TRANSFORMATION LEADERSHIP AND BURNOUT; THE ROLE OF STRESS, ANXIETY AND WORKPLACE LONELINESS AND HRM PRACTICES

Kayani Hajra Waheed
Department of Psychiatry ,Head of Department and Clinical Psychologist
Cantonment General Hospital , Rawalpindi ,Pakistan
hajrawaheedkayani@gmail.com
Alveena Aziz
MSPM , Department of Management Science ,szabist Islamabad
alveena.aziz@yahoo.com
Faira Farooq
Clinical Psychologist ,Islamabad Psychiatry Clinic and Rehabilitation Center
Fairafarooqfaira@gmail.com
Anny Kamal Laghari
MBA in Business Management ,Department Business Management
Liaoning University of Science and Technology, China
alaghari@live.com
Babar Feroze
Researcher, MPhil Management Sciences. PrestonUniversity
bauz007@gmail.com
Kashif Javed
Institute of Business Administration, KFUEIT, Rahim Yar Khan, Pakistan.
Kashiftaurus1982@gmail.com

Abstract:

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly disrupted the global hospitality industry, leading to unprecedented challenges for hotel employees. This study investigates the impact of Transformational Leadership (TFL) on employee burnout, with a focus on the mediating effects of personal financial stress, anxiety, and workplace loneliness. Additionally, the moderating role of Human Resource Management (HRM) practices in the relationship between TFL and burnout is explored. Utilizing the Job-Demands Resources (JD-R) and Conservation of Resources (COR) theories, data were collected from frontline hotel employees during the pandemic. The findings reveal that TFL reduces employees' personal financial stress, anxiety, and workplace loneliness, which are key factors influencing employee well-being. However, contrary to expectations, TFL does not have a direct impact on burnout, nor do the mediators (financial stress, anxiety, and loneliness) significantly affect the TFL-burnout relationship. This suggests that while TFL alleviates certain job stressors, it does not directly mitigate burnout through these mechanisms. Furthermore, HRM practices did not moderate the relationship between TFL and burnout, indicating that organizational practices alone may not be sufficient to buffer the adverse effects of job stressors during a crisis. The study underscores the complexity of leadership and burnout dynamics in the hospitality sector, especially during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic. It highlights the need for a more comprehensive approach to address burnout, considering additional factors beyond leadership style and stress mediators. These findings contribute to the existing literature on leadership and employee well-being, particularly in the underexplored context of the hospitality industry, and suggest future research directions to better understand and mitigate burnout in high-stress environments.
Keywords: *Anxiety, Burnout, HRM practices, Stress, Transformational Leadership, Workplace loneliness*

1.0 Introduction:

The COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically transformed the world, with enduring effects on the global economy and all facets of human life. The surge in infections and fatalities has led to significant psychological challenges, including increased levels of stress, anxiety, and depression. In the course of such a crisis, measures that are associated with social distancing including international and domestic travel restrictions negatively affected the tourism and hospitality industry. UNWTO (2021) reported that from April 2020 to May 2021, global international tourist arrivals had halved and canceled international tourism brought a loss of $1.3 trillion in export revenue and threatened 100–120 million tourism jobs. Therefore, the lockdowns led to an unusual decrease of the appointments and many companies in the sphere of tourism had to shut down and dismiss their employees.

As a result of these challenges, hotels have been forced into necessary reconsideration of service practices, including cleanliness and implementing safety for guests and employees (Goh and Baum, 2021). Some have adopted flexibility practices in working from home to address the reality and also achieve operational performance. On one hand, the flexibility of work from home enables employees to gain more autonomy over jobs and emotional support; on the other hand, there is work home interference (Chi et al., 2021). Many hospitality workers lost their jobs or struggled with mental stresses including those stem from precarious work formats, including self-employment or casual employment (Martins et al., 2020).

