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UNVEILING PROFESSIONAL MISCONDUCT IN THE INDIAN HOTEL INDUSTRY: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON EMPLOYEE TREATMENT AND ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

Suraj YADAV¹

1 D Y Patil University, India; surajyadavdyphmt@gmail.com

Handling Editor:

Professor Dr. Wing-Keung WONG

Asia University, Taiwan

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Reviewers:

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Abstract

This research paper aims to unveil the prevalence and dynamics of modern slavery in the Indian hotel industry, particularly focusing on the professional conduct of superiors towards their subordinates. Drawing on qualitative and quantitative data collected from employees across various star hotels in India, this study delves into the dimensions of transforming the nature of the organization, perceived rudeness, and its impact on employee effectiveness, and psychological capital. Through rigorous analysis, the research uncovers the nuanced experiences of hotel staff, illuminating the widespread presence of professional misconduct and its impact on employee well-being and organizational culture. Findings reveal significant variations in perceptions of Dehumanization within organizations and the perception of rudeness among employees, underscoring the need for targeted interventions to address interpersonal dynamics and foster a respectful work environment. Moreover, insights into employee performance and psychological capital highlight the importance of nurturing positive workplace attributes to enhance resilience and productivity. This research contributes to the broader discourse on modern slavery and professional misconduct in the hospitality sector, providing valuable insights for policymakers, industry stakeholders, and organizational leaders. By uncovering the hidden realities of the Indian hotel industry, this study catalyzes meaningful change, advocating for ethical practices and dignity in the workplace.

Keywords: Slavery, Misconduct, Supervisors, Authority, Workload

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Introduction

Human trafficking, a contemporary form of slavery, involves transporting victims to different locations for forced labour under slave owners or for various forms of exploitation, such as sexual exploitation. Hotels are particularly vulnerable (Gillard et al., 2018) to being associated with both human trafficking and modern slavery due to their operational characteristics. They provide discreet accommodation, often exploited by traffickers who arrange for "escort" services for guests or facilitate the trafficking of victims to fulfill such requests (Paraskevas, 2020). Additionally, hotels frequently employ a significant number of "low-skilled" workers, including agency employees or immigrants, providing traffickers with an opportunity to exploit their workforce as slaves (Robina-Ramírez et al., 2021). Ultimately, hotels frequently accommodate guests who become lucrative targets for criminal organizations. These groups may exploit trafficked victims to pilfer valuables or acquire personal data, enabling activities such as credit card fraud, identity theft, and potentially even blackmail (Paraskevas, 2020). In recent times, there has been a trend to refer to all of these types of compulsion under the general label "modern slavery." Given how emotional the phrase is, there has been significant discussion about what exactly qualifies. International legal documents that have achieved a great rate have characterized slavery, forced labour, and human trafficking. International law does not define the phrase "modern slavery (Plant, 2014)." Global action against forms of coercion that are variously referred to as forced labour, slavery, human trafficking, and related behaviors has significantly increased in the last several years. next the adoption of the first comprehensive international instrument against human trafficking in 2000 (for organ removal, labour exploitation, or sexual exploitation), human trafficking became the primary focus of attention over the next years (Plant, 2014). Due to widespread franchising, opaque supply chains, a workforce that is prone to exploitation, and a lack of monitoring from global hotel chains and brands, the hotel industry is very vulnerable to exploitation (Teng & Cheng, 2021). Under the franchising model, hotel brands give their reputation and high standards of customer service to outside parties, but they often make significantly less restrictions on the standards they demand when it comes to worker employment—even in nations where labour exploitation is pervasive (Business & Human Rights Resource Centre, 2019). In India, the hotel industry lacks an efficient monitoring mechanism to work together on social and environmental challenges. To address the risk of human trafficking and modern-day slavery in the hotel business, there is no working group to promote awareness, discuss best practices, and develop workable solutions. Indian hotels and restaurants are unaware of social compliance systems and issues related to human trafficking. Due to the abundance of lower-skilled positions in the sector, unscrupulous individuals and organizations may use hotels as a means of trafficking children and adults for sexual exploitation. This can result in forced or bonded labour (Dwivedi, 2019).

Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

One of the biggest sectors in the world, the hotel business is also a social phenomenon that grows and changes significantly every year. The significance of the tourist and hotel industries on a global scale underscores the relevance of its ethical components. Prioritizing ethical values and standards should come before profit maximization (Goh & Kong, 2018), even if it is the primary objective of hoteliers. Acts of hospitality, compassion, and treating people like we want to be treated are the most effective forms of in-service marketing promotion. More so than other forms of marketing, business ethics improve a hotel's standing, competitiveness, and market share (Guler & Yukselen, 2010). In Asia-Pacific nations, slavery is pervasive in India due in large part to the country's economy's reliance on inexpensive (Selinger & Schoen, 1965), low-skilled labor. Hotels found to be involved in modern slavery or professional misconduct risk significant damage to their reputation and brand image. This can lead to loss of customer

trust, boycotts, and legal repercussions, affecting the hotel's long-term viability. Slavery is illegal everywhere in the world (Lee & Tsang, 2013), yet more than twenty-seven million people are still trapped in one of the oldest social institutions in history. The work by K. Bales investigates the conditions of slaves in Mauritania, Brazil, Thailand, Pakistan, and India (Bales, 1999). Indian hotels rely on complex supply chains for goods and services. If any part of these supply chains involves suppliers who engage in modern slavery or unethical labor practices, the hotel may indirectly contribute to such exploitation (Davis et al., 2014). This can lead to professional misconduct if the hotel management turns a blind eye to these issues or fails to adequately address them. Professional misconduct can also arise when hotels fail to uphold ethical standards and compliance with labor laws. If management prioritizes profit over ethical practices, employees may be mistreated or exploited, leading to a deterioration in service quality and potential legal issues. Some Indian hotels may engage in exploitative labor practices such as paying below minimum wage, withholding salaries, or forcing employees to work long hours without proper compensation (Davis et al., 2014). This can create an environment where professional misconduct, such as employee mistreatment or unethical behavior toward guests, is more likely to occur. There is no mechanism in place to verify or check recruitment agencies, nor is there an interface for communication with specialized companies operating in this region. This issue necessitates ongoing collaboration (McFarland, 1989), a great deal of basic and rapid learning, and remediation of the major problem to support the hotel industry's cooperative efforts to create resources and solutions. This industry is desperately needed right now, and we implore other industries to join together and discuss how they might collaborate and their stakeholders to further efforts to reduce the risk of human trafficking and slavery (Dwivedi, 2019).

Bullying is something that people frequently anticipate to persist on school playgrounds. Unfortunately, though, bullies do not always stop being hostile as they age. It is nearly hard to come up (Nguyen & Truong, 2021) with a universal definition of bullying because not all nations have laws against it. Any abusive behavior that a reasonable person would deem unfriendly is generally considered to constitute bullying. Similar to harassment, it may take many forms, such as verbal, physical, or psychological. Examples include slander, physical or cyber threats, destroying someone's job, spreading untruths, and frightening someone into doing something they don't feel comfortable doing (Boateng & Hsieh, 2019). On the other hand, the management team of a company can decide what constitutes bad performance, enforce disciplinary measures, and oversee and supervise the way work is done without being accused of bullying. These are part of their managerial responsibilities, and as long as they are carried out lawfully, they are not considered bullying (Lim et al., 2023).

H1: There is a significant correlation between the hierarchical position of employees in star hotels and their likelihood of experiencing professional misconduct from superiors.

The hierarchical structure within star hotels often plays a significant role in shaping the dynamics of professional conduct and misconduct among employees. The hierarchical structure in star hotels typically places higher-ranking employees, such as managers and supervisors, in positions of authority over lower-ranking staff, such as frontline workers and support staff (Moyo, 2017). This power dynamic creates a potential for abuse, where superiors may exploit their authority to engage in professional misconduct, such as harassment, discrimination, or unfair treatment toward subordinates. Lower-ranking employees may be hesitant to report instances of professional misconduct from their superiors due to fear of retaliation. They may worry about jeopardizing their job security, facing negative performance evaluations, or experiencing further mistreatment if they speak out against their higher-ups. This fear can contribute to underreporting of misconduct and perpetuate a culture of silence within the organization (Молдажанов et al., 2022).

