


The role of autonomy and competence in retaining Dutch hotel staff post-COVID-19

Sofiia Norenko, Emmah Muchoki, Vanessa de Oliveira Menezes*  & René Rijnders

Department of Hospitality Business Administration, Wittenborg University of Applied Sciences, Apeldoorn, The Netherlands

*Correspondence: vanessa.menezes@wittenborg.nl

ABSTRACT: This article explores potential changes in employee motivation for retention in the Dutch hotel industry after the COVID-19 pandemic, applying the self-determination theory to examine autonomy and competence. An online survey was designed and applied to 298 Dutch hotel staff members, assessing variables such as (1) volition, (2) perceived locus of causation (PLC), (3) perceived choice, (4) perceived competence, (5) optimal challenge and (6) experience of success. Staff were categorised into two groups — managerial and non-managerial workers — taking into account their distinct job responsibilities. Statistical analysis and content analyses were applied to the research to comprehend and discuss the data. Findings indicate that although there were some differences between the two groups and their emphasis on distinct sub-factors, it is clear that staff have assigned increased significance to intrinsic elements of autonomy and competence post-pandemic. The study does not apply other dimensions of the self-determination theory, such as relatedness; however, based on the quantitative and qualitative results, recommendations are provided for supervisors, HR managers and other policymakers in the Dutch hospitality industry to enhance employee retention in the sector.

KEYWORDS: hospitality, human resources, self-determination theory, The Netherlands, staff's point of view

Introduction

Retaining personnel is crucial in the hotel industry, especially given its constantly changing and demanding operating environment. Skilled and loyal employees are the hospitality industry's foundation, directly impacting productivity, service quality and the overall stability of any establishment. This also applies to the hotel business in the Netherlands. However, staff retention, which has always been a major concern in hospitality (Dwesini, 2019), grew in importance during and after the COVID-19 pandemic which disrupted global business operations (Bajrami et al., 2021). The pandemic and the measures to control its spread caused significant changes in the Dutch hotel industry, which faced a major decrease in employment, and in turn, the overall number of hours worked in the industry decreased (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek [CBS], 2022). In addition, the Dutch hospitality sector had difficulties filling job vacancies (Maurits, 2022) due to the high turnover rate experienced during the pandemic, as many hotel workers switched to other industries (Maurits, 2022). This means that re-evaluating and focusing more on talent acquisition, (re-)training and retention is necessary.

During the pandemic, staff needs also shifted (Mahmoud et al., 2022). For instance, following the disruptions brought on by COVID-19, employees are more interested in having a sense of choice in their work, including in how activities are carried out. This perceived choice empowers them, which improves job satisfaction and therefore motivates them (Mahmoud et al., 2022).

Employees in hospitality are interested in feeling more confident about and having more autonomy in conducting their tasks and in strategic situations. However, confidence is related to competence, and so adding new skills and practising existing skills is a must. Despite the fact that the employees require more autonomy, they also show a great desire for a collaborative workplace. They enjoy belonging to a strong team that promotes cooperation and togetherness (Yam et al., 2018), especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, when many people experienced feelings of loneliness. Therefore, the research topic is to investigate the motivational factors in staff retention in the post-COVID-19 era. Accordingly, the main objective of this research is to analyse the role of autonomy and competence in the retention intentions of Dutch hotel staff post-COVID-19.

Research on how COVID-19 has changed what employees expect from their work environment in the hospitality industry could provide valuable insights, which could then be used to create strategies that fit with new working conditions and meet the needs of employees, ultimately helping to improve staff retention in a post-pandemic world. Therefore, a pragmatic study was carried out, applying an inductive and mixed-method approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data collection. It was applied to a survey where the questions were developed based on the self-determination theory and other relevant literature reviews. Autonomy and competence were the main variables, and these constructs were broken down into multiple measurable components such as (1) volition, (2) perceived locus of causation (PLC), (3) perceived

choice, (4) perceived competence, (5) optimal challenge and (6) experience of success. A dual approach was implemented using a Likert scale and open-ended questions. The reliability of the questionnaire used for data collection was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha analysis. Both convenience and purposive sampling were applied in this study. The sample size calculation used an estimated population of 53 500 Dutch hospitality employees; therefore, to ensure consistency and relevance, screening questions were introduced. The final sample consisted of 298 respondents, 149 from each category — managerial and non-managerial — from all Dutch regions to achieve the balance between the groups. To increase response rates, participants were offered the opportunity to enter a draw to win gift cards. It was communicated that participation in the draw was voluntary.

The data analysis was conducted based on two different methods. For the quantitative data, descriptive statistics were applied, including the mean creating a clear interpretation of the information. The qualitative data was examined based on thematic analysis where identifying recurring themes in participants' responses brought valuable insights to the research.

The consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on the hospitality industry and the well-being of hospitality staff during the pandemic have already been studied (Bajrami et al., 2021; Cuc et al., 2022; Mahmoud et al., 2022); however, there is a clear gap regarding the post-pandemic effects on motivation within this group. Additionally, this study attempts to fill the gap by examining the motivation of managerial employees in the hotel sector.

The results may provide a basis for future research into the effects of autonomy and competence on employee retention in various other settings after COVID-19, including other industries and geographical regions. Therefore, the wider implications of this research involve assisting other sectors in creating efficient staff retention programmes.

The research is divided into five sections. The introduction gives an overview of the subject, the context, the objectives, relevance and methodology. The second section reviews the relevant literature, providing access to secondary data on the topic and context for the research. In turn, the third section displays and evaluates the data gathered. In the fourth section, the study's limitations are clarified, drawing relevant conclusions, with suggestions for further research. The final item includes all relevant references.

Literature review

As the COVID-19 pandemic spread worldwide, the Dutch economy experienced significant changes. Forced into lockdown, the second quarter of 2020 experienced the most severe economic contraction (nearly 8% quarter-on-quarter) since the Second World War (Mares, 2021; NOS Nieuws, 2021). This resulted in many job losses, especially in the cultural and other "contact" sectors (Ministry of Finance, 2021). The hospitality industry was one of the first to experience the impacts of the pandemic (CBS, 2022). According to the Netherlands' National Bureau of Statistics (CBS), there was a decline of 33.9% in the industry's turnover in 2020 compared to the previous year. In response to these difficulties, many businesses reduced their workforce to diminish costs associated with sustaining employees when the volume of work decreased. This resulted in approximately 100 000 fewer

hospitality positions at the beginning of 2021 compared to the beginning of 2020, with on-call workers being the most affected (Notten & Hooijmaaijers, 2021).

The economic crisis caused significant psychological distress for employees. CBS data reveals that various age groups responded differently to the COVID-19 crisis. Nearly half (45%) of young adults reported feeling lonelier since the pandemic, with increased reports of frequent sadness (37%) and increased stress (31%) (Reep & Hupkens, 2021). Given that young people form the majority of employees in the Dutch hotel industry (CBS, 2022), it is assumed that the impact on this group was substantial.

