



Presenteeism among Hospitality Employees: Uncovering the Role of Job Insecurity, Social Support and Perfectionism

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Abstract. The main focus of this study is to examine the influence of job insecurity, social support, and perfectionism (i.e., self-oriented perfectionism and socially prescribed perfectionism) on presenteeism among employees in the hospitality sector in Malaysia. The present cross-sectional data was collected by distributing bilingual self-administered questionnaires (in English and Malay) to hospitality employees located in the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, and Perak State. Initially, the questionnaires were personally distributed to the respondents, but subsequently, an online survey was used following the restriction to travel across different states during the COVID-19 pandemic. The analysis from Partial Least Square-Structural Equation Modelling revealed some intriguing findings. Social support was found to be effective in reducing presenteeism tendency among employees in the hospitality industry. The negative relationship between job insecurity and presenteeism was an unexpected finding. On the other hand, socially prescribed perfectionism caused more presenteeism among employees but not self-oriented perfectionism. These findings have significant practical implications for management and human resource personnel, who can use this knowledge to design effective strategies to mitigate presenteeism among employees, which can be costly for hospitality organisations.

Keywords: Job insecurity, social support, self-oriented perfectionism, socially prescribed perfectionism, presenteeism, hospitality industry.

1 Introduction

Presenteeism occurs when employees attend work though they are suffering from illness or health problems [1]. Consequently, employees are unable to perform well in their given tasks, resulting in sub-optimal or below-par performance [2][3]. The pressure to attend to work despite being unwell is common in the sectors that require in-person services, and remote working is impossible. This is particularly relevant in the labour-intensive hospitality sector, which includes lodging, dining, and travel services [3]. A rise of presenteeism among employees in this sector raises substantial concerns

as the behaviour can cause detrimental impacts on the organisation and worsen employees' health problems [5][6].

Presenteeism is harder to notice in contrast to absenteeism [7]. For instance, employees who turn up to work may disengage mentally and fail to perform optimally. Presenteeism results in a loss of productivity and the financial impacts of presenteeism are said to be tenfold greater than those related to employees being absent from work [8, 9]. Concern about presenteeism escalated during the COVID-19 pandemic as individuals working while affected by the infectious disease risk the health of other organisational members and customers [10]. Common deleterious impacts of presenteeism on an individual include depression, anxiety, and mental and physical health problems [11][5]. Several factors trigger presenteeism, such as fear of job loss, job demands and worry that tasks cannot be accomplished when taking a day off [5][12]. Downsizing and restructuring processes in the hospitality industry exacerbate employees' feelings of job insecurity, especially during the pandemic [13][14]. Employees tend to engage in presenteeism to show their work commitment and protect their jobs [15][10].

In a challenging work environment, support from co-workers and supervisors can be useful resources for promoting positive behaviour and reducing health problems and burnout [16][17]. Moreover, employees are more likely to disclose their sickness or problems in a supportive workplace relationship, thus useful in reducing presenteeism tendency [18].

An extensive review of the existing literature showed that different organisation-related, work-related, and person-related variables can serve as antecedents of presenteeism tendency among employees [19]. Nevertheless, existing studies show a lack of focus on the linkage between perfectionism and presenteeism among employees. Hitherto, the only empirical study found was conducted by [20] who evaluated the connection between self-oriented perfectionism and presenteeism among Italian service organisations' managers. It is important to note that a meta-analysis by [21] indicated an increasing trend of perfectionism over the last few decades. Perfectionists are more susceptible to mental health problems, and such a trend is especially worrying during the pandemic [22]. There are three facets of perfectionism based on conceptualisation by [23]: self-oriented perfectionism (demanding oneself to be perfect), socially prescribed perfectionism (striving to meet the expectations of others), and other-oriented perfectionism (expecting others to be flawless). This study focuses on self-oriented perfectionism and socially prescribed perfectionism which relate to performance expectation on the focal employees, rather than expectations on others. Besides, self-oriented and socially prescribed perfectionists tend to be more addicted to work [24]. Though employees' perfectionism may contribute favourably to the customer-oriented hospitality industry [25], its implication on dysfunctional presenteeism should not be overlooked.