H2: Organizational culture significantly influences the prevalence of professional misconduct towards subordinates in star hotels.

Organizational culture establishes the norms and values that govern interactions and behaviors within the hotel. If the prevailing culture prioritizes professionalism, respect, and ethical conduct, instances of professional misconduct toward subordinates are less likely to occur. Conversely, a culture that tolerates or even condones abusive behavior from superiors creates an environment where misconduct flourishes (Ouchi & Wilkins, 1985). The behavior of senior management and leadership sets the tone for the entire organization. If leaders' model respectful and ethical behavior towards subordinates, it reinforces a culture of mutual respect and fairness. However, if leaders engage in or turn a blind eye to misconduct, it signals to employees that such behavior is acceptable, leading to its normalization within the organization (Varaei et al., 2024).

H3: Economic pressures and labor market conditions contribute to the perpetuation of modern slavery practices within the Indian hotel industry.

Many workers in the Indian hotel industry, particularly those in lower-skilled positions such as housekeeping, dishwashing, or security, are often paid low wages. Economic vulnerability due to poverty or lack of alternative employment opportunities makes these workers susceptible to exploitation. In such circumstances, individuals may be more willing to accept precarious working conditions, including forced labor or debt bondage, as a means of securing income for themselves and their families (Ndiuini & Baum, 2021). The Indian hotel industry, like many other sectors in the country, has a significant informal labor market. Informal employment arrangements, where workers lack formal contracts or legal protections, are more prone to exploitation. Employers may take advantage of the lack of regulation and oversight in the informal sector to engage in abusive labor practices, including modern slavery (Kaynak & Rahman, 2024).

H4: Regulatory oversight and enforcement mechanisms have a moderating effect on the occurrence of professional misconduct in star hotels.

Regulatory oversight ensures that star hotels comply with industry standards, codes of conduct, and legal requirements. This includes adherence to labor laws, anti-discrimination regulations, health and safety standards, and ethical business practices. Knowing that they are subject to scrutiny and potential penalties for non-compliance, hotels are incentivized to maintain higher standards of conduct and to avoid engaging in misconduct that could lead to regulatory sanctions (Ghobadi et al., 2024). Effective enforcement mechanisms create accountability for hotels and their employees. When instances of professional misconduct occur, regulatory bodies have the authority to investigate complaints, conduct audits, and impose penalties or sanctions for violations. The fear of facing legal consequences, fines, or license revocation acts as a deterrent against engaging in misconduct, encouraging hotels to prioritize ethical behavior and treat employees and guests with respect (Fitzgerald, 1989).

Research Methodology

Sample & Procedure

The research adopted a qualitative approach to investigate the phenomenon of modern slavery in the Indian hotel industry, focusing specifically on the professional misconduct of superiors towards subordinates in star hotels. A qualitative approach allowed for an in-depth exploration of the experiences and perspectives of individuals involved in or affected by modern slavery in the hotel industry (Yadav, 2021). The research employed semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis to gather and analyze data. The study used purposive sampling to select participants from the target population, which included employees at various levels within star hotels in India. Participants were selected based on their firsthand experiences or knowledge of professional misconduct and modern slavery in the hotel industry. The sample aimed for

diversity in terms of job roles, hotel locations, and demographics to capture a range of perspectives (Yadav, 2024). From December 2023 to February 2024, data collection was conducted by interviewing 485 employees from various levels of management within a star hotel. Throughout this period, meticulous efforts were made to ensure the confidentiality of the identity and feedback provided by the participants. The interviews allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the experiences and perspectives of individuals working within the hotel industry (Kotani et al., 2024). By gathering data from all levels of management, the research aimed to capture a holistic view of the phenomenon under investigation. The questionnaire was taken from the research paper “Impact of Organizational Mistreatment on Employee Performance in the Hotel Industry” by Aisha Sarwar & Lucky Mohammad (Sarwar & Muhammad, 2021).

