

Workplace Stress among Generation Z and Millennials: A Comparative Study in the Hospitality Sector

Akanksha Sahu¹, Dr. Amol Kumar²

¹*M.Sc. Student as in Hospitality Administration, NCHM, Institute of Hospitality, Noida, Uttar Pradesh, India*

²*Lecturer at National Council for Hotel Management, Institute of Hospitality, Noida*

Abstract—The hospitality industry is known as one of the toughest service fields because of long hours, emotional work, high customer expectations, and a lot of pressure. These conditions often cause high stress for workers. In recent years, more and more workers in this industry are from the Millennial and Generation Z generations. Even though they work in the same places, they have different views on their careers, how they deal with stress, their attitude toward balancing work and personal life, and how they respond to stress in the workplace. This study looks at and compares the stress levels of Generation Z and Millennial workers in the hospitality industry. It aims to find out the main causes of stress, see how the two generations experience stress differently, and look at how stress affects their health and how well they do their jobs. The study used a quantitative approach and gathered data through a survey given to hospitality workers. It looked at several stress factors like workload, emotional labour, unpredictable hours, and support from the organization. The results show that both generations face a lot of stress, but the reasons and how severe it is are different. Generation Z workers often feel stressed because they don't get enough guidance, worry about job security, and find it hard to manage emotional challenges with customers. Millennials, however, feel stressed more because of heavy workloads, not seeing progress in their careers, financial worries, and difficulty in balancing work and personal life. The findings show that stress harms workers' motivation, mental health, the quality of service they provide, and how well the organization performs. The study concludes that hotels and restaurants must create human resource plans that take into account the differences between generations to deal with workplace stress better. Ideas like having supportive leaders, offering flexible work schedules, starting mentorship programs, providing mental health support, and giving career growth chances can help lower stress and improve workers' well-being. By understanding how each generation deals with stress, hospitality businesses

can boost worker happiness, improve service, and lower the number of people leaving their jobs.

I. INTRODUCTION

The hospitality industry is one of the fastest-growing and most service-focused sectors around the world. It plays a big role in developing tourism, growing the economy, and creating jobs. Hotels, restaurants, resorts, and other hospitality businesses depend a lot on human interaction and the quality of service they offer to meet what customers expect. Workers in this sector need to stay professional, keep their emotions in check, and be efficient while managing the different needs of customers and the pressures of work.

However, the nature of the work in hospitality often leads to high levels of stress for employees. Things like long hours, shift work, high customer expectations, emotional labour, and tight time limits all contribute to stressful work environments. Employees often have to handle many tasks at once while keeping up a positive attitude toward customers. These working conditions can cause physical tiredness, emotional burnout, and mental stress. Workplace stress has become a major concern for hospitality organizations because it affects employees' well-being, their satisfaction with their jobs, and how well they perform their duties. High stress levels can lead to burnout, more absences from work, lower productivity, and higher rates of employees leaving their jobs. In an industry that's all about service, employee stress can also harm customer satisfaction and the reputation of the organization. In recent years, the makeup of the hospitality workforce has changed a lot. A large number of workers in hotels and tourism

businesses are now from two younger generations: Millennials and Generation Z. Millennials were born between 1981 and 1996 and are currently in the early to middle stages of their careers. Many of them are in supervisory or management roles. Generation Z was born between 1997 and 2012 and is now entering the workforce for the first time.

Even though both generations work in similar environments, they have different views on work, what they expect from employers, and how they deal with stress at work. Millennials usually focus on career growth, financial security, and recognition for their work. Generation Z, on the other hand, tends to value flexibility, awareness of mental health, doing meaningful work, and having a supportive workplace culture. These differences may affect how each generation experiences and deals with workplace stress. It's important for hospitality organizations to understand these differences so they can create better human resource policies and stress management strategies. For this reason, this research looks at and compares the levels of workplace stress among Generation Z and Millennial employees in the hospitality industry.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Workplace stress has been studied a lot in many different kinds of industries, especially in the hospitality industry where the quality of service is closely linked to how well employees do their jobs. Earlier studies have found that several things cause stress for workers in the hospitality field. These include heavy workloads, the need to manage emotions while working with customers, irregular hours, and dealing with difficult customers.

According to O'Neill and Davis (2011), workers in the hospitality sector often face a lot of stress because they work long hours, feel pressured for time, and are expected to perform well. These employees usually have to work on weekends, holidays, and busy times when many tourists are around. This kind of work schedule can make it hard to have a balanced life between work and personal activities.

