded "D", suggesting unsatisfactory policies in this area. Notably, for companies based in the United States and the United Kingdom, the distribution of ratings was slightly different, with only

21.6% achieving an “A” and 39% falling into the “D” category. Among hospitality sectors, the distribution of workforce scores varies. In the Hotels, Resorts, and Cruise Lines category, 35% of companies received an “A” rating, while 19% were graded “D”. In the restaurant sector, 28% of companies achieved an “A” grade, but nearly 30% were rated “D”, implying a significant disparity in working condition policies across different hospitality industries.

On average, the companies reporting CSR data had a workforce of 25,622 employees, including both part-time and full-time staff. Net employment growth over the last year was 10.05%, while employee turnover was nearly 27%, with over 8% being involuntary. The average employee tenure was approximately 6.8 years, which, by hospitality standards, should be considered relatively long (see also [Mooney et al., 2016](#)). In terms of working conditions, employee satisfaction, as reported by the companies, reached nearly 80%. However, the salary gap, measured by the ratio of the CEO’s total compensation to the average employee’s salary and benefits, averaged 236.09 – an imbalance that raises serious questions about fairness and has significant ethical implications.

Around 45% of companies offering relevant data reported providing flexible working hours to promote WLB. However, only about 20% offered daycare facilities or related benefits such as vouchers, referrals, or allowances. Similarly, about 20% of hospitality firms reported having so-called employee resource groups, which are voluntary groups formed around shared characteristics like ethnicity, sexual orientation, or disability status. Regarding employee health and safety, nearly 90% of companies reporting on these issues claim to have policies in place to improve employee health and safety, including processes or initiatives aimed at reducing occupational accidents, injuries, and illnesses. Still, only about 40% have similar policies for their supply chains. Around 70% of companies provide health and safety training for executives, and over 80% offer training specifically for executives in their supply chain. Yet, less than 3% demonstrate, through surveys or measurements in their CSR reports, any improvement in health and safety within their supply chain. Furthermore, fewer than 45% of hospitality companies reporting on workforce-related issues have dedicated health and safety teams responsible for inspections, incident investigations, and related activities.

In terms of DEI, women make up an average of 45% of the workforce, 46% of new hires, and nearly 40% of managerial roles. Approximately 50% of employees are from ethnic minorities, but less than 2% are individuals with disabilities. While over 90% of firms report having a policy promoting diversity and equal opportunities, only around 20% set specific DEI targets or objectives. As regards training and career development, over 85% of companies report having policies that support employee skills training or career advancement. Around 80% have policies specifically aimed at improving both employee skills training and career development paths (by and large, companies spend about \$200 per employee on training, with an average of 30 training hours per employee annually). Still, fewer than 20% offer CSR/ESG training to suppliers and only around 40% prioritize internal promotions. Finally, for companies that report labor union representation, an average of 23.7% of employees are represented by independent labor unions or covered by

collective bargaining agreements. Nevertheless, only 2% reported strikes or industrial disputes that resulted in lost working days.

While examining ESG ratings and statistics for major hospitality companies gives an overview of workforce management in the industry, it is also essential to analyze the specific CSR reports these companies issue to gain a complete understanding. Yet, before we proceed with this, let us first explore the theoretical and practical aspects of CSR reporting in the hospitality sector.

4.1.3 CSR reporting in the hospitality industry

A sustainability or CSR report is essentially a company-controlled narrative, leading to concerns about subjectivity and selectivity. As a result, CSR reporting has increasingly come under regulation over the past decade ([Cooper & Michelon, 2022](#)). This has prompted legislative efforts to standardize the processes for preparing these reports and determining what content must be disclosed. Notably, in the European Union, the EU Non-Financial Reporting Directive (NFRD) has increased reporting requirements for publicly listed companies compared to private ones. It encourages stakeholder engagement in materiality assessments but allows flexibility in compliance. In the United States, since 2010, the SEC has used a principles-based approach to non-financial disclosures, making stakeholder engagement and materiality reporting voluntary ([Guix et al., 2025](#)). This regulatory landscape has led to the widespread adoption of reporting frameworks (or standards) like the Global Reporting Initiative ([GRI, 2022](#)) and the International Sustainability Standards Board (ISSB), which provide structured guidelines to help companies navigate these varying requirements.

Historically, research on hospitality CSR reporting has focused on common reporting topics, the types of information disclosed, and methodological issues ([de Grosbois, 2012](#); [Holcomb et al., 2007](#)). For example, [De Grosbois \(2012\)](#) identified inconsistencies in methodologies, varied metrics, and unclear reporting scopes in hotel companies' CSR reports. In response to these identified issues, recent research has increasingly concentrated on examining and refining the reporting process itself, leading to the development of more specialized methodologies for CSR reporting in the hospitality sector. [Guix and Font \(2020\)](#), for instance, developed the Materiality Balanced Scorecard, an integrated framework that merges elements of the Balanced Scorecard, the Sustainability Balanced Scorecard, and the AA1000 Stakeholder Engagement Standard. This framework emphasizes stakeholder engagement, which refers to the practices undertaken by a firm to involve stakeholders "in a positive manner in organisational activities" ([Greenwood, 2007](#), p. 318), and rests on the following pillars: inclusiveness, materiality, and responsiveness ([Guix et al., 2018](#)). Specifically, inclusiveness underscores the necessity of involving all stakeholders in decision-making processes, while materiality prioritizes issues that hold the greatest relevance and impact for both stakeholders and the organization itself. Responsiveness entails addressing stakeholder feedback promptly.

Importantly, the latest research explores how institutional logics – conceptualized as underlying values, socially constructed beliefs, and historically shaped praxes

that influence organizational decision-making – determine the reporting process (Guix et al., 2025). The prevailing view is that two dominant institutional logics influence sustainability reporting: market logic and stakeholder logic (Edgley et al., 2015). Market logic is rooted in capitalism or the neoclassical economics paradigm (Friedman, 2002). Consequently, it prioritizes profit maximization and operational efficiency, focusing on how environmental and social issues influence financial performance. In contrast, stakeholder logic is steeped in stakeholder theory (Laplume et al., 2008) and takes a broader view, taking into account the interests of various stakeholders and playing up the impact of corporate behavior on them and society as a whole.

These different logics influence the content and priorities of sustainability reports, depending on the chosen framework (Contrafatto, 2022). For instance, the GRI framework aligns with stakeholder logic, while the ISSB framework is more market-oriented (Guix et al., 2025). Companies often navigate these competing logics by blending approaches to meet the requirements of various reporting frameworks. The situation is further complicated by the fact that even in countries where sustainability reporting is mandated, organizations have the flexibility to choose their reporting standards. To address this, the EU's Corporate Social Reporting Directive (CSRD) aims to standardize reporting practices and improve information comparability.

We can now proceed with analyzing the CSR reports from selected hospitality companies, keeping in mind that our goal is not to evaluate the quality of the reports themselves but to ascertain what actions these companies are taking for their employees.

4.2 Analysis of the workforce-related sections of hospitality companies' CSR reports

4.2.1 Procedure

To capture what hospitality companies do for their employees, we conducted a content analysis of workforce-related sections in their sustainability/CSR reports. Our aim was to identify employee-centered initiatives and activities across six key categories (dimensions) that conceptually combine the core aspects of POS, employee-oriented CSR, sustainable employment practices, and decent work. As noted throughout our text and supported by our review of relevant literature, there is considerable overlap between these concepts (García-Rodríguez et al., 2021; Wang & Cheung, 2024). Although different authors highlight varying nuances and use slightly different terminologies, the core principles are fundamentally interconnected.

Based on our analysis, we identified the following categories: (1) core benefits, working conditions, and fundamental workers' rights; (2) health and safety; (3) employee well-being and wellness; (4) diversity, equity, and inclusion; (5) development and growth; (6) support for immigrants and refugees. Our approach at this stage was to align these dimensions with the arguments and conceptualizations

laid out earlier in the monograph, which allowed us to capture the essence of each element while maintaining a straightforward analysis and avoiding unnecessary complexity. Subsequently, a more granular analysis enabled us to identify several themes within each category.

To ensure consistency and comparability in our analysis, we adhered to a standardized content analysis methodology. Content analysis is a method used to systematically collect and examine the content found within texts (this content can include words, meanings, images, symbols, concepts, themes, or any form of communicable message) (Neumann, 2003). It allows for the objective identification and classification of themes or features in communication (Hsie, 2012). Our approach involved the systematic development of a coding framework designed to categorize and interpret the qualitative data found in the reports. The coding framework was built around the six key categories mentioned above, ensuring a structured and comprehensive evaluation (Guix et al., 2018).

We began by defining a detailed set of codes to represent the various initiatives and activities within each of the six categories. These codes were developed through an iterative process, informed by a review of existing literature on POS, employee-oriented CSR, sustainable employment practices, and decent work (Baum, 2018; Eisenberger et al., 1986; García-Rodríguez et al., 2021; González-de-la-Rosa et al., 2023; ILO, 1999; Kurtessis et al., 2017; Wang & Cheung, 2024). The codes were grouped based on their alignment with each POS dimension, ensuring that all relevant aspects of broadly understood employee-centric support and care were captured. After the coding tree was established, we proceeded to identify specific sections in the sustainability/CSR reports that addressed employee-related matters. This involved a close reading of the reports, with particular attention paid to mentions of workforce initiatives, policies, and activities. The identified sections were then imported into MAXQDA software for systematic analysis.

In particular, using the pre-built coding tree, we applied the codes to the relevant sections of the reports. MAXQDA software facilitated the organization and classification of the data, enabling us to track the presence and frequency of employee-centered initiatives across different companies (Guix & Font, 2020). Each report was coded according to its alignment with the predefined categories, ensuring that the analysis was both consistent and replicable. Importantly, to enhance the reliability of our findings, we applied a double-coding approach (Hay, 2005) for the first five reports. Two coders, both authors of this monograph, independently coded the reports using the same coding framework. After completing the initial coding, we compared our results and discussed any differences or uncertainties. This process helped us refine the codes, resolve ambiguities, and ensure consistency in the interpretation of the data. Following the comparison, any necessary adjustments were made to the coding tree based on the discrepancies observed. This step allowed us to further clarify the coding definitions and enhance the accuracy of the analysis. Once consensus was reached, the remaining reports were coded accordingly.

4.2.2 Sample

For the analysis, we selected 50 hospitality firms from the United States and the United Kingdom with the highest available “workforce” scores, as provided by the most recent data from LSEG Eikon. The decision to focus on companies with the highest scores was driven by the goal of identifying firms that are (considered to be) leaders in supporting their employees, allowing us to capture best practices in this area. We then proceeded to download the companies’ reports – typically titled sustainability, CSR, ESG, or impact reports – in PDF format. If a PDF version of the report was not available (e.g., when the company provided information across different sections of their website), we excluded that company from the analysis (we also excluded a company if there was a cross-listing). As a result, our final sample consisted of 40 hospitality firms, including 29 from the United States and 11 from the United Kingdom (Table 4.1). In terms of subsectors, the sample included eight companies from casinos and gaming, 10 from hotels, motels, and cruise lines, 16 from restaurants, pubs, bars, and food services, two from gym, fitness, and spa centers, and two from travel agencies and online services. The average workforce score for the selected companies was 74.89 (out of 100) – much above the average for the sector among publicly listed companies, and the average general ESG score was 64.58. On average, the number of employees in the selected companies was over 67,000 and their average revenue, as by the most recent data, was \$9.2 billion.

Table 4.1 Hospitality and tourism companies with published CSR reports selected for the analysis

No	Company	Year	Title	Number of employees	GICS sub-industry name	Country of headquarters
1	Airbnb Inc	2023	Sustainable and Community Update	6,907	Hotels, Resorts & Cruise Lines	United States
2	Aramark	2023	Progress report	262,550	Restaurants	United States
3	Booking Holdings Inc	2022	Sustainability report	23,600	Hotels, Resorts & Cruise Lines	United States
4	Boyd Gaming Corp	2023	Corporate and social responsibility report	16,129	Casinos & Gaming	United States
5	Brinker International Inc	2022	Sustainability report	64,323	Restaurants	United States
6	Caesars Entertainment Inc	2022	Corporate Social Responsibility Report	51,000	Casinos & Gaming	United States
7	Carnival Corp	2022	Sustainability report	104,000	Hotels, Resorts & Cruise Lines	United States
8	Chipotle Mexican Grill Inc	2021	Chipotle Sustainability Report	116,068	Restaurants	United States

(Continued)

Table 4.1 (Continued)

No	Company	Year	Title	Number of employees	GICS sub-industry name	Country of headquarters
9	Choice Hotels International Inc	2023	Environmental, Social and Governance Report	1,800	Hotels, Resorts & Cruise Lines	United States
10	Compass Group PLC	2022	Our planet promise. A sustainable future for all	562,460	Restaurants	United Kingdom
11	Cracker Barrel Old Country Store Inc	2023	ESG Report	77,000	Restaurants	United States
12	Deliveroo PLC	2022	Annual Report/ Strategic report	3,630	Restaurants	United Kingdom
13	Domino's Pizza Inc	2022	Sustainability Report	11,200	Restaurants	United States
14	Entain PLC	2023-2024	Entain ESG Report. It is your game	23,650		
15	Expedia Group Inc	2022	Global impact report	17,100	Hotels, Resorts & Cruise Lines	United States
16	Greggs PLC	2022	Sustainability report	30,085	Restaurants	United Kingdom
17	GYM Group PLC	2022	Sustainability report	1,837	Leisure Facilities	United Kingdom
18	Hilton Worldwide Holdings Inc	2022	Hilton Environmental, social and governance report	178,000	Hotels, Resorts & Cruise Lines	United States
19	InterContinental Hotels Group PLC	2023	Responsible Business Report	13,451	Hotels, Resorts & Cruise Lines	United Kingdom
20	International Game Technology PLC	2022	Sustainability report	11,000	Casinos & Gaming	United Kingdom
21	JD Wetherspoon PLC	2021	Annual Report Supplement. Environment, Responsible Retailing, People, Awards	24,450	Restaurants	United Kingdom
22	Las Vegas Sands Corp	2022	Environmental, Social and Governance report	38,400	Casinos & Gaming	United States
23	Marriott International Inc	2022	Serve 360 Report: Environmental, Social and Governance Progress	148,000	Hotels, Resorts & Cruise Lines	United States
24	Marston's PLC	2022	Marston's PLC Task force on climate-related financial disclosure report	12,292	Restaurants	United Kingdom

(Continued)

Table 4.1 (Continued)

No	Company	Year	Title	Number of employees	GICS sub-industry name	Country of headquarters
25	McDonald's Corp	2022-2023	Impact Report	150,000	Restaurants	United States
26	MGM Resorts International	2022	Consolidated ESG Factbook	45,000	Casinos & Gaming	United States
27	Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings Ltd	2023	ESG Report	41,000	Hotels, Resorts & Cruise Lines	United States
28	Papa John's International Inc	2022	Corporate Responsibility Highlights	13,200	Restaurants	United States
29	Planet Fitness Inc	2022	ESG Report	3,411	Leisure Facilities	United States
30	Rank Group PLC	2023	Sustainability Report	4,337	Casinos & Gaming	United Kingdom
31	Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd	2022	Environmental, Social and Governance Report	98,200	Hotels, Resorts & Cruise Lines	United States
32	Shake Shack Inc	2021	Stand for something good. Summary	12,196	Restaurants	United States
33	Starbucks Corp	2021	Global Environmental & Social Impact Report	381,000	Restaurants	United States
34	Sweetgreen Inc	2022	Impact Report	6,186	Restaurants	United States
35	Travel + Leisure Co	2022	Environmental, Social and Governance Report	19,000	Hotels, Resorts & Cruise Lines	United States
36	Wendys Co	2021	Corporate Responsibility Report	5,100	Restaurants	United States
37	Whitbread PLC	2022/23	Environmental, Social and Governance Report	39,611	Hotels, Resorts & Cruise Lines	United Kingdom
38	Wyndham Hotels & Resorts Inc	2023	Environmental, Social, and Governance Report	2,300	Hotels, Resorts & Cruise Lines	United States
39	Wynn Resorts Ltd	2022	ESG Report	27,800	Casinos & Gaming	United States
40	Yum! Brands Inc	2022	Global Citizenship & Sustainability Report	25,000	Restaurants	United States

The links to these CSR reports can be found in the References section.

4.3 Discussion of the findings and identification of best practices

4.3.1 Core benefits, working conditions, and fundamental rights

As mentioned earlier, the first category we identified pertains to the protection of fundamental workers' rights and the assurance of satisfactory working conditions. These rights and benefits, such as fair wages, reasonable working hours, and access to benefits like health insurance and retirement plans, are the anchor of job security and satisfaction for employees (ILO, 1999; Wang & Cheung, 2024). This is especially significant when considering the implicit-explicit CSR framework (Matten & Moon, 2008) and the role of employee-oriented CSR in liberal market economies like the United States and the United Kingdom. In these economies, state and labor laws provide less protection and support than in Continental Europe, offering comparatively generous work-related benefits to workers in low-wage sectors like hospitality becomes even more essential.

As we already know, the hospitality industry is well-known for its challenging working conditions, including unsociable hours, low pay, job instability, and a lack of union support, all of which contribute to job insecurity, financial instability, and a diminished quality of life (Baum et al., 2023; García-Rodríguez et al., 2021). Our findings from the previous chapter, along with evidence from earlier research, suggest that employees who feel supported and receive competitive compensation (relative to industry standards) are more motivated and engaged, often going above and beyond in delivering quality service, and less likely to quit.

Crucially, among most important themes covered in the sections addressing core benefits, working conditions, and fundamental rights, we identified: (1) fair and competitive compensation; (2) core benefits including healthcare, pensions, financial stability; (3) retention strategies and internal promotion; (4) flexible work arrangements; (5) employee recognition and rewards programs; (6) open communication and employee voice; and (7) freedom of association, unions and collective bargaining.

It should be noted that themes related to core benefits, working conditions, and fundamental rights in the CSR reports were not the most prevalent in terms of both frequency and percentage share in the coded sections of the reports with an exception for parts related to culture in the company. Although 31 out of 40 reports analyzed addressed this theme to some extent, it constituted, on average, 20% of employee-focused sections of the CSR reports and less than 4% of the total report. The greatest attention was given to general description of company's corporate culture typically using broad and general statements designed to portray the organization as open and welcoming (77.5% of analyzed companies). Furthermore, working conditions, including work flexibility, retention strategies, employee recognition, engagement, and rewards programs, were described by 75% of companies analyzed, and issues related to compensation and core benefits were discussed by 62.5% of analyzed firms. Much less focus was placed on freedom of association and co-operation with unions. Only seven companies mention these aspects in their CSR reports. Let us now examine each of the themes mentioned above to see what hospitality companies report about them.

4.3.1.1 Fair and competitive compensation

Without a doubt, ensuring fair and competitive wages matters greatly in the hospitality industry. The following quotations illustrate what companies are doing to address this issue.

Pay rates for all employees are above the relevant National Minimum Wage and National Living Wage. In addition to basic pay, all employees are eligible for a company bonus scheme paid monthly to pub-based staff and bi-yearly to head office-based staff.

(Wetherspoon)

In 2023, Boyd completed the implementation of a \$15/hour minimum wage for all non-tipped, non-represented team members nationwide, demonstrating our commitment to paying a living wage to all team members.

(Boyd Gaming)

The average hourly wage for our North America employees in 2022 was \$38.84, and 100 percent of Wynn employees in North America earned above minimum wage in 2022.

(Wynn Resorts)

Since May 2019, our U.S. shoreside team has earned a minimum hourly wage of \$15 per hour, except for certain teams that have a lower hourly wage combined with a higher incentive. In October 2022, we proudly established an \$18 per hour minimum wage for our non-commission-based shoreside employees.

(Norwegian Cruise Line)

Another recurring element in this theme is the implementation of performance-based compensation systems. Indeed, some organizations adopt a pay-for-performance philosophy, where employees are rewarded based on individual contributions through bonuses, equity, and merit increases. Arguably, such systems incentivize employees to excel in their roles, directly linking compensation to performance, which is especially effective in roles that are customer-centric and service-oriented, such as in hospitality. The following quotes provide examples of such initiatives.

We attract and retain talented team members by offering competitive compensation and benefits. Our pay-for-performance compensation philosophy for our shoreside team is based on rewarding each team member's individual contributions. We use a combination of fixed and variable pay components which can include base salary, bonus, equity, commissions, and merit increases.

(Norwegian Cruise Line)

Crew, Kitchen Managers and Service Managers are eligible to receive a merit increase after each review based on their performance and overall contribution to the restaurant.

(Chipotle)

In addition to our General Managers, we offer performance-based bonuses to the entire restaurant management team. Top results equal top rewards.

(Brinker International)

Particularly noteworthy are those initiatives focused on reducing the negative impacts of the cost-of-living crisis, fueled by rising housing costs and surging food prices. In response, some hospitality companies adjusted wages based on cost-of-living assessments. These wage adjustments were intended to help employees maintain a reasonable standard of living despite the inflationary pressures. For obvious reasons, such initiatives are especially important in hospitality (and they must have played a crucial role in 2022, a year marked by a significant squeeze on living standards). The following quotes provide illustrative examples.

As the cost of living increases in many of our communities, wages don't always follow. To ensure that our shoreside employees earn enough to live comfortably, we conducted an assessment in 2021 and implemented adjustments in 2022 for all U.S. employees.

(Royal Caribbean Cruises)

Wynn Resorts responded to rising inflation in 2022 with a cost-of-living adjustment for all employees. This reinvestment into our workforce was based on market findings from the compensation committee.

(Wynn Resorts)

4.3.1.2 Core benefits: Healthcare, retirement plans, and financial security

The consensus now is that offering core benefits like healthcare, retirement plans, and other financial security measures is a key responsibility of companies toward their employees. As noted earlier in this chapter, this is particularly important in liberal market economies like the United States and the United Kingdom, where state-provided benefits are limited – especially in America, which lacks a universal healthcare system similar to those in Europe. As a result, when employers provide healthcare benefits, it ensures that employees are covered for medical emergencies, routine checkups, and preventive care. Of course, healthcare benefits are particularly important in sectors like hospitality, where the physical demands of the job can lead to health issues. Line-level workers in this industry often face irregular hours, long shifts, and physically strenuous tasks, making access to affordable and comprehensive healthcare absolutely crucial. Again, it is worth providing some real-life examples:

Good work begins with good health, which is why we offer all employees affordable health insurance. All part-time and full-time employees, their

spouses, and dependents are eligible for health insurance as of the first of the month following 30 days from their date of hire. This includes medical, dental, and vision plans. Employees have access to Health Advocate, an advocacy service enabled by technology, at no cost. We added this service with the aim of making healthcare accessible to all our employees.