Data Collection & Method of Analysis

Table 1 Demographic characteristics with frequency and percentage.

Demographic characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	257	52.98
Female	228	47.01
<i>Age</i>		
25 and below	229	47.21
26-35	126	25.97
36-45	90	18.55
46 and above	40	8.24
<i>Qualification</i>		
Higher Secondary School	14	2.88
Bachelor	341	70.30
Masters	158	32.57

The demographic characteristics were likely collected to understand the composition of the sample population. The data collected provides insight into the gender distribution, age distribution, and educational qualifications of the respondents (Ekong & Thomas, 2019). This information is used to analyze how different demographic groups may perceive or respond to the survey question. It can also help in identifying any potential biases or trends within the sample population. Overall, this demographic breakdown provides valuable context for interpreting the survey results and understanding (Dato, 2024) the characteristics of the surveyed population. The following graph shows the data from Table No. 1 in chart format.

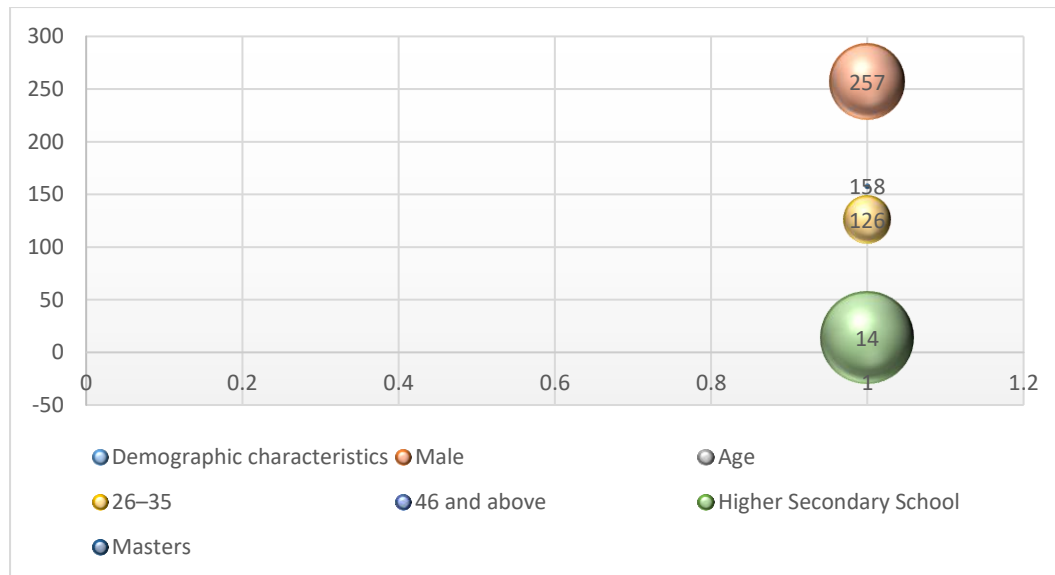


Figure 1 Demographic Characteristics

Table 2 Collected data on the given questionnaire on various parameters.

Organizational dehumanization		Response (in %)	Standard Deviation
Q1	My organization makes me feel that one worker is easily as good as any other	5	5.24
Q2	My organization would not hesitate to replace me if it enabled the company to make more profit	10	
Q3	If my job could be done by a machine or a robot, my organization would not hesitate to replace me with this new technology	7	
Q4	My organization makes me feel that my only importance is my performance at work	12	
Q5	My organization is only interested in me when it needs me	15	
Q6	The only thing that counts for my organization is what I can contribute to it	18	
Q7	My organization treats me as if I were a robot	20	
Q8	My organization considers me as a number	8	
Q9	My organization treats me as if I were an object	5	
Perceived incivility			
Q10	Put you down or was condescending to you?	5	6.42
Q11	Paid little attention to your statement or showed little interest in your opinion?	10	
Q12	Made demeaning or derogatory remarks about you?	15	
Q13	Addressed you in unprofessional terms, either publicly or privately	20	
Q14	Ignored or excluded you from professional camaraderie?	10	
Q15	Doubted your judgment on a matter over which you have responsibility?	8	
Q16	Made unwanted attempts to draw you into a discussion of personal matters?	7	
Q17			
Employee performance			
Q18	This employee is very competent	20	10.12