Another reason for stress in the hospitality industry is emotional labour. Emotional labour means controlling your feelings to match what the company expects from you when you're dealing with customers. Workers are

often asked to be happy and friendly even when they're dealing with upset or difficult customers. Doing this a lot can make people feel emotionally tired and lead to burnout.

Ayachit (2022) did research showing that stress in the workplace is closely connected to burnout among hospitality workers. Burnout is when people feel emotionally used up, feel like they aren't doing well at their jobs, and start to see customers less kindly. When workers are under a lot of stress for a long time, they lose their motivation and become less interested in their work. This can lead to worse service and more people wanting to leave their jobs.

Recent studies have also looked at how different generations see work stress. Goh and Lee (2018) studied young people, like Generation Z, in the hospitality field and found they often feel that this job is stressful because of long hours, pressure from customers, and not enough room for career growth.

Millennials have also been studied in relation to work stress. Research shows that they face stress because of the pressure to move up in their careers, financial worries, and trying to manage work and personal life. Although Millennials might have better ways to handle stress thanks to their experience, they can still get burned out from working in stressful conditions for a long time. Even though there is a lot of research on work stress and how different generations deal with it, not much has been done to compare how stressed Generation Z and Millennials are in the hospitality industry. Most studies either look at stress in general or focus on one generation at a time. This research aims to fill that gap by looking at how stress levels differ between these two generations in hospitality companies.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses a quantitative method to look at stress in the workplace for Generation Z and Millennial workers in the hospitality industry.

Research Design

The research follows a comparative and cross-sectional design. Data was gathered at one specific time from employees in hospitality companies. This setup lets us compare stress levels and stress causes between the two groups.

Objectives of the Study

The key goals of this research are:

- To find out the main reasons for stress in the workplace for hospitality workers.
- To compare stress levels between Generation Z and Millennial employees.
- To look at how workplace stress affects employee well-being and their job performance.

Hypotheses

These are the hypotheses that were developed for the study:

- H1: There is a noticeable difference in stress levels between Gen Z and Millennial employees.
- H2: Emotional labour has a bigger effect on stress for Gen Z employees than for Millennials.
- H3: Irregular working hours greatly increase stress for hospitality workers.
- H4: Workplace stress is linked to higher levels of burnout and more likely to cause employees to leave their jobs.

Data Collection

Primary data was gathered through a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire included questions about demographics and statements about workplace stress, emotional labor, workload, support from the organization, and job satisfaction.

Respondents were asked to show how much they agreed with each statement on a five-point scale, going from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

Sampling

The study focused on employees in hotels, restaurants, and other hospitality businesses. A stratified sampling method was used to make sure both Generation Z and Millennial employees were represented.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The survey results indicate that workplace stress is a widespread issue among hospitality employees. Most participants reported experiencing stress while performing their job responsibilities. The nature of hospitality work involves continuous customer interaction while maintaining a high level of service, which can lead to emotional and mental strain. The study suggests that workplace stress is not confined to

a particular group but is experienced across various roles and age groups within the industry.

The analysis reveals that extended working hours and inconsistent shift patterns are significant contributors to workplace stress. Hospitality workers often face irregular schedules, including night shifts, weekend duties, and working during holidays. These unpredictable schedules make it difficult for employees to maintain a healthy work-life balance. Many employees noted that these inconsistent working hours affect their sleep patterns, social life, and overall well-being. Consequently, employees may experience fatigue and reduced energy levels, which can increase stress and lower job satisfaction.

Emotional labor was also identified as a key stress factor. Employees in the hospitality industry are expected to maintain a positive and friendly attitude when interacting with customers, even in challenging situations. Workers often deal with demanding or dissatisfied customers and must manage complaints while remaining calm and professional. Continuously controlling emotions and presenting a positive attitude can result in emotional exhaustion over time. The findings suggest that employees who frequently engage in emotional labor are more likely to report higher levels of workplace stress.

A high workload was another major stressor identified in the survey. Many hospitality employees reported that they are required to handle multiple responsibilities simultaneously. Due to staffing shortages or high service demands during busy periods, employees often have to manage several tasks at once, including handling customer requests, completing operational duties, and meeting service expectations within limited time. Such conditions can create pressure and make employees feel overwhelmed, contributing to higher stress levels.