Consequently, hotel staff Jos reported increased levels of negative affectivity, which escalated to anxiety, frustration, and stress that caused burnout Wong, Huang, & Chen, 2021, Fan, Tsai, Wu, & Teng, 2021). This has called for the necessity of practicing sustainability in the hospitality industry in the pre, during and post pandemic period (Mao et al., 2020). Despite the growing interest of scholars in anti-pandemic measures, there is a lack of literature on HRM approaches to preventing the negative impact that the pandemic has had on employees, although there are some studies on leadership contributions (Agarwal, 2021; Zhang et al., 2020).

Most studies in the HRM literature have focused on the link between HRM policies and firm performance. In the process, to explain the nexus of the black box, much attention has been paid to the relationship between HRM and OP (Ogbonnaya & Messersmith, 2019), but among the different modes of leadership, TFL occupies an intermediate position and its potential impact on the employee outcomes, including burnout, remains understudied (Koutsimani et al., 2019). But the integration of EE into AVs has received increased attention in the last few years (Hildenbrand et al., 2018). The third methodological limitation in prior research is the oversampling of the manufacturing industry to the neglect of service industry, especially the hospitality industry despite a few attempts (Tuan, 2018). Such a gap signifies the difference in understanding the need for adaptation when information flow and knowledge sharing was disrupted due to COVID-19 which had a heavy toll especially on the hospitality sector because it relied on mobility (Salem et al., 2021).

Facing these limitations, the present study proposes an integrated framework that covers the factors of transformational leadership for decreasing burnout of the hotel workers in the context

of COVID-19. In particular, it examines the moderated mediation of the TFL-burnout relationship by two types of job stressors: personal financial stress and anxiety and workplace loneliness, as an indicator of psychological well-being. Furthermore, it examines the research question if and how the relationship between HRM practices and employees' innovative behavior is moderated by the performance management system among the employees in the Indonesian hospitality industry, with particular attention to the following research question:

To that end, this study uses the Job-Demands Resources (JD-R) theory of Demerouti et al. (2001) and the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory of Hobfoll (2001) and conducts Partial Least Squares (PLS) Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) on data collected from 459 frontline hotel employees working in 15 Pakistan TRY hotels during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is the intention of this study to highlight how, through interaction between HRM practices, TFL and job stressors, employee burnout and behaviors can be impacted on.
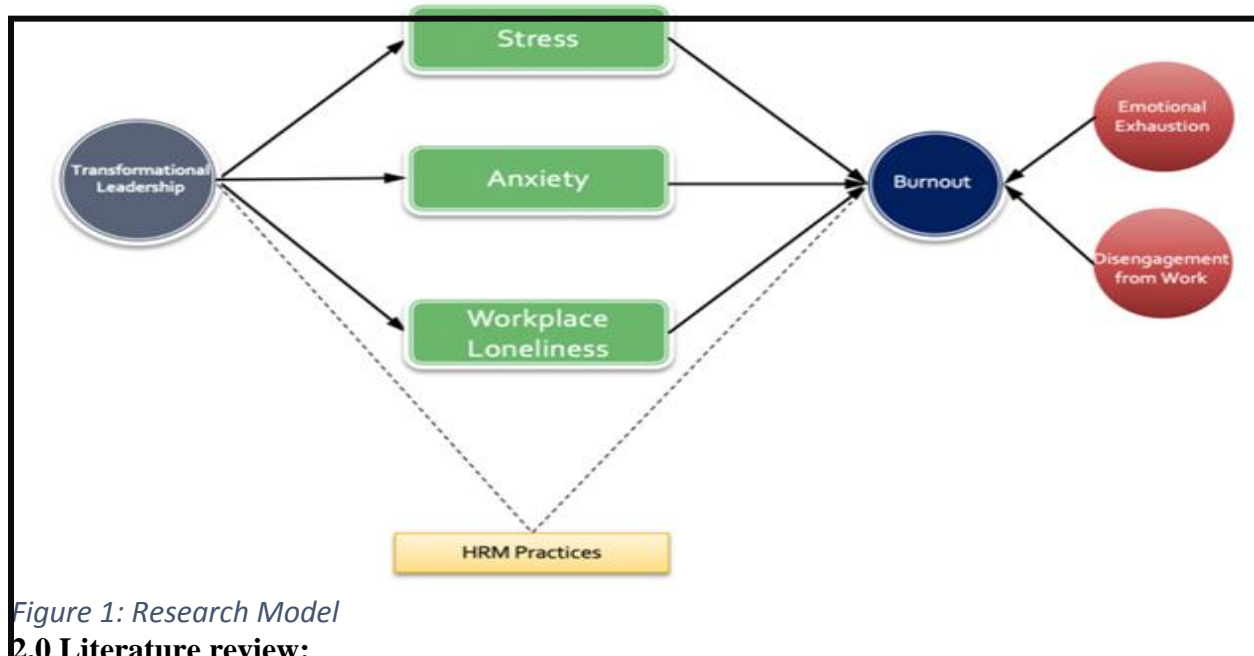