Changes in the work environment caused by the pandemic, including reduced working hours or even employment loss, contributed to feelings of loneliness, anxiety, gloom and stress (Reep & Hupkens, 2021). This may have been exacerbated in the hospitality industry by the widespread use of "zero hour" or "on-call" contracts, which typically contribute to a sense of job insecurity (Van Aerden et al., 2017; CBS, 2021; Hoerberichts et al., 2021; Codrington, 2021). Wood and Burchell (2014) found that the inherent uncertainty of these contracts negatively affects employees' mental health. The pandemic merely worsened these concerns, resulting in a significant rise in feelings of job insecurity (Wilson et al., 2020). The way to reduce insecurity and low productivity is to invest in staff motivation, increasing job satisfaction and retention. Autonomy and competence could be an essential factor in this equation.

Autonomy is a combination of several interrelated elements. One of these elements is the degree to which people believe their actions are the product of their own free will rather than outside forces (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Autonomy can also be expressed in the feeling of engagement and willingness in one's actions, contrasting with the sense of obligation or being forced to act (Gagné & Deci, 2005), or the feeling of having the freedom to make independent decisions, thereby having a sense of control over one's actions (Van den Broeck et al., 2008). These "components" contribute to the sense of freedom and independence that defines autonomy.

It is generally believed that managers have a high level of autonomy and decision-making freedom, particularly due to their jobs requiring them to be "in control". Employees, in turn, also require autonomy in their day-to-day tasks. For instance, frontline employees need freedom of action and creativity to adapt their behaviour to meet each customer's unique service requirements (Slåtten & Mehmetoglu, 2011). While the definition of autonomy may vary between managers and employees based on their job roles, both positions necessitate a level of freedom in making decisions and determining their task execution methods, which has been shown to promote job satisfaction and retention (Lee & Way, 2010).

The COVID-19 pandemic, with its unforeseen challenges, underscored the importance of autonomy for employees and management staff in the hospitality industry. At every level of an organisation, the uncertainty of the pandemic and the quickly shifting environment brought attention to the necessity of adaptable decision-making and individual initiative (Kniffin et al., 2021). Additionally, the sense of a lack of control and the associated psychological distress (anxiety) experienced by individuals during the pandemic further emphasise the critical role of autonomy in feeling content and deriving satisfaction from a job. Providing employees with control over their work and decision-making can enhance motivation, satisfaction and

overall well-being. Although there is a literature gap in studying the significance of autonomy in the post-COVID-19 hotel industry, it is logical to assume that fostering autonomy post-pandemic is a strategy that can increase the resilience of the industry.

In terms of competence, this psychological need involves multiple distinct components and goes beyond a simple measure of capability. Firstly, there is perceived competence, representing an individual's confidence in their ability to complete tasks and achieve goals. Such a perception, according to Gagné and Deci (2005), has a significant correlation with job satisfaction as it provides employees with a sense of accomplishment. The next factor is optimal challenge, which balances an individual's skills against their responsibilities, which in turn also contributes to the sense of achievement (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Mandigo & Holt, 2002). Furthermore, when achieved, it creates a state of "flow", which is characterised by total, energised focus, linked to increased job satisfaction and a decreased motivation to quit (Mandigo & Holt, 2002; Maeran & Cangiano, 2013). Finally, the regular experience of success can strengthen organisational commitment and lead to increased job satisfaction since it strengthens an employee's sense of value and purpose (Demir, 2020).

When considering competence in the hospitality industry, it is crucial to keep in mind that various roles necessitate different needs and expectations. Managerial roles, for instance, often require a wide set of skills like flexibility, adaptability, industry knowledge, leadership and interpersonal skills (Jain & Bukhari, 2021). On the other hand, when discussing hospitality employees, researchers most often mention interpersonal and soft skills, such as communication and customer service, as being crucial (Kabii et al., 2019).

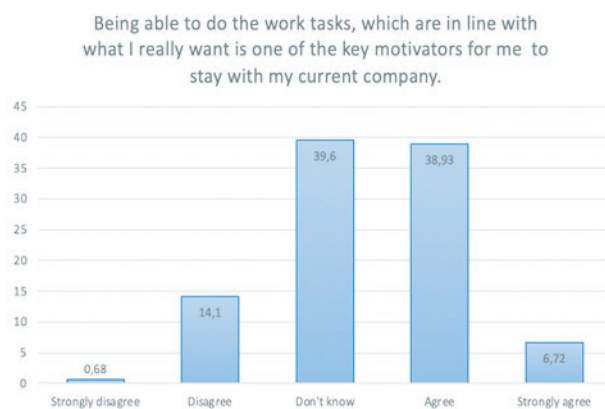
The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of competence for both employees and managers. Employees had to adapt quickly to new roles and responsibilities, follow stricter hygiene protocols, and use digital tools (Rawal et al., 2020; Bharti & Sharma, 2023). For managers, the unpredictable nature of the pandemic and the operational challenges it presented made competence in decision-making, crisis management and technology even more important (Lai & Cai, 2023). Security in one's competence serves as a psychological empowerment tool and lessens feelings of job insecurity (Knežević & Krstić, 2019), a

common fear among hospitality workers during the pandemic. It motivates people to see a threat as a challenge and fosters stress resistance (Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2009).

Exploring the complexities of human motivation, a theory emerged from the relationship between psychology and business called the self-determination theory (SDT). The SDT emphasises that motivation is an active interaction between internal and external elements, rather than a one-dimensional drive (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Central to SDT is the belief that meeting some basic psychological needs such as autonomy and competence can lead to achieving one's full potential and improving long-term well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2000). However, considering the complexity of human motivation, the relevance of SDT could differ in diverse settings, for instance, among different cultures (Chirkov et al., 2003). Despite these variations, most empirical studies (Vansteenkiste et al., 2010; Deci et al., 2017) agree that these needs are crucial for enhancing motivation and well-being. Again, the motivation, in this sense, could be intrinsic or extrinsic. Engaging in activities that result in personal fulfilment is intrinsic motivation, which fosters creativity and engagement. On the other hand, extrinsic motivation is sparked by rewards from outside sources, or the need to avoid punishment (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Numerous environmental and individual factors impact the balance between these types of motivation, underscoring the complexity of human motivation (Gagné & Deci, 2005). However, the focus of this study is limited to the intrinsic components of SDT, namely autonomy and competence.

Results

Autonomy was the first item evaluated in this research. Based on a Likert scale, the respondents were required to choose between five options that expressed their opinions about specific statements (Strongly disagree, Disagree, Don't know, Agree, and Strongly agree). When asked how important volition is for their intention to remain at the hotel, while most managers were uncertain about their response (39.6%), a number of them still expressed their agreement (38.93%) (Figure 1). Most non-management employees agree (65.11%) or strongly agree (20.14%) with the statement, resulting in an average response value of 4 (Figure 2) compared to 3 for managers (Figure 1).