(Chipotle)

We offer a range of healthcare options, including medical, dental, and vision coverage, ensuring that employees can access care for themselves and their families [...]. Additionally, team members who average 20 to 30 hours per week are eligible to enroll in ‘Mini Med Plans’, which is medical coverage designed specifically for our part-time team members.

(Boyd Gaming)

Our Company provides health plans that include medical, dental and vision to cover team members, their spouses, domestic partners and/or dependents.

(Norwegian Cruise Line)

Retirement plans are another essential component of employee benefits, providing workers with the financial security needed for their future. Offering 401(k) plans in the United States, pensions, or similar retirement savings schemes helps employees plan for their post-work life, reducing financial anxiety and, at least theoretically, contributing to long-term loyalty. In hospitality, where wages are often lower than in other industries, robust retirement benefits are thought to play a part in creating a sustainable and supportive work environment. Employers who provide matching contributions, such as through 401(k) programs in the United States, further enhance this sense of security, encouraging employees to save for their futures (which is especially prudent given the fast-rising cost of living in major metropolitan areas). The following examples are of note:

Every Chipotle employee is eligible to contribute to their retirement savings after 30 days of employment.

(Chipotle)

As of the beginning of 2022, Wendy’s has expanded its 401(k) match policy, which was previously available to employees after one year or 1,000 hours worked, to eliminate the waiting period. That way, everyone who contributes to the company’s 401(k) plan can receive the match without delay.

(Wendy’s)

It should be stressed that, in addition to healthcare and retirement, other financial benefits, such as disability insurance, life insurance, and employee assistance programs (EAPs), are becoming standard in hospitality firms as part of comprehensive compensation packages. These benefits help protect employees from unexpected life events and financial hardships, ensuring that they are supported during difficult times (as was evident during the 2022 cost-of-living crisis, when many low-income

families began to feel the pinch). Norwegian Cruise Line, for example, provides both short-term and long-term disability coverage, as well as life insurance for employees, ensuring that they are financially protected in the event of injury or illness.

We offer [...] short-term disability, and voluntary long-term disability insurance, and term life and business travel insurance.

(Norwegian Cruise Line)

Boyd Gaming team members averaging 30 hours or more per week qualify for the following benefits:[...] life insurance, disability insurance, accident insurance, critical illness insurance.

(Boyd Gaming)

The standard benefits available to full-time employees generally include as a minimum: life insurance, health care insurance, disability and invalidity coverage, parental leave, and retirement provision.

(International Game Technology)

4.3.1.3 Retention strategies and internal promotion

Moreover, many companies emphasize their commitment to offering clear career paths and comprehensive development programs, aiming to enhance employee retention and build long-term loyalty. As previously mentioned, career commitment is closely linked to employee satisfaction and long-term retention. Put simply, employees who are satisfied with their jobs and can envision a clear career trajectory within their organization are more likely to stay committed to their careers and less likely to exit the industry. Interestingly, Norwegian Cruise Line ascribes its high retention rate to a workplace culture that “allows our team members to thrive and achieve their career goals” (Norwegian Cruise Line). The company points out in this context that performance reviews and opportunities for growth are instrumental in its high retention rate, ensuring that employees feel valued and motivated to stay. There are echoes in this of our findings from [Chapter 3](#), where we identified a strong negative association between POS and the intention to leave the hospitality industry. It is also worth quoting other companies:

Despite experiencing higher-than-normal turnover, we are consistent with the trends in our industry. We are proud of our measures to improve retention from simplified applications, increased starting rates, transparent path to opportunity, flexible and predictable work schedules, improved training, and inclusive benefits. We will continue to iterate and innovate at every step of the team member journey.

(Sweetgreen)

Internal progression is our main source of appointing job roles throughout the company. All pub-manager and area-manager vacancies are filled by

internal applicants. In 2020/21, we promoted over 555 hourly paid staff to management positions.

(Wetherspoon)

Wynn Resorts possesses a strong ‘promote from within’ culture with 67 percent of open supervisor and above positions filled by internal candidates in 2022.

(Wynn Resorts)

4.3.1.4 Flexible work arrangements

One of the most significant shifts brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic – alongside other impacts discussed in [Chapter 1](#) – was the widespread adoption of remote work. This trend has prompted many companies outside the hospitality industry to prioritize flexible working arrangements, allowing their employees to spend significantly more time working from home rather than being in the office. While the nature of hospitality often requires the physical presence of frontline employees, making remote work challenging for most roles, some hospitality firms are innovating by offering flexible schedules, remote work options for specific positions, and greater control over work hours, particularly for roles not directly involved in guest-facing operations (by the way, it is well-documented that a culture of presenteeism exists among hotel managers, who often remain at work well beyond what is necessary). The following quotations bear this out:

We have a policy that gives Team Members weekly flex days to work from home so they can better manage their various responsibilities.

(Brinker International)

We’re also creating opportunities for employees to work from different locations through our Discover EG program. Available to all regular part-time and fixed-term employees, Discover EG helps people better connect with their global colleagues by allowing them to work from other Expedia Group offices for up to four weeks a year.

(Expedia Group)

As an employer of choice, the Company continues with a 4/1 flexible work model for shoreside team members globally. The flexible model allows most employees to work in-office Monday through Thursday and remotely on Friday.

(Norwegian Cruise Line)

4.3.1.5 Employee recognition and rewards programs

It is hardly in dispute that recognition is an important aspect of workforce management in hospitality, where employees are expected to deliver consistent, high-quality customer service ([Maxwell & Lyle, 2002](#)). As we have argued earlier, effective recognition programs, whether through awards, bonuses, or public

acknowledgment, can greatly enhance job satisfaction and, by implication, job performance. Our analysis suggests that many hospitality companies are increasingly adopting these practices to show appreciation for their employees' work and dedication. Sweetgreen, for example, states that "our performance framework is built around transparency and objectivity in expectations and anchoring achievement in rewards and recognition". The following initiatives are particularly noteworthy:

Catch Me at My Best encourages guests, managers, and peers to recognize Team Members whose actions and attitudes embody our values. In 2022, more than 1.3 million Catch Me at My Best messages were sent [...]. Two of our most prestigious recognition programs are the CEO Light & Warmth Award and the Hospitality Heroes Award. In 2022, we celebrated 15 individual winners and two teams.

(Hilton)

Listening to Win: In early 2022, we launched our first comprehensive All-In We Win Team Member engagement survey to understand what drives our Team Members' happiness and success at work.

(Caesars Entertainment)

4.3.1.6 Open communication and employee voice

One of the most widely agreed-upon principles in modern HRM is the crucial role of open communication between employees and management ([Den Hartog et al., 2013](#)). It is no coincidence that this is considered a cornerstone of a healthy work environment, especially in industries like hospitality, where clear and consistent communication is vital for both service quality and employee engagement. In fact, transparent communication channels empower employees to voice concerns, provide feedback, and share ideas, which, all else being equal, can lead to enhanced organizational performance (these practices also enable management to identify issues early and address them proactively) ([Den Hartog et al., 2013](#)). Open communication is facilitated through various methods, including regular feedback sessions, suggestion platforms, and formal open-door policies, as illustrated by the following examples:

On each of our ships, we have Human Resources Directors or Managers to maintain an open culture. Captain's meetings are held monthly for a two-way exchange of information, and each ship has a Crew Welfare committee.

(Norwegian Cruise Line)

Connecting all Team Members: A major engagement initiative in 2022 was the launch of Empire Wire, Caesars Entertainment's first companywide intranet and one-stop shop connecting more than 50,000 Team Members across more than 50 properties through an easy-to-use, accessible two-way communication platform.

(Caesars Entertainment)

4.3.1.7 Freedom of association, unions and collective bargaining

One of the most fundamental elements of employee rights is the ability to organize, join unions, and participate in collective bargaining. This right is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948). Given the tough working conditions and challenging realities of the hospitality industry, the presence of unions – which act as a crucial mechanism for protecting workers from exploitation and advancing their interests – becomes particularly important. As will be discussed further in the monograph, while companies are implementing various measures to improve workplace conditions, this does not justify undermining or ignoring unions (of which more in [Chapters 5](#) and [6](#)).

Unions have stakeholder status ([Delbard, 2011](#)), and, therefore, a company's relationship with them should be thoroughly addressed in CSR reports. It follows that companies should provide accurate reports on how they interact with unions, even if the presence of unions is limited. This is all the more so given that a company's relationship with unions ought to be viewed as a key indicator of its overall CSR performance ([Clarkson, 1995](#)), which determines its ESG ratings. However, this issue is rarely addressed in hospitality firms' CSR reports, where references to unions typically focus solely on the principle of freedom of association rather than on actual engagement with unions representing some of their employees. In fact, there are few mentions of how these relationships play out. The following quotes illustrate this:

The company respects employees' rights to freedom of association.
(Wetherspoon)

We adhere to ILO Core Labor Standards, including the rights to freedom of association and participation in collective bargaining. While we do not believe third-party representation is necessary (...).
(Starbucks)

Only some companies show details of their relationship with unions. These include Carnival Corporation and International Game Technology:

We have also entered into agreements with unions covering certain employees on our ships and in our shoreside hotel and transportation operations.
(Carnival Corporation)

The Company is involved in collective bargaining in different countries and is committed to accommodating specific local laws and regulations, providing union representatives with resources needed to perform their duties [...]. All employees in Italy, Argentina, Austria and some employees in U.S., Sweden and Spain, made up of 15.25% employees worldwide, are covered by collective bargaining agreements.
(International Game Technology)

4.3.1.8 Best practices

Our analysis helped us identify best practices for each theme in the first category. When it comes to fair and competitive compensation, we suggest that hospitality companies take the following steps: (1) ensure all employees are paid above the national minimum wage and in line with industry standards; (2) introduce bonus schemes and performance-based incentives tailored to both frontline and managerial roles; (3) regularly review wages to keep them competitive and responsive to inflation; (4) develop a compensation strategy that links rewards directly to individual performance whenever possible; (5) provide variable pay options such as bonuses, equity, and merit-based raises, especially for customer-facing roles; and (6) adjust wages according to the cost of living, particularly during times of high inflation, to help employees maintain a reasonable standard of living.

Regarding core benefits, we recommend that hospitality companies consider the following steps: (1) provide access to healthcare benefits that cover medical, dental, and vision care for employees and their families; (2) offer retirement savings options, such as 401(k) plans with employer matching, to help employees plan for their future; and (3) include additional financial benefits like life insurance, disability coverage, and EPAs to ensure financial security during unexpected events.

For effective retention strategies, we recommend that hospitality companies: (1) establish clear career progression paths with opportunities for internal promotions (to foster loyalty and reduce turnover); (2) implement performance reviews and ongoing training programs to support employees in achieving their career goals.

Regarding flexible work arrangements, we suggest that hospitality companies consider: (1) offering flexible work schedules or remote working options where possible; (2) implementing hybrid working models (e.g., a balance of in-office and remote work) for eligible roles.

When it comes to employee recognition, we suggest that hospitality companies take the following steps: (1) implement recognition programs, such as awards and public acknowledgments, to celebrate employee achievements and boost job satisfaction; (2) conduct regular employee engagement surveys and actively address the feedback to foster a more inclusive and responsive work environment; and (3) encourage immediate supervisors to show recognition and appreciation through simple, non-monetary gestures, such as personalized thank-you notes or verbal praise.

For fostering open communication and ensuring employee voice, we recommend that hospitality companies: (1) establish transparent communication channels, including regular feedback sessions, suggestion platforms, and formal open-door policies; (2) appoint dedicated HR representatives and organize (ad-hoc) meetings where employees can freely share their concerns and ideas.

Finally, regarding freedom of association and collective bargaining, we recommend that hospitality companies: (1) respect employees' rights to organize, join unions, and engage in collective bargaining in accordance with international labor standards and national laws; (2) recognize unions as independent

stakeholders and desist from thwarting organizing efforts (which will be discussed in depth in [Chapter 5](#))

4.3.2 Health and safety

The second category we identified pertains to health and safety. Considering the nature of hospitality work, the significance of this issue cannot be overstated. Wynn, for example, emphasizes their commitment by stating, “We take the safety and security of our employees seriously and use technology to create a more secure and safe environment at our resorts”. Similar to the first category, several themes emerged within this area: (1) safety and health programs; (2) safety tools and equipment; (3) safety and health certifications and compliance; (4) workplace safety training and injury prevention; (5) anti-harassment and anti-bullying policies; and (6) human trafficking and modern slavery prevention. Let us now discuss the specific actions hospitality companies are taking within each of these themes.

4.3.2.1 Safety and health programs

In general, safety and health programs are vital in the hospitality industry due to the sector’s unique work environment, which involves direct interaction with guests, physical labor, and often high-stress situations. Of course, the COVID-19 pandemic underscored the importance of health measures in hospitality, pushing companies to adopt more rigorous cleaning practices, social distancing protocols, and health screenings. Safety and health programs help mitigate these risks by providing clear guidelines and preventive measures. Moreover, research shows that the presence of robust health and safety measures is linked to employee job satisfaction ([Barpanda & Unnithan, 2019](#)). In addition, health and safety programs are thought to help companies build a positive brand reputation, which is increasingly important in today’s socially conscious market. Indeed, there are more and more customers with “a social conscience” who pay attention to how businesses treat their employees, and positive word-of-mouth from satisfied employees can be a highly effective marketing tool, particularly among Generation Z.

It is important to emphasize at this point that mentions of safety and health programs in CSR reports are relatively numerous. In the analyzed sample, 25 out of 40 companies address this theme to some extent. On average, it takes 14% of the employee-centered sections of the CSR reports and less than 1% of the total report (still, considering the importance of minimizing risks and ensuring worker health, it is concerning that 15 out of 40 companies did not mention safety and health programs). The following examples are particularly noteworthy:

We maintain a number of additional health and safety policies designed to protect our employees while they work. We also have Heat Illness Prevention Plans for our restaurants in California and Oregon as required by state law.

(Chipotle)

In 2022, we launched a new emergency security program for our Hotel Housekeeping Team Members to enhance onsite security and ensure Team Members feel safe at work.

(Caesars Entertainment)

4.3.2.2 Safety tools and equipment

In the hospitality industry, where employees regularly handle heavy equipment, work in kitchens, clean rooms, or interact with guests, having the right safety tools and equipment is crucial to minimizing accidents and injuries. Safety equipment ranges from personal protective gear to technological solutions designed to monitor and manage safety across operations. Accordingly, providing employees with appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) is a foundational element in any safety strategy. This can include items like non-slip shoes for kitchen and housekeeping staff, cut-resistant gloves for those handling sharp objects, and protective eyewear or masks in environments with hazardous chemicals. The following examples illustrate this:

We continue to focus on initiatives that protect team members and members, such as Touchless Check-in to reduce physical contact, Cleaning Stations with disinfectant spray, and a Crowd Meter on the PF App so members can pick the right time to visit the gym.

(Planet Fitness)

Marriott continued to execute on the company's 2018 Associate Alert Devices Program by making the devices a standard across managed and franchised hotels in the U.S. and Canada.

(Marriott International)

The safety button is a personal alert device provided to employees in designated operations as a tool to alert Wynn Security of unexpected urgent threats affecting the safety of employees and/or guests.

(Wynn Resorts)

4.3.2.3 Safety and health certifications and compliance

Regular safety audits, both internal and external, along with the pursuit of relevant certifications, are vital for driving continuous safety improvements. Many hospitality companies collaborate with local and international organizations to achieve these goals. Notably, Las Vegas Sands earned ISO 45001 certification for its occupational safety and health management systems across several of its properties. However, the most critical aspect remains compliance with health regulations, such as the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards in the

United States. The following quotations illustrate the importance that some hospitality companies place on this issue:

Each of our facilities is inspected annually to ensure they meet local health and safety regulations and standards.

(Boyd Gaming)

Each property maintains a safety committee focused on implementing safety procedures, risk analysis, and frequent workplace inspections.

(Caesars Entertainment)

4.3.2.4 Workplace safety training and injury prevention

In addition to the previously mentioned measures, it is essential to offer employees specialized safety training tailored to their specific job roles. In practice, this training should focus on increasing their awareness of potential health risks, safe work practices, and accident prevention strategies. Such knowledge is particularly vital in physically demanding environments like hospitality, where the risk of injury is high. The following quote suggests that some hospitality companies do indeed provide this type of specialized training to their employees:

Promoting and maintaining a safe and healthy work environment is a top priority at Papa John's. We continue to invest in training and technology to ensure the safety of our people in our Quality Control Centers (QCC) and Corporate Hubs, in our restaurants and on the road. Our Vice President of Global Safety & Security has oversight of the program and provides regular reports to senior leadership.

(Papa John's)

4.3.2.5 Anti-harassment and anti-bullying policies

A key aspect of maintaining a safe workplace is the prevention of harassment, bullying, and unethical behavior. It is encouraging to see, therefore, that some hospitality companies in our sample prioritize a zero-tolerance policy toward harassment. These companies provide clear guidelines, mandatory training, and robust reporting mechanisms, which include whistleblower protection and channels for open reporting. Ensuring that employees can report safety concerns or unethical behavior without fear of retaliation is crucial for fostering a safe work environment. To support this, many companies have implemented anonymous reporting systems and offer strong guarantees against any form of reprisal. The following quotes highlight the importance that some hospitality companies place on this issue:

Harassment is not permitted or condoned in the work environment under any circumstances. Everyone must be treated fairly and is entitled to work in an environment free from harassment, victimization, and bullying.

(Wetherspoon)

Every Boyd Gaming team member (full-time, part-time, and on-call) is required to participate in annual anti-harassment training that identifies warning signs of harassment in the workplace and reviews methods for reporting concerns or misconduct [...]. We provide both a website and a 24/7 toll-free independent hotline allowing all team members to report concerns (anonymously if desired), which are then forwarded to Human Resources for further investigation.

(Boyd Gaming)

Marriott's goal of an environment free from sexual harassment by any associate, supervisor, manager, guest, vendor, client, or customer.

(Marriott)

4.3.2.6 Human trafficking and modern slavery prevention

Lastly, recognizing the unique risks within the hospitality sector, companies have implemented comprehensive training and risk mitigation strategies to combat human trafficking and modern slavery. These initiatives include awareness programs, partnerships with NGOs, and mandatory employee training. Such measures are especially critical given recent evidence from the UK hotel industry, where cases of modern slavery have been uncovered ([Bullock et al., 2024](#)). Arguably, by proactively addressing these issues, some hospitality companies are not only safeguarding their workforce but also contributing to the broader fight against exploitation in the industry, as indicated by the following citations:

We continue to equip our hotels with training and best practices to help drive awareness and prevent human trafficking.

(Choice Hotels)

As part of Wyndham's ongoing Business Continuity Plan, Emergency Preparedness Guide, and Training, the Company includes checklists, escalation protocols, and information to assist property management and staff in identifying the key warning signs of human trafficking and provides guidance on how to report cases.

(Wyndham)

We respect the fundamental human rights of all people and have taken an aggressive approach to prevent human trafficking at Hyatt properties – and across the hospitality industry.

(Hyatt)

4.3.2.7 Best practices

Similar to the previous section, our analysis enabled us to identify best practices for each theme within the second category. For safety and health programs, we recommend that hospitality companies (1) establish comprehensive initiatives

specifically designed for this purpose and tailored to the unique demands of each role or function; (2) ensure that these programs should not only comply with regulatory standards but also proactively address potential risks.

As regards safety tools and equipment, hospitality companies should: (1) provide essential PPE, such as non-slip shoes, cut-resistant gloves, and protective eyewear; (2) install personal safety devices like panic buttons for isolated workers, such as housekeeping staff; (3) leverage technology to enhance safety through measures like touchless check-ins and digital crowd management tools.

In terms of safety and health certifications and compliance, it is advisable for hospitality companies to conduct regular safety audits, risk assessments, and inspections across all properties to ensure adherence to OSHA standards or their local equivalents.

When it comes to workplace safety training and injury prevention, we recommend that hospitality companies: (1) offer job-specific safety training and ensure all employees participate in annual safety reviews; (2) update training materials to reflect changes in regulations and emerging risks; and (3) establish safety committees at each property to review incidents and develop preventive strategies.

For anti-harassment and anti-bullying policies, hospitality companies should consider the following steps: (1) implement zero-tolerance policies for harassment and bullying, applicable to all employees, customers, and contractors; (2) provide mandatory annual training to help employees recognize and report harassment; (3) establish accessible reporting mechanisms, including anonymous options, so employees can safely raise concerns; (4) introduce anonymous, 24/7 reporting systems for safety concerns and unethical behavior, ensuring whistleblower protection; and (5) guarantee protection against retaliation for employees who report misconduct.

To combat human trafficking and modern slavery, we recommend that hospitality companies: (1) offer annual training and regularly updated resources on human trafficking awareness for all employees; (2) collaborate with NGOs and law enforcement to stay informed on the latest prevention strategies; and (3) establish clear protocols for identifying and reporting human trafficking incidents.

4.3.3 Employee well-being and wellness

The third category we identified focuses on employee well-being and wellness, which has become increasingly important in the hospitality industry as companies recognize its direct impact on productivity, job satisfaction, and overall service quality. This includes, among other things, providing access to mental health resources such as counseling and wellness apps, as well as offering perks like gym discounts. Similar to the first and second categories, several key themes emerged in this area: (1) mental health and emotional well-being; (2) physical well-being and wellness programs; (3) work-life balance; (4) employee perks and additional benefits; and (5) comprehensive wellness platforms and digital resources. In the analyzed sample, 24 out of 40 companies address these themes to varying degrees. On average, these topics account for about 19% of the workforce-related sections of CSR reports and less than 2% of the total report.

4.3.3.1 Mental health and emotional well-being

It is encouraging to see that promoting mental health is increasingly recognized as crucial in the hospitality sector, given the high-stress environments and irregular hours. Most companies from our sample are implementing mental health programs, offering resources ranging from counseling services to mental health first aid training, as attested by the following quotations:

The company is committed at all times to supporting positive mental health in the workplace and assisting our employees wherever possible with mental health problems. Our aim is always to encourage positive mental well-being and health in the workplace (and outside of work).

(Wetherspoon)

We offer additional support via trusted partners including essential services such as Occupational Health and our Employee Assistance Programme provided by Hospitality Action. Mental Health First Aiders across our Operations and Support Centre 121 Hardship grants issued to Whitbread employees.

(Whitbread)

In the UK this year, we have also introduced a network of mental health first-aiders. This is part of our commitment to ensure the right support is in place to help everyone feel at their best.

(InterContinental)

Marriott has an arrangement with meQuilibrium, a proven, clinically validated resilience platform, which proactively refers managed associates to our employee assistance program who need help managing stress.