[1] highlighted that presenteeism is a major worry, specifically among hospitality employees who are involved in food preparation and direct customer interaction. This behaviour raises the risk of spreading viral diseases, potentially disrupting business operations. Besides, the COVID-19 global crisis has increased the urgency for companies to combat the prevalent problem of employees working while sick. Despite its importance, there is still a paucity of presenteeism research in the hospitality context,

which warrants further evaluation [5]. Therefore, this paper aims to evaluate the influence of social support, job insecurity and perfectionism on presenteeism among employees working in the hospitality industry in Malaysia.

2 Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1 Presenteeism

Presenteeism refers to employees attending to work despite impaired health conditions and results in a loss of productivity or performance [2][26][27]. Dysfunctional presenteeism leads to ineffectiveness as employees may show poor customer service, more mistakes and the potential risk of spreading the disease to co-workers or customers [1][27].

Recently, [28] in their systematic review, concluded that factors that prompt an employee to report to work despite being a confirmed or suspected case of respiratory infectious diseases (e.g., COVID-19 or other related diseases) include job demands, inflexible work arrangement, sick leave policy, concern of pay loss, they are irreplaceable, perceived obligation, peer pressure, and presenteeism culture (i.e., avoid burdening their co-workers with the given tasks). Low decision latitude also triggers higher presenteeism among employees [5]. On the other hand, optimistic employees are less prone to presenteeism [29][30].

Conservation of Resources (COR) theory suggests that one with fewer resources is more easily exposed to the loss of resources, and they are less capable of securing more resources [31][32]. As such, employees who perceive job insecurity and limited social support are more apt to practise presenteeism to avoid the depletion of resources (e.g., loss of job and income). Similarly, prolonged exposure to heightened personal demands, such as meeting others' high expectations, drains one personal resource and results in loss spiral effects [33].

2.2 Job Insecurity and Presenteeism

Job insecurity can be explained as the employees' subjective perception of the possibility of losing their present job in the future [34]. The meta-analysis by [35] supported the idea that job insecurity among staff is significantly influenced by organisational circumstances like having a temporary contract and being exposed to changes within the organisation. On the other hand, the research conducted by [36] on longitudinal studies between 1987 and 2007 revealed that job insecurity plays a crucial role in impacting health and wellbeing over an extended period, rather than vice versa.

The concern about job insecurity is mounting in the hospitality sector during the recent COVID-19 outbreak due to the sharp drop in the number of visitors, which severely affects the businesses' earnings [14]. A few studies demonstrated that employees who perceived high job insecurity felt the need to be at the workplace despite being sick to demonstrate their dedication or work commitment, which can be a way to protect their jobs [37][38]. This line of reasoning gives rise to the subsequent assumption:

H1: Job insecurity is positively related to presenteeism.

2.3 Social support and presenteeism

Support from co-workers and supervisors in the workplace involves beneficial social exchanges that offer assistance and information to ease emotional strain while carrying out tasks [39][40]. Besides, employees can rely on their peers and superiors for care, respect, and assistance in reaching their work goals. Social assistance is useful in lessening the adverse effects of difficult life situations and enhances the general well-being of individuals [17].

With supervisor support, employees can better manage their emotions and cope with prolonged job stress [41]. Further, [42] found that co-worker support effectively reduced job stress and presenteeism. Subsequent research by [43] showed that support from supervisors not only improved employees' perception of distributive justice but also reduced presenteeism behaviour among healthcare workers in China. Leveraging social support from co-workers and supervisors could lessen the enduring impacts of job burnout and working with an illness [39][5]. From the perspective of COR theory [31], social resources can be a protective factor against resource loss and improve the sense of resource gains. The perceived resource availability, such as practical help and understanding from colleagues and supervisors, is expected to reduce employees' presenteeism behaviour. Hence, we state our hypothesis as:

H2: Social support is negatively related to presenteeism.