Q8: Managerial staff	
Mean	3,369127517
Standard Error	0,068242821
Median	3
Mode	3
Standard Deviation	0,833009793
Sample Variance	0,693905315
Kurtosis	-0,339083374
Skewness	-0,144786394
Range	4
Minimum	1
Maximum	5
Sum	502
Count	149
Largest(1)	5
Smallest(1)	1
Confidence Level(95,0%)	0,134856174

FIGURE 1: Volition (managerial staff)

Perceived locus of causation (PLC) was reflected by the next question, which asked if respondents' perception of themselves at work was a key motivator for their intention to remain with their current employer. The data demonstrates that most of both

groups agree with the statement (managers: 42.96% agree + 8.06% strongly agree) (Figure 3); non-managers: 55.04% agree, + 28.86% strongly agree (Figure 4). It is again more evident among

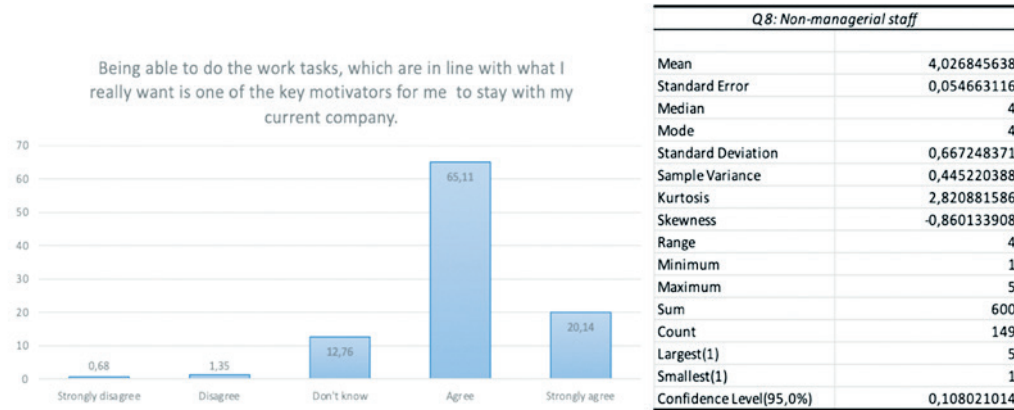


FIGURE 2: Volition (non-managerial staff)

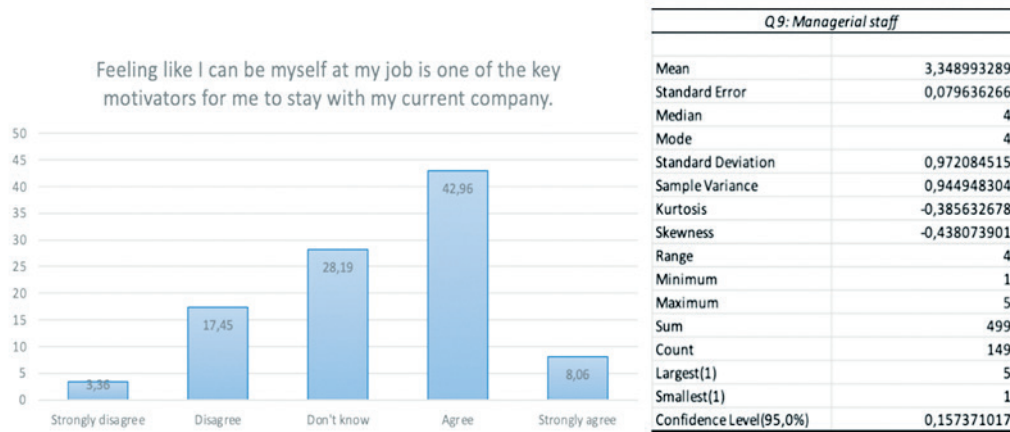


FIGURE 3: PLC (managerial staff)

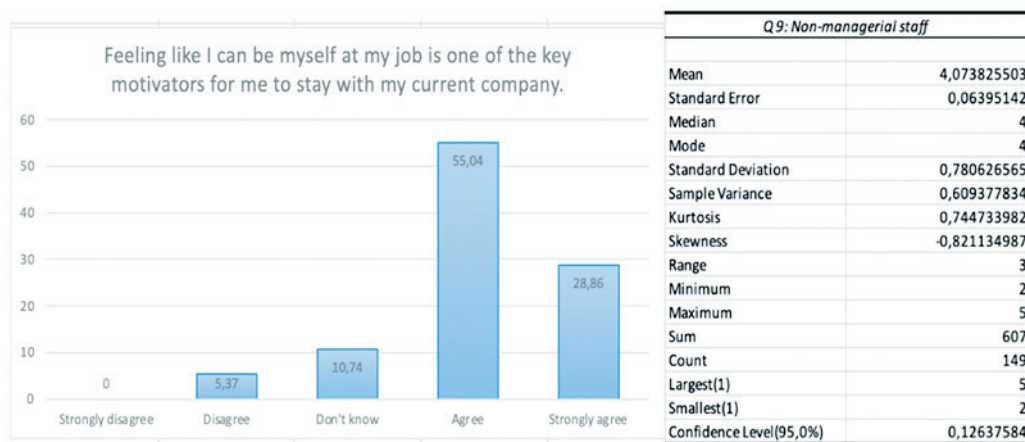


FIGURE 4: PLC (non-managerial staff)

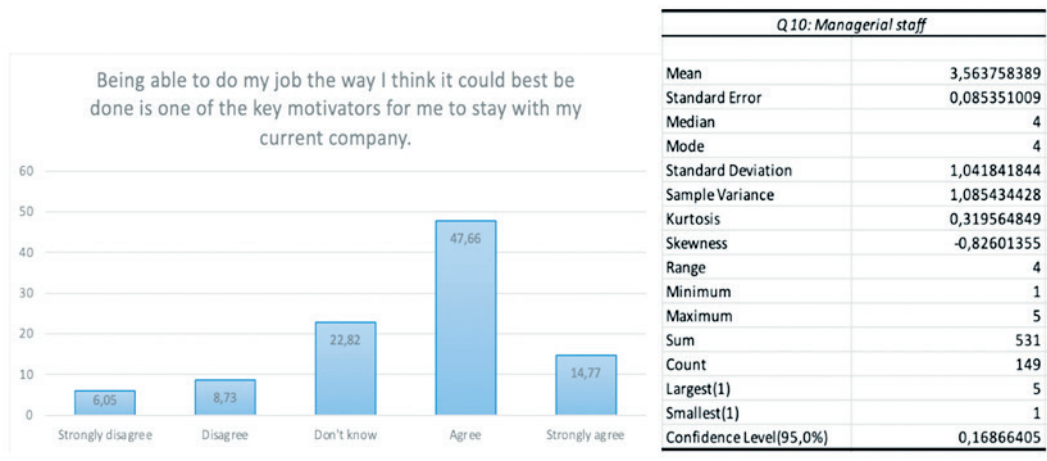


FIGURE 5: Perceived choice (managerial staff)

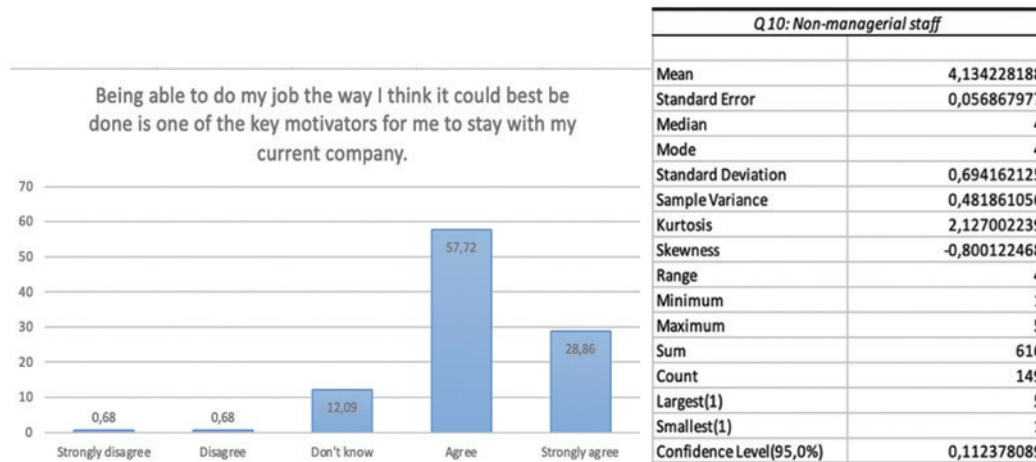


FIGURE 6: Perceived choice (non-managerial staff)