(Marriott)

4.3.3.2 Physical well-being and wellness programs

Equally important is addressing physical health, particularly in roles that are physically demanding. Our analysis shows that hospitality companies are increasingly investing in initiatives that promote physical health, such as wellness communication programs, fitness classes, and providing resources for a healthy lifestyle.

Our operational teams are often in roles that are physically active so ensuring we care for their physical wellbeing is paramount. Our 'Wellbeing Wednesday' monthly communication provided by our occupational health provider has regular features focusing on physical health.

(Whitbread)

At our Maidenhead office we have introduced a host of fun initiatives and benefits for our colleagues including free access to an onsite gym, massage therapist appointments available monthly, yoga classes every Tuesday lunchtime.

(Rank Group)

4.3.3.3 Work-life balance

As mentioned several times earlier, helping employees balance work and personal life can be particularly challenging in the hospitality sector. This is especially crucial for employees at higher risk of work-life conflict, such as single mothers. However, some hospitality companies are making significant strides in this area by implementing hybrid work models, flexible hours, and enhanced leave policies to support employee well-being. The following quotes provide evidence of these efforts.

We implemented family-friendly policies giving greater opportunities for flexibility and work-life balance through enhanced periods of leave for fertility treatment, pregnancy loss, carers, neonatal care.

(GymGroup)

We have revised our hybrid and flexible working policies for our Support Centres to promote more togetherness and human connection.

(Whitbread)

4.3.3.4 Employee perks and additional benefits

It is important to acknowledge that many hospitality companies are going beyond traditional benefits by offering a variety of perks designed to boost employee satisfaction and well-being. These perks often include discounts, complimentary services, and exclusive access to company resources, all intended to make employees feel valued and appreciated. By offering these additional incentives, companies are not only likely to boost morale but also to cultivate a stronger sense of loyalty and organizational commitment among their employees – key issues that are particularly relevant to the hospitality industry. These quotes are indicative of this:

We have enhanced our employee perks offering which now includes discounts on stays at our hotels, restaurant meals, and access to exclusive deals through our Perks at Work platform.

(Whitbread)

Rank offers various perks such as discounted dining at our venues, complimentary hotel stays, and access to our company-owned holiday homes. These perks are part of our broader strategy to reward and recognize our employee.

(Rank Group)

Marriott provides its employees with global discount rates at our hotels, which extends to friends and family, ensuring that our team members can enjoy the same world-class service that we deliver to our guests.

(Marriott)

4.3.3.5 Comprehensive wellness platforms and digital resources

Lastly, it is worthwhile to highlight that hospitality companies are increasingly utilizing digital platforms to centralize wellness resources. These platforms offer employees convenient access to a variety of support tools addressing mental, physical, and financial health. By integrating these resources into a single digital hub, companies streamline access to essential services, making it easier for employees to manage their well-being and address any issues proactively.

We introduced a digital platform app in 2023 which gives our team access to a range of physical, mental and financial support and resources from their smartphone or computer at any time of day.

(Whitbread)

We are proud to have launched our Be Well Portal for all Team Members in FY22. The site is a mobile-friendly one-stop shop for all benefits, perks, and resources to improve wellbeing.

(Las Vegas Sands)

4.3.3.6 Best practices

Analogically to the previous sections, our analysis identified best practices for each theme within the third category. Regarding mental health and emotional well-being, we recommend that hospitality companies: (1) implement mental health programs, such as EAPs, to ensure easy access to counseling services; (2) provide mental health first aid training; (3) promote awareness by fostering a workplace culture that openly discusses mental health through regular communications; and (4) offer on-site mental health support by training designated employees as mental health first-aiders to provide immediate assistance and guidance to colleagues facing mental health challenges.

When it comes to physical well-being and wellness programs, it is advisable for hospitality companies to (1) introduce programs that promote physical health, such as wellness communication campaigns, fitness classes, and access to gym facilities; (2) provide regular wellness tips and resources to employees in physically demanding jobs to reduce the risk of injury and promote healthy lifestyles; and (3) offer access to massage therapists, yoga classes, and other wellness services that help employees maintain physical well-being.

For work-life balance, hospitality companies should consider the following measures: (1) introduce (if technically feasible) hybrid work models, flexible schedules, and enhanced leave policies to help employees effectively manage their work and personal lives; (2) provide leave and flexible options for employees undergoing fertility treatments, experiencing pregnancy loss, or caring for dependents, to support their unique needs; and (3) update hybrid work policies to balance productivity with maintaining social connections among team members.

Regarding perks and additional benefits, hospitality companies should consider (1) providing discounts on company services, such as hotel stays, restaurant meals,

and access to exclusive deals; (2) offering complimentary access to company-owned resources, such as holiday homes or dining experiences, as a way to recognize and reward employees; and (3) extending global discounts to employees and their families, enabling them to experience the company's offerings firsthand.

Finally, for comprehensive wellness platforms and digital resources, hospitality companies should focus on (1) developing and implementing digital platforms that centralize wellness resources, offering employees easy access to a range of tools and services for mental, physical, and financial health; (2) providing access to a variety of digital resources, such as virtual fitness classes, mental health apps, and online wellness workshops; and (3) using data-driven insights to offer personalized wellness recommendations and support, ensuring that employees receive resources tailored to their specific health needs and preferences.

4.3.4 Diversity, equity, and inclusion

The fourth category we identified focuses on diversity, equity, and inclusion. In essence, DEI aims to ensure equal opportunities for all employees, regardless of their socioeconomic background, race, sexual orientation, gender, or ethnicity. Its primary goal, therefore, is to cultivate a workplace culture characterized by respect, fairness, and a strong sense of belonging for *every* staff member. This focus on DEI is particularly relevant in the hospitality industry, where a significant portion of the workforce consists of foreign-born and female workers (Papadopoulos et al., 2021).

DEI encompasses three key components: diversity, equity, and inclusion. Diversity refers to the presence of varied identities, characteristics, and perspectives within a group. Equity involves creating fair access, opportunities, and resources tailored to individual needs, while equality – a related but distinct concept – focuses on providing the same resources to everyone. Inclusion is about fostering environments where all individuals feel welcomed, respected, and valued. These principles, by definition, underscore the importance of rooting out discriminatory practices.

It is fair to say that DEI is currently a prominent topic in the employee-focused sections of CSR reports published by hospitality firms. These sections often constitute a significant portion of CSR reports, and many companies also produce separate DEI reports addressing employees, customers, and the broader community. Our analysis, based on general CSR reports, reveals that DEI issues are addressed by 39 out of 40 companies. On average, DEI-related content comprises over 40% of the employee-centered sections of CSR reports and about 4% of the total report.

Crucially, the vast majority of companies adhere to the conventional framework of DEI initiatives, which includes diversity, equity, and inclusion. Within this framework, our analysis highlighted several fundamental areas of focus. These include gender representation, ethnic representation, race, sexual orientation, military or war-related status, disability, and age.

In particular, most of the analyzed companies highlight their efforts to maintain balanced gender representation. In fact, initiatives aimed at promoting gender diversity are mentioned in over 80% of the analyzed CSR reports. For instance,

Booking Holdings states, “*We aspire to maintain balanced gender representation across all business units and brands, and approximately 47% of our employees are women*”.

The second most common focus is on ethnic representation, mentioned in over 65% of the reports. For example, Marriott reports that 32.6% of its workforce is Hispanic, while Airbnb indicates that 16% of its US employees identify as under-represented minorities. Interestingly, Choice Hotels points out in this context that “Choice continues to be a leader in creating hotel ownership opportunities for underrepresented minority entrepreneurs. In 2023, the number of agreements signed with Native American hotel owners doubled over the prior year, and the number of agreements with Hispanic and Latino owners increased by 30%”.

As regards race, it is emphasized in over 50% of the reports. Wyndham, for example, notes: “To drive business value to Wyndham by empowering, leveraging, and developing the spectrum of African American/Black/People of Color team members and internal and external resources, through leadership, education, innovation, and networking”.

Diversity in terms of sexual orientation and equal treatment of this group is played up in 40% of the reports. Starbucks states, “For more than three decades, Starbucks has been committed to building a culture where everyone is welcome. We stand as an ally to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer community – affirming every way people may choose to identify”.

Another interesting group covered in CSR reports are war veterans. Their inclusion is a focus in 35% of the reports, mainly from the United States. For example, Starbucks mentions: “Our goal is to hire 5,000 military Veterans and military spouses annually, and in FY21 we have hired more than 7,700 Veterans and military spouses across Starbucks roles in the U.S.”. Surprisingly, disability inclusion is directly addressed in only 20% of the reports. For example, Caesars Entertainment highlights: “Caesars Entertainment is the first gaming company to be named ‘Best Place to Work for Disability Inclusion’ for the second consecutive year, receiving the highest possible score in 2022”.

Similarly, age diversity is also mentioned in only 20% of the reports. Sweetgreen, for instance, notes: “We hire 62.5% of workers under the age of 30, 29.9% between 30 and 50 years old, and 7.6% of people above the age of 50”. Surprisingly, analyzed hospitality firms, do not mention diversity in terms of social background, language (with one exception of Wynn Resort mentioning): “As part of continuing employee development in 2022, the English as a Second Language (ESL) classes returned to Wynn Las Vegas and 167 participants clocked in 384 hours of language training. These free classes were available to eligible employees and gathered twice weekly for 12 weeks” or religion.

In addition to these fundamental areas of focus, our analysis – consistent with our approach in other categories – identified several key themes. These include (1) gender parity goals; (2) pay gaps; (3) leadership diversity and representation; (4) inclusive hiring practices; (5) mentorship and sponsorship programs; (6) employee resource groups (ERGs) and networks; and (7) global and localized DEI initiatives. Let us now examine how hospitality companies are implementing these ideas in practice.

4.3.4.1 Gender parity goals

Gender parity goals typically focus on ensuring balanced representation of men and women across all levels of the workforce, from frontline roles to leadership positions. In hospitality, where women often make up a significant portion of the workforce, it is imperative to address gender disparities in career advancement and decision-making roles. Most firms that report gender parity focus on both current state, but also future goals, as attested by the following quotes:

By the end of 2025 McDonald's aspires to increase representation of women in leadership roles globally (Senior Director and above) to 45% with an overall goal to reach gender parity globally in leadership roles by the end of 2030.
(McDonald's)

Globally 35% of our leaders working at VP level and above are female (vs an ambition of 39% by 2025).
(InterContinental Hotels Group)

4.3.4.2 Pay gaps

Addressing pay gaps is particularly important for hospitality workers, who often face wage disparities due to factors like gender, race, and job type. In an industry characterized by high turnover and often lower-wage positions, ensuring equal pay for equal work is essential for promoting fairness and economic stability for employees. As discussed in earlier chapters, fairness is deeply connected to the principles of equality and human dignity, serving as a core societal expectation and a key factor in shaping workplace norms (Croppanzano & Stein, 2009). In fact, employees expect fair treatment from their organization, which determines, to a large extent, their perception of their employer, the perceived "appropriateness" of their employment relationship, and their attitudes and behaviors at work. The following questions illustrate the importance most hospitality companies place on the elimination of the pay gap:

The gender pay gap is a measure of the difference in the average pay of men and women across the company – regardless of their role. Median and mean gaps are calculated using those calculations set out in the gender pay gap-reporting regulations.

(Wetherspoon)

Our 2022 pay gap analysis indicates that McDonald's substantially attained equal pay and in 2023 we closed the small pay gaps identified in the analysis. The results of our 2022 pay gap analysis showed that women globally in Company-owned and operated markets are paid \$0.9991 in base pay for every \$1 paid to men for similar work.

(McDonald's)

Our pay gap reporting is based on data collected from 98% of our employees. As of April 2023 our mean ethnicity pay gap was 22.7%, this is a 7.9 percentage point increase from 2022 reporting. Our median ethnicity pay gap remains at 0%.

(Gym Group)

Pay Equity: We are committed to the principle of pay equity and seek to be a leader on this front. To do this, we conduct annual pay-equity analyses that examine and adjust potential pay gaps. These analyses are binary gender-based globally and race-based in the US.

(Airbnb)

Commitment to providing fair and competitive pay for all associates regardless of gender, race, or other demographics.

(Choice Hotels)

In 2022, we conducted an annual pay equity audit as part of our efforts to ensure gender and racial pay equity among headquarters team members. The audit results showed zero statistically significant pay gaps with respect to gender or race across all career level team member groupings at PFHQ.

(Planet Fitness)

4.3.4.3 Leadership diversity and representation

Furthermore, hospitality companies aim to maintain diversity not only among employees in general but also within leadership roles by increasing the representation of underrepresented groups. This focus on leadership diversity is crucial, as it ensures that decision-making reflects a variety of perspectives, leading to more inclusive policies and practices. The following quotes bear this out:

We remain committed to having leaders who represent the diverse global nature of our business. Thanks to the self-disclosure of employees, we know that 22% of our global leaders working at VP level and above are racially or ethnically diverse (vs an ambition of 26% by 2025) and represent 16 nationalities.

(Whitbread)

By the end of 2025, McDonald's aspires to increase representation of women in leadership roles globally (Senior Director and above) to 45%, with an overall goal to reach gender parity globally in leadership roles (Senior Director and above) by the end of 2030.

(McDonald's)

4.3.4.4 Inclusive hiring practices

DEI initiatives often involve developing more inclusive recruitment strategies that actively target underrepresented groups and promote diversity at every level of the organization. These strategies are essential for building a workforce that reflects the diverse communities the company serves. Arguably, from a practical point of view, failing to recruit talent regardless of race, age, or other factors would be self-defeating, especially given the persistent staffing shortages in the hospitality industry. Thus, by prioritizing inclusive hiring practices, companies not only foster a more equitable workplace but also ensure they are tapping into the broadest talent pool available, which is critical for meeting staffing needs and sustaining business growth. These quotes make it clear that some hospitality companies are fully aware of this:

Over this past year, we have expanded our talent acquisition team to help support our inclusive external recruitment efforts. We have also continued to grow our connections with diversity-focused agencies and organizations and invested in new databases to help ensure our external job postings are reaching a broad and diverse candidate pool. We have also added a page for veterans on our Career Site and posted job listings on veteran-focused recruiting websites.

(Wendy's)

In 2022, we expanded our efforts to recruit diverse talent by implementing anti-bias training for our recruiters.

(Papa John's)

4.3.4.5 Mentorship and sponsorship programs

Some hospitality companies are also implementing mentorship and sponsorship initiatives. These programs are designed to provide guidance, support, and opportunities for career development, helping underrepresented employees navigate their professional journeys more effectively. By connecting diverse employees with experienced mentors or sponsors, companies can foster a culture of inclusion where talent from all backgrounds has the chance to thrive. Besides, such initiatives contribute to building a robust leadership pipeline, ensuring that future leaders reflect the diversity of the broader workforce. The balance of the argument now says that this not only enhances employee satisfaction and retention but also strengthens the organization's overall competitive edge in a diverse and global market. Noteworthy examples of such programs include:

We proudly welcomed another 162 participants into our Rise mentoring program, an initiative created to empower our female talent in hotel operations to achieve their full potential.

(InterContinental Hotels Group)

We also have a program called MidRISE, which is a bridge to RISE for select underrepresented people of color at mid-level manager roles. This program continues throughout the year with additional skill development and group mentoring opportunities.

(Yum! Brands)

4.3.4.6 Employee resource groups and networks

Much has recently been made of employee resource groups, which play a role in fostering a culture of belonging by offering support, mentorship, and opportunities for employees from diverse backgrounds. These groups create safe spaces where employees can connect with others who share similar experiences, helping to build a sense of community within the employing organization. Crucially, ERGs also serve as a platform for raising awareness about diversity issues and advocating for policies that promote inclusivity. By empowering employees to take an active role in shaping the workplace culture, ERGs contribute to greater employee engagement and satisfaction. At the same time, they provide insights to managements, helping companies better understand the needs of their diverse workforce and develop strategies that reflect those needs.

Our Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) bring together people from underrepresented groups and their allies to drive change. We now have over 4,000 members across 29 chapters, contributing significantly to our inclusive culture.

(InterContinental Hotels Group)

We introduced our first two Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) aimed at building a more supportive environment for our team members, including the EmpowHER ERG for women in the workforce and the Judgement Free Parents ERG for working parents.

(Planet Fitness)

[Booking.com](#) started the year with five Employee Resource Groups (ERGs): B.able, B.bold, B.equal, B.harmony, and B.proud. The B.proud mission is to create a workplace where every LGBTQ+ employee can be proud to be their authentic self.

([Booking.com](#))

4.3.4.7 Global and localized DEI initiatives

Finally, some hospitality companies are increasingly adopting both global and localized approaches to diversity to effectively address regional challenges while maintaining consistent standards across all locations. This dual strategy allows organizations to tailor their diversity efforts to the specific cultural and demographic needs of each region, thereby ensuring that initiatives are relevant and impactful. In addition to these approaches, companies are also investing in cultural awareness

and inclusion initiatives, which help to foster understanding and respect among employees from different backgrounds. These efforts enable companies to better serve diverse customer bases by promoting a deeper appreciation of cultural differences. Ultimately, by combining global standards with localized action, hospitality firms can create a more inclusive and cohesive organizational culture. The following quotes bear this out.

We have identified the UK and US – where we have our largest populations of corporate colleagues – as markets in which we want to increase ethnic representation. We have set targets for the percentage of leaders working at VP level and above that are ethnically diverse in each market.

(Whitbread)

In Thailand, we've teamed up with Steps – an organization that empowers employers to realize the potential of neurodivergent people. We've provided work experience, internships, and full-time work for trainees and students in five Bangkok hotels.

(InterContinental Hotels Group)

Our commitment to raising up female voices is only one example of our overall DE&I commitment and efforts. We were also able to host a general DE&I focused discussion at our Conference for the first time for an audience of leaders, PFHQ team members, franchisees, and club managers.

(Planet Fitness)

4.3.4.8 Best practices

As with the previous sections, we identified best practices for each theme within the fourth category. In terms of gender parity goals, we recommend that hospitality companies (1) take proactive measures to ensure equal representation of all genders at every level of the organization; (2) set clear targets for gender diversity in leadership roles; (3) review and adjust promotion practices; and (4) consider implementing transparent reporting on gender parity progress to hold themselves accountable and demonstrate their commitment to closing the gender gap.

When it comes to addressing pay gaps, we suggest that hospitality companies (1) take deliberate steps to ensure pay equity across all roles and demographics; (2) conduct regular salary audits to identify and correct disparities; (3) implement transparent compensation structures; (4) establish clear criteria for pay raises and promotions; and (5) provide training for managers on recognizing and mitigating unconscious biases that may contribute to pay gaps.

Regarding leadership diversity and representation, it is advisable for hospitality companies to (1) work to ensure that leadership teams reflect the diversity of the broader workforce; (2) set specific diversity targets for leadership roles; (3) implement succession planning that prioritizes diverse talent; and (4) offer leadership development programs aimed at underrepresented groups.

For inclusive hiring practices, we recommend that hospitality companies (1) pursue strategies designed to attract and retain a diverse pool of candidates; (2) craft job descriptions that use inclusive language; (3) utilizing diverse recruitment channels, with social media to the fore; (4) ensure that hiring processes are free from bias; (5) provide training for hiring managers on equitable interviewing techniques and unconscious bias to promote fair evaluation of all candidates; (6) avoid using AI for scanning CVs and pre-selecting candidates (as recent research indicates it has been biased against non-white job seekers); and (7) establish partnerships with organizations that support underrepresented groups.

As regards mentorship and sponsorship programs, we suggest that hospitality companies (1) develop structured initiatives to support the growth and advancement of diverse employees; (2) create formal mentorship programs that match employees with experienced mentors who can provide guidance and support; (3) carry out sponsorship programs where senior leaders actively advocate for and invest in the development of high-potential employees from underrepresented groups; and (4) evaluate and refine these programs to ensure that they meet the evolving needs of participants and effectively contribute to their career development.

For employee resource groups and networks, we recommend that hospitality companies (1) establish and actively support ERGs to promote inclusion and provide a sense of community for employees from diverse backgrounds; (2) create quasi-formal ERGs with clear objectives; (3) provide resources and funding to support the activities of ERGs; (4) ensure that ERGs have a seat at the table in strategic discussions; (5) encourage participation in ERGs by integrating their initiatives into broader organizational goals and offering opportunities for ERG members to lead and contribute to company-wide projects; and (6) assess the impact of ERGs and gather feedback from members.

Lastly, in terms of global and localized DEI initiatives, we think that hospitality companies should consider taking the following steps: (1) develop strategies that balance global DEI standards with localized approaches to address regional differences; (2) carry out overarching DEI policies that set a consistent framework for inclusion and equity while allowing for adaptations to meet specific regional needs and cultural contexts; (3) try to engage local leaders and employees in the development and execution of DEI initiatives to ensure they are relevant and effective in each market; and (4) review and update both global and localized DEI strategies with a view to addressing emerging issues.

4.3.5 Development and growth

The fifth category we identified focuses on development and growth. Proper training and development for hospitality employees are crucial as they directly impact service quality, customer satisfaction, and overall operational efficiency. In the hospitality industry, which is highly customer-centric, employees must consistently deliver high-quality service, adapt to diverse guest needs, and manage high-pressure situations. It follows that continuous training equips staff with the skills needed to uphold service standards and navigate evolving industry trends.

In our sample, 37 out of 40 CSR reports address themes related to employee development and growth, with this topic comprising about 18% of the employee-centered sections of the CSR reports and approximately 2% of the total report.

As with the other categories discussed, several key themes have emerged within this area: (1) career planning; (2) leadership development; (3) personal growth; (4) life coaching; (5) apprenticeships and internships; and (6) DEI-focused training. Let us now explore the specific actions hospitality companies are taking in each of these areas.

4.3.5.1 Career planning

HRM research shows that career planning is integral to employee development, as it helps employees align their personal aspirations with the organization's goals ([Adekola, 2011](#)). Companies often provide structured career paths, individualized career plans, and internal mobility programs that assist employees in mapping out their long-term career objectives. This approach includes offering resources such as mentorship, career coaching, and succession planning to support employees in visualizing and achieving their growth within the organization. All of this is instrumental in maintaining career commitment, a topic extensively discussed in the previous chapter. In addition, career planning initiatives can help identify and cultivate talent for future leadership roles, ensuring a strong pipeline of skilled and motivated employees. The following quotes demonstrate that many companies in our sample acknowledge the strategic significance of career planning:

Team members interested in career advancement are encouraged to work with their supervisor or manager to develop a career plan. Boyd's career plan template specifies the next step in the team member's career path, specific training and development required for that position, opportunities to develop skills through expanded job responsibilities, and opportunities to receive mentorship from leaders in the company.

(Boyd Gaming)

Our internal mobility program opens up interesting and diverse career paths for those looking to challenge themselves or make a lateral career move. As it evolves, the mobility program will become an integral part of increasing our structure around individual career development and providing clarity and consistency on internal moves for our employees.