2.4 Self-oriented perfectionism, socially prescribed perfectionism and presenteeism

Perfectionism is a personal trait that denotes individuals who strive for perfection and hold themselves to high standards with critical self-evaluation [44]. [23] described a person who strives to achieve personal standards of perfection as self-oriented perfectionism (SOP). SOP is self-critical and unable to accept anything that is considered imperfect [45]. On the other hand, socially prescribed perfectionism (SPP) is a belief that one needs to be perfect in meeting society or significant others' high expectations [23]. High SPP individuals are often exposed to burnout and depression as they perceive that failure to meet expectations will result in harsh criticism [46][47]. Besides, they like to get others' attention and worry about negative appraisal [48].

Looking from a positive perspective, perfectionist service workers are more likely to engage in organisational citizenship behaviour [25]. However, meta-analytic results by [49] demonstrated that perfectionism is a risk factor that can escalate a person's depression, anxiety, stress, and burnout. Furthermore, employees who are self-oriented perfectionists tend to be more workaholics as they continually seek excellence [20][49]. Similarly, [50] indicated that individuals with SOP and SPP were found to be more addicted to work. As socially prescribed perfectionists are very concerned about others' views and seek to avoid failure [49][51], they are likely to present at work despite being unwell to show their commitment and portray a positive image. Perfectionists often

struggle to cope with difficulties and stress because they are aware that their actions are being watched [48]. These reasonings lead to the following hypothesis:

H3a-b: (a) Self-oriented perfectionism and (b) socially prescribed perfectionism are positively related to presenteeism.

3 Methodology

3.1 Collection of Data and Participants

A self-administered questionnaire (available in both Malay and English) was prepared and distributed to hospitality employees working in the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, and Perak State in Malaysia. Experts in the field evaluated both the English and translated versions for content validity, and a pilot study was conducted. A cover letter was provided to explain the study's purpose, and respondents were assured of the anonymity and confidentiality of the collected data. The data collection process took approximately four months, concluding in January 2021, and utilised snowball sampling. Due to travel restrictions during the pandemic, the initial in-person data collection was replaced with an online survey. A screening question was included to verify that respondents were involved in the hospitality sector. The Scientific and Ethical Review Committee of the university had provided permission for the data collection. A total of 220 valid responses were collected, and Table 1 shows the details of the respondents' characteristics.

Table 1. Characteristics of the Respondents

Variable	Description	Number	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	113	51.4
	Female	107	48.6
Age	< 25 years old	49	22.3
	25 - 34 years old	76	34.5
	35 - 44 years old	54	24.5
	45 - 54 years old	34	15.5
	≥ 55 years old	7	3.2
Ethnicity	Malay	103	46.8
	Chinese	82	37.3
	Indian	32	14.5
	Others	3	1.4
Organisation currently work with	Hotel/Lodging	76	34.5
	Cafe/Restaurant	105	47.7
	Airlines	14	6.4
	Others	25	11.4
Marital Status	Married	109	49.5
	Single	111	50.5

3.2 Measures

Job insecurity was operationalised using a four-item scale developed by [52]. On the other hand, the measure for social support was adapted from [53], covering two dimensions: co-worker support (3 items) and supervisor support (4 items). The measure for SOP and SPP consists of five items each, the scale developed by [23]. Lastly, presenteeism was measured by referring to the short form of World Health Organization and Work Performance Questionnaire [2].

4 Data Analysis

IBM-SPSS ver. 26 together with SmartPLS3.0 software [54] which equipped with the function of Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) were used in the current study for the data analysis.

Given that all the participants provided their responses on all the measures in the survey, Harman’s single-factor test was used to examine potential common method bias (CMB). The result from exploratory factor analysis revealed that the first factor only explained 17.35% of the variance in the data, well below 50% [55], signifying that the data was not affected by CMB.