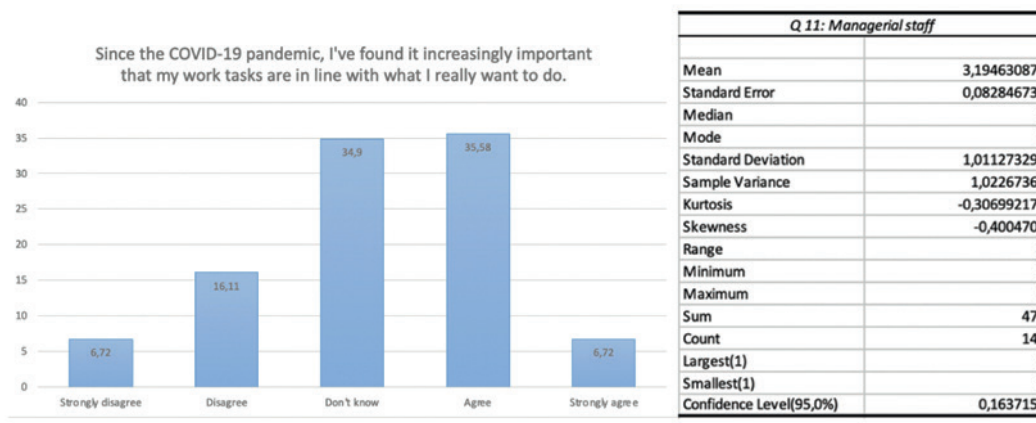


FIGURE 7: Volition after COVID-19 (managerial staff)

non-managerial employees, as the range of their responses is 3 (Figure 4) compared to 4 for managers (Figure 3).

The following question was about the significance of having a choice in how tasks are performed. Again, the non-managerial employees mostly agreed with this statement (57.72% + 28.86%), with a disagreeing minority of 1.36% in total. Managerial staff

also agreed with the statement, with 62.43% in total, resulting in a 3.57 mean (Figure 5) against 4.13 for non-managers (Figure 6).

The next question aimed to determine whether COVID-19 impacted the respondents' perceptions of the significance of performing tasks of their own volition. Managerial employees questioned whether pandemics had any impact on this factor,

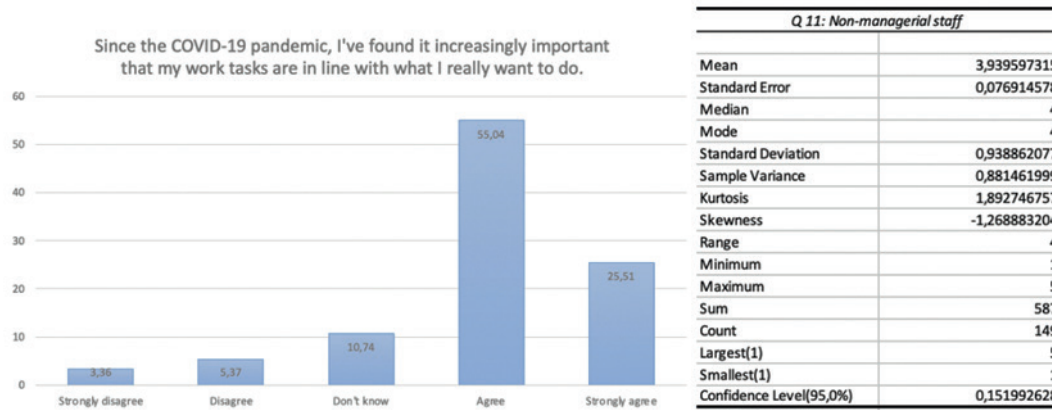


FIGURE 8: Volition after COVID-19 (non-managerial staff)

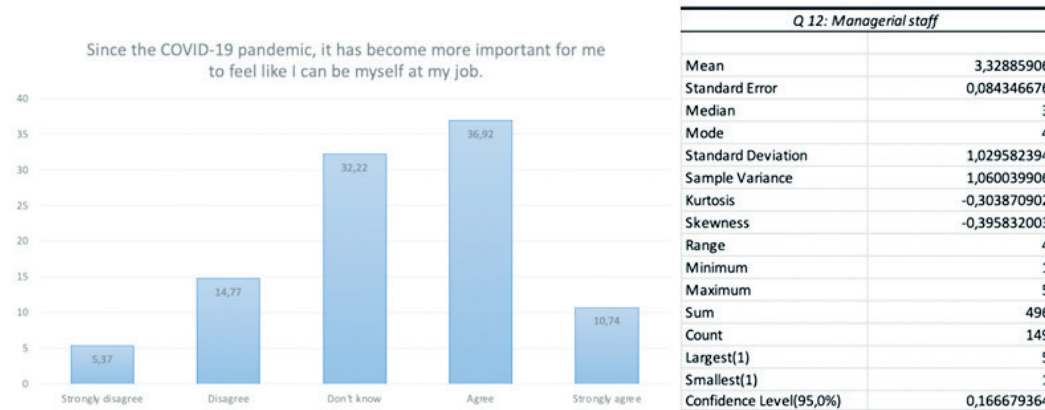


FIGURE 9: PLC after COVID-19 (managerial staff)

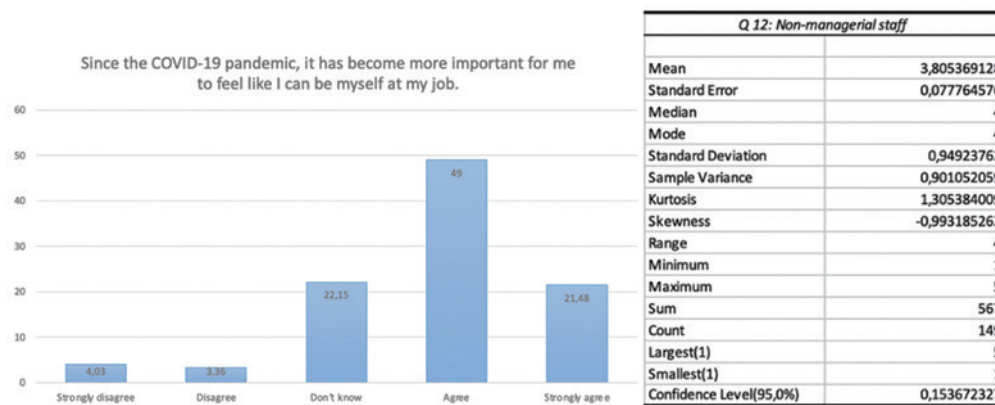


FIGURE 10: PLC after COVID-19 (non-managerial staff)