(Deliveroo)

We empower our team members to do exceptional work and we support them on their career journeys. The opportunity to grow and develop skills and experience regardless of job role division or geographic location is critical to our success.

(Norwegian Cruise Line)

4.3.5.2 Leadership development

Leadership programs are recognized as an important element of training in the hospitality industry, as they are essential for developing the next generation of leaders. That is why most of them are designed for emerging managers and high-potential employees. Such programs often include advanced leadership training, strategic project assignments, and opportunities for cross-functional experience to build comprehensive skills (of course, the overarching idea is to ensure a robust leadership pipeline). The following quotations are indicative of this:

Leadership Bench Programs: A blended learning experience to develop Managers and Directors and enhance their readiness for advanced career opportunities in various areas of the business.

(Travel + Leisure)

Our Leadership Development program reinforces the knowledge and skills needed to be an effective leader at Wynn Resorts, including receiving feedback, managing conflict, and creating a collaborative and engaging work environment.

(Wynn Resorts)

4.3.5.3 Personal growth

Without doubt, personal growth is a vital aspect of employee development in the hospitality industry. In fact, it helps workers enhance their skills and achieve their full potential. Our analysis reveals that many hospitality companies support personal growth through a variety of programs and resources, including workshops, seminars, and online courses that focus on both professional and personal advancement. These initiatives may cover areas such as communication skills, time management, and emotional intelligence. The following examples are particularly noteworthy:

We also recently partnered with LinkedIn Learning to provide our associates with access to their extensive online training library, including over 6,000 courses covering a wide range of topics. In 2023, our associates voluntarily completed more than 1,000 learning courses and viewed close to 36,000 training videos.

(Choice Hotels)

Our brands also support employees in developing their skills outside of work. For example, in the U.S., KFC is putting college degrees in reach for its restaurant employees. Team members who apply and enroll can now earn degrees at Western Governors University (WGU) with tuition 100% covered.

(Yum! Brands)

Emotional Intelligence: In this program, participants learn what emotional intelligence is and why it's essential. They discover ways to become more self-aware so that they can identify triggers that may hijack their performance.

(Wyndham)

Many educational tools help our people develop technical, social, and emotional skills and encourage personal and professional growth while establishing purpose behind everything we do. Our Learning Management System (LMS) delivers consistent training to improve skills while ensuring understanding of and compliance with policies. The average training hours per U.S. salaried employee were 4.20 in fiscal year 2023.

(Aramark)

4.3.5.4 Life coaching

Life coaching is an increasingly valued component of employee development in the hospitality industry, offering individuals personalized support to enhance both their professional and personal lives. Companies often incorporate life coaching into their development programs to help employees set and achieve personal goals, overcome challenges, and improve overall well-being. These coaching sessions typically focus on areas such as goal setting, work-life balance, and stress management. The following quotes provide examples of such initiatives:

We offer an Employee Assistance Program to help our employees and their dependents better deal with any of life's issues. Employees and their dependents can speak with licensed counselors in a confidential manner at no cost.

(Chipotle)

Additionally, our internal network of Mental Health Ambassadors enables peer-to-peer support for our employees. During 2022, 70 employees joined the ambassador program, receiving external certification in Mental Health First Aid, delivering effective, confidential mental health support to colleagues.

(Expedia)

Best You EDU also offers no-cost citizenship-preparation courses, free tutoring for Team Members or their dependents and even some tuition reimbursement for bachelor's and master's degrees obtained outside the program's educational offerings.

(Brinker)

4.3.5.5 Apprenticeships and internships

As is widely acknowledged, apprenticeships and internships are key components of employee development in the hospitality industry, offering valuable hands-on experience and professional growth opportunities. Many hospitality companies carry out structured apprenticeship and internship programs to provide emerging talent with practical skills and industry knowledge. These programs usually include mentorship, on-the-job training, and exposure to various aspects of the business, allowing participants to gain a comprehensive understanding

of their roles. In essence, these initiatives go a long way toward bridging the gap between education and practical application, enhancing both the readiness of new entrants to the industry and the overall quality of the workforce. Crucially, successful internship and apprenticeship programs can lead to long-term employment opportunities, potentially contributing to higher retention rates. The following quotes highlight the significant value some companies place on apprenticeships and internships:

In the last 12 months, £2.49 million has been paid as an apprenticeship levy. The apprenticeship program was launched in January 2018 offering 10 qualifications.

(Wetherspoon)

Through the Yum! Franchise Accelerator, a one-of-a-kind MBA elective opportunity, the Center focuses on recruiting and educating underrepresented people of color and women. In Spring 2022, the Center welcomed MBA students from the University of Louisville and Howard University to its latest cohort. All 10 students received a \$10,000 scholarship from Yum! Brands and the opportunity to learn about franchising with Yum!

(Yum! Brands)

Marston's now has over 300 apprentices in learning across the whole business from accountancy and legal to General Managers and Head Chefs.

(Marston)

4.3.5.6 DEI-focused training

Given the prominent place DEI occupies in today's CSR discourse, it is no coincidence that more and more hospitality companies provide their staff with DEI-focused training. By definition, it is aimed at fostering a more inclusive and equitable workplace. Companies are increasingly carrying out specialized training programs that address diversity, equity, and inclusion issues, thereby helping employees understand and navigate these critical aspects. These training programs typically cover topics such as unconscious bias, cultural competency, and inclusive communication. The overarching idea is to promote a culture of respect and understanding. The following quotes provide examples of such initiatives:

Your Passport to Belonging: New mandatory course developed to help new associates understand our focus on inclusion, equity, and diversity; equality vs equity; unconscious bias; microaggressions; pronouns; and allyship.

(Travel + Leisure)

Our Welcome Wanted and Respected – It's Good for Everyone training focuses on raising awareness of unconscious bias.

(Choice Hotels)

4.3.5.7 Best practices

Consistent with our approach, we also identified best practices for each theme within the fifth category. For career planning, we recommend that hospitality companies (1) implement structured career development programs that include clear career paths and progression opportunities; (2) offer individualized career planning sessions, regular performance reviews, and personalized development plans to help employees set and achieve long-term career goals; and (3) provide access to career resources such as workshops, skill assessments, and networking events.

As regards leadership development, we suggest that hospitality companies (1) establish comprehensive leadership training programs that cater to various levels, from emerging leaders to senior executives; (2) ensure that these programs include mentorship opportunities, leadership workshops, and real-world project assignments to build critical skills; and (3) put into place succession planning to identify and prepare high-potential employees for future leadership roles.

Regarding personal growth, it is advisable for hospitality companies to (1) provide access to a variety of personal development resources, such as online courses, seminars, and self-improvement workshops; (2) encourage employees to set personal development goals and offer support through coaching and feedback can also enhance growth; and (3) create a culture that values continuous learning and provides opportunities for employees to explore interests beyond their current roles.

For life coaching, we recommend that hospitality companies (1) offer life coaching services as part of their employee development programs; (2) provide access to certified life coaches who can assist employees in achieving personal and professional goals, managing stress, and improving work-life balance; (3) try to integrate life coaching with wellness initiatives; and (4) ensure confidentiality.

Regarding apprenticeships and internships, we suggest that hospitality companies (1) develop structured programs that offer hands-on experience and mentorship; (2) ensure that these programs include clear objectives, defined roles, and regular feedback; and (3) establish partnerships with educational institutions and industry organizations to attract a diverse pool of talent and to create pathways for future employment within the company.

Finally, for DEI-focused training, we recommend that hospitality companies (1) carry out comprehensive training programs that address various aspects of DEI; (2) provide regular, interactive workshops on topics such as unconscious bias, cultural competency, and inclusive practices; and (3) create mechanisms for ongoing learning and dialogue, such as DEI resource groups and refresher courses, to continuously reinforce the principles of inclusion and equity throughout the organization.

4.3.6 Immigrants and refugees

The last category identified in the employee-oriented sections of CSR reports pertains to refugees and immigrants in the hospitality industry. This is particularly important as many hospitality workers are foreign-born and may face unique vulnerabilities to abuse and exploitation (Bullock et al., 2024). Undoubtedly, ensuring

robust protections and support mechanisms for these employees is crucial in an industry where diverse, international workforces are prevalent. However, this topic is seldom mentioned in CSR reports, and we identified only two key themes: (1) support for refugees through employment and training opportunities; and (2) provision of citizenship and life skills support.

4.3.6.1 Support for refugees through employment and training

A few hospitality companies are actively involved in supporting refugees by offering employment opportunities and specialized training programs. These initiatives not only provide financial stability but also aid refugees in integrating into their new communities. Specifically, programs are designed to offer skills development and job readiness, often in partnership with resettlement agencies. The following quotes illustrate this:

By providing skills development and training for jobs in our industry, Marriott empowers resettled refugees to create a positive future for themselves, their families, and their communities in the U.S. and beyond.

(Marriott)

As a Tent partner, Hilton has committed to hiring 1,500 refugees in the U.S. by September 2025.

(Hilton)

4.3.6.2 Provision of citizenship and life skills

Some hospitality firms provide more than just employment opportunities by offering programs that help immigrants and refugees navigate life in a new country. These include language training, citizenship classes, life skills coaching, and cultural integration support, ensuring that immigrants have the resources they need to succeed both personally and professionally. The following examples are particularly noteworthy:

In 2022, Wynn Las Vegas relaunched its citizenship classes – a 12-week course free to eligible employees with instruction to prepare them for the United States citizenship test.

(Wynn Resorts)

Hilton Austin is leading the way [...] they have identified tenured Afghan Team Members to assist with translations for onboarding and mentoring, created job-specific pictorials of commonly used items to help teach English words, and provided space and time for prayer in accordance with the Muslim faith.

(Hilton)

4.3.6.3 Best practices

We also identified best practice suggestions for each theme. As regards support for refugees through employment and training opportunities, we recommend that hospitality companies (1) establish targeted recruitment and training programs specifically designed for refugees; (2) offer internships, apprenticeships, and entry-level positions with clear pathways for career advancement; (3) partner with local organizations and refugee support groups to identify potential candidates and provide culturally sensitive training that addresses language barriers and industry-specific skills; and (4) create a supportive onboarding process aimed at helping refugees integrate smoothly into the workforce.

For the provision of citizenship and life skills, we suggest that hospitality companies (1) offer resources and programs to assist refugees and immigrants with essential life skills and citizenship processes; (2) provide workshops on financial literacy, legal rights, and navigating local services; (3) support employees in accessing legal assistance for citizenship applications and offer guidance on integrating into the community.

4.4 Conclusions and contributions

4.4.1 Summary of the findings

This chapter has explored how the hospitality industry addresses labor-related issues through the lens of ESG metrics and sustainability/CSR reports. The significance of the “Workforce” category within the “Social” dimension of ESG is undeniable in the hospitality industry, a labor-intensive, customer-facing sector where service quality directly influences customer satisfaction. Our goal was to examine employee-centered initiatives and activities across six key categories that integrate the core elements of POS, employee-oriented CSR, sustainable employment practices, and decent work. Based on this examination, we aimed to identify best practices.

We conducted a content analysis of CSR reports from a selected sample of firms, primarily large, publicly listed companies in the United States and the United Kingdom. These companies were chosen because they have high workforce ESG ratings, implying that they are industry leaders in supporting employee welfare. However, it could be argued that this sample might not be fully representative of the entire hospitality sector. While large companies with established CSR policies offer interesting insights into how they care about their staff, they differ significantly from small and medium-sized hospitality enterprises, which may not engage in CSR to the same extent or in the same ways. Thus, while the findings from this sample can provide a blueprint for smaller companies to follow, they may not fully capture the diversity of practices across the entire sector.

It is important to reiterate at this juncture that our objective was not to evaluate the quality of these reports (or the quality of reporting per se) but to ascertain what hospitality companies say about their efforts to improve working conditions for

their employees. The underlying assumption was that the content of these reports – what is emphasized and what is downplayed or omitted – actually reflects the company’s priorities. It follows that companies that frequently discuss a particular issue are likely prioritizing it, while those that ignore, downplay, or give limited attention to certain topics by only briefly mentioning them might be signaling either a lack of focus or potential areas of concern. For example, extensive mention of health and safety issues suggests a strong focus on minimizing workplace hazards and preventing accidents, while little to no mention of unionization might imply either a lack of attention or a deliberate avoidance of the topic, potentially hinting at issues that could be cause for concern.

This approach revealed significant variations in how hospitality companies address different employment challenges. In other words, the issue lies in the varying focus and depth of reporting among different companies. The vast majority of firms provided detailed accounts of their DEI initiatives, suggesting a genuine commitment to non-discrimination and inclusivity (still, there was minimal mention of non-discrimination based on religion or economic background).² However, many were noticeably silent on union representation and their interactions with organized labor, which raises concerns about their attitudes toward workers’ rights and collective bargaining. Likewise, few companies shared information about their policies toward immigrants and refugees or their efforts to support their integration into a new environment (which, as such, is also surprising given the significant portion of the hospitality workforce that is made up of foreign-born employees).

By and large, the findings present a cautiously positive outlook: most US and UK companies in our sample are implementing well-intentioned and generally beneficial initiatives across all identified categories (with the notable exception of support for immigrants and refugees). These initiatives indicate a strong focus on improving employee conditions by showing that the organization cares for and supports its workforce. As observed, these programs address various aspects of employee welfare, including pay, healthcare, WLB, specialized training, professional growth, and physical and emotional well-being. Nevertheless, the critical question remains: assuming the self-reported information is accurate, how effective are these initiatives in practice, and how are they perceived by the employees themselves? In this context, it is worth noting that, in September 2024, 10,000 US hotel employees from Hiltons, Marriots, Sheratons, and Westins participated in a three-day strike, protesting against low pay and poor working conditions. This large-scale action suggests that, despite any claims of progress, many workers still feel that their concerns are not being adequately addressed, raising doubts about the actual impact of these initiatives on employee well-being.

Thus, while CSR reports may suggest that hospitality staff at large, publicly listed companies are well-supported, the persistent issue of high staff turnover – along with the above-mentioned strike and similar protests – raises fundamental questions. If employees are indeed well cared for and valued, why are there still disputes over pay and problems with staff retention? Granted, the situation is much more complex as other factors might be at play. With vacancies in industries like technology, healthcare, and e-commerce on the rise, some employees, particularly those deeply

dissatisfied with their jobs and working conditions, may be attracted to roles that provide higher wages, a better work-life balance, or more secure career opportunities. Given this, employers' CSR-inspired efforts – no matter how well-intentioned and beneficial on paper – may struggle to offset the inherent challenges of the demanding nature of hospitality work. Besides, generational shifts in work preferences (Goh & Baum, 2021) and the growing desire for remote work options can further undermine the effectiveness of these measures, thereby compounding retention challenges. This indicates a need for further research into these critical issues.

4.4.2 Theoretical contributions

Our approach emphasizes the need to examine not only what companies include in their CSR reports but also what they choose to leave out, aligning with the principles of signaling theory (Connelly et al., 2011). By understanding both the explicit content and omissions in these reports, we can gain deeper insights into a company's genuine priorities and potential weaknesses. This view positions CSR reports as more than just tools for public relations or regulatory compliance – they serve as reflections of a company's underlying values, beliefs, and priorities, consistent with the concept of institutional logic. As noted in the hospitality literature, institutional logics shape how companies construct their CSR narratives, influencing what is highlighted or minimized in these reports (Guix et al., 2025). Therefore, analyzing how hospitality companies communicate their workforce practices offers a window into their institutional logics. This approach allows us to assess not only their public commitments but also how deeply these commitments align with their internal culture and actual behaviors. In other words, by scrutinizing what is emphasized and what is omitted, we can better understand how seriously companies take their responsibilities toward their employees.

4.4.3 Practical implications

That said, our primary objective was to ascertain what hospitality companies are actually doing to improve employee conditions and make hospitality work more rewarding and less burdensome, rather than evaluating the quality of their CSR reporting. Going by the measures, and programs outlined in CSR reports, it can be inferred, as noted above, that large hospitality employers are making efforts to improve conditions for their employees. However, our sample is limited to large, publicly listed companies with the highest workforce ESG scores and ratings, which inherently restricts the scope of our findings. After all, not all hospitality workers are employed by major corporations like Hilton or Marriott (and even those who are, as evidenced by the previously mentioned strike, may still be dissatisfied with their pay and working conditions). Many work at smaller, often family run businesses, where employee-oriented CSR practices – and, consequently, the level of organizational support and care – are not as advanced as in larger companies (Font et al., 2012). Indeed, smaller firms usually lack the financial resources and expertise to carry out such programs.

Nevertheless, we believe that smaller, locally embedded hospitality companies could still benefit from adopting some of the best practices used by global corporations, albeit with necessary adaptations to fit the realities of small business operations. There are reasons why these businesses should consider taking a leaf out of larger hospitality corporations' books. First, some of the best practices we identified do not require significant financial investment; for instance, establishing and supporting employee resource groups is relatively low-cost. Second, even the practices that do involve higher upfront costs may pay dividends in the long term by boosting employee morale and productivity. These investments can lead to a more loyal and engaged workforce, which not only reduces turnover but also enhances the company's overall performance and reputation in the industry. Third, as recent research suggests, some restaurant-goers are willing to pay slightly more for meals ("fair pay") if it ensures better pay and more generous work-related benefits for frontline employees (Mejia et al., 2022). The implication is that prioritizing employee well-being from the every moment he or she becomes a staff member can also resonate positively with customers, creating a win-win situation for both the business and its workforce. That is why we propose a framework for addressing employee needs at different stages of their career, ensuring a tailored approach based on where employees are in their journey with the company.

4.4.3.1 Employee care framework: Lifecycle perspective

Phase 1: Onboarding and integration

Objective: Ensure new employees feel welcomed, supported, and equipped in their new roles. This phase is critical for establishing trust and setting in employees in the company culture.

- **Well-being:** Introduce new employees to wellness programs and mental health resources.
 - **Possible initiatives:** a well-being welcome pack (e.g., information on wellness programs, mental health resources, etc.); well-being buddy system.
- **Employment conditions:** clarity around job expectations, responsibilities, and work-life balance policies.
 - **Possible initiatives:** Clear communication on flexible work policies, paid time off, and any special leave; new hire feedback mechanism to gather insights on onboarding experiences; personalized onboarding schedules.
- **Core Benefits:** Educate new hires on their benefits packages, including health insurance, retirement plans, and employee assistance programs.
 - **Possible initiatives:** benefits orientation session with HR to explain health-care options, pensions; early financial planning workshops; part-time and full-time employees should have access to the same core benefits, promoting inclusivity.

- **Safety:** Essential safety training and guidelines.
 - **Possible initiatives:** Onboarding safety briefing; comprehensive safety orientation programs; mandatory safety app or reporting tool for tracking incidents.
- **Training and Development:** Foundational training for the role and opportunities for continuous learning.
 - **Possible initiatives:** job-specific training programs for new employees; a learning portal with online courses; apprenticeship or internship program for entry-level employees.
- **DEI:** DEI as a core part of onboarding by introducing company values and resources related to diversity and inclusion.
 - **Possible initiatives:** DEI onboarding module to discuss the company's DEI policies and expectations, along with introductions to employee resource groups; hiring practices include unconscious bias training for recruiters and managers.

Outcome: New employees should feel welcomed, valued, and equipped with the resources to succeed, making their transition smooth and engaging.

Phase 2: Early career development

Objective: Provide opportunities for growth and development in early career stages, encouraging employee loyalty and increasing job satisfaction.

- **Well-being:** Promote work-life balance and early intervention for stress management or mental health challenges.
 - **Possible initiatives:** Regular check-ins with managers to assess well-being; wellness incentives like gym memberships; mindfulness workshops.
- **Employment conditions:** Reinforce clear job roles and opportunities for flexible work.
 - **Possible initiatives:** Performance reviews that include discussions around flexible working needs and career progression; performance-based bonuses; clear career path framework
- **Core benefits:** Strengthen the value of the benefits.
 - **Possible initiatives:** Financial literacy workshops; possibilities to customize benefits, such as increasing retirement contributions or additional healthcare coverage; financial wellness workshops.
- **Safety:** Continuously review safety training and ensure employees feel safe in their work environments.
 - **Possible initiatives:** Regular safety audits and risk assessments tailored to specific roles; safety mentorship programs.

- **Training and development:** Provide mentorship, early leadership opportunities, and skills development to fast-track career growth.
- **Possible initiatives:** Mentorship program pairing early career employees with experienced mentor; rotational programs within different departments; professional development stipend.
- **DEI:** Targeted development opportunities for underrepresented groups.
 - **Possible initiatives:** DEI-focused workshops and training; internal diversity networks that facilitate mentorship and development.

Outcome: Employees in the early stages of their career should feel supported in their development, increasing engagement and reducing turnover.

Phase 3: Mid-career growth and leadership

Objective: Support employees through career advancement and offer leadership development opportunities to retain high-performing talent.

- **Well-being:** Help mid-career employees manage work-life balance.
 - **Possible initiatives:** Flexible work schedules, sabbaticals; burnout prevention initiatives, or wellness retreats to avoid burnout; leadership wellness programs.
- **Employment conditions:** Competitive compensation packages that reflect their growing experience and contributions.
 - **Possible initiatives:** Regular compensation reviews; bonuses or performance-linked rewards.
- **Core benefits:** Long-term benefits such as retirement planning, health savings accounts, and family oriented benefits like parental leave or childcare support.
 - **Possible initiatives:** Consultations on retirement savings plans; pension reviews and financial planning support.
- **Safety:** Safety culture, especially in leadership roles, where modeling safe behavior is crucial.
 - **Possible initiatives:** psychological safety in leadership roles by offering training on mental resilience; wellness and safety checklists for senior staff.
- **Training and development:** leadership development and personal growth programs.
 - **Possible initiatives:** Leadership development academy; executive education programs; cross-functional leadership projects that allow mid-career employees to lead initiatives outside their regular domain.

- **DEI:** Mid-career employees from underrepresented groups should have access to leadership programs and mentorship.
 - **Possible initiatives:** Diverse leadership channels by setting clear targets for increasing the representation of women and underrepresented groups in senior positions; inclusive leadership training; DEI scorecards for leadership positions to track progress.

Outcome: Mid-career employees should feel valued, supported, and motivated to stay with the organization, leading to lower attrition rates and higher leadership strength.

Phase 4: Late career and transition support

Objective: Robust support for late-career employees as they prepare for retirement or career transitions.