Figure 1: Research Model

2.0 Literature review:

2.1 Transformational leadership (TFL) and burnout

Leadership is in most cases described as "the art of guiding a group of people toward a shared goal or prescribed results' (De Jong & Den Hartog, 2007). This work highlights the important function of management in influencing employee behavior and productivity, and definitive driver of organizational success or failing (Wen et al., 2019). Leadership has been reviewed from different approaches, and each approach provides information about what makes leaders great especially in the present business world that is characterized by high turbulence (Tal & Gordon, 2016). Among the leadership styles, two types stand out: Burns (1978) has defined two forms of leadership namely; transactional and transformational leadership.

Transactional leadership taps on the exchange relationship between leaders and the followers, which involve mainly the use of contingent rewards and management by exception in that leaders only get involved if the subordinates deliver substandard performance (Rafferty & Griffin, 2004). This style addresses mostly the extrinsic needs of the followers as classified by Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Zheng et al., 2017). On the other hand, transformational leadership (TFL) is a more developmental and a systemic and trust-based and high-expectancy model. Liberate, it is aimed at satisfying the employees' self-actualization and spiritual needs and is related to increased organizational commitment, psychological health and, overall, personal growth (Wen et al., 2019; Zheng et al., 2017). TFL has been positively associated with the improved health of happiness/ Physical health Psychological health and performance of the employee thus positively impacting the job of TFL (Kelloway et al., 2012; Braun et al., 2013).

In addition, it has been revealed that TFL is most efficient in managing organizations in the course of crises. For instance, Bowers et al. (2017) established that TFL could lead organizations away from a troublesome scenario. Zhang et al. (2012) looked at a quantitative study of TFL, which involved 526 employees in a hospital affected by the 2008 Sichuan earthquake in China. The outcomes showed that TFL did positively affected the OP and team integration during the crisis. Similar to that, Ma and Yang also highlighted the benefits of TFL in crisis management with a focus on epidemic crises in more recent works. However, more research is still needed on the effectiveness of TFL in relation to burn out, though other studies are already quite positive (Breevaart et al., 2014). This study fills this gap by using TFL as a more appropriate leadership style to address burnout especially in the hospitality industry amidst the COVID-19 outbreak.

Based on JD-R model each work environment can be described by such dimensions as "job demands" and "job resources." Ways in which job demands have been defined refers to the physical, psychological, social or organizational aspects of work that are made to persist and which are linked to some cost, for instance, work pressure and emotional depletion (Demerouti et al., 2001). On the other hand, job resources are defined as the factors that may enhance employee's performance by providing them with the tools to meet organizational as well as their personal goals enable to buffer Job demands and lastly enhance personal growth (Demerouti et al., 2001). Where job demands are high, there is psychological depletion, exhaustion, and eventually burnout (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007). Whereas, job resources have healer effects that enhances organizational commitment and work engagement (Breevaart & Bakker, 2018).