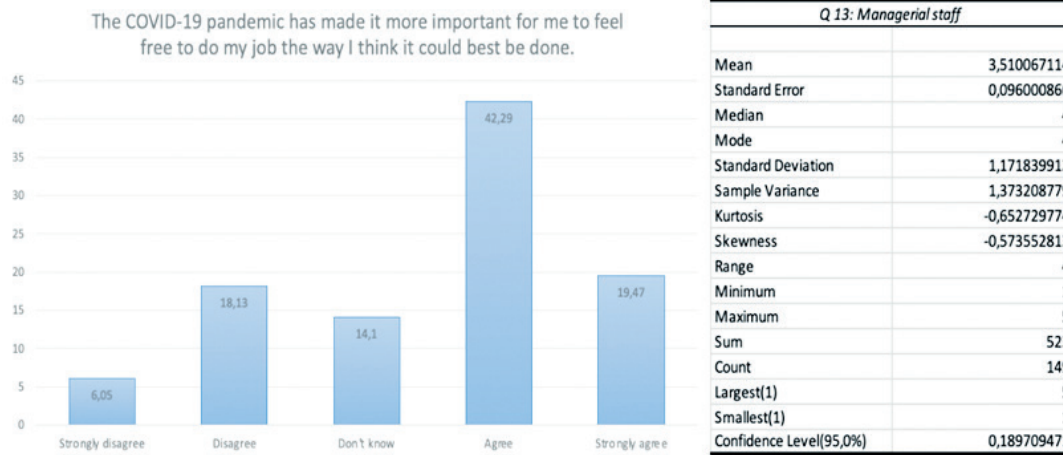


FIGURE 11: Perceived choice after COVID-19 (managerial staff)

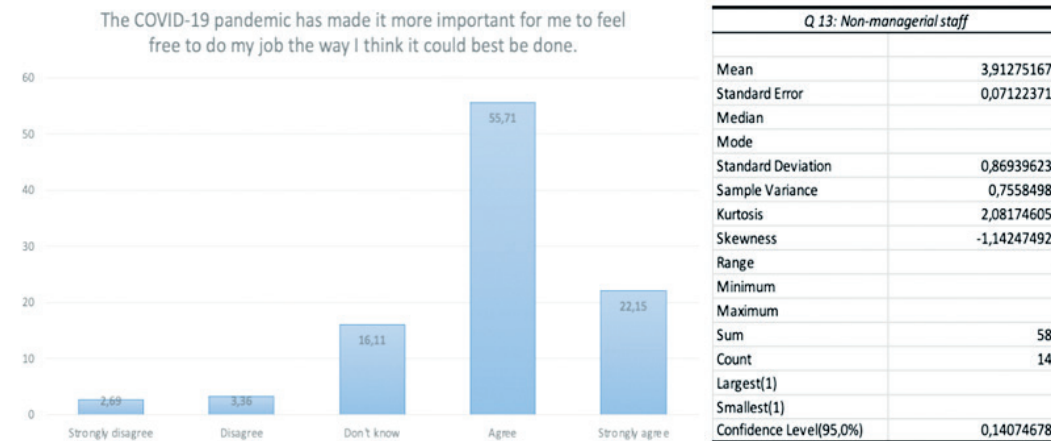


FIGURE 12: Perceived choice after COVID-19 (non-managerial staff)

TABLE 1: Themes identified from open questions related to autonomy

Themes	Considerations
Value and recognition in the workplace	Among managers, the most prominent theme was value and recognition. The pandemic shifted the perception of work, emphasising the importance of feeling valued and recognised by employers. This includes valuing autonomy to acknowledge employees' contributions beyond profit generation. For instance, one food and beverage managerial employee stated: <i>It has always been important to feel good at the workplace, but especially after being at home for several months, I understood how much time I spend at work and the importance of being happy and feeling valued in the workplace.</i>
Work-life balance and well-being	Another prevalent theme, especially among non-managerial employees, was "Work-life balance and well-being". Lockdowns and remote work during the pandemic heightened awareness of the importance of this balance and personal well-being. Autonomy was seen as crucial in achieving this balance. One front-office employee shared: <i>The pandemic made me perceive work in a different light; now being able to be more comfortable and myself is more important than before as I am more focused on ensuring my mental health is first before the company's goals and profits.</i>
Adaptation to new work dynamics	Some responses mentioned "Adaptation to new work dynamics" and the importance of autonomy in improving customer service. Respondents believed that autonomy at work can improve customer service in response to increased customer demands after COVID-19. One front office employee shared: <i>The demand for services has increased dramatically since the COVID-19 pandemic, which also requires us to better serve our customers.</i>
Job insecurity and economic uncertainty	A theme of "Job insecurity and economic uncertainty" emerged in one response. The COVID-19 pandemic raised concerns about job security and economic stability, leading this respondent to value autonomy at work to ensure stability. This front office employee expressed her worries thus: <i>The pandemic made me more stressed, and I feel that I did not have a lot of control over my work, and I felt that I have to do a lot of things which I do not really like doing because I did not have choice...so I guess after the pandemic I just started giving these things [autonomy factors] higher importance.</i>

as the mean of their responses was 3.2 and a high percentage of 34.9 chose the "Don't know" response (Figure 7). However, among non-managerial employees, the change caused by COVID-19 was evident, as the mean is 3.9, and 55.04% + 25.51% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement (Figure 8).

When presented with the statement that the COVID-19 pandemic changed the perception of the significance of being oneself at work, most managerial staff respondents (36.92%) agreed or strongly agreed (10.74%) with this statement. Nonetheless, many respondents in this group expressed doubts (32.22%), which resulted in an average score of 3.33, again slightly above the medium (Figure 9). In the case of non-managerial staff, the inclination towards the fact that the pandemic influenced people's perception of PLC at their work is much more evident, with almost half of the whole sample (49%) agreeing and 21.48% strongly agreeing with the statement, resulting in the mean of 3.8 (Figure 10).

The next question aimed at identifying if respondents placed greater importance on having the choice in performing work tasks after COVID-19. There was an evident variance in managers' responses, as seen on the bar chart. However, once again the majority of respondents in this group agreed (42.29%) or strongly agreed (19.47%) with the statement (Figure 11). Non-managers, on the other hand, only had a small percentage of those who disagreed or were uncertain (22.16% in sum), while the overwhelming majority agreed (55.71%) or strongly agreed (22.15%) (Figure 12).

In the "Autonomy and COVID-19" section of the survey, participants were asked to explain their points of view in relation to various statements. This aimed to gain insights into autonomy after the pandemic. A total of eight responses were analysed, with two from managers and six from non-managers. These responses were categorised into four themes (Table 1).

The results reveal a pattern: following the COVID-19 pandemic, respondents overwhelmingly acknowledged the increasing significance of autonomy-related factors (volition, PLC, perceived choice). Non-managerial employees confidently voiced their agreement and were particularly aware of this shift.

The data indicates that the importance of autonomy, especially regarding volition and perceived choice, experienced a noticeable increase among respondents post-COVID-19 (Figures 7, 8, 11, 12). Notably when elaborating on their agreement, many non-managerial respondents highlighted the pandemic's role in changing their perception of the importance of autonomy. They associated experiencing autonomy at work with having a healthy mental state and feeling happy. These results support the self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), which establishes a relationship between autonomy and psychological health and well-being.

Anxiety, depression and mental health problems were all made worse by the pandemic (Reep & Hupkens, 2021). These circumstances frequently restrict personal autonomy (Bergamin et al., 2022), which provides a valid justification for most respondents who consider increasing autonomy as crucial to their workplace retention.