- **Well-being:** Managing health and well-being before the retirement.
 - **Possible initiatives:** Pre-retirement wellness programs; ergonomics and workplace adaptation support.
- **Employment conditions:** Flexible work schedules or phased retirement options.
 - **Possible initiatives:** Implement flexible retirement transition plans that allow for reduced hours or consulting roles post-retirement; financial planning workshops focusing on pensions, retirement savings; post-retirement engagement opportunities.
- **Core benefits:** Financial security through retirement planning and healthcare coverage beyond employment.
 - **Possible initiatives:** Retirement counseling services; extended healthcare benefits; retiree benefits programs, such as discounts on company products/services.
- **Safety:** Ensure that late-career employees in physically demanding roles receive necessary accommodations to maintain safety and productivity.
 - **Possible initiatives:** Workplace safety assessments to ensure that late-career employees are not exposed to unnecessary physical risks.
- **Training and development:** Personal growth opportunities focused on transitioning out of full-time work and into retirement.
 - **Possible initiatives:** Provide life coaching and transition planning, with a focus on post-career engagement; post-retirement coaching.
- **DEI:** Age-inclusive policies.
 - **Possible initiatives:** intergenerational collaboration workshops promoting knowledge sharing; diversity programs that address the specific needs and contributions of older employees.

Outcome: Late-career employees should feel secure and supported as they approach retirement, ensuring an easy transition out of the workforce.

Phase 5: Exit and alumni engagement

Objective: Manage employee exits and maintain positive relationships with alumni.

- **Well-being:** Health and well-being support during the exit process.
 - **Possible initiatives:** mental health and financial counseling to support employees transitioning out of the company; support group for departing employees.
- **Employment conditions:** Employees are treated fairly during the exit process.
 - **Possible initiatives:** comprehensive exit interviews to understand why employees are leaving; career coaching and job placement assistance; fair severance packages.
- **Core benefits.**
 - **Possible initiatives:** Extended access to health benefits and retirement planning services post-exit; alumni discounts or continued access to certain company services/products.
- **Training and development:** Resources for employees looking to re-skill or transition outside the company.
 - **Possible initiatives:** Partner with external organizations to offer upskilling programs for departing employees; free online learning resources for departing employees.
- **DEI:** Ensure fair treatment for all departing employees and invite them to stay engaged in company initiatives as part of alumni programs.
 - **Possible initiatives:** alumni networks for underrepresented groups; inclusive alumni events.

Outcome: Employees leaving the company should feel respected and valued, creating a positive relationship that can turn them into advocates or future re-hires.

To recapitulate, our framework provides a comprehensive and personalized approach to employee well-being, development, and engagement at every stage of their career journey. From onboarding to retirement, the framework emphasizes holistic support across well-being, employment conditions, core benefits, safety, training, diversity, equity, and inclusion. By proactively addressing employees' needs, the framework has the potential to foster long-term loyalty, continuous development, and a strong connection between employees and the organization – all of which are vital to the success of the hospitality industry. At the same time,

companies implementing this framework should recognize and respect the rights of workers to unionize. As will be argued in the next chapter, unionization is a vital part of promoting fair employment practices. Thus, integrating this framework with respect for workers' rights to organize can lead to a more balanced, fair, and inclusive workplace, reinforcing trust between employees and employers.

Notes

- 1 It is important to note that there has recently been a backlash against ESG in the USA, particularly in states with Republican majorities in their legislatures. These states have introduced legislation or taken measures to limit or counteract the influence of ESG criteria on corporate practices and investment decisions. This resistance stems from concerns that ESG considerations are linked to "wokeism" and may impose undue burdens or align with political and ideological agendas that some policymakers and business leaders oppose. While ESG may face criticism on various grounds, including its perceived association with left-wing political agendas, it remains a crucial framework for holding corporations accountable.
- 2 On the other hand, this strong focus on DEI might also reflect a desire to be seen as politically correct, given how sensitive and emotionally charged discussions of non-discrimination have become in public discourse.

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5 Employment relations in the hospitality industry

5.1 Unionization in the hospitality industry in the United States and the United Kingdom

Unionization remains notably low in the hospitality industry compared to other sectors in the United States, the United Kingdom, and many European countries. As of 2023, the unionization rate in the US hospitality industry was around 2.9%, significantly lower than the national average of 11.2% across all sectors. Overall, 16.2 million workers were represented by unions across various industries, marking an increase of 191,000 compared to 2022. However, the unionization percentage dropped due to the rapid growth of workplaces. In the private sector, unionization stood at 6.9%, while in the public sector, it reached 36% ([Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, 2024](#)). Unionization among workers of color was responsible for the entire increase in union membership in 2023, with black workers having the highest unionization rate at 13.1%. Union membership among workers under 45 grew by 229,000 in 2023, while it decreased by 38,000 among workers aged 45 and older.

The low unionization rate in the hospitality industry in the United States is mirrored in the United Kingdom, where only about 3.5% of hospitality workers are unionized, compared to the overall unionization rate of 23.1% across all industries ([Department for Business and Trade, & Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, 2023](#)). These rates are particularly low when compared to industries such as manufacturing (8.6% in the United States) and transportation (17.5% in the United States), which have historically strong union representation. The situation in the United Kingdom is similar, with sectors like public administration and education enjoying much higher union density, often exceeding 50%. Notably, however, these figures often fail to reflect the number of workers interested in joining unions. In 2023, over 60 million workers in the United States were interested in becoming union members but were unable to do so ([Shierholz et al., 2024](#)).

Across Europe, unionization rates in the hospitality industry vary but tend to be low compared to other sectors. In Croatia, for example, 18% of hotel employees were unionized in 2021 ([Draskovic et al., 2022](#)). All told, in Europe, while sector-wide agreements may cover non-unionized workers, their effectiveness is limited in industries like hospitality that experience high turnover and part-time employment.

Still, evidence from Greece suggests that the relatively strong position of unions, combined with the enduring tradition of collective bargaining, can result in better wages and working conditions for a significant portion of the hospitality workforce (Papadopoulos & Ioannou, 2023).

5.2 Reasons behind low unionization rates in the US and UK hospitality industry

Several key factors contribute to the low unionization rates in the hospitality industry. First, the nature of employment in this sector often involves a high proportion of part-time, temporary, and seasonal work (Lucas, 2009). Such employment arrangements can make it difficult for labor unions to organize and maintain a stable membership base, as workers frequently change jobs or, as mentioned repeatedly in this monograph, leave the industry (IL) altogether (Wood, 2020). This complicates sustained union organizing efforts, as many workers do not stay long enough in their roles to gain the benefits of union membership (in 2023, union membership among full-time US workers was 10.9%, more than double the 5.2% rate for part-time workers; Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, 2024).

Second, young people make up a significant portion of the hospitality workforce, and research indicates that they are generally less likely to be union members (Hodder, 2015; Ioannou & Dukes, 2021). However, this trend is not as straightforward as it may seem. For instance, Lowery et al. (2019) found that younger hospitality workers in the U.S. actually exhibited stronger support for unions. Additionally, studies outside the hospitality industry suggest that today's youth hold a generally positive view of unions (Fiorito et al., 2021). Despite this, young workers may still choose to address unsatisfactory working conditions by leaving their jobs, especially when job opportunities are abundant (Haynes et al., 2005; Lucas, 2009), rather than joining a union.

Third, it is sometimes argued that younger workers hew to individualistic values which clash with the collective mindset typically associated with union membership (Freeman & Diamond, 2003; Lucas, 2009). This trend appears to be particularly pronounced among young workers in hospitality, who tend to “assume the values of their social superiors (managers and guests), values which are highly individualistic and hostile to trade unionism” (Aslan & Wood, 1993, p. 61). In the United Kingdom, this is deeply influenced by cultural and historical factors. Indeed, the tradition of domestic service in large 19th-century hotels contributed to a culture of individual rewards and resistance to unionization. Riley (1985) argued that this domestic service ethos fostered a conservative individualism among workers, which is reflected in George Orwell’s observation – cited by Wood (2020) – that waiters often have a servile yet individualistic attitude, making them less likely to support unions.

Fourth, in both the United States and the United Kingdom, there is sometimes a lack of awareness or appreciation for the benefits of union membership among hospitality workers. This is partly due to the industry’s history of weak union presence, leading to a cycle where low union visibility results in low membership, which,

in turn, perpetuates the lack of influence unions have in advocating for workers' rights in this sector.¹ Relatedly, some researchers (Riley, 1985; Saunders, 1981) also make a case for the impact of socio-geographic factors on unionization in the UK hospitality sector (since hospitality services primarily expanded in London and coastal areas, this development resulted in the isolation of hospitality workers from urban industrial unionism).

Fifth, migrant workers, who make up a significant portion of the hospitality workforce, are often less familiar with or inclined toward union membership. Recent research shows that foreign-born hospitality workers frequently lack awareness of their rights, feel uncertain about their employability, and are socially isolated and hence apprehensive about participating in organizing efforts (Bullock et al., 2024; Papadopoulos et al., 2021). Sixth, issue is the very structure of the hospitality sector. Unlike large manufacturing or transportation sectors, many hospitality businesses are smaller and more fragmented, which makes effective union organization more problematic (Wood, 2020). However, in the United States, another factor is at play, namely, the transition in the restaurant industry from many small, independently owned businesses to chain outlets. For example, because Chipotle owns its restaurants, employees can form unions and use their collective power to negotiate with the company, even across various locations and states. In contrast, workers at McDonald's and other franchised restaurants face greater challenges in unionizing, as parent corporations are generally not recognized as joint employers, based on a 2017 ruling by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). Last but not least, the strong resistance from hospitality employers goes some way toward explaining low unionization rates among those working in hotels, bars, and restaurants (Logan, 2023; Papadopoulos et al., 2021; Zientara et al., 2024c).

5.3 Employer hostility to unionization in the hospitality industry

5.3.1 Definitions and forms of employer anti-unionism

Union-busting, steeped in neoliberal and unitarist ideologies (Cullinane & Dundon, 2014), refers to a range of strategies aimed at undermining or suppressing labor unions' influence, often to prevent them from organizing within a workplace (Fiorito, 2001; Gall, 2004; Roy, 1980). Crucially, many lines of evidence indicate that employer hostility to unionization in the hospitality industry is most common in workplaces in the United Kingdom and the United States (Logan, 2023; Papadopoulos et al., 2021), as well as in US subsidiaries operating in Europe and other parts of the world (Royle, 2002; Royle & Urano, 2012). As discussed in Chapter 2, employer anti-unionism encompasses both union substitution and union suppression strategies (Gall, 2004). These can be legal or illegal and range from subtle maneuvers to overtly aggressive actions, all intended to diminish the power of unions or discourage workers from joining them (Fiorito, 2001; McNicholas, 2022).

Typical anti-union tactics include holding “captive audience” meetings, displaying anti-union posters and banners throughout the workplace, warning pro-union employees that they could be fired if they support union recognition, discussing the potential negative outcomes of voting “yes” in a union election with workers, labelling pro-union employees as “enemies” to others in the workplace, asking workers to reveal their opinions on unionization, providing managers with training on how to prevent unionization efforts, discriminating against pro-union employees by giving financial rewards to those who oppose unionization, monitoring employee social media activity to detect union organizing efforts, pressuring social media platforms, like YouTube and TikTok, to suspend union accounts, using CSR- or HRM-inspired language to suggest that company care can replace the need for unions, creating employee committees to address workplace issues as a substitute for union representation, introducing profit-sharing plans or other benefits as alternatives to unionization, and refusing to acknowledge the outcome of union elections ([Zientara et al., 2024a](#)).

5.3.2 Motivations for hospitality employers’ use of anti-union tactics

All this raises the question of what motivates hospitality employers to engage in union-busting. First and foremost, cost control and profit maximization are primary motivations. The hospitality industry is known for its focus on maintaining low labor costs ([Parsley, 1980](#)), and unions are often seen as a threat to this model. Unions typically advocate for higher wages, better benefits, and improved working conditions, all of which can increase operational costs and reduce profit margins. To avoid these financial impacts, employers may resort to union-busting tactics ([Fiorito, 2001](#)). Second, there is the issue of operational flexibility. Unions can enforce strict work rules and may resist certain management decisions, which can limit a company’s ability to make quick and necessary changes. In a fast-paced industry like hospitality, this perceived loss of flexibility can be a significant concern for employers ([Zientara et al., 2024c](#)).

Another motivation is the protection of decision-making authority. Unions generally seek to have a greater say in decisions that affect their members, such as those related to layoffs, promotions, and job assignments. Employers may view this as an encroachment on their ability to run the business as they see fit ([Cullinane & Dundon, 2014](#)). In addition, the desire to avoid strikes and disruptions is a major factor. Unions have the power to organize strikes or work stoppages, which can severely disrupt business operations, sully a company’s reputation, and lead to financial losses. To prevent such outcomes, employers might engage in anti-union activities. Finally, corporate culture plays a role. Companies that prioritize individualism, competition, or a particular corporate ethos – as often happens in the hospitality industry ([Aslan & Wood, 1993](#)) – may perceive unions as incompatible with their cultural values. This cultural clash can further motivate employers to resist unionization efforts.

All told, financial concerns, the need for operational flexibility, the desire to retain decision-making authority, the wish to avoid disruptions, and the preservation

of corporate culture are key factors that help explain why employers in the hospitality industry (as well as other sectors) resort to anti-union tactics. These actions are further facilitated by a legal framework that tends to favor employers.

5.3.3 Legal framework of unionization

As we remember from [Chapter 4](#), the primary international regulation affirming workers' right to organize is Article 23 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948), which recognizes the right to form or join a labor union. However, this provision is not legally binding in most jurisdictions and generally has limited direct impact on employer-employee relations. In the United States, the legal framework governing union activities has been primarily shaped by the National Labor Relations Act ([NLRA, 1935](#)) of 1935 (also known as the Wagner Act) and the Taft-Hartley Act of 1947. The NLRA granted US workers the right to form or join unions, but the Taft-Hartley Act introduced several provisions that complicated union activities. These include the "employer free speech" clause, which allows employers to express anti-union views, the use of mandatory "captive audience" meetings to dissuade unionization, and the ability for employers to file petitions to gauge workers' interest in unionizing (it should be emphasized that, since the 1970s, employers have increasingly exploited loopholes in the NLRA to resist unionization efforts, often facing minimal repercussions due to the absence of substantial civil penalties for labor law violations; [McNicholas, 2022](#)).

Recent actions by the NLRB under the Biden administration have aimed to restore a more balanced environment for unions. Key changes include the reintroduction of the "quickie election", which shortens the time frame within which employers can campaign against unionization, and the reinstatement of smaller collective bargaining units, known as "micro units". This latter change facilitates union organization within specific segments of a workplace (previously, employers could argue that unionization votes needed a majority across an entire hotel, for example, rather than within a specific department). Importantly, the 2023 Cemex ruling further strengthened union rights by requiring employers to recognize and bargain with a union if a majority of workers express their desire to unionize, unless the employer files for an election. If the employer commits any unfair labor practice that would invalidate the election, the petition is dismissed, and rather than holding a new election, the NLRB will order the employer to recognize and negotiate with the union ([NLRB, 2024](#)).

Meanwhile, in the United Kingdom, changes in legislation over the years have significantly weakened union power ([Papadopoulos et al., 2021](#)). Key legislative shifts, such as the Trade Union Act of 2016, introduced stricter thresholds for industrial action ballots, requiring a minimum turnout of 50% and, in some essential public services, a higher threshold of 40% of all eligible members in favor. Additionally, restrictions on picketing and increased reporting requirements have made it more difficult for unions to organize and conduct strikes effectively. These measures, combined with the decline in traditional industries where unions have

historically been strong, have contributed to a reduction in union influence and membership across the United Kingdom. That said, the new Labour government under Keir Starmer has outlined plans to introduce legislation that will facilitate organizing and improve workers' rights.

5.3.4 Consequences of union-busting

Considering that unions exist primarily to protect workers from exploitation and to improve working conditions (Freeman & Medoff, 1984), and that they hold stakeholder status (Delbard, 2011) while also contributing to reducing inequalities (Denice & Rosenfeld, 2018), employing anti-union tactics exhibits clear signs of corporate social irresponsibility. In fact, as discussed in Chapter 2, Corporate Social Irresponsibility involves actions deliberately harming a company's stakeholders and society overall (Clark et al., 2022; Iborra & Riera, 2023; Lin-Hi & Müller, 2013).

This is especially significant in a low-wage industry like hospitality and in a liberal market economy such as the United States. Indeed, recent research reveals that US workers under union contracts earn, on average, 13.5% more in wages than their nonunionized counterparts with similar education, occupation, and experience in the same industry (Shierholz et al., 2024). Similarly, hourly wages for unionized women are 9.5% higher on average than for nonunionized women with comparable backgrounds. Besides, union workers enjoy better access to healthcare, with over 95% having employer-sponsored health benefits, compared to just 71% of nonunion workers. Unionized employees are also more likely to have paid sick leave, with 92% having access, versus 78% of nonunion workers. Moreover, employers with unionized workforces are more likely to provide retirement plans, with 95% of union-covered workers having access to employer-sponsored retirement benefits, compared to 70% of their nonunion counterparts (Shierholz et al., 2024). There is evidence, too, that when local economies have greater shares of union workers, nonunion workers benefit, because unions effectively set broader standards, including higher wages, which nonunion employers must meet to attract and retain the workers they need (Mishel & Bivens, 2021).

On the other hand, when workers attempt to form unions, employers frequently hire “union-avoidance” consultants (also known as “union busters”) to undermine these efforts and discourage unionization. These consultants aim to prevent union elections or, if that fails, to sway workers to vote against unionization (mainly during “captive audience” meetings). The Economic Policy Institute (EPI) estimates that employers spend around \$433 million annually on such consultants, with hourly rates exceeding \$350 and daily rates surpassing \$2,500 (Shierholz et al., 2024) (however, this estimate only scratches the surface, as current data are insufficient to capture the full extent of employer spending on union avoidance²). This is particularly galling, especially considering that some hospitality line-level workers earn less in a month than what these consultants make in a single day.

Box 5.1 Case study: Employer anti-unionism at Starbucks

Starbucks Corporation, a global leader in roasting, marketing, and retailing specialty coffee, operates around 38,000 stores across 86 markets, as of 2024. These are divided into three main segments: North America (including the United States and Canada), International (covering regions such as China, Japan, Asia Pacific, Europe, the Middle East, Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean), and Channel Development (which handles the sale of Starbucks-branded products outside of its stores, like whole bean and ground coffee). Starbucks is publicly traded on the Nasdaq under the ticker symbol SBUX, with a market capitalization of approximately \$85.1 billion, as of 2024. Major shareholders include investment firms like The Vanguard Group, BlackRock, and State Street Global Advisors. In 2023, the company reported revenues nearing \$36 billion and a net profit of over \$4.1 billion. Since 2004, Starbucks has seen revenue growth of over 118%, with an average annual increase of 10%, with the only decline occurring in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Starbucks has a complex relationship with unions. Workers first unionized under the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) in 1985, but the union was decertified in 1992. For nearly 30 years afterward, only employees at licensed stores operated by other companies with existing union agreements remained unionized. The modern wave of unionization at Starbucks began in Buffalo, New York, in 2021, which inspired other locations to unionize. By early 2022, the first union outside Buffalo was established in Mesa, Arizona. As of June 2024, more than 10,500 workers across over 470 Starbucks locations in at least 40 US states have voted to unionize, primarily under Workers United, a worker-led union affiliated with the Service Employees International Union. Starbucks employees have voiced concerns about being understaffed and not receiving sufficient training, problems that worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic. Starbucks Workers United, represented by Workers United, has adopted a grassroots strategy, expanding gradually from one location to another. Most of the union members are young adults aged 19–29, belonging to Generation Z. These efforts are part of a broader resurgence in labor activism in the United States, often referred to as the “new labor movement”.

Despite these early successes, by 2024 Starbucks has not finalize yet a collective bargaining agreement and faces accusations of union-busting. In 2022 alone, Starbucks terminated over 85 US employees involved in union organizing. The company has been accused of fostering a culture of fear and surveillance. In April 2023, NLRB prosecutors reported that Starbucks’ corporate leadership had failed to engage in fair collective bargaining with 144 unionized cafes, effectively refusing to negotiate with the unions representing those locations ([Sainato, 2022](#)). In September 2023, an NLRB judge

found Starbucks in violation of labor laws after announcing pay raises exclusively for non-union employees (a par-excellence anti-union tactic) ([Valinsky, 2023](#)). In addition, the company has faced criticism for retaining Littler Mendelson, a law firm known for its anti-union strategies.

Crucially, former Starbucks CEO Howard Schultz has been a particularly polarizing figure in the unionization debate. Schultz has consistently opposed unionization, arguing that it is unnecessary at Starbucks due to the company's (CSR-inspired) commitment to competitive wages and benefits. He has claimed that unions could create an adversarial relationship between employees and management, which he believes would undermine the collaborative culture he sought to cultivate at Starbucks (an argument rooted, as we already know, in unitarism). "What the leadership team has done in Buffalo is what we have always done. We listen. We learn. We get better together. No partner has ever needed to have a representative seek to obtain things we all have as partners at Starbucks. And I am saddened and concerned to hear anyone thinks that is needed now" (A Message from [Howard Schultz: From Buffalo with Love, 2021](#)).

All this notwithstanding, Starbucks is perceived as a socially responsible company with high ESG score (including within the "Workforce" category of the "S" dimensions). In its CSR report, it claims: "While we do not believe third-party representation is necessary at Starbucks, we respect our partners' right to organize and we want partners to be informed as they make decisions about engaging with third-party representation" (Starbucks Global Environmental & Social Impact Report, Starbucks 2021, [2022](#), p. 46).

In response, Starbucks Workers United has organized strikes at over 190 locations, totaling more than 450 cumulative days of striking. The largest strike occurred on March 22, 2023, when 117 unionized stores participated in the "One day longer, one day stronger" strike. Symptomatically, public opinion has increasingly favored the workers as more details about Starbucks' anti-union practices have emerged, tarnishing the company's reputation as a progressive employer. Even some shareholders have expressed concerns about the financial and reputational impact of Starbucks' anti-union actions. In a notable development, a majority of Starbucks shareholders voted in favor of a proposal to have the company's labor practices independently audited, signaling growing unease among investors.

5.4 Alt-labor associations in the hospitality industry

In response to the challenges traditional unions face in organizing workers in the US hospitality sector, there has been a rise in alternative labor organizations, often referred to as "alt-labor" unions or associations ([Milkman et al., 2021](#)). These groups differ from traditional unions in that they often do not engage in collective bargaining directly ([Haiven, 2006](#)). Instead, they focus on advocacy, legal support,

and public campaigns to improve working conditions for hospitality workers. One Fair Wage and Fight for \$15, which seek to secure a \$15-per-hour wage for fast food workers, bear all the hallmarks of alt-labor unions. Alt-labor groups typically operate outside the conventional labor union framework, offering a more flexible approach to organizing workers, particularly those in precarious or non-unionized employment situations (it should be noted in this context that traditional unions, unlike alt-labor unions, are obliged to address only the issues permitted by the NLRA, which, in principle, bear upon wages and working conditions).