The Conservation of Resources (COR) theory also is helpful to understand that resources should be dealt with job demands. Resources in the context of COR theory are also needed not only for controlling demands but also for enhancing the individual and career advancement (Halbesleben et al., 2014). They learned that supervisors and transformational leaders offer such resources. Ten Brummelhuis and Bakker (2012) identified two types of resources: contextual and personal. For example, while formal recognition from a supervisor as a contextual resource can boost job performance through the generation of positive personal resources.

Based on these theories, TFL can be construed as a contextual resource that can play a role of reducing burnout (Hildenbrand et al., 2018). Competency developmental approach to transformational leadership entails encouraging employees to get resourceful in catering their

needs in performing their tasks because their jobs are bigger than that. These leaders also provide && encourage employees to tackle different circumstances autonomously. Consequently, the staff remains well-spirited, self-confident and increased well-being among employee is experienced (Diebig et al.,2017). Hildenbrand et al. (2018) explained the relationship between TFL and burnout and revealed that the employees' thriving at work also moderates that relationship. Yet, to the best of the current authors' knowledge, the relationship between TFL and burnout has remained understudied (Liu et al., 2019) and it remains inconclusive as to the nature of the relationship (Nielsen & Daniels, 2012). This research thus seeks to address this gap by exploring the role of TFL in determining the level of burn out particularly within the Hospitality sector during the COVID-19 pandemic whereby human interactions are high and thereby pose a huge risk towards the increased level of burn out among staff {Yıldırım et al., 2021}. As this discussion has elicited, the following hypothesis is postulated:

Hypothesis 1: TFL negatively impacts hotel employees' burnout.

2.2 TFL, personal financial stress, and burnout

Stress in the workplace is an area of interest that has clearly been explored in Human Resource Management (HRM) and Organizational Psychology. According to Gill et al., (2006), Stress has been labelled as "an individual's reaction to work environment characteristics that appear threatening" Stress is one of the biggest occupational diseases of today's industrialized world ravaging people's health in its numerous forms (Harms et al., 2017). The theoretical models applied to explain effects of stress on employees' health are the JD-R theory and the COR model. These models suggest that when job demands are high they are likely to result in negative consequences such as burn out and labor turnover (Demerouti et al., 2001). In order to minimize these negative effects, employees again require adequate job resources for optimum functioning (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

Here the concept of" personal resources" has the significance role in preserving and reducing the workplace stress from employees. These personal resources include self-efficacy, self-esteem and the levels of optimism that help lessen the impact of stress notably among the subordinate staff in an organization such as the hotel workers (Xanthopoulou et al., 2007; Peasley et al., 2020). Even though 'role demands' such as role conflict, work pressure and work-family conflict have formed the basis of JD-R literature with the concept of personal demands receiving comparatively less attention. Enumerated demands that originate from one's family including stress from family can also affect an employee's health and productivity as much as work-related stress (Peasley et al., 2020). This research fills this gap by implementing 'personal financial stress' as a personal requirement in the JD-R framework, as recommended by Peasley et al., (2020).

The APA (2018) identified personal stressors to comprise health, relationship, and financial stress. As for working people which often work on a fluctuating schedule framework, the COVID-19 pandemic took an additional toll by initiating the widespread income insecurity (Martins et al., 2020). Among the personal stressors in this study, we have included "personal financial stress," which according to Peasley et al. (2020) is "a state that develops when personal finances become problematic for an individual to the extent that he or she feels overwhelmed by debt." Kim and Garman (2004) have argued that such a type of stress affects well-being

(Agrigoroaei et al., 2017) and productivity in that workers are less productive when experiencing learner stress.

According to Salem (2015), Transnational Feminist Leadership: TFL is a potential approach of addressing personal financial stress. The work of transformational leaders is to provide a model of behavior that is congruent with organizational objectives, and thus followers tend to identify with leaders (Bakker & Xanthopoulou, 2013). This leadership style makes employees feel supported by their organizations and thus have desire to gain new skills, which enhances work Engagement (Kopperud et al, 2013), increases productivity according to Bakker and Schaufeli (2015) and enhances Health status according to Demerouti et al (2001). By developing this vision, transformational leaders create hope in the employees regarding future organizational outcomes (Buil et al., 2016).