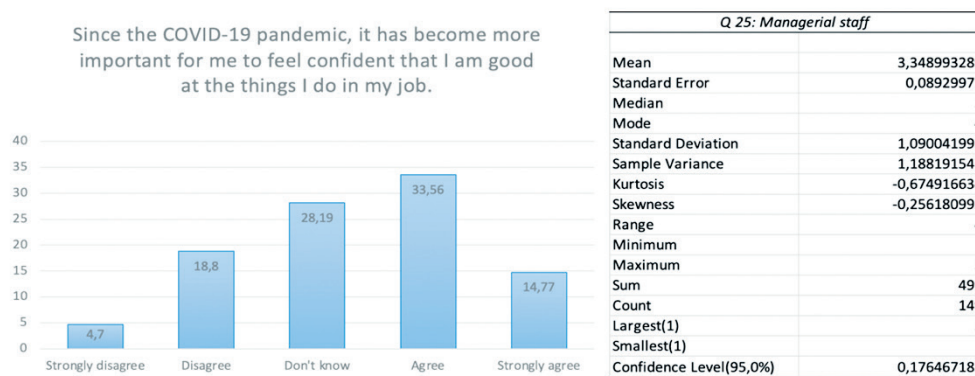


FIGURE 13: Perceived competence after COVID-19 (managerial staff)

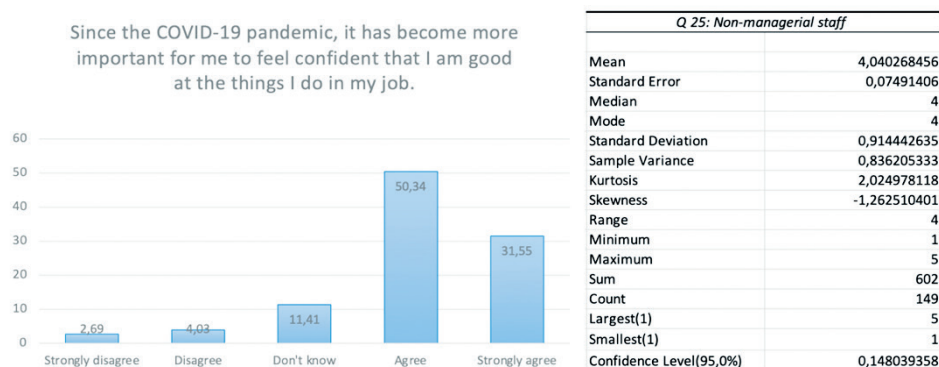


FIGURE 14: Perceived competence after COVID-19 (non-managerial staff)

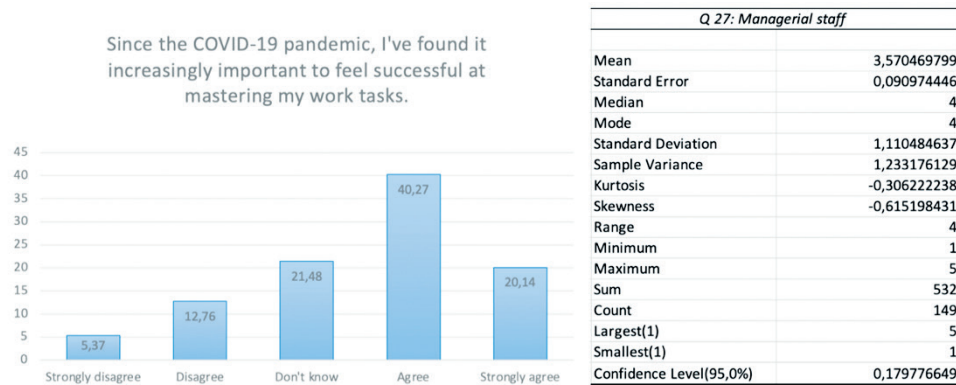


FIGURE 15: Experience of success after COVID-19 (managerial staff)

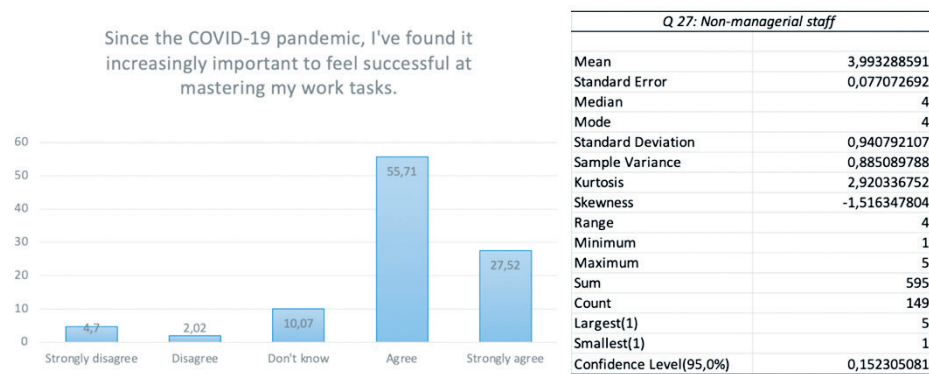


FIGURE 16: Experience of success after COVID-19 (non-managerial staff)

The employees' strong desire to feel valued at work is another important aspect influencing the increased importance of autonomy, because it makes them feel "heard" and "trusted", as several respondents claimed. Employees increasingly associate feeling valued by management with having more autonomy in their work. These findings align with the study by Guo et al. (2021), where autonomy, and therefore being granted freedom at work, promotes a positive environment since the employee feels valued for their input. The change in the perception of importance given to autonomy at work can be ascribed to how the pandemic affected people who sought purpose and control during uncertainty and stress. Autonomy enabled staff to take charge of their work, make impactful decisions, and boost the general resilience of the organisation. Therefore, the findings suggest that, to a significant extent, autonomy plays a crucial role in influencing the intentions of both employees and managers to remain with their current company in the Dutch hotel industry post-COVID-19, and COVID-19 had a major impact on this impression.

The next variable investigated was competence. The need for competence was studied by examining respondents' desires for perceived competence, optimal challenge and the experience of success. As with the preceding needs, managers and non-managers reported a consistent pattern, acknowledging that all competence-related factors had gained greater importance for them after the pandemic. Interestingly, the managers emphasised the increased importance of

the "experience of success" factor (Figure 13). In contrast, non-managers highlighted "perceived competence" as the most crucial competence factor (Figure 14).

The COVID-19 pandemic underscored the importance of feeling successful at mastering work tasks. Among non-managerial staff, most respondents agreed (55.71%) or strongly agreed (27.52%) with the statement, leading to a mean of 4 (Figure 16). Managerial staff, on the other hand, while generally more diverse in responses, on average gave this statement the most agreement in the section "Competence after COVID-19" (the mean was 3.6) (Figure 15), which also made it the most "agreed to" statement across the "after COVID-19" sections in this group.

In the "Competence and COVID-19" section of the survey, participants were asked to explain why any of the competence factors became more important to them after the pandemic. A total of 10 responses were collected, with six from managers and four from employees in non-managerial roles. These responses were categorised into several themes (Table 2).