One prominent example of alt-labor in the hospitality industry is the emergence of worker centers ([Rosado Marzán, 2024](#)). These centers provide resources such as legal assistance, educational workshops, and advocacy support to low-wage workers, many of whom are employed in hospitality. Organizations like the Restaurant Opportunities Centers United (ROC United) have gained traction by addressing issues such as wage theft, discrimination, and workplace safety, often through public campaigns and partnerships with other social justice groups. These efforts have spotlighted the plight of some hospitality workers.

Moreover, alt-labor organizations have embraced digital platforms and social media to mobilize workers and raise awareness about labor issues in the hospitality sector ([Martindale et al., 2024](#)). By leveraging technology, these groups can reach a wider audience and engage with workers who may not have access to traditional union structures ([Galvin, 2024](#)). This approach has been particularly effective in organizing campaigns and protests, enabling alt-labor associations to build solidarity among workers across different locations and even across the country. As a result, alt-labor groups have become an important force in advocating for hospitality workers' rights. All of this is significant, considering the ongoing hostility of many hospitality employers toward the labor movement.

5.5 The impacts of the fear of unionizing on employee outcomes

5.5.1 *The nature of fear*

Union-busting tactics rely heavily on intimidation and create a climate of fear among pro-union employees ([Roy, 1980](#)). Fear, an emotion deeply rooted in human evolution, represents a natural response to the presence of danger, harm, or pain, prompting individuals to react accordingly ([Gullone, 2000; Rachman, 1990](#)). Discrete emotion theory holds that core emotions are innate emotional reactions determined by biology, universally characterized by their causes and consequences ([Larsen & Diener, 1992](#)). Hence, fear – like disgust, anger, and other core emotions – are engendered by similar factors and tend to evoke comparable responses in all individuals. Thus, fear fosters avoidance behavior, restricts one's perceptual and cognitive focus to perceived threats, and leads to pessimistic assessments of risks and future outcomes ([Kish-Gephart et al., 2009](#)).

The consensus view is that fear developed as a protective mechanism for human survival. This protective function is attributed to the presence of a “fear module” ([Ohman & Mineka, 2001](#)), which unconsciously activates reactions to potential threats in the surrounding environment. Fear can also arise through conscious

awareness. This is because our brain assigns meaning to situations and events occurring in our environment (Power & Dalgleish, 2008). In other words, humans are constantly vigilant, searching for cues that indicate whether a specific situation is dangerous. Based on these evaluations, people may experience either a heightened fear response or a milder one. This response is influenced by two aspects of the threat: its immediacy and severity (Blanchard & Blanchard, 2008). The former pertains to the time available for deciding how to react, while the latter concerns one's perception of the seriousness of the threat.

The idea that fear can be triggered by conscious awareness is relevant to the concept of fear appeals. Protection motivation theory (Rogers, 1975) posits that fear appeals initiate two cognitive processes that together form danger control responses: threat appraisal, which assesses the severity of the threat and personal vulnerability, and coping appraisal, which evaluates the effectiveness of potential responses and one's ability to execute them. These processes generate protection motivation, a driving force that motivates, sustains, and directs activity (Rogers, 1975). However, this theory has limited applicability to the study included in this chapter, as there is a world of difference between being warned about, say, the health risks of smoking and being told that voting "yes" in union elections could result in termination.

While fear is a natural instinct, it can also be learned through personal or observed experiences (Frijda, 1986). This learned fear is crucial for survival, as it helps humans navigate and respond to threats in their environment, which, albeit not as hostile as in the past, still present dangers to human existence (Gullone, 2000). In this context, Hankiss (2001, pp. 35–36) notes that "[...] the concept of life cannot and should not be reduced to mean plain biological life. [...] It is human life in its wholeness and freedom, dignity and meaning. Our existence, defined in this way, is threatened even in the trivial accidents of everyday life. If one loses one's job, it is not only one's physical existence that is threatened, but also one's social standing, one's existence as a social being". Since most people depend for their livelihoods on their jobs, the sources and consequences of fear at work have been the subject of much interest and research (Appelbaum et al., 1998).

5.5.2 Sources and consequences of fear at work

The consensus view is that a major source of fear at work is job insecurity, defined as a potential threat to continuity of current employment (Schreurs et al., 2015). Accordingly, even in placid economic conditions – at a time of low unemployment and staffing shortages, which enhances one's ease of movement (March & Simon, 1958) – the thought of losing a job worries or scares many an employee (Bünnings et al., 2017). Fear can also be brought about by abusive supervision, which refers to "subordinates' perceptions of the extent to which their supervisors engage in the sustained display of hostile verbal and nonverbal behaviors, excluding physical contact" (Tepper, 2000, p. 178).

There is some force to the argument that fear can be instilled not only by managers but also by co-workers. Here of particular note is workplace ostracism, understood as the act of being excluded or ignored by one's colleagues and, hence, sometimes likened to "social death" (Williams, 2001). For this reason, ostracism

is thought to represent passive aggression (Eisenberger et al., 2003). Furthermore, counterproductive work behaviors – which denote “a set of volitional acts as opposed to accidental or mandated that harm or intend to harm organisations and their stakeholders (clients, co-workers, customers, and supervisors)” (Spector & Fox, 2005, pp. 151–152) – constitute a source of fear, too. In particular, this goes for those counterproductive work behaviors that are directed at one’s colleagues and take the form of verbal abuse or backbiting. Likewise, generally understood antisocial conduct – such as “criticising people at work” or “griping about co-workers” (Robinson & O’Leary-Kelly, 1998, p. 663) – is likely to make some employees feel fearful and isolated.

One significant consequence of fear at work is employee silence (Kish-Gephart et al., 2009). When workers feel intimidated, they often react by remaining silent, engaging in self-censorship that tends to disrupt the flow of information from staff to mid-level managers. That is why much has recently been made of ensuring psychological safety, where employees feel free to express their thoughts without fear of embarrassment or discipline (Clark, 2020). Of course, people especially avoid speaking up when they disagree with their superiors (Rachman, 1990). Historically, challenging individuals of higher status could lead to serious repercussions (Ohman, 2000). While social norms and circumstances have evolved, this dynamic still holds true today.

5.5.3 The fear of unionizing and employee well-being

Thus, when employees have a well-founded fear of managerial retaliation for engaging in organizing efforts, especially if they are actually bullied and intimidated by a manager (Roy, 1980), their well-being can be severely compromised. It follows that this environment of fear and harassment can lead to heightened stress and anxiety, adversely affecting both their mental and physical health (in other words, various forms of employer anti-unionism bear all the hallmarks of a significant stressor). Moreover, the ongoing intimidation can erode job satisfaction and reduce work engagement, as employees may feel unappreciated and unsafe. All told, at least some of those who experience fear due to union-busting tactics are likely to feel uncomfortable and stressed at work. Crucially, recent research indicates that this holds true even for employees who share their managers’ anti-union views (Zientara et al., 2024c). Based on this reasoning, we propose the following hypothesis³:

H11. There is a negative relationship between the fear of unionizing and employee well-being.

5.5.4 Well-being and the intention to leave the industry

As hypothesized in the study presented in Chapter 3, there are reasons to believe that those who do not feel well at work may be inclined to leave not only their current job but also the industry as a whole (Zientara et al., 2024b). This is based on the assumption that working conditions and workplace realities across different

facilities within the same industry tend to be relatively similar (this is especially true of low-wage, low-skill industries). As a result, when employees experience low levels of well-being, they may perceive switching employers within the industry as an *inadequate* solution and instead seek opportunities in entirely different fields. Arguably, while switching industries can be challenging due to the need for new skills and adjustments, low unemployment rates can alleviate some of these difficulties, in line with the implications of the theory of organizational equilibrium (March & Simon, 1958). In such a market, employers may be less selective, making it easier for individuals to transition into new roles and fields. Consequently, we propose the following hypothesis:

H12. There is a negative relationship between well-being and the intention to leave the industry.

5.5.5 *The fear of unionizing and the intention to leave the industry*

Over time, the prevalence of fear-inducing anti-union practices – especially if they are frequent and intense – can cause some workers to disengage and seek employment elsewhere in order to escape the toxic atmosphere. Put another way, when employees experience fear in the workplace (due to the presence of anti-union practices), some might consider seeking out environments characterized by care and support, where their rights and well-being are respected. Undoubtedly, such exits not only deplete the workforce but also, critically, erode institutional knowledge (Crossan et al., 1999) and disrupt team cohesion (DeVaro, 2006). Besides, if employees (rightly) anticipate that union-busting and similar issues are widespread in the hospitality industry, they may choose to ILI altogether, seeking more stable and supportive work environments in other sectors. Given this argumentation, we hypothesize that:

H13. There is a positive relationship between the fear of unionizing and the intention to leave the industry.

5.5.6 *The fear of unionizing and career commitment*

Crucially, the fear of unionizing (FOU) can go some way toward weakening one's career commitment within a given industry. When employees face fear due to employer resistance to unionization, their sense of security and overall well-being at work is likely to be undermined. Such a negative environment can reduce an employee's motivation to stay in the industry long-term. In fact, the stress and anxiety associated with fear-inducing practices can lead to disengagement, lower job satisfaction, and ultimately a lack of commitment to their careers within that industry (Afrahi et al., 2022). This is because (pro-union) employees may feel that their professional growth and job stability are at risk, prompting them to consider alternative career paths where they can work without such fear. Hence, the negative relationship between the FOU and career commitment is evident, as a toxic

workplace atmosphere discourages employees from investing in a long-term career in an industry plagued by such practices. Therefore:

H14. There is a negative relationship between the fear of unionizing and career commitment.

5.5.7 *Career commitment and the intention to leave the industry*

As noted in [Chapter 3](#), career commitment is instrumental in an employee's intention to remain within or ILI. In fact, high career commitment typically indicates a strong attachment to one's professional role, a clear sense of purpose, and a desire to advance within the field ([Herachwati & Rachma, 2018](#)). Research shows that when employees are deeply committed to their careers, they are more likely to persevere through challenges and seek opportunities for growth within the industry ([Sonenshein et al., 2012](#)). Conversely, low career commitment suggests a lack of enthusiasm and connection to the industry, leading employees to be more susceptible to industry exit intentions ([Herachwati & Rachma, 2018](#)). Without a strong commitment, employees may feel less motivated to endure the difficulties and uncertainties that can arise in their professional journey. Thus, they might perceive leaving the industry as a viable option to seek better alignment with their career aspirations and personal values. Consequently, a lack of career commitment is often associated with a higher intention to ILI, as employees look for roles that offer greater satisfaction and opportunities for meaningful professional development ([Gebbels et al., 2020](#)). In light of this reasoning, we propose the following hypothesis:

H15. There is a negative relationship between career commitment and the intention to leave the industry.

5.5.8 *The fear of unionizing and trust in management*

Trust refers to a “state of mind that enables its possessor to be willing to make herself vulnerable to another – that is, to rely on another despite a positive risk that the other will act in a way that can harm the truster” ([Hill & O’Hara, 2006](#)). By definition, trust has positive connotations. It implies confidence, reliability, and safety within relationships, whether personal or professional ([Mayer et al., 1995](#)). By contrast, fear has negative connotations and creates a sense of insecurity and apprehension. In principle, fear weakens trust by fostering suspicion and doubt, making it difficult for individuals to rely on others. [Clark \(2020\)](#) argues in this context that the presence of fear in an organization is the first sign of weak leadership. It is evident, therefore, that the FOU, instilled by management’s anti-union tactics, can erode the trust between employees and their superiors ([Zientara et al., 2024c](#)).

In fact, when employees face intimidation, threats, or misinformation aimed at deterring unionization efforts, some of them – in particular, those with pro-union views – are unlikely to believe that management has their best interests at heart. Instead of feeling supported and valued, such workers may feel that their rights

are being trampled on, leading to a significant erosion of trust in their managers. Furthermore, when employees feel their concerns about unionization are met with hostility, they may become less likely to voice their grievances or seek constructive feedback, leading to a breakdown in communication between staff and management (Kish-Gephart et al., 2009). This, in turn, can create a cycle of distrust and fear that ends up affecting the functioning of the organization. Given these arguments, we posit that:

H16. There is a negative relationship between the fear of unionizing and trust in management.

5.5.9 Trust in management and the intention to leave the industry

Trust in management is widely recognized as a crucial element in cultivating an employee's overall attachment and loyalty to their organization. This is because mid-level managers, often considered the "face" of the organization (Konovsky & Pugh, 1994), play a key role in shaping how employees perceive and experience their work environment (Cantor et al., 2012). The actions and behaviors of these managers are seen by employees as reflective of the organization's broader intentions, goals, and values. Consequently, when managers consistently demonstrate integrity, competence, and fairness, they not only establish their own credibility but also enhance the trustworthiness of the organization as a whole (Meyer & Allen, 1991). This trust, rooted in the belief that leaders have the employees' best interests in mind, increases employees' likelihood of remaining with the organization (Mayer & Schoorman, 1998). Over time, this trust fosters a strong emotional bond between employees and the organization, in keeping with the implications of attachment theory (Bowlby, 1979).

On the other hand, a lack of trust in management can severely weaken an employee's commitment to the organization. When employees perceive that their managers are self-serving, unfair, or abusive (Tepper, 2000), it creates a sense of insecurity and undervaluation in their roles. This erosion of trust disrupts the positive work environment necessary for developing a meaningful emotional connection to the organization. Without this connection, employees are far more likely to consider leaving their job, or in some cases, the entire industry – especially if they believe such negative managerial behaviors are widespread within the industry. This sentiment echoes Marcus Buckingham's observation that "people join companies, but leave managers". In view of this reasoning, we propose the following hypothesis:

H17. There is a negative relationship between trust in management and the intention to leave the industry.

5.5.10 The fear of unionizing and organizational commitment

Organizational commitment (OC) refers to an employee's overall attachment and loyalty to their organization, encompassing their belief in the organization's goals

and values, their willingness to exert effort on behalf of the organization, and their desire to remain a member of the organization (Mowday et al., 1982). When employees feel apprehensive about potential involvement in unionizing efforts, their commitment to the organization can be diminished. This fear, driven by concerns about potential repercussions like retaliation from management – including termination, being overlooked for promotion, or experiencing bullying – undermines the very foundation of their commitment (Murphy, 2016). Even employees who may hold anti-union views might come to perceive their organization as unfair, irresponsible, and dismissive of their rights, focusing more on control than on employee welfare (Zientara et al., 2024c). This perception can, in turn, lead to disillusionment with the company's leadership and values, decreasing their emotional attachment and weakening their overall commitment. In such an environment, workers are less likely to feel a sense of belonging and identification with the organization. Therefore:

H18. There is a negative relationship between the fear of unionizing and organizational commitment.

5.5.11 *Organizational commitment and the intention to leave the industry*

OC is closely linked to an employee's intention to leave not only their current job but potentially the entire industry (Mowday et al., 1982). High OC, characterized by a strong attachment to the company and alignment with its goals, typically results in lower turnover intentions (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Indeed, employees who feel a deep connection to their organization often find satisfaction and purpose in their work, making them less likely to seek opportunities elsewhere. Conversely, when OC is low, employees may feel disconnected, undervalued, or misaligned with the organization's direction, which can lead them to consider leaving the organization (Mayer & Schoorman, 1998). In some cases, this dissatisfaction may extend beyond the individual company to the broader industry, especially if the issues causing the discontent are perceived as widespread. For example, if employees encounter systemic challenges such as poor working conditions, lack of support and advancement opportunities, or industry-wide anti-union practices, they may become disillusioned with the entire sector. This disillusionment can prompt them to explore careers in different industries where they feel their values and aspirations can be better fulfilled. Thus, a lack of OC can not only increase the likelihood of turnover but also drive employees to ILI altogether, seeking more fulfilling career paths. In light of this argumentation, we propose the following hypothesis:

H19. There is a negative relationship between organizational commitment and the intention to leave the industry

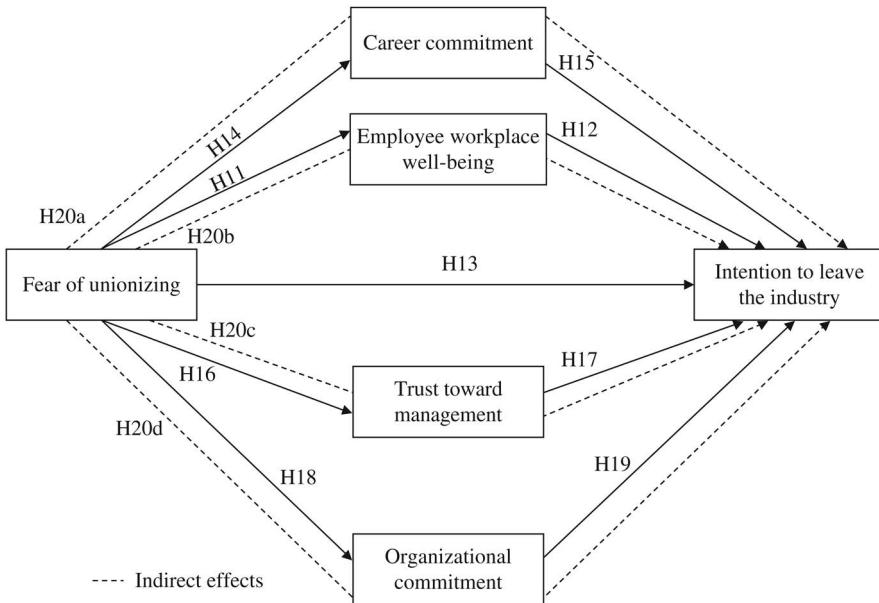


Figure 5.1 presents our conceptual model

5.5.12 Mediation effects

Building on the reasoning outlined in Section 3.4.1.10, we can interpret our conceptual model from a mediation perspective (Figure 5.1). Consequently, we can frame our mediation hypotheses as follows:

- H20a:** Career commitment mediates the relationship between the fear of unionizing and the intention to leave the industry.
- H20b:** Well-being mediates the relationship between the fear of unionizing and the intention to leave the industry.
- H20c:** Trust in management mediates the relationship between the fear of unionizing and the intention to leave the industry.
- H20d:** Organizational commitment mediates the relationship between the fear of unionizing and the intention to leave the industry.

5.6 Research method

5.6.1 Measures

To evaluate employee well-being, career commitment, and intention to leave the hospitality industry, we used the same scales as in Study 1. Trust in management was measured using a 16-item scale from [Tzafrir and Dolan \(2004\)](#) ($\alpha = 0.958$), while OC was assessed using a questionnaire developed

by Mowday et al. (1979) ($\alpha = 0.934$). As there was no existing instrument to measure the FOU, we developed and validated a new scale specifically for this study (Boxes 5.2–5.6) ($\alpha = 0.918$). We also controlled for age, gender, workplace, country, and job tenure.

Box 5.2 Development and validation of the fear of unionizing scale

Item generation and construct formation

Scale development is a multi-step process (Churchill, 1979). Specifically, it involves generating items, forming a construct, “purifying” items, validating, and applying a measure (Edwards, 2003). The main purpose of this process is to determine a scale’s reliability and to establish its face, content, construct, predictive, and nomological validity (Bagozzi, 1981). Accordingly, we began by generating relevant items for our instrument named the FOU scale (FOUS). To that end, we drew on the deductive method, which consists in conducting a “literature review and assessment of existing scales and indicators of that domain” (Boateng et al., 2018, p. 5), and on the inductive method, which involves examining utterances of interviewees or respondents participating in semi-structured surveys. We, therefore, performed a literature review (Grant & Booth, 2009) with a view to identifying relevant items of the proposed measurement instrument.

The review focused on the sources of and reactions to fear in and outside the workplace. We analyzed, inter alia, extant research on workplace ostracism (Williams, 2001) and abusive supervision (Tepper, 2000), as well as (fear caused by) COVID-19 (Millroth & Frey, 2021). This led us to conclude that fear of getting involved in organizing efforts may encompass feelings of heightened anxiety related to one’s job security and career prospects as well as relations with one’s supervisor and co-workers. With this in mind, we conducted a semi-structured survey with ten hospitality workers from the United Kingdom and the United States, recruited via Prolific. We asked them whether they experienced any challenges or issues from their employer or managers related to unionizing or being a union member at work, and what feelings those experiences caused. Based on the literature review and the survey findings, we came up with 17 items. Subsequently, we held an online meeting with six experts (three university lecturers in employment relations and HRM, two union officials, and one psychologist) with the aim of assessing the 17-item scale’s face validity and content validity (Edwards, 2003). The experts did not report any difficulty understanding the items but suggested we remove ten items which were seen to reflect perceptions of employer antiunion practices rather than employees’ sense (and experience) of fear (or were not of universal character). We acted on this advice and, consequently, reduced the initial number of items from 17 to seven (see Table 5.1).

Box 5.3 Items comprising the FOUS

-
- | | |
|-------------|--|
| FOU1 | Getting involved in organizing efforts would negatively affect my career. |
| FOU2 | Getting involved in unionizing would negatively affect my job security. |
| FOU3 | It would be risky to unionize my workplace. |
| FOU4 | I am afraid of getting involved in unionizing my workplace. |
| FOU5 | The thought of unionizing my workplace worries me. |
| FOU6 | The thought of unionizing my workplace scares me. |
| FOU7 | My participation in organizing efforts might cause my colleagues to give me the cold shoulder treatment. |
-

Box 5.4 Initial validation and application

We continued with a content adequacy assessment. To that end, we conducted a questionnaire survey containing, among other measures, the FOUS. The survey (hereafter referred to as Study 1) was carried out via Prolific among 300 US non-union employees from different sectors. Since six participants failed the attention check, we analyzed a total of 294 valid responses. Our respondents were equally distributed between males and females. Specifically, 49% of respondents were female (144 participants), 49% were male (144) and 2% were non-binary (6). Their average age was 39.5 years. Seventy-six percent worked full-time, while 19% were part-time employees. Over 60% had attained some level of higher education. We then conducted exploratory factor analysis (EFA). All items loaded accurately on the factor with factor loadings above the recommended value of 0.7. Both the Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin (KMO) test and Bartlett's test of Sphericity reported satisfactory values (KMO = 0.903; Bartlett's test: $\chi^2 = 1492.41$, $p = 0.000$). The reported eigenvalue of 4.85 and the varimax rotation confirmed a one-factor structure explaining 69.25% of the variance. Next, we analyzed the item-rest correlation and inter-item correlation, whose values were within the accepted limits. Moreover, all items had communalities above the recommended value of 0.5 (Hair et al., 2013). We also tested the change in the Cronbach's alpha value by removing a good-fitting item expecting that alpha would get lower. Finally, all this led us to conclude that the FOUS formed a coherent factor, in view of the acceptable values of Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = 0.926$) confirming internal consistency, critical ratio ($\omega = 0.94$) bearing out composite reliability and the AVE (AVE = 0.69) indicating convergent validity.