The integration of TFL with good HRM practices can even decrease personal monetary pressure (Tuan, 2018). For instance, when a performance management system is combined with contingent compensation, there is possibility of enhancing value for the employees, giving them the feeling that they are valued (Zacharatos et al., 2005). It could also enable one raise the income of its employees thereby decreasing the level of financial pressure. Another important HRM practice is Employment security which is a great advantage to the employee during several changes since they can easily be fired during challenging time constraining productivity as well as decreases employees 'loyalty level (Macky & Boxall, 2007). Furthermore, employee freedom increases the level of work interest, and improves the effective, spiritual and cognitive attachment to the organization (Zacharatos et al., 2005). Although this study considers HRM practices as the moderating variable, the realization of the practices significantly relies on managers (Katou et al., 2014).

Hypothesis 2a.: TFL reduces hotel employees' personal financial stress.

While there have been some studies done on how personal financial stress leads to burnout among the employees; the connection is expected to be positive. Embarking on conflicts and reduced well-being can be as a result of financial stress (Hall et al., 2008 & Agrigoroaei et al., 2017). The literature also shows that financial crises and COVID-19 negatively impacted the working conditions in Pakistan particularly in hospitality sector cries of layoffs and wage cuts (Kloutsiniotis & Mihail, 2020; Bajrami et al., 2021). Financial stress is related to reduced performance (Kim & Garman, 2004) and increased burnout (Peasley et al., 2020): TFL probably moderates this link.

Hypothesis 2b.: Personal financial stress positively impacts hotel employees' burnout.

Hypothesis 2c.: Personal financial stress will mediate the TFL – burnout relationship.

2.3 TFL, anxiety, and burnout

A consequence of job stress is anxiety; it is complex emotion characterized by tension, worry or depression due to fear of the unknown or other tasks (Wang et al., 2014). They also say it was indicative of psychological health (Nielsen, Kotte, Nielsen, & Schier, 2019) and can have negative effects including headache, substance use, and couple arguments (Chapa & del Carmen Triana, 2015). In the COVID-19 consequences, the anxiety of the employees was investigated by several factors including emotional suppression and discomfort (He et al., 2020). In this regard,

leadership behavior does play an important role in attempts at controlling anxiety (Nielsen et al. 2019).

TFL is expected to lessen anxiety by offering the required job resources so that an individual or a group can meet job requirements (Diebig et al., 2017). TFL reduces ''power differential,' which is between the top management and employees making it easier for the former to provide support for the latter's development (Bono et al., 2007; Nielsen et al., 2019). Organizational transformation is achieved when the leaders ensure that the workers give out their concerns without feeling anxious, and this is through empathy, compassion and support (Kelloway et al., 2012). This leadership style enhances good health and prepares the employees to deal with the pressure better hence making work environment better (Nielsen et al., 2019):
Hypothesis 3a: TFL reduces hotel employees' anxiety.

Organizational stress may negatively affect employees' performance and health, and is usually difficult to treat therapeutically (Muchalla & Linden, 2009). However, the link between anxiety and burnout is still not well understood and rather limited (Koutsimani et al., 2019). It causes the individuals to incline to negative thinking hence develops nervousness or lowers self-esteem in executing tasks (Vickers & Williams, 2007). They may quickly turn into job stress that in the long-run leads to burnout. For instance, Vasilopoulos compared anxiety and burnout, with the two variables proving to be strongly related and so did Ding et al. Further, Turnipseed (1998) pointed out that the pressure, that is the demands related to the job, and personality characteristics can produce significant concern and result in burnout.