The item’s factor loading must be at least 0.7 [56]. Following this guideline, those indicators with low loadings were deleted; the remaining items are shown in Table 2. The indicators of internal consistency, namely Cronbach’s alpha and composite reliability, showed values of 0.7 and beyond, whereas AVE is between 0.528 and 0.801 (see Table 2). Thus, the measurement model meets the reliability and convergent validity requirements.

Table 2. Reliability and Convergent Reliability of the Key Constructs

Constructs	Items	Factor Loading	Cronbach’s alpha	Composite reliability	Average variance extracted
Job insecurity	JIS1	0.765	0.878	0.842	0.581
	JIS2	0.979			
	JIS3	0.631			
	JIS4	0.618			
Co-worker support	SS1	0.854	0.878	0.916	0.732
	SS2	0.866			
	SS3	0.878			
Supervisor Support	SS4	0.872	0.833	0.900	0.750
	SS5	0.832			
	SS6	0.859			
	SS7	0.859			

Social supports (Second-order construct)	Co-worker support (CS)	0.984	0.806	0.888	0.801
	Supervisor Support (SS)	0.796			
Self-oriented perfectionism	SOP1	0.914	0.739	0.810	0.605
	SOP2	0.888			
	SOP4	0.436			
Socially-prescribed perfectionism	SPP1	0.643	0.700	0.814	0.528
	SPP3	0.598			
	SPP4	0.788			
	SPP5	0.848			
Presenteeism	P3	0.898	0.860	0.903	0.701
	P4	0.752			
	P5	0.871			
	P6	0.821			

Next, heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT) criteria was applied to confirm the construct's discriminant validity [57]. Table 3 shows that the HTMT ratio values between different variables are less than the HTMT_{0.85} [58]. This confirmed that the constructs in the measurement model in this study differ from one another.

Table 3. The Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (Discriminant validity)

Construct	1	2	3	4
1. Job insecurity				
2. Social support	0.416			
3. Self-oriented perfectionism (SOP)	0.135	0.23		
4. Socially prescribed perfectionism (SPP)	0.183	0.307	0.201	
5. Presenteeism	0.206	0.245	0.145	0.538

Next, the analysis of the structural model enables the hypothesised relationships between the latent variables to be determined. We first checked the structural model's latent variables' collinearity, which all well below 5 [56]; thus, there is no sign of collinearity (see Table 4).

Table 4. Results for the Direct Relationships.

H	Relationship	Beta	SE	p-value	R ²	f ²	VIF
H1	Job Insecurity → Presenteeism	-0.250	0.085	0.003	0.306	0.073	1.246
H2	Social Support → Presenteeism	-0.142	0.062	0.021		0.024	1.278

H3a	Self-oriented Perfectionism → Presenteeism	0.084	0.080	0.315	0.008	1.206
H3b	Socially prescribed perfectionism → Presenteeism	0.349	0.060	0.000	0.155	1.409

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Note. H=hypothesis; SE=Standard Error, VIF = variance inflator factor. Effect size, $f^2 = 0.02$ (small), 0.15 (medium), and 0.35 (large) [59].

Table 4 revealed that job insecurity was related negatively to presenteeism ($\beta = -0.250$, $p < 0.01$), in which the direction was opposed to the hypothesis (H1). Social support ($\beta = -0.142$, $p < 0.05$) demonstrated a significant negative relationship with presenteeism. On the other hand, socially prescribed perfectionism ($\beta = 0.349$, $p < 0.001$) was positively related to presenteeism but not self-oriented perfectionism ($\beta = 0.084$, $p > 0.05$). Therefore, only H2 and H3b were fully supported by the data.

These variables explained 30.6% ($R^2 = 0.306$) of the variance in presenteeism, demonstrating a substantial level of predictive accuracy as it is greater than 0.26 [59]. The Q^2 value for presenteeism was more than zero ($Q^2 = 0.174$), suggesting the model has an appropriate level of predictive relevance.