The findings also highlight the negative impact of workplace stress on employee well-being. Several respondents reported experiencing emotional exhaustion, reduced motivation, and lower levels of job satisfaction as a result of workplace stress. Some employees also indicated that prolonged stress can affect their physical health, causing fatigue, headaches, and difficulty concentrating. When employees feel constantly stressed, their engagement

with work decreases, and their ability to deliver high-quality service may also decline.

Another important finding of the study is the impact of workplace stress on employee performance and organizational outcomes. Employees who experience high levels of stress are more likely to make mistakes, feel less motivated, and show reduced productivity. In a service-based industry like hospitality, this can directly influence the quality of service provided to customers. Poor service experiences can affect customer satisfaction and may harm the reputation of the organization.

Generational differences were also noted in the study. Generation Z workers reported higher stress linked to a lack of mentorship, job instability, and challenges in managing emotional labor. Since many Gen Z employees are new to the workforce, they may struggle to adapt to the demands of hospitality jobs. They often expect regular feedback, clear guidance, and supportive work environments. When these expectations are not met, they may feel overwhelmed and dissatisfied with their work.

Millennials, in contrast, experienced higher stress related to workload, limited career growth opportunities, and difficulty balancing work with personal life. Many Millennials occupy positions that involve greater responsibility, including supervisory or managerial roles. These roles often require them to manage teams, meet performance targets, and handle operational challenges. As a result, they may experience long-term stress associated with career progression and job responsibilities.

Overall, the findings indicate that workplace stress is influenced by multiple factors including workload, emotional labour, irregular working hours, and organizational support. The study also highlights that generational differences play a role in how employees experience and respond to stress in the hospitality industry.

V. DISCUSSION

The research indicates that workplace stress is a significant issue in the hospitality industry. Both Generation Z and Millennials experience stress, but the causes differ due to their age groups and career stages. The demanding nature of hospitality jobs, such

as long hours, high customer expectations, and emotional pressure, contributes to overall stress among employees.

Generation Z workers, who are typically new to the workforce, often seek a supportive work environment. If their expectations are not met, they may feel more stressed and dissatisfied. Lack of mentorship or clear communication from supervisors can exacerbate their stress. As inexperienced employees, they may struggle with managing emotional demands, particularly in challenging situations like customer complaints or service failures. Their emphasis on mental well-being and work-life balance makes them less tolerant of stressful or unsupportive work environments.

On the other hand, Millennials often experience stress related to career growth and increased responsibilities. Many hold leadership or management roles, requiring them to manage teams, meet targets, and balance work and personal life. Additionally, financial obligations, family commitments, and career aspirations can add to their stress. Prolonged exposure to demanding conditions may lead to emotional exhaustion and burnout.

The findings also highlight that generational differences influence how employees cope with workplace stress. Generation Z employees tend to seek emotional support, regular feedback, and a collaborative environment. Millennials, however, may rely more on experience-based coping strategies such as problem-solving, time management, and career planning. These differences underscore the importance of understanding generational expectations in workplace management.

The study suggests that hospitality companies should develop stress management strategies tailored to each generation. Supporting leaders, encouraging open communication, and implementing mentorship programs can help reduce stress for younger employees. Training programs that enhance emotional labor management and customer interaction skills can also be beneficial.

For Millennials, offering flexible work options, career development opportunities, and recognition can aid in stress management. Organizations can also introduce wellness programs, employee assistance initiatives,

and stress management training to improve overall well-being.

Overall, the findings emphasize that stress management in the hospitality industry should not be a one-size-fits-all approach. Instead, organizations should adopt strategies that consider generational differences in expectations, coping mechanisms, and career stages. By doing so, hospitality organizations can foster healthier work environments, boost employee satisfaction, and enhance service quality.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study shows that workplace stress is a big problem in the hospitality industry because service jobs are very demanding. Workers often have to work long and unpredictable hours while dealing with high customer expectations and emotional challenges. These work conditions can create a stressful environment that harms employees' health and how well they do their jobs. The research finds that both Generation Z and Millennials face stress at work, but the causes and levels of stress are different for each group. Generation Z workers usually feel stressed because they lack guidance, have little experience, worry about job security, and find it hard to handle emotional interactions with customers. Since many are just starting their careers, they need supportive leaders, clear communication, and mentors to help them deal with work demands. Millennials, on the other hand, face stress from higher job responsibilities, pressure to advance in their careers, financial concerns, and difficulties in balancing work and personal life. Their roles often include leadership duties and high-performance standards, which can cause ongoing stress and burnout if not handled properly.