Taking into account challenges that COVID-19 poses to the hospitality industry of Pakistan, one might assume that anxiety is going to play a role in heightened burnout among members of the hotel workforce. Also, anxiety should moderate the relationship between the variables such as; transformational leadership (TFL) and burnout. While anxiety is considered to be a significant mediator between leadership style and burnout, it appears reasonable to assume that anxiety is an element that underpins the relationships between leadership and burnout in the hospitality setting and might be targeted by effective leadership to reduce burnout in the given industry.
Hypothesis 3b.: Anxiety positively impacts hotel employees' burnout.
Hypothesis 3c.: Anxiety will mediate the TFL – burnout relationship.
2.4 TFL, workplace loneliness, and burnout

Workplace loneliness is defined herein as a painful emotional experience that results from perceived deficiencies in the level and quality of social relationships at the workplace (Wright et al., 2006).; It means employees' perceptions about how much and how well their social and affiliation needs are fulfilled by co-workers and the organization (Ozcelik & Barsade, 2018). This paper combines IM, SR, and online resources analyzing workplace loneliness as an important aspect affecting people's mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic (Kniffin et al., 2021), leaving them with poor self-esteem and self-efficacy (Peng et al., 2017), and lowers their well-being (Erdil & Ertosun, 2011) and performance (Lam & Lau, 2012). Other outcomes of loneliness are changes in employee behaviors and attitudes at the workplace (Heinrich & Gullone, 2006), in light of which loneliness remains an important area of study (Ananda & Mishrab, 2019).

Workplace loneliness can be reduced by organizational TFL; TFL institutionalizes leaders' care and fosters followers' autonomy (Peng et al., 2017). Positive leadership makes negative work experience lower (Chang et al., 2012) and increases trust and satisfaction of the intrinsic needs of the employees (Wen et al., 2019). As per Lawler (2001), the two theories, social exchange theory describes the manner in which employee feelings arising from interaction affect their organizational bonds. It means positive interactions help build better attachment and thus reduce loneliness while negative encounters help worsen it (Ozcelik and Barsade 2018). Therefore, transformational leadership promotes perception of organizational value, trust and work role attraction among employees (Peng et al., 2017).

Hypothesis 4a.: TFL reduces hotel employees' workplace loneliness.

According to some studies, loneliness at the workplace results in burn out (Ananda & Mishrab, 2019). Lam and Lau (2012) affirmed that, lonely persons have low willingness towards social skills Employees often perceive the organizational information negatively as a threat, according to Cacioppo and Hawley (2009). They may therefore use what Roth and Cohen (1986) refer to as 'avoidance coping strategies' in an effort to minimize job related stress via avoiding contact. While there are a number of benefits of TFL to employees and organizations, such as obtaining necessary resources and instrumental support for dealing with negative work outcomes (Chang et al., 2012) lonely individuals can avoid valuable social interactions at work such as with managers and co-workers. This seclusion may cause dis-satisfaction, increased stress, and finally, utter burnout (Ananda and Mishrab, 2019).

In addition, Murphy and Kupshik (1992) states that lonely workforce may feel concerned with the duties of demolishing the exchange relationships with supervisors because of insecurity and rejection. This anxiety is the cause of 'mental tiredness' as well as burnout, in the opinion of at least Chi and Liang (2013) and Ananda and Mishrab (2019). A realization therefore is that not only is workplace loneliness detrimental to the employees' psychological well-being and organizational commitment, but it is also a stressor and organizational burnout predisposing condition where key affiliative relations with co-workers are avoided at the workplace.

Hypothesis 4b.: Workplace loneliness positively impacts hotel employees' burnout.

Hypothesis 4c.: Workplace loneliness will mediate the TFL – burnout relationship.