Having ascertained the scale's content validity and reliability, which "provide supportive evidence of construct validity" (Hinkin, 1998, p. 114),

we continued with the construct-validation process (Edwards, 2003). Specifically, we proceeded to test the scale's predictive and nomological validity (Bagozzi, 1981) by analyzing relationships between the FOU and the intention to unionize as well as between the FOU and union instrumentalities. As noted in the main text, most individuals, when faced with intimidation, experience fear and tend to respond by remaining silent and withdrawing from the situation. This behavior is particularly evident when people disagree with their superiors (Rachman, 1990). Given that fear fosters avoidance behavior, it is reasonable to assume that, in the face of managerial intimidation, workers might be afraid to unionize. Therefore, there may be a positive relationship between the FOU and the intention to unionize.

Since attitudes toward unions and union instrumentalities are acknowledged as strong drivers of union support (Godard, 2008; Lowery et al., 2019), it is reasonable to assume that firm convictions can also make individuals more courageous in the face of intimidatory behavior. The psychological mechanism at play here involves the strength of one's beliefs, which can help overcome fear, often motivating a response of fight rather than flight. Therefore, it is plausible to hypothesize that those who strongly believe in the efficacy of collective action might be less fearful of getting involved in organizing efforts, suggesting a negative relationship between union instrumentalities and the FOU.

Box 5.5 Validation and application of the FOUS

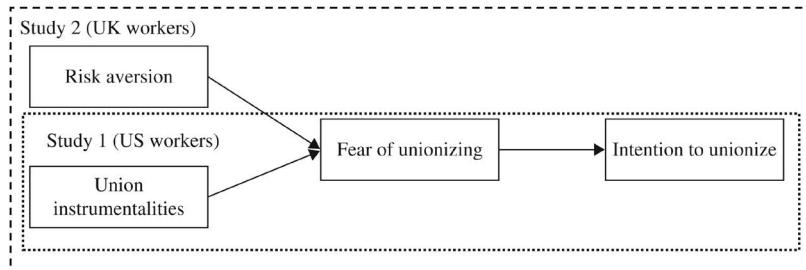


Figure 5.2 Validation and application of the FOUS: Conceptual model

In our research instrument, we measured union instrumentalities with a three-item scale developed by Metochi (2002). Items measuring the intention to unionize were adapted from Cheung and Lee (2012). We analyzed our data using PLS-SEM. All loadings were above the recommended cut-off point of 0.6. Cronbach's alpha values exceeded the recommended 0.7, CR was higher

than 0.7 and values of the AVE were well above 0.5. We drew on the [Fornell and Larcker \(1981\)](#) criterion as well as the HTMT ratio in order to assess discriminant validity of the constructs. The AVE values were above the squared inter-correlations with other constructs, while the HTMT ratio was below the recommended value of 0.9. It follows that the results provided support for the discriminant validity and reliability of the measures. Given the acceptable measurement model, the hypothesized relationships were evaluated with PLS-SEM. To obtain t-score and p-score, we performed PLS bootstrapping with 5,000 subsamples. The results indicate that the FOU had a significant negative effect on the intention to unionize ($t = 7.274$, $p = 0.000$). Moreover, union instrumentalities were negatively associated with fear ($t = 7.957$, $p = 0.000$).

Box 5.6 Further validation and application

In order to properly validate a scale, it is advisable to test a newly developed construct in a different (national) context ([Zenker et al., 2021](#)). Accordingly, we carried out another survey via Prolific (hereafter referred to as Study 2), using a questionnaire containing the FOUS. Crucially, this time our study was conducted among UK workers. The idea was to provide further evidence of the predictive and nomological validity of the FOUS on the basis of data collected in a different country. We also decided to add one more variable, namely, risk aversion in our model. When it comes to feelings of anxiety and fear, one of the most important individual factors affecting one's behavioral reactions is risk aversion ([Millroth & Frey, 2021](#)). Importantly, people have different attitudes toward risk. The implication is that workers may react differently when confronted with managerial threats of reprisal. Those characterized by greater acceptance of risk might feel less fearful than employees who are highly averse to risk. Accordingly, theoretical foundations exist for assuming that one's attitude toward risk might affect the FOU. In our survey, risk aversion was measured using a six-item scale developed by [Mandrik and Bao \(2005\)](#).

The survey among UK respondents was again carried out via Prolific among 300 non-union employees. Ten participants failed the attention check. Our respondents were equally distributed between males and females. Their age ranged from 18 to 65 years with the modal group 18-29. Specifically, 69% worked full-time, 25% were part-timers. In the measurement model, all factor loadings exceeded the recommended cut-off point of 0.6, with the exception of two items related to risk aversion. These two items were subsequently removed. To assess internal consistency, we examined Cronbach's alpha, CR, and AVE. Cronbach's alpha values surpassed the recommended threshold of 0.7, CR values were above the suggested 0.7, and AVE values were well above 0.5. Besides, to confirm the discriminant validity of the constructs, we applied

both the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the HTMT ratio. The AVE values exceeded the squared inter-correlations with other constructs, and the HTMT ratios were well below the recommended 0.9 threshold. Overall, these results supported the discriminant validity and reliability of the measures.

Our results showed that the FOU had a significant negative effect on the intention to unionize ($t = 4.983, p = 0.000$). Furthermore, union instrumentalities ($t = 4.900, p = 0.000$) had a negative significant effect on the FOU. These findings supported those from Study 1 among US workers. In addition, we found a significant positive relationship between risk aversion and the FOU ($t = 3.618, p = 0.000$).

The main findings from Studies 1 and 2 confirmed the content validity and reliability of the FOUS (Figure 5.2). Moreover, the relationships analyzed in both studies were significant, aligning with our expectations based on the literature review and our theoretical assumptions. Taken together, these findings provide further empirical support for the scale's nomological validity. Thus, the FOUS effectively reflects and captures workers' experiences of the FOU, as it demonstrates internal consistency, composite reliability, and face, construct, predictive, and nomological validity.

5.6.2 Sample

A total of 300 responses were collected for the study. After a thorough analysis and data-cleaning process, 282 valid responses remained, as 12 participants did not correctly answer the attention-check question. All respondents were based in the United Kingdom ($n = 139$) and the United States ($n = 143$). Of the respondents, 60% were female ($n = 169$). More than 35% were aged between 25 and 34, and 23% were between 35 and 44 years old. Approximately 65% of the participants had a university degree ($n = 183$). Over 54% had more than five years of experience in the hospitality industry ($n = 154$). Specifically, 40% were employed in restaurants or catering companies ($n = 115$), 23% in hotels or other lodging facilities ($n = 64$), 10% in tourism services and attractions companies ($n = 29$), 11% in recreation, entertainment, and event organizations ($n = 30$), and 5% in travel and transportation companies ($n = 14$) (see Table 5.1).

5.6.3 Data analysis

As in Study 1, we analyzed our data using PLS-SEM with Smart PLS 4 software and we implemented a two-stage process. First, we conducted CFA to assess the convergent and discriminant validity of the measurement model. Next, we applied PLS-SEM to test the causal relationships between constructs. Before applying the measurement model, we took several steps to address potential CMB. First, we conducted Harman's single-factor test, which showed that a single factor explained 43.50% of the variance – below the recommended threshold of 50% (Podsakoff et al., 2003). We also checked for multicollinearity using the VIF, with all values

Table 5.1 Demographic characteristics of the respondents (N=282)

Characteristics	Descriptive statistics	
	N	%
Gender	106	59.9
Male	169	37.6
Female	7	2.5
Non-binary		
Age	61	21.6
18–24	101	35.8
25–34	66	23.4
35–44	32	11.3
45–54	17	6.0
55–64	5	1.8
65 or more		
Education level	79	28.0
Secondary	183	64.9
University	20	7.1
Other		
Workplace	115	40.8
Restaurant or catering	64	22.7
Hotel or other lodging facility	30	10.6
Recreation, entertainment, events	29	10.3
Tourism services and attractions	14	5.0
Travel and transportation	30	10.6
Other		
Work experience	10	3.5
< 1 years	68	24.1
1–3 years	50	17.7
3–5 years	154	54.6
> 5 years		

being less than 5.0, indicating that multicollinearity was not a significant issue ([Hair et al., 2022](#)). These measures ensured that our measurement model was free from significant biases, thereby enhancing its reliability and validity.

5.6.4 Measurement models

The analysis revealed that two items within the OC construct had loadings below 0.4, leading to their removal. Several other items had loadings ranging from 0.5 to 0.7. Following the recommendation of [Hair et al. \(2022\)](#), each of these cases was carefully reviewed. It was determined that removing these items did not significantly improve the validity and reliability of the constructs, and the composite reliability remained above the recommended threshold of 0.7 ([Bagozzi & Yi, 1988](#)). Subsequently, we assessed both convergent and discriminant validity. Composite reliability for all factors was above 0.7. For convergent validity, the AVE ranged from 0.60 for OC to 0.90 for intention to ILI. [Table 5.2](#) presents the standardized loadings, Cronbach's α , AVE, and CR.

Table 5.2 Confirmatory factor analysis: Items, standardized factor loadings, Cronbach's α , AVE, and CR

<i>Construct</i>	<i>Item^a</i>	<i>Standard loading</i>	<i>CR</i>	<i>AVE</i>
Intention to leave the industry (ILI) (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.950$)	ILI1: I'm thinking about quitting the hospitality and tourism industry and finding a job elsewhere	0.952	0.968	0.909
	ILI2: I intend to quit the hospitality and tourism industry.	0.971		
	ILI3: I expect to move into another industry in the future.	0.937		
Fear of unionizing (FOU) (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.918$)	FOU1: Getting involved in organizing efforts would negatively affect my career.	0.833	0.925	0.641
	FOU2: Getting involved in unionizing would negatively affect my job security.	0.908		
	FOU3: It would be risky to unionize my workplace.	0.880		
	FOU4: I am afraid of getting involved in unionizing my workplace.	0.815		
	FOU5: The thought of unionizing my workplace worries me.	0.734		
	FOU6: The thought of unionizing my workplace scares me.	0.710		
	FOU7: My participation in organizing efforts might cause my colleagues to give me the cold shoulder treatment.	0.700		
Trust toward management (TM) (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.958$)	TM1: Employees' needs and desires are very important to my employer.	0.799	0.962	0.619
	TM2: I can count on my managers to help me if I have difficulties with my job.	0.849		
	TM3: My managers would not knowingly do anything to hurt the organization.	0.758		
	TM4: My employer is open and up front with me.	0.846		
	TM5: I think that the people in the organization succeed by stepping on other people. (R)	0.540		
	TM6: Managers in the organization I work for will keep the promises they make.	0.884		
	TM7: My employer really looks out for what is important to the employees.	0.874		
	TM8: Managers in the organization I work for has a lot of knowledge about the work that needs to be done.	0.788		
	TM9: My employer is known to be successful in the things they attempt to accomplish.	0.790		

(Continued)

Table 5.2 (Continued)

Construct	Item ^a	Standard loading	CR	AVE
	TM10: If I make a mistake, my employer is willing to “forgive and forget”.	0.742		
	TM11: Managers’ actions and behaviors are not consistent. (R)	0.673		
	TM12: Managers in my company takes actions that are consistent with their words.	0.816		
	TM13: It is best not to share information with managers in the company I work for (R)	0.638		
	TM14: There is a lot of warmth in the relationships between the managers and workers in this organization.	0.876		
	TM15: Managers in my company would make personal sacrifices for our group.	0.807		
	TM16: Managers in the organization express their true feelings about important issues.	0.822		
Organizational commitment (OC) (Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.934$)	OC1: I am willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond that normally expected in order to help this organization be successful.	0.705	0.950	0.600
	OC2: I talk up this organization to my friends as a great organization to work for.	0.832		
	OC3: I feel very little loyalty to this organization. (R)	0.611		
	OC4: I would accept almost any type of job assignment in order to keep working for this organization.	0.669		
	OC5: I find that my values and the organization’s values are very similar.	0.853		
	OC6: I am proud to tell others that I am part of this organization.	0.865		
	OC8: This organization really inspires the very best in me in the way of job performance.	0.851		
	OC10: I am extremely glad that I chose this organization to work for over others I was considering at the time I joined.	0.846		
	OC11: There’s not too much to be gained by sticking with this organization indefinitely. (R)	0.713		
	OC12: Often, I find it difficult to agree with this organization’s policies on important matters relating to its employees. (R)	0.703		

(Continued)

Table 5.2 (Continued)

Construct	Item ^a	Standard loading	CR	AVE
	OC13: I really care about the fate of this organization.	0.861		
	OC14: For me this is the best of all possible organizations for which to work.	0.829		
	OC15: Deciding to work for this organization was a definite mistake on my part. (R)	0.633		
Career commitment (CC) (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.891$)	CC1: I like this career too well to give it up	0.899	0.915	0.610
	CC2: If I could go into a different profession which paid the same, I would probably take it (R)	0.740		
	CC3: If I could do it all over again, I would not choose to work in this profession (R)	0.691		
	CC4: I definitely want a career for myself in this profession	0.880		
	CC5: If I had all the money I needed without working, I would probably still continue to work in this profession	0.699		
	CC6: I am disappointed that I ever entered this profession (R)	0.654		
	CC7: This is the ideal profession for a life's work	0.862		
Employee workplace well-being (WWB) (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.946$)	WWB1: I am satisfied with my work responsibilities	0.844	0.957	0.788
	WWB2: In general, I feel fairly satisfied with my present job	0.888		
	WWB3: I find real enjoyment in my work.	0.931		
	WWB4: I can always find ways to enrich my work	0.887		
	WWB5: Work is a meaningful experience for me	0.881		
	WWB6: I feel basically satisfied with my work achievements in my current job.	0.893		

Items marked with (R) are reverse-coded.

To assess discriminant validity, we utilized the Fornell and Larcker (1981) approach along with the HTMT ratio (Henseler et al., 2015). The square root of the AVE for each construct exceeded its correlations with all other constructs, except in one case: the square root of the AVE for OC was lower than its correlation with workplace well-being. To address this, we further examined the HTMT ratios, which were found to be below the 0.90 threshold (Table 5.3)

Table 5.3 Assessment of discriminant validity: Fornell and Larcker and HTMT

	<i>CC</i>	<i>FOU</i>	<i>OC</i>	<i>TM</i>	<i>WWB</i>
Fornell and Larcker					
CC	0.781				
FOU	-0.166	0.801			
OC	0.680	-0.259	0.775		
TM	0.547	-0.257	0.755	0.787	
WWB	0.707	-0.232	0.842	0.706	0.888
HTMT					
CC	0.160				
FOU	0.741	0.224			
OC	0.588	0.215	0.781		
TM	0.767	0.204	0.889	0.733	

Boldface values show the square roots of AVE.

5.6.5 Structural model

In the subsequent phase, the proposed relationships (Figure 5.1) were evaluated using PLS-SEM. In particular, we utilized the SmartPLS 4. Before assessing the structural model, we checked the collinearity to ensure it did not bias the results. Since VIF values for the inner model ranged between 1 and 3.890, they were below the recommended value of 5.0 (Hair et al., 2022). For our main endogenous construct (i.e., the intention to ILI), the R^2 was 0.615. To determine the significance of the path coefficients, we employed bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples, a resampling technique that enhances the reliability of the results by estimating the sampling distribution and providing confidence intervals for the parameters. Table 5.4 presents the standardized path coefficients, along with the corresponding t-values and significance levels of the hypothesized paths.

Table 5.4 Hypotheses testing

Hypotheses	Path coefficient (Sample Mean)	t-value	Results
H11: FOU → WWB	-0.245	4.002***	Supported
H12: WWB → ILI	0.056	0.732	Not supported
H13: FOU → ILI	0.024	0.560	Not supported
H14: FOU → CC	-0.177	2.783**	Supported
H15: CC → ILI	-0.725	12.661***	Supported
H16: FOU → TM	-0.276	4.307***	Supported
H17: TM → ILI	0.051	0.903	Not supported
H18: FOU → OC	-0.279	4.481***	Supported
H19: OC → ILI	-0.150	1.799	Not supported

*p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001

First, Study 2 results confirmed the relationships established in Study 1. In particular, the relationship between career commitment and the intention to ILI was significant ($t = 12.803$, $p = 0.000$) (H15). However, the relationship between well-being and the intention to ILI was non-significant ($t = 0.732$, $p = 0.464$) (H12). Next, the relationships between OC and the intention to ILI ($t = 1.799$, $p = 0.072$), and between trust toward management and intention to leave ($t = 0.903$, $p = 0.366$), were non-significant hence, H17 and H19 were not supported. Finally, and most importantly, regarding relationships with our main variable (i.e., the FOU), we found that the relationships with well-being ($t = 4.002$, $p = 0.000$), trust toward management ($t = 4.307$, $p = 0.000$), career commitment ($t = 2.783$, $p = 0.005$) and OC ($t = 4.481$, $p = 0.000$) were significant, supporting H11, H14, H16 and H18, respectively. Conversely, H13 was not supported, as the direct relationships between the FOU and the intention to ILI ($t = 0.560$, $p = 0.575$) was not significant.

Regarding the control variables, all (gender, job tenure, workplace type, age, and country of residence – the United States or the United Kingdom) were not significantly related to the intention to ILI ($p = 0.667$, $p = 0.580$, $p = 0.112$, and $p = 0.792$, respectively).

5.6.6 Mediation analysis

Similarly to Study 1, we conducted a mediation analysis using the PLS-SEM approach. To test the significance of these mediating effects, we employed bootstrapping procedures. To differentiate between full and partial mediation, we followed the criteria outlined by [Hair et al. \(2022\)](#). The results of the mediation analysis are presented in [Table 5.5](#).

Our results indicated the relationship between the FOU and the intention to ILI was significantly mediated by career commitment ($t = 2.661$, $p = 0.08$), supporting H20a. Conversely, well-being, trust toward management and OC were not significant mediators of this relationship ($t = 0.727$, $p = 0.467$; $t = 0.623$, $p = 0.533$ and $t = 1.550$, $p = 0.121$, respectively). Thus, H20b, H20c, and H20d were not supported. Since the direct effect of the FOU on the intention to ILI was not significant, career commitment acted as a full mediator.

Table 5.5 Mediation analysis: Hypotheses testing

Hypotheses	Path coefficient	t-value	Results
H20a FOU → CC → ILI	0.129	2.671**	Supported
H20b FOU → WWB → ILI	-0.015	0.727	Not supported
H20c FOU → TM → ILI	-0.011	0.623	Not supported
H20d FOU → OC → ILI	0.042	1.550	Not supported

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

5.7 Discussion of the findings

The findings from Study 2 reveal nuanced insights into the relationships between the FOU, well-being, career commitment, trust in management, and OC, and their impact on industry exit intentions. Crucially, these relationships help illuminate the complex dynamics within organizations where unionization fears are present. H11, which posited a negative relationship between the FOU and well-being, was supported. This indicates that the FOU is detrimental to employees' mental and emotional health (Murphy, 2016; Roy, 1980). In fact, when employees are fearful of unionizing their workplace, it tends to create a work environment characterized by stress and uncertainty, thereby negatively affecting how employees feel at work. This finding is consistent with existing literature, which suggests that perceived threats to job security and autonomy can negatively impact employees' psychological well-being (Saeed et al., 2023; Vander Elst et al., 2012).

Interestingly, H12, which proposed a negative relationship between well-being and the intention to ILI, was unsupported. This suggests that even when employees' well-being is compromised, it does not necessarily lead them to consider leaving the industry. As discussed in Chapter 3, this finding implies that other factors, macroeconomic conditions (including job market trends) and industry-specific skills, may weigh more heavily on employees' decisions to stay or leave their industry, regardless of their well-being (Guchait & Cho, 2010).

H13, which explored the relationship between the FOU and the intention to ILI, was unsupported. This suggests that the FOU alone may not directly influence an employee's decision to ILI (again, other factors might be at play). However, the support for H14 and H15, indicating that the FOU has a negative effect on career commitment and that weaker career commitment is associated with a greater intention to ILI, adds an important dimension. It implies that while the FOU may not directly push employees out of the industry, it undermines their commitment to their careers, which, in turn, could indirectly influence their decision to leave (Gebbels et al., 2020).

Furthermore, the findings also accentuate the role of trust in management, as highlighted by the support for H16. In fact, we found a negative relationship between the FOU and trust in management, suggesting that employees who fear unionizing tend to have low trust in their managers. However, H17, which proposed a negative relationship between trust in management and the intention to leave, was not supported. This implies that even employees who distrust their superiors are unlikely to leave, indicating that a lack of trust alone is not a strong enough motivator for turnover. This aligns with studies showing that while distrust in management may lead to dissatisfaction, other factors – such as job security, financial stability, or external job opportunities – often play a more decisive role in influencing employees' decisions to stay or leave (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

By contrast, H18, which hypothesized a negative link between the FOU and OC, was supported, suggesting that employees who fear unionizing are less likely to feel committed to their organization. This indicates that fear surrounding union activity may weaken the emotional bond employees have with their workplace,

leading to lower levels of loyalty and engagement. That said, the unsupported H19 suggests that while OC is important, it may not always prevent employees from intending to ILI. This aligns logically with the idea that even committed employees might still consider leaving due to external factors, such as industry-specific challenges (e.g., job instability, low wages) or broader economic conditions, which can outweigh their loyalty to a particular organization.

Importantly, the mediating role of career commitment further elucidates the complex pathways through which the FOU affects employees' decisions. H20a, which proposed that career commitment mediates the relationship between the FOU and the intention to ILI, was supported. This mediation suggests that the FOU indirectly affects employees' industry exit intentions through its impact on career commitment. Conversely, H20b, H20c, and H20d were unsupported.

Overall, these findings highlight the complex interplay between the FOU, employee well-being, career commitment, trust in management, OC, and industry exit intentions. While the FOU has detrimental effects on well-being, career commitment, trust in management, and OC, its direct impact on intentions to ILI is less clear, suggesting the presence of other moderating factors. The critical role of career commitment as a mediator in this relationship suggests that hospitality companies seeking to retain employees should prioritize supporting employees' career aspirations, particularly in environments where unionization fears are prevalent. This perspective aligns with the core principles of the framework discussed in the previous chapter.

5.8 Summary and conclusions

5.8.1 Theoretical contributions

Our study makes a significant theoretical contribution by addressing a critical gap in the existing literature concerning the FOU, conceptualized as a measurable construct, and its impact on key employee outcomes. While prior research has generally approached this issue descriptively, noting that managerial intimidation often leads to worker fear, which reduces the likelihood of participation in organizing efforts and voting "yes" in union elections (Murphy, 2016; Roy, 1980), there has been a lack of quantitative analysis to systematically measure and understand these effects. By developing a research instrument specifically designed to measure the FOU, our study advances the field by providing a more precise and empirical framework to capture this fear and assess its impact on various employee outcomes, such as well-being, trust in management, and career commitment. This work not only fills a notable gap but also paves the way for future research to explore the broader implications of unionization fears across different organizational and sectoral contexts.