The study also stresses the importance of support from the organization in reducing stress. Having supportive managers, good communication, flexible work options, and clear paths for career growth can greatly improve employee well-being. When employees feel supported by their company, they are more motivated, engaged, and committed to their work.

The findings also suggest that hospitality businesses should use stress management strategies that take into account the differences between generations. Offering mentoring programs, training on how to manage emotional labour, and raising awareness about mental

health can help younger workers better handle stress. At the same time, providing opportunities for career growth, recognition, and flexible work policies can help reduce stress for Millennials.

In addition, organizations should build a healthy workplace culture that encourages work-life balance and looks after employee well-being. Programs like employee assistance, wellness activities, and stress management training can help workers develop better coping methods and take care of their mental health.

Overall, dealing with workplace stress is good for employees and important for the long-term success of hospitality businesses. By understanding the different needs of each generation and using supportive HR practices, companies can improve employee happiness, lower turnover, and provide better service. Creating a supportive and balanced work environment will lead to a more productive workforce and a stronger hospitality industry.

REFERENCES

- [1] Ayachit, M., & Chitta, S. (2022). Burnout in hospitality: A systematic review. *Journal of Human Resources in Hospitality & Tourism*, 21(3), 365–389.
- [2] Bakker, A. B., & Demerouti, E. (2007). The Job Demands–Resources model: State of the art. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 22(3), 309–328.
- [3] Baum, T. (2015). Human resources in tourism: Still waiting for change? *Tourism Management*, 50, 204–212.
- [4] Brotheridge, C. M., & Grandey, A. A. (2002). Emotional labor and burnout: Comparing two perspectives of “people work.” *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 60(1), 17–39.
- [5] Chen, Z., Sun, H., Lam, W., Hu, Q., Huo, Y., & Zhong, J. A. (2012). Chinese hotel employees in the smiling masks: Roles of job satisfaction and emotional exhaustion. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 31(3), 906–915.
- [6] Chi, C. G., & Gursoy, D. (2009). Employee satisfaction, customer satisfaction, and financial performance. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 28(2), 245–253.
- [7] Cropanzano, R., Rupp, D. E., & Byrne, Z. S. (2003). The relationship of emotional exhaustion

- to work attitudes and behaviors. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88(1), 160–169.
- [8] Deery, M., & Jago, L. (2015). Revisiting talent management, work-life balance and retention strategies. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 27(3), 453–472.
- [9] Demerouti, E., Bakker, A. B., Nachreiner, F., & Schaufeli, W. B. (2001). The Job Demands–Resources model of burnout. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 86(3), 499–512.
- [10] Goh, E., & Lee, C. (2018). A workforce to be reckoned with: The emerging pivotal Generation Z hospitality workforce. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 73, 20–28.
- [11] Grandey, A. A. (2000). Emotion regulation in the workplace: A new way to conceptualize emotional labor. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 5(1), 95–110.
- [12] Karatepe, O. M. (2013). High-performance work practices and hotel employee performance. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 32, 132–140.
- [13] Kim, H. J. (2008). Hotel service providers' emotional labor: The antecedents and effects on burnout. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 27(2), 151–161.
- [14] Kuppelwieser, V. G., & Klaus, P. (2021). Measuring employee well-being: A review of scales. *Service Industries Journal*, 41(7–8), 503–534.
- [15] Maslach, C., & Jackson, S. E. (1981). The measurement of experienced burnout. *Journal of Occupational Behavior*, 2(2), 99–113.
- [16] Maslach, C., Schaufeli, W. B., & Leiter, M. P. (2001). Job burnout. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 52, 397–422.
- [17] O'Neill, J. W., & Davis, K. (2011). Work stress and well-being in the hotel industry. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 30(2), 385–390.
- [18] Robinson, R. N. S., Kralj, A., Solnet, D. J., Goh, E., & Callan, V. (2014). Attitudinal similarities and differences of hotel frontline generations. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 41, 45–55.
- [19] Schaufeli, W. B., Leiter, M. P., & Maslach, C. (2009). Burnout: 35 years of research and practice. *Career Development International*, 14(3), 204–220.
- [20] Solnet, D., Kralj, A., & Baum, T. (2015). 360 degrees of pressure: The changing role of the HR professional in hospitality. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, 39(2), 271–292.