Organizational dehumanization		Response (in %)	Standard Deviation
Q19	This employee gets his or her work done very effectively	35	
Q20	This employee has performed his or her job well	45	
Psychological Capital			
Q21	I feel confident analyzing a long-term problem to find a solution	1	3.39
Q22	I feel confident in representing my work area in meetings with management	2	
Q23	I feel confident contributing to discussions about the company's strategy	5	
Q24	I feel confident helping to set targets/goals in my work area	3	
Q25	I feel confident contacting people outside the company (e.g. suppliers, customers) to discuss problems	8	
Q26	I feel confident presenting information to a group of colleagues	12	
Q27	If I should find myself in a jam at work, I could think of many ways to get out of it	7	
Q28	At present, I am energetically pursuing my work goals	4	
Q29	There are lots of ways around any problem	10	
Q30	Right now I see myself as being pretty successful at work	6	
Q31	I can think of many ways to reach my current work goals	9	
Q32	At this time, I am meeting the work goals that I have set for myself	3	
Q33	When I have a setback at work, I have trouble recovering from it, moving on (R)	11	
Q34	I usually manage difficulties one way or another at work	15	
Q35	I can be "on my own," so to speak, at work if I have to	6	
Q36	I usually take stressful things at work in stride	7	
Q37	I can get through difficult times at work because I've experienced difficulty before	4	
Q38	I feel I can handle many things at a time at this job	2	
Q39	When things are uncertain for me at work, I usually expect the best	8	
Q40	If something can go wrong for me work-wise, it will (R)	9	
Q41	I always look on the bright side of things regarding my job	3	
Q42	I'm optimistic about what will happen to me in the future as it pertains to work	6	
Q43	In this job, things never work out the way I want them to (R)	5	
Q44	I approach this job as if "every cloud has a silver lining I approach this job as if" every cloud has a silver lining	7	

Note: Questioner taken from the research paper "Impact of Organizational Mistreatment on Employee Performance in the Hotel Industry" by Sarwar & Mohammad (2021).

Results

The data collected on various parameters including Organizational dehumanization ($\sigma = 5.24$), Perceived incivility ($\sigma = 6.42$), Employee performance ($\sigma = 10.12$), and Psychological Capital ($\sigma = 3.39$).

Organizational Dehumanization:

The data revealed a standard deviation (σ) of 5.24 in perceptions of organizational dehumanization. This indicates a moderate level of consensus among respondents regarding the extent to which they perceive their organization as dehumanizing. Further analysis is warranted to explore specific aspects contributing to this perception.

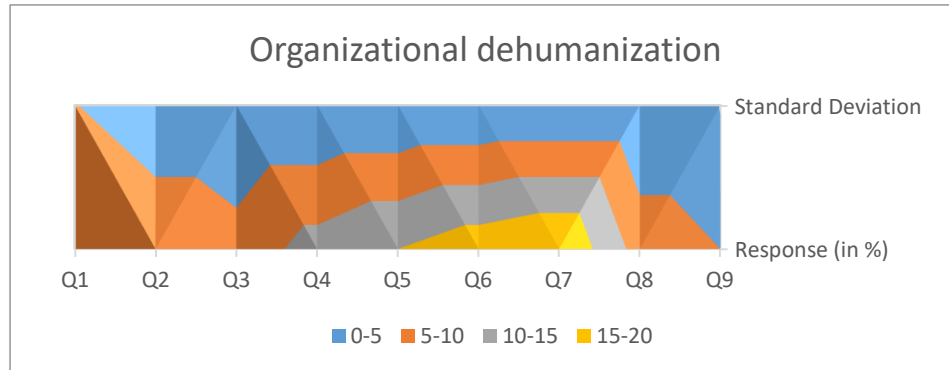


Figure 2 Organizational Dehumanization

Perceived Incivility:

Perceived incivility exhibited a standard deviation of 6.42. This suggests a considerable degree of variation in respondents' experiences of uncivil behavior within the workplace. Such variability underscores the importance of addressing interpersonal dynamics and fostering a respectful organizational culture.

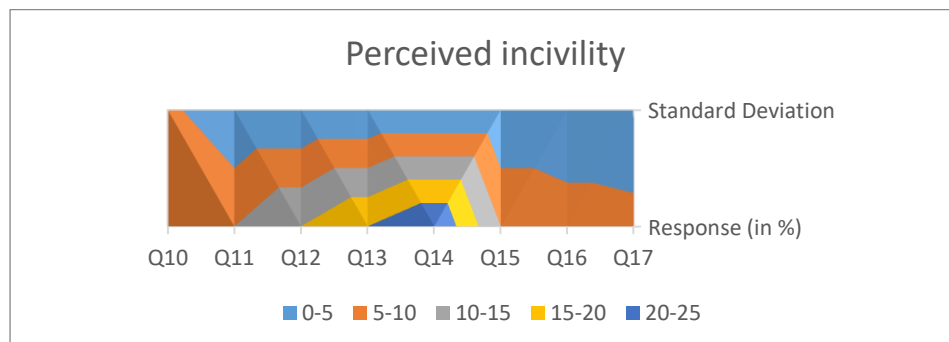


Figure 3 Perceived incivility

Employee Performance:

The standard deviation for employee performance was calculated to be 10.12. This indicates a notable range in perceptions of individual competence and job effectiveness among employees. Understanding factors contributing to this variability could inform strategies for enhancing overall performance and productivity within the industry.

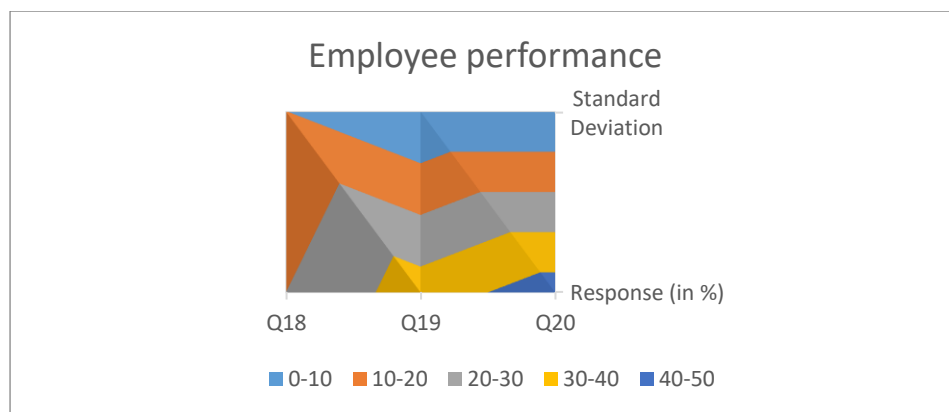


Figure 4 Employee Performance

Psychological Capital:

Psychological capital demonstrated a standard deviation of 3.39. This suggests relatively consistent levels of psychological resources such as confidence, resilience, and optimism among respondents. Strengthening these positive attributes may contribute to employee well-being and organizational effectiveness.