Moreover, our findings contribute to the broader theoretical understanding of the mechanisms through which the FOU influences employee behaviors and attitudes. The identification of career commitment as a mediator offers a more nuanced perspective on how these fears translate into critical outcomes like industry exit intentions. This theoretical advancement helps to clarify the complex dynamics at

play, providing a more comprehensive framework for understanding the multifaceted impact of unionization fears on employees. By demonstrating that the FOU can undermine well-being, career commitment, trust in management, and OC – factors which, in turn, influence intentions to ILI – our work adds a new dimension to the existing body of research on employee retention and organizational loyalty. At the same time, the findings challenge the assumption that employee well-being is always a direct predictor of turnover intentions, suggesting that other factors, such as industry-specific conditions, may affect this relationship.

5.8.2 *Practical implications*

This study also offers several practical implications for hospitality management. One of the most important implications is the need for employers to reconsider their hostility toward unionization. Our findings indicate that the FOU experienced by some employees has negative effects on their well-being, career commitment, trust in management, and OC. Arguably, these are critical employee outcomes; after all, if workers do not feel well at work, are not committed to their careers and organizations, and lack trust in their managers, it is unlikely that they will demonstrate strong work engagement and job performance. This is especially true considering that managing through fear is increasingly recognized as not only ineffective in the long run but also a sign of poor managerial competence (Clark, 2020). Therefore, hospitality companies should recognize that while anti-union tactics may initially succeed in discouraging workers from unionizing, they could ultimately backfire by diminishing employee morale and commitment, thereby jeopardizing organizational stability and customer service excellence (as disillusioned and disengaged staff are less likely to go the extra mile in serving customers, which can directly impact service quality and customer satisfaction). This raises the critical question of whether the use of anti-union practices, which result in employees feeling fearful of unionizing their workplace, is truly beneficial in the long run.

Union organizers, for their part, should focus on educating employees about the benefits of unionization, countering the arguments adduced by union-busters and anti-union managers. By clearly communicating how unions can ameliorate working conditions, protect against managerial intimidation, and ensure fair treatment, organizers can build a stronger case for unionization that resonates with employees' concerns about their work environment. At the same time, it is essential for unions, if technically feasible, to engage in open and transparent dialogues with both employees and management, promoting a collaborative approach rather than an adversarial one. This can help reduce the stigma associated with unionization (still present in certain circles) and demonstrate that unions are committed to improving organizational stability and service quality, benefiting both workers and the company as a whole.

Given the limited union presence in many hospitality workplaces, unions should strategically leverage social media to reach and engage workers, especially younger employees who are digital natives and spend a significant amount of time online (Hodder & Houghton, 2020).

Social media platforms provide a powerful tool for unions to share information, dispel myths about unionization, and build a sense of community among workers (Houghton & Hodder, 2021). In fact, by creating targeted content that resonates with the experiences and concerns of young hospitality workers, unions can effectively mobilize this demographic, making unionization efforts more visible and accessible in a sector where traditional union outreach may be less prevalent. This digital approach not only broadens the reach of union campaigns but also helps to cultivate a more informed and connected workforce, better to handle intimidation and fear generated by anti-union practices.

Notes

- 1 Given that union membership is often conceptualized as an “experience good”, where the benefits are difficult to fully understand until one becomes a member (Gomez & Gunderson, 2004), many young workers in the hospitality industry must rely on others for insights into the advantages of joining a union. However, since union presence is limited in many of these workplaces, accessing firsthand knowledge about the benefits of union membership can be challenging for these workers.
- 2 We may note in passing that US employers are required to report certain union-avoidance expenses, but exemptions and weak enforcement severely limit the scope of what is reported. Importantly, the Obama administration sought to close this loophole with the “persuader” rule, noting that although 71% to 87% of employers hire consultants for counter-organizing efforts, very few reports are filed due to the broad “advice” exemption. However, business groups successfully challenged the rule, and the Trump administration later rescinded it, leaving the true scale of corporate spending on union-busting largely unknown.
- 3 Even if we aim to test similar or identical hypotheses to those presented in Chapter 3, it is important to note that our studies are based on different data, specifically gathered from a distinct group of workers.

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6 Conclusions

6.1 Summary of the findings

The hospitality industry, a vital engine of global economic activity, employs millions of people worldwide and offers substantial opportunities for personal and professional growth. With the expected increase in travel and tourism in the near future, particularly driven by rising incomes in developing countries like India and China – whose citizens are increasingly able to afford international travel – this industry's significance is poised to expand further. As a result, the demand for accommodation, food, and entertainment is likely to grow considerably. However, this surge in demand may put substantial strain on popular tourist destinations, reinforcing concerns about overtourism, and on the hospitality employees who will be responsible for serving an ever-growing number of visitors.

This situation is particularly concerning given that the hospitality industry has long struggled with high labor turnover and acute staffing shortages. While advancements in AI are impressive and more customers are becoming comfortable with interacting with “non-human employees”, the widespread deployment of AI-powered robots in hospitality is unlikely to fully replace human workers, at least in the near future ([Dwivedi et al., 2024](#)). This is largely due to the specific nature of many physical tasks involved in hospitality jobs and the still-imperfect dexterity of service robots. Therefore, the overall working conditions for employees in this sector, as well as the way they are treated by their superiors, remain crucial – especially given that the success of hospitality companies depends heavily on the quality of service delivered by frontline employees.

However, as discussed throughout this text, the industry is notorious for harsh workplace realities, including low wages, poor working conditions, job insecurity, unsocial working hours, and a poor work-life balance. Employees often face the added burden of emotional labor, having to manage interactions with sometimes inconsiderate customers. These challenges are compounded by disrespectful managerial treatment and, critically, the widespread anti-union practices prevalent in the industry, particularly in liberal market economies such as the United States and the United Kingdom ([Logan, 2023](#); [Papadopoulos et al., 2021](#); [Zientara et al., 2024b](#)).

In this monograph, we set out to examine these issues from a dual perspective, considering both employees and employers. To achieve this, we included two

empirical studies based on data collected from employees in the United Kingdom and the United States, as well as an analysis of the workforce-related sections of selected hospitality companies' CSR reports from both countries. In the studies based on primary data, we employed a similar (albeit not identical) set of dependent variables representing key employee outcomes, such as career commitment, well-being, and, most notably, the intention to leave the industry – our primary dependent variable.

In the first study, we aimed to ascertain how POS – which reflects employers' efforts to support and value their employees and conceptually overlaps with many aspects of employee-oriented CSR and the notion of decent work – affects these key outcomes. In the second study, we focused on understanding how the fear of unionizing (instilled by anti-union practices carried out by employers to discourage unionization) impacts these and other key outcomes (such as trust in management and organizational commitment), with a particular emphasis on the intention to leave the industry.

Thus, we explored two contrasting influences: on the one hand, POS as a positive expression of employer actions geared toward fostering a supportive, fairness-centered work environment, and, on the other, fear generated by employer-driven tactics aimed at thwarting organizing efforts. This approach allowed us to gain insight into how hospitality employees in two major liberal market economies perceive their workplace realities and how these perceptions shape their attitudes and, critically, their intentions to leave the industry – a factor of immense significance for the sector as a whole ([Zientara et al., 2024a](#)).

We juxtaposed these findings with the results of a content analysis of sustainability/CSR reports, offering a glimpse into what employers claim they are doing for their employees. Although CSR reports, being company-produced narratives, are inherently self-reported and may portray an idealized version of organizational practices, they still provide a window into how companies treat their staff and make hospitality work more fulfilling. Thus, analyzing these documents allowed us to juxtapose employers' proclaimed commitments against the actual perceptions and experiences reported by employees. Of course, there was not a perfect match between the employees from whom we gathered data and the employers whose CSR reports we analyzed, as the employees did not necessarily work for the same major hospitality corporations. However, despite this lack of direct alignment, our dual-perspective approach still offers interesting insights into the broader industry dynamics.

As discussed in [Chapter 4](#), the programs and initiatives outlined in the CSR reports analyzed suggest that hospitality corporations are making efforts to support their employees. These initiatives broadly address all aspects of employee well-being, including improved access to healthcare and pensions, promotion of DEI, provision of training and development opportunities, and efforts to enhance work-life balance and support mental and physical health (that said, as the aforesaid three-day strike held at Hiltons, Marriotts, Sheratons, and Westins in September 2024 raises fundamental questions about the effectiveness of these initiatives or the accuracy of CSR reporting by US corporations). Accordingly, we have identified several best practices, many of which – regardless of their actual effectiveness on the ground or how they are perceived by their beneficiaries – are well-intentioned

and beneficial, particularly in liberal market economies, and are thus worth emulating (with adjustments for smaller business operations).

Crucially, these findings should be considered alongside those from Study 1, which revealed, *inter alia*, that POS positively influences psychological capital, both as a whole and some of its individual components. This is significant in its own right because it provides empirical evidence that supportive organizational behavior can help employees cultivate their most valuable personal resources. It follows that POS has the potential to alleviate the unique challenges and drawbacks of working in the hospitality industry, helping employees to feel more confident in their roles. Conversely, a lack of POS (and employee-oriented CSR) can be a strong push factor, diminishing employees' commitment to their careers and prompting some to consider leaving the industry altogether. This dynamic also works in the other direction: when new employees are hired and go through onboarding, it is crucial that they immediately experience this support and sense of being valued and treated fairly. Establishing a strong foundation of POS from the outset can enhance their engagement, reinforce their decision to join the company, and increase their long-term commitment to the organization.

From a certain point of view, it could be reasonably argued that since employment practices have far-reaching implications for broader society ([Greenwood & van Buren, 2017](#)), the declared behavior of hospitality corporations toward their staff takes on even greater importance. In fact, when large companies demonstrate a commitment to supporting and valuing their employees, they not only foster a more confident and loyal workforce but also contribute to the overall social and economic well-being of the communities they operate in. This means that the way hospitality companies treat their employees is not just a matter of internal policy, but a reflection of their broader role and responsibility within society.

6.2 CSR and employer anti-unionism

However, all of this needs to be viewed in light of the evidence from Study 2, which highlights a stark contrast between the publicized commitments of hospitality corporations and the actual on-the-ground realities of organizing efforts. Unions – which seek to improve workplace conditions and protect employees from exploitation – are already scarce in the hospitality industry in the United States and the United Kingdom (while alternative labor unions and informal workers' associations are emerging as significant advocates for workers, their influence remains relatively limited) ([Lowery et al., 2019; Wood, 2020](#)). Indeed, anti-union tactics intended to discourage unionization are widespread in hospitality workplaces in both countries. This is evident not only from the data we collected from workers – if employer anti-unionism were not a reality, our hypotheses related to the fear of unionizing would not have been supported – but also from an analysis of [NLRB \(2024\)](#) data and reports from local and national newspapers. Both sources reveal numerous complaints against hospitality companies and well-documented instances of anti-union behavior. Although some cases are still awaiting resolution, the sheer volume of complaints points to the existence of these practices in hotels and restaurants.

This situation highlights a fundamental contradiction in the actions of hospitality companies. On one hand, these companies emphasize their commitment to decent work and employee-centered sustainability as part of their CSR strategies, presenting themselves as socially responsible and genuinely concerned with their employees' well-being. On the other hand, many of these same companies actively undermine workers' rights to organize and engage in collective bargaining – rights that are fundamental human rights and ethical universals, which are “norms, principles, policies, or goals that are not a function of time or place” (Cummings & Patel, 2009, p. 58). Therefore, by opposing unionization, these companies are contradicting the ethical principles and respect for human rights that are supposed to be at the core of their CSR efforts. Given the negative impacts of anti-unionism – both material and ethical – they engage in CSI. This creates a paradox, defined as “contradictory yet interrelated elements that exist simultaneously and persist over time” (Smith & Lewis, 2011, p. 382), backing up the idea that both CSR and CSI can co-exist within the same organization (Riera & Iborra, 2023).

But there is more to this than that. Many companies accused of union-busting not only receive high scores in the “Workforce” category, as indicated by Eikon ESG ratings but also flaunt their CSR credentials in their reports. Thus, there are grounds for assuming that this behavior exemplifies corporate hypocrisy, whereby companies intentionally project an ethical image while engaging in actions that contradict this portrayal (Wagner et al., 2009). Unlike a paradox, hypocrisy involves a deliberate effort to publicly promote social responsibility while simultaneously undermining it through irresponsible practices like union-busting (Scheidler et al., 2019).

This hypocrisy is particularly glaring in the context of the hospitality industry, where frontline employees play a crucial role in shaping customer satisfaction and loyalty. As noted throughout this text, the success of these businesses relies heavily on the dedication and quality of service provided by their staff. However, expecting employees to consistently deliver high-quality service while subjecting them to unfair treatment and hostility toward unionization is both demoralizing and counterproductive. When employees feel they are not trusted to know what is best for them and are fearful of organizing, their morale is likely to decline, *ceteris paribus*, resulting in lower service quality, higher turnover rates, and, ultimately, a negative impact on the company's performance. This is all the more so given recent research indicating that negative emotions, such as anger and fear, are experienced not only by pro-union workers but also by those who hold negative views of unions (Zientara et al., 2024b).

Arguably, the contradiction between the professed commitment to the principles of CSR and the simultaneous engagement in union-busting practices raises serious questions about the sincerity of these companies' CSR efforts aimed at ensuring decent work and employee well-being. This is particularly important in liberal market economies, where deregulated labor markets and weaker employment laws leave employees in a more vulnerable position when confronting employers (Blindheim, 2015). In a nutshell, creating a genuinely fair and supportive work environment demands that employers recognize the role of unions as partners in advancing the very goals they claim to uphold.

Granted, it could be argued, as former Starbucks CEO Howard Schultz has suggested, that when employees are well taken care of through comprehensive employee-oriented CSR initiatives, unions become unnecessary and might only create divisions between management and staff. Supporters of maintaining union-free hospitality workplaces might also point out that some union leaders have been accused of corruption and mistreatment of workers who do not wish to be represented by a union. These proponents could assert that many union leaders are far from being “saints” and ideal advocates for workers’ interests. Historically, they might note the Taft-Hartley Act, which *de iure* restricts the activities and power of labor unions, was enacted in response to the corrupt practices of some labor organizations at the time. Following this line of reasoning, one could make a case that anti-union tactics ultimately benefit society by protecting employees and members of the public. Without unions, the former avoid paying dues to potentially self-serving and insufficiently accountable entities and can foster more direct and less confrontational relationships with their managers. The latter benefit from lower prices for meals, hotel stays, and theme park visits.

The “lower-price” argument, which posits that unions drive up labor costs and consequently lead to higher prices for consumers, strikes at the core of CSR – particularly the question of how corporate profits should be distributed. Some argue that companies committed to substantive (rather than symbolic) CSR ([Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990](#)) should not pass the burden of higher wages on to customers through price increases. Instead, they should absorb these costs by reducing dividends to shareholders and cutting executive compensation. As highlighted in [Chapter 4](#), Eikon data reveal that in publicly listed US hospitality companies, the pay gap between the lowest-level employees and the CEO is often enormous, with CEOs earning more than 200 times the salary of an entry-level worker. This disparity raises important (ethical) questions about the distribution of corporate profits at both the individual company level and across the broader economy. Moreover, it prompts a deeper inquiry into the division of GDP between labor and capital. There is research indicating that since the 1970s, the share of GDP allocated to workers has steadily declined across wealthy nations, even as corporate profits have surged ([Piketty & Saez, 2003](#))

While there is ongoing debate, with mixed and inconclusive evidence on the exact distribution of GDP between labor and capital ([Auten & Splinter, 2024](#); [Piketty, 2015](#)), the reality is that income and wealth inequalities in the United States – and, to a somewhat lesser extent, in the United Kingdom – are both significant and growing. In fact, inequality in America, as measured by the Gini coefficient, reached an all-time high in 2019 ([McNicholas, 2022](#)). This widening gap underscores the importance of companies genuinely embracing CSR by paying more than just the minimum wage, particularly in low-wage industries like hospitality. Thus, to take the argument to its logical conclusion, if unions strive to raise wages, thereby helping to reduce inequality ([Denice & Rosenfeld, 2018](#)), this effort actually promotes societal welfare rather than undermining it, regardless of corporate claims about their commitment to employee welfare.

Another counterargument is that, while corrupt and self-serving behavior persists in some unions, it has become less common over time. Much has changed since the enactment of the Taft-Hartley Act, including societal attitudes toward unions. Gallup surveys consistently show that a significant majority of Americans – around 70% – now view unions favorably ([Gallup, 2022](#)). This level of public support contrasts sharply with the far less favorable opinion of big business, which often suffers from negative public perception. Besides, as [Kaufman \(2014\)](#) points out, even Adam Smith, who framed the market process within a political economy where property rights and inherited capital grant the rich and powerful a socioeconomic advantage, recognized the imbalance of power in wage negotiations and the justification for collective action in employment relationships.

In their influential work, [Freeman and Medoff \(1984\)](#) identified two contrasting views of unions held by economists and the public: the negative “monopoly face” and the more positive “collective voice/institutional response” face. They proposed – a view that has been widely debated ([Lewin, 2007](#)) – that the positive aspects of unions might counteract the negative ones. While sympathetic to workers’ experiences, this monograph – which, as noted, engages with a debate that is both emotionally charged and ideologically driven – has sought to offer a balanced perspective. It has aimed to avoid bias or selective use of evidence, reflecting [Kochan’s \(1980, p. 21\)](#) assertion that “industrial relations theories, research, and policy prescriptions must be conscious of the relationships among the goals of workers, employers, and the larger society and seek ways of achieving a workable and equitable balance among these interests”.

Hence, we have included insights directly from hospitality workers, as well as indirectly from employers through their CSR reports. Nevertheless, we maintain that within any employment relationship characterized by a power imbalance, employees are inherently in a more vulnerable position ([Kaufman, 2014](#)). Therefore, the primary responsibility for their treatment rests with the employer (who also happens to be responsible for carrying out specific employee-focused CSR initiatives and programs). This issue is especially significant in low-wage industries, such as hospitality, within liberal market economies like the USA, where “union-unfriendly” legislation prevails.

6.3 Theoretical and practical contributions

Taking into account the discussions and lines of evidence provided in this monograph, our research yields several important theoretical and practical contributions. First, it integrates multiple theoretical frameworks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by frontline hospitality employees. Concepts such as psychological contract theory, organizational support theory, and the psychology of working theory are interwoven to analyze the dynamics between employers and employees, particularly in the context of precarious work environments. A significant theoretical advancement is the exploration of CSI alongside CSR, highlighting the paradoxical co-existence of these concepts within the same

organization. The monograph plays up the orthogonal relationship between CSR and CSI, arguing that companies can simultaneously engage in socially responsible practices while also partaking in actions that harm stakeholders, such as anti-union activities (Iborra & Riera, 2023). This duality offers a nuanced perspective on corporate behavior, emphasizing that CSR initiatives do not inherently preclude irresponsible actions.

The monograph also contributes to the understanding of employee-oriented CSR, positioning it as a critical element in achieving decent work as outlined by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. It argues that employee-centered CSR is not just about ensuring fair wages and safe working conditions but also about promoting an equitable distribution of corporate profits and empowering employees through participation in decision-making processes.

On a practical level, the monograph provides insights for hospitality employers, managers, and policymakers. It underscores the importance of adopting sustainable employment practices that prioritize the well-being of employees, particularly in an industry characterized by high turnover rates and challenging working conditions. By presenting evidence-based findings from empirical studies, the monograph offers actionable recommendations for improving and enhancing overall workplace well-being and reducing turnover intentions. Of special interest is the framework developed for addressing employee needs at different stages of their career, ensuring a tailored approach based on where employees are in their journey with the hospitality company.

Furthermore, the monograph highlights the implications of anti-union practices within the hospitality industry, offering strategies to mitigate their negative impact on employee well-being and trust in management. It advocates for a more balanced approach to labor relations, encouraging employers to view unions not as adversaries but as partners in fostering a fair and supportive work environment. To recapitulate, the monograph bridges the gap between theory and practice, providing a holistic view of the labor-related challenges in the hospitality industry. Its contributions are not only academically significant but also provide practical solutions that can be directly applied to business praxes.

6.4 Conclusive remarks and future research directions

We believe this monograph stands out from other works on sustainability and CSR in hospitality and tourism due to its broad scope and strong emphasis on primary data and evidence-based insights. While many relevant books focus primarily on the environmental aspects of sustainability and CSR (Font & Lynes, 2020; Guliani & Rizwan, 2016; Legrand et al., 2022), they pay less attention to labor-related issues and employee-focused CSR initiatives. Likewise, some research concentrates mainly on employment relations within hospitality (Lucas, 2004), neglecting how employee-oriented CSR can – alongside unions – improve working conditions and ensure decent work. Our goal was to integrate these various perspectives and provide a comprehensive view of how to enhance the working conditions for individuals in hotels, restaurants, and theme parks. We hope this monograph achieves

that aim, thereby shedding new light on how companies can ameliorate the quality of hospitality work and the treatment of frontline employees, regardless of their union status. Therefore, we believe this monograph will appeal to researchers and students focused on hospitality employment, as well as to hospitality employers, managers, and union organizers.

Inspired by our monograph, future researchers might explore the following areas. First, there is a need for a deeper examination of how CSR can be more genuinely aligned with workers' rights, particularly the right to organize and engage in collective bargaining. Scholars should investigate the mechanisms by which companies can reconcile their public CSR commitments with their actual labor practices, ensuring that CSR initiatives translate into real improvements in working conditions.

Moreover, the role of alternative labor unions and informal workers' associations deserves more attention. As these entities gain prominence, understanding their impact on workers' rights and conditions in sectors resistant to traditional unionization could provide valuable insights. Research should also explore how these emerging forms of worker advocacy can be integrated into CSR strategies, potentially offering a more flexible and adaptive approach to labor representation in industries like hospitality.

Lastly, future studies could examine the broader societal and economic implications of the growing disconnect between corporate profits and employee compensation. This includes investigating how shifts in the distribution of GDP between labor and capital affect income inequality and exploring potential policy interventions that could support more equitable profit-sharing practices.

As the world moves forward, the lessons learned from the past few years – along with the future research discussed above – will play a role in shaping a more resilient and adaptable hospitality sector, better equipped to handle whatever challenges may arise. The research presented in this monograph further supports this endeavor by providing in-depth insights into the labor-related issues that have long plagued the industry. By addressing these challenges through an evidence-based approach, the monograph offers guidance for creating a more equitable and sustainable future for hospitality workers.

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