There was this tendency among managers, as a result of the pressure they experienced during the pandemic, to keep the company operating in an uncertain environment (Graf-Vlachy et al., 2020), as the experience of success, in this case, determines the future of the organisation. The concept of experiencing success may have taken on a new meaning — it no longer represents personal competence, but also the idea that the managers' efforts contribute to the organisation's resilience and recovery. On the other hand, non-managers placed the greatest

TABLE 2: Themes identified from open questions related to competence

Themes	Considerations
Learning and skill enhancement for confidence	It was a recurring theme among managers (two responses) and non-managerial employees (two responses). In response to uncertainty during the pandemic, individuals wanted to learn more about their jobs and improve their skills. This was seen as a way to boost their confidence and adapt to changing circumstances. For example, one front office employee mentioned: <i>The pandemic brought a lot of anxiety to me. It makes me quite worried that if something goes wrong again I can also be fired, so to stay "in shape". I try to learn more about my job and boost my confidence by doing it.</i> This quote indirectly implies feelings of job insecurity.
Impact on industry and task achievement	This was mentioned twice by non-managerial employees. The respondents acknowledged that their level of competence directly impacted the resilience and customer appeal of their industry. They stated that they felt more confident when they could achieve tasks effectively and contribute to the industry's resilience after the crisis: <i>Being at the brink of extinction of a hospitality industry during COVID-19, I realised the importance of good task achievement at my workplace to keep the industry running and attractive for visitors. I am therefore very result-oriented and feel more confident when I can complete tasks with a good quality.</i>
Psychological resilience and adaptability	While not mentioned by any non-managerial employees, the theme of "Psychological resilience and adaptability" emerged among managers twice, with one of them mentioning: <i>It can improve the psychological quality of individuals.</i> The COVID-19 pandemic brought unexpected challenges and changes, highlighting the significance of confidence and a positive mindset in maintaining resilience, adaptability and mental well-being.
Confidence in personal growth and control	Another common theme among managers was "Confidence for personal growth and control". According to two of the respondents, having competence and confidence at work is crucial because it gives them a sense of control over their lives and opportunities for personal development: <i>Confidence gives us more control over our lives.</i>

importance on perceived competence, which can be attributed to the prevalence of feelings of job insecurity among this group.

When elaborating on their responses, both groups consistently highlighted the importance of learning and skill enhancement for building confidence. Vander Elst et al. (2012) agree that competence serves as an empowerment tool for employees in demanding situations such as job insecurity. Thus, as reflected in this survey, the demand for perceived competence among staff may reflect their efforts to recover a sense of control and confidence after the uncertainty the pandemic caused.

These findings resonate with the self-determination theory, as competence factors emerged as significantly important to respondents in both managerial and non-managerial positions. Within the framework of the self-determination theory (SDT), competence stands out as a fundamental psychological need (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Gagné & Deci, 2005; Deci et al., 2017), which became particularly pertinent in light of the prevalent job insecurity during the pandemic. According to the findings, competence is crucial in motivating hotel staff to stay in the Dutch hotel industry after COVID-19. It emphasises the need to improve job skills, which is critical for job security and adaptability in the industry's changing context.

Conclusions

This research aimed to analyse the role of autonomy and competence in the retention intentions of Dutch hotel staff post-COVID-19. Based on the quantitative and qualitative analysis, it can be concluded that both constructs are relevant in human motivation and have also grown in importance after the pandemic for both managerial and non-managerial staff in Dutch hotels. Respondents identified perceived choice, perceived competence and the experience of success as the most "relevant" factors for their retention. These same elements

increased in importance the most following the pandemic, both among managers and non-managers. While these factors stood out, other components were also highly valued.

Interesting insights emerged throughout the study, notably concerning the influence of timing on respondents' perspectives, and the extent to which intrinsic motivation factors grew in importance immediately after the pandemic is remarkable. Additionally, higher levels of uncertainty were observed among managers in their responses, providing a perspective on distinctive challenges encountered by this group. These findings added depth to the research findings and underscored the importance of considering timing and managerial roles in future research.

Some limitations were identified in this study, with the relatively small sample size limiting the generalisability of findings to a larger population. Additionally, the research adopted a cross-sectional design, capturing a specific moment in the post-pandemic period, which may not fully capture long-term changes. The cross-sectional design provides a snapshot of the post-pandemic landscape relevant to the time of the study, which can further inspire and contribute to future research on this topic.

Future research in this field could benefit from longitudinal studies to capture the developing dynamics of staff motivation over time, allowing for a better understanding of how the motivational needs of staff change by degrees after a crisis. Additionally, employing a strictly purposive sampling approach and surveying a more extensive pool of participants in future research could yield a more comprehensive and nuanced insight into the variations of staff motivation in the Dutch hotel industry post-COVID-19. Further studies using other motivational theories may enhance the findings of this study, offering an expanded view of employee motivation in this Dutch sector after the pandemic. Other theories might provide new perspectives on the different

variables impacting employee retention. Lastly, considering different age groups, the demographics of employee motivation may be the subject of future research and may provide valuable insights for creating motivational methods aimed at certain workforce demographics, considering the diverse experiences of different age groups during the COVID-19 pandemic.

ORCID iD

Vanessa de Oliveira Menezes – <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5293-533X>