5 Discussion, Implications and Future Research

Our findings showed that job insecurity and presenteeism were negatively related. The direction of the relationship is unexpected as it contradicts the findings of past studies. For instance, [1] concluded that job insecurity increased presenteeism among European hospitality employees. The result may be due to rising awareness of safety and health, whereby employers are urged to prioritise employees' well-being. Many organisations have clear policies to prevent employees from attending work when they are unwell during the pandemic since it may pose higher risks to others. Nonetheless, further study should be done to have a greater knowledge of the linkage between the two variables in the post-pandemic era.

Further, we found an inverse relationship between social support and presenteeism, which accords with past studies. For example, [39] indicated that social supports reduce the impact of presenteeism on employees' creative performance. Consistent with COR theory, our study demonstrated that acquiring additional resources (social support) compensates for employees' perceived loss of other resources, thus reducing presenteeism.

In this study, SPP but not SOP leads to more presenteeism tendencies among hospitality employees. SPP has typically been described as a maladaptive component of perfectionism [49] and has often been associated with psychological distress due to the desire to meet standards set by others. In contrast, SOP is viewed as more adaptive and its impact on personal well-being and health was mixed with positive outcomes reported in a few studies [49][60]. In the study by [20], SOP was found to have no direct impact on presenteeism as it was fully mediated by workaholism.

5.1 Theoretical and Practical Implications

Our results contribute to a more nuanced understanding of how different forms of perfectionism and job-related stressors (job insecurity) shape presenteeism behaviour. This study also revealed the complexity of presenteeism, especially in a prolonged health crisis. Higher job insecurity caused a decrease in presenteeism found in this study may suggest a potential disengagement or demotivation effect among employees who perceive their jobs as unstable with a highly uncertain prospect of the hospitality industry during the pandemic.

In accordance with COR theory, social support is validated as a valuable resource that can effectively reduce employees' presenteeism. Besides, this study also identified SPP, which is driven by external expectations, as the most influential factor of hospitality employees' presenteeism behaviour. SOP, however, did not have the same impact. This distinction contributes to the broader understanding of perfectionism as a multidimensional construct. Socially prescribed perfectionists are often highly self-critical in their attempts to meet others' expectations. They are inclined to invest additional resources, such as time and effort, and continue attending work even when unwell to avoid resource loss (e.g., monetary rewards and promotion). This behaviour shows that individuals strive to protect and conserve valuable resources, as indicated in the COR theory [32].

From a practical perspective, this study suggests that the management of the hospitality industry should create a supportive work climate. Furthermore, employment uncertainty will cause employees to experience increased stress. Thus, hospitality management, such as supervisors or managers, need to be concerned about the well-being of their employees. The management should encourage employees who suffer from sickness to stay at home and reduce the perception that being absent from work is not acceptable. Human resource personnel can support employees by adjusting work schedules, such as offering flexible hours and alternative work arrangements. Moreover, the management should carefully evaluate the risk of presenteeism and protect employees' well-being to avoid a corporate culture that promotes employees to achieve perfection at all costs in their work [20].

5.2 Limitations and Future Study

Several limitations exist in this study. First, our research used a cross-sectional design, which captures data at a single point in time. Consequently, it is challenging to establish a definitive cause-and-effect relationship between the variables. Such limitation can be overcome through a longitudinal design so that the direction of the relationships between the variables can be ascertained. Second, the present study only examined the three antecedents of presenteeism. In their comprehensive review, [61] concluded that more studies are needed to understand the implications of presenteeism on organisations and individuals fully. Thus, future research should consider a more comprehensive model incorporating both antecedents and potential consequences of presenteeism. The generalisation of the present result can potentially be limited by the unique situation of the COVID-19 pandemic that may influence employees'

perceptions. Hence, an extension of the present research model at the current post-pandemic time is beneficial in testing the generalisation of the result.

In conclusion, despite the limitations addressed earlier, this study is unique and contributes to the literature for a better understanding of the extent to which social support, job insecurity, and perfectionism relate to presenteeism among hospitality employees in Malaysia during an unprecedented global pandemic.

Acknowledgements. The authors would like to thank all the respondents who participated in this study.

Disclosure of Interests. The authors have no competing interests to declare that are relevant to the content of this article.

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