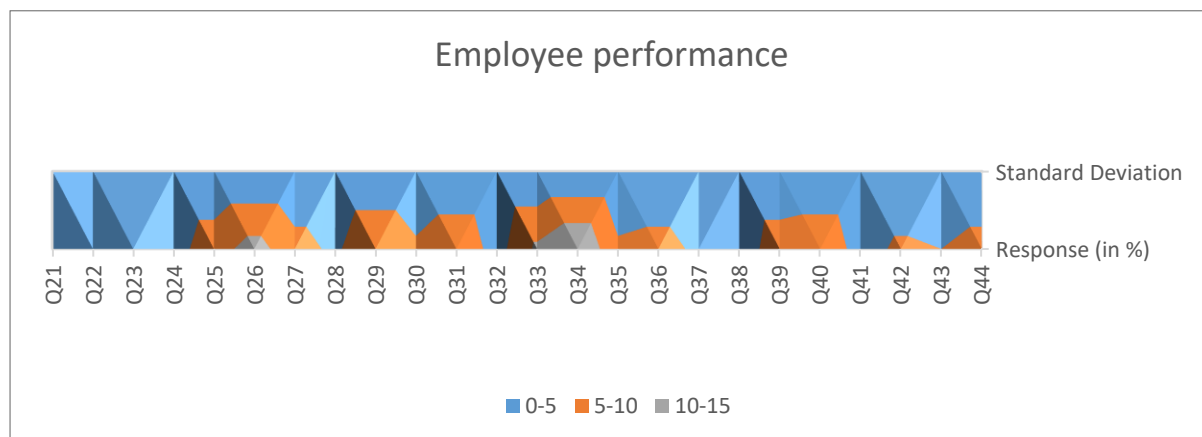


Figure 5 Employee Performance

Conclusion

The study sheds light on the concerning prevalence of professional misconduct among superiors in star hotels towards their subordinates within the Indian hotel industry. The data reveals significant levels of Organizational Dehumanization and Perceived Incivility, indicating a systemic issue within these establishments (Nanda, 2023). Organizational Dehumanization, with a standard deviation of 5.24, suggests a disturbing trend where employees may be treated more like resources than individuals, potentially leading to a devaluation of their worth and dignity within the workplace. Perceived Incivility, with a standard deviation of 6.42, underscores the widespread perception of disrespectful behavior among superiors toward their subordinates (Dal-Re & Marušić, 2024). This fosters a toxic work environment that can have detrimental effects on employee morale and well-being. Employee Performance, with a standard deviation of 10.12, reflects significant variability in performance levels among hotel staff. This variance may be attributed, at least in part, to the negative impact of organizational dehumanization and perceived incivility on employee motivation and engagement. Psychological Capital, with a standard deviation of 3.39, suggests a moderate level of psychological resources among employees. However, given the hostile work

environment characterized by dehumanization and incivility, there is a risk of diminishing psychological capital over time, further exacerbating the issue (Miao et al., 2021).

In conclusion, the findings underscore the urgent need for interventions to address professional misconduct and improve workplace dynamics within the Indian hotel industry. Strategies aimed at promoting a culture of respect, empathy, and ethical leadership are essential to safeguarding (Rao et al., 2024) the well-being and dignity of all employees. Additionally, efforts to enhance employee training and support systems can contribute to fostering a more positive and conducive work environment, ultimately benefiting both employees and the organizations they serve (Asongwe, 2023).

Implications and Recommendations

The findings underscore the need for organizations in the Indian hotel industry to address issues related to dehumanization and incivility, which can have detrimental effects on employee morale and organizational culture. Strategies aimed at promoting psychological capital, such as resilience training and fostering (Tewari & Arya, 2023) a supportive work environment, may enhance employee engagement and resilience in the face of challenges. Further research and interventions targeted at understanding and mitigating factors contributing to perceived incivility and organizational dehumanization are warranted to promote a positive and respectful workplace environment. Environmental corporate social responsibility, or CSR, good practices, the hotel industry, compliance with local, state, and federal laws, and compliance with international regulations governing the hotel industry are all important aspects of this sector (Jayaraj, 2014). As a legal and social practice about how people employed in the hotel sector are treated, there is no such thing as hospitality law. Obtain a social compliance audit certificate for a management system that complies with international labor standards for hotels, restaurants, and leisure services (Dwivedi, 2019).

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