References

- Bajrami, D. D., Terzic, A., Petrovic, M. D., & Radovanovic, M. (2021). Will we have the same employees in hospitality after all? The impact of COVID-19 on employees' work attitudes and turnover intentions. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, *94*, 1–9.
- Bergamin, J., Luigjes, J., Kiverstein, J., Bockting, C. L., & Denys, D. (2022). Defining autonomy in psychiatry. *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, *13*.
- Bharti, R., & Sharma, S. (2023). Guest preferences and future challenges in the post COVID-19 scenario – an exploratory study of hotel front office department. *PUSA Journal of Hospitality and Applied Sciences*, *9*(1), 47–57. <https://doi.org/10.48165/pjhas.2023.9.1.6>
- Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek (CBS). (2021). *CBS Jaarverslag 2020*. The Hague.
- Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek (CBS). (2022). *De arbeidsmarkt in cijfers* [The labour market in numbers]. The Hague.
- Chirkov, V., Ryan, R. M., Kim, Y., & Kaplan, U. (2003). Differentiating autonomy from individualism and independence: A self-determination theory perspective on internalization of cultural orientations and well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *84*(1), 97–110. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.84.1.97>
- Codrington, P. (2021). *Zekerheid van de baan? Deelstudie naar onzekerheid over werk en inkomen voor verschillende groepen werknemers* [Job security? Substudy into uncertainty about work and income for different groups of workers]. Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid.
- Cuc, L. D., Feher, A., Cuc, P. N., Szentesi, S. G., Rad, D., Rad, G., Pantea, M. F., & Joldes, C. S. R. A. (2022). Parallel mediation analysis on the effects of pandemic accentuated occupational stress on hospitality industry staff turnover intentions in COVID-19 context. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *19*(19), 12050. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph191912050>
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1985). *Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior*. Springer Science Business Media. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4899-2271-7>
- Deci, E. L., Olafsen, A. H., & Ryan, R. M. (2017). Self-determination theory in work organizations: the state of a science. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, *4*, 19–43. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-032516-113108>
- Demir, S. (2020). The role of self-efficacy in job satisfaction, organizational commitment, motivation and job involvement. *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, *85*, 205–224.
- Dwesini, N. F. (2019). Causes and prevention of high employee turnover within the hospitality industry: A literature review. *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure*, *8*(2), 1–15.
- Kabii, F., Wamathai, A., John, K. M., & Jilo, N. (2019). Analysis of the skills gap in tourism and hospitality industry in Kenya. *ASEAN Journal on Hospitality and Tourism*, *17*(2), 95–105. <https://doi.org/10.5614/ajht.2019.17.2.3>
- Gagné, M., & Deci, E. L. (2005). Self-determination theory and work motivation. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *26*, 331–362. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.322>
- Graf-Vlachy, L., Sun, S., & Zhang, S. X. (2020). Predictors of managers' mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic. *European Journal of Psychotraumatology*, *11*(1), 1834195. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2000819.8.2020.1834195>
- Guo, M., Ahmad, N., Adnan, M., Scholz, M., & Khalil-ur-Rehman Naveed, R. T. (2021). The relationship of CSR and employee creativity in the hotel sector: the mediating role of job autonomy. *Sustainability*, *13*(18), 10032. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su131810032>
- Hoerberichts, M., Volkerink, M., Biesenbeek, C., & van der Meulen, G. (2021, 4 October). *Toekomst van de Arbeidsmarkt* [Future of the labour market]. <https://www.dnb.nl/publicaties/publicaties-onderzoek/analyse/toekomst-van-de-arbeidsmarkt/>
- Jain, M. P., & Bukhari, S. A. (2021). Lodging management competencies: industry, educators and students perspective. *International Journal of Management*, *11*(12), 2864–2874. <https://doi.org/10.34218/IJM.11.12.2020.268>
- Kammeyer-Mueller, J. D., Judge, T. A., & Scott, B. A. (2009). The role of core self-evaluations in the coping process. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *94*(1), 177–195. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0013214>
- Knežević, J., & Krstić, T. (2019). The role of basic psychological needs in the perception of job insecurity. *Archives of Industrial Hygiene and Toxicology*, *70*, 54–59. <https://doi.org/10.2478/aiht-2019-70-3156>
- Kniffin, K. M., Narayanan, J., Anseel, F., Antonakis, J., Ashford, S.P., Bakker, A.G., & Creary, S. J. (2021). COVID-19 and the workplace: Implications, issues, and insights for future research and action. *American Psychologist*, *76*(1), 63–77.
- Lai, Y.-L., & Cai, W. (2023). Enhancing post-COVID-19 work resilience in hospitality: A micro-level crisis management framework. *Tourism and Hospitality Research*, *23*(1), 88–100. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14673584221075182>
- Lee, C., & Way, K. (2010). Individual employment characteristics of hotel employees that play a role in employee satisfaction and work retention. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, *29*, 344–353. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2009.08.008>
- Maeran, R., & Cangiano, F. (2013). Flow experience and job characteristics: Analyzing the role of flow in job satisfaction. Testing, psychometrics. *Methodology in Applied Psychology*, *20*(1), 13–26.
- Mahmoud, A. B., Reisel, W. D., Fuxman, L., & Hack-Polay, D. (2022). Locus of control as a moderator of the effects of COVID-19 perceptions on job insecurity, psychosocial, organisational and job outcomes for MENA region hospitality employees. *European Management Review*, *19*(2), 313–332. <https://doi.org/10.1111/emre.12494>
- Mares, A. (2021, 1 April). *De Nederlandse economie in 2020* [The Dutch economy in 2020]. <https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/longread/de-nederlandse-economie/2021/de-nederlandse-economie-in-2020?onepage=true>
- Mandigo, J., & Holt, N. L. (2002). Putting theory into practice: Enhancing motivation through OPTIMAL strategies. *Avante*, *8*(3), 21–29.
- Maurits, E. (2022). *Moeilijk vervulbare vacatures en behoud van personeel: ervaringen werkgevers* [Vacancies difficult to fill and retain personnel: employers' experiences]. UWV Afdeling Arbeidsmarktinformatie en -advies.
- Ministry of Finance. (2021). *De Nederlandse economie in crisis*. <https://www.rijksfinancien.nl/miljoenennota/2021/650620>
- NOS Nieuws. (2021, 26 February). *Afgelopen jaar grootste economische krimp sinds WO II; wel kleiner dan in andere eurolanden* [Last year, largest economic contraction since WWII; smaller than in other euro countries]. <https://nos.nl/artikel/2368908-afgelopen-jaar-grootste-economische-krimp-sinds-wo-ii-wel-kleiner-dan-in-andere-eurolanden>
- Notten, F., & Hooijmaaijers, S. (2021, 24 August 24). *Corona en de horeca*. <https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/longread/de-nederlandse-economie/2021/corona-en-de-horeca/3-faillissementen-en-opheffingen>
- Rawal, Y. S., Pal, S., Bagchi, P., & Dani, R. (2020). Hygiene and safety: a review of the hotel industry in the era of COVID-19 pandemic. *Bioscience Biotechnology Research Communications*, *13*(10), 79–83.
- Reep, C. & Hupkens, C. (2021, 3 September). *Ervaren impact corona op mentale gezondheid en leefstijl* [Experienced impact of corona on mental health and lifestyle]. <https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/longread/statistische-trends/2021/ervaren-impact-corona-op-mentale-gezondheid-en-leefstijl>

- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist*, 55(1), 68-78. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.55.1.68>
- Silfsten, T., & Mehmetoglu, M. (2011). Antecedents and effects of engaged frontline employees: A study from the hospitality industry. *Managing Service Quality*, 21(1), 88-107. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09604521111100261>
- Van Aerden, K., Gadeyne, S., & Vanroelen, C. (2017). Is any job better than no job at all? Studying the relations between employment types, unemployment and subjective health in Belgium. *Archives of Public Health*, 75(1), 55. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13690-017-0225-5>
- Van den Broeck, A., Vansteenkiste, M., De Witte, H., & Lens, W. (2008). Explaining the relationships between job characteristics, burnout, and engagement: The role of basic psychological need satisfaction. *Work & Stress*, 22(3), 277-294. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02678370802393672>
- Vander Elst, T., Van den Broeck, A., De Witte, H., & De Cuyper, N. (2012). The mediating role of frustration of psychological needs in the relationship between job insecurity and work-related well-being. *Work & Stress*, 26(3), 252-271. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02678373.2012.703900>
- Vansteenkiste, M., Niemiec, C. P., & Soenens, B. (2010). The development of the five mini-theories of self-determination theory: an historical overview, emerging trends, and future directions. *Advances in Motivation and Achievement*, 16(A), 105-165.
- Wilson, J. M., Lee, J., Fitzgerald, H. N., Oosterhoff, B., Sevi, B., & Shook, N. J. (2020). Job insecurity and financial concern during the COVID-19 pandemic are associated with worse mental health. *Journal of occupational and environmental medicine*, 62(9), 686-691. <https://doi.org/10.1097/JOM.0000000000001962>
- Wood, A. J., & Burchell, B. J. (2014). *Zero hours contracts as a source of job insecurity amongst low paid hourly workers*. University of Oxford. <https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:f115e386-543b-4608-b818-0f3c1dcd4dc4>
- Yam, L., Raybould, M., & Gordon, R. (2018). Employment stability and retention in the hospitality industry: Exploring the role of job embeddedness. *Journal of Human Resources in Hospitality & Tourism*, 17(4), 445-464. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15332845.2018.1449560>