2.5 The moderating role of HRM practices

As a background information, before examining the moderating effect of HRM practices on the TFL-burnout relationship, it is important to note that a variety of studies published over the last decade has established that "High-Performance Work Systems" (HPWS) enhance the positive employee outcomes, including psychological health (Zacharatos et al., 2005). First, based on earlier research, this investigation sought to explore the possibility of HPWS as a moderator of the relationship indicated above. However, because of the current pandemic, it is impossible for the hotels to achieve the optimal utilization of all the practices that constitute HPWS. Thus, this research concentrates only on specific HRM practices as a sub-system to determine if they moderate the TFL – burnout relationship without confusion, calling them, "HPWS" (Kloutsiniotis & Mihail, 2020c).

In general, HRM literature focus on the notion that the "practices" and the "processes" pulled out in HRM result to positive return in the employees and organizations (Macky & Boxall 2007). These practices have an active interface with leadership to condition the attitudes and behavior of employees (Tuan, 2018), and foster social exchange process between the subordinates and their superiors (Zhang & Chen, 2013). Being seen as forms of treating employees fairly, recognizing them, and empowering them, the HRM practices are the foundation for the employee trust and loyalty (Gong et al., 2010), and in turn lower burnout (Babakus et al., 2017). Accordingly, this study suggested that both HRM practices and TFL be established as a realistic social exchange system in which positive employee behaviors can be promoted (Tuan, 2018). Therefore, it is expected that through this study, HRM practices will mediate the TFL – burnout relationship.

Hypothesis 5: HRM practices moderate the negative relationship between TFL and hotel employees' burnout.

3.0 Methodology:

The survey was conducted between March 2020 and October 2020 using a convenient sampling method. During this period, the hotel industry was heavily impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, leading to the closure of many tourist accommodations. Despite these challenges, the research team successfully contacted hotels that remained operational. Initially, the team engaged with HR managers from various hotels to secure their cooperation and gather information on the HR practices currently in use in the Pakistanis hotel industry. Considering the pandemic, the team opted to use electronic questionnaires as the safest and most efficient data collection method. In total, 600 questionnaires were distributed to 15 four- or five-star hotels, with 459 responses received, yielding a 51% response rate. The sample consisted of four hotels in Karachi, four in Lahore, four in Islamabad, and three in Peshawar. These particular hotels were selected due to their well-established human resources (HR) departments, which provided valuable insights for the study. This approach ensured that the research captured the practices being implemented in large, resource-rich hotels during an extraordinary time for the industry. The findings provide insights into the HR strategies used to navigate the COVID-19 crisis in Pakistan's top-tier hotel sector.

Each scale was measured on 5 point Likert scale; 1 indicates strongly disagree and 5 indicates strongly agree. Transformational leadership has 6 items and measured through likert scale. Perceived financial stress has 3 items and measured through likert scale. Anxiety has 3 items and measured through likert scale. Workplace loneness has 4 items and measured through likert scale. Burnout has 4 items and measured through likert scale. HRM has 13 items and measured through likert scale.

4.0 Data analysis:

The study was very careful in investigating the dataset to eliminate problems that can affect the credibility of its results. In particular, missing values, outliers, normality and multicollinearity were accentuated and controlled as they are widely accepted to have strong effects on statistical outcomes (Sekaran, 2003). On data missing, the researchers identified none missing in the data set they were using. This absence can be blamed on the data collection tool; the questionnaires were administered in person thus gave the respondent an opportunity to cross check their' s answers and any failure to include something that they wanted was corrected before submission.

Such a strategy can be considered best practice in survey research that aims at exclusion of missing data by engaging directly with respondents (Dillman and Smyth, 2014).

In the current study, the stem-and-leaf plot method was used to analyze outliers. This technique is useful in visualizing distributions of data and exclude any outliers which may lead to unfavorably end results (Field, 2018). The study also evaluated normality through several methods: P-plots and histograms were used for data inspection on the normality of the data distribution. The observed frequencies were close to the regression line in P-plots while histograms had a normal distribution. In addition, the skewness and kurtosis were reported as ± 1 and ± 3 respectively; thus, showing an improved normality of the data (Byrne, 2010).

Multicollinearity was tested based on the Tabachnick and Fidell (2007) guidelines on how to do so. This study also established that there were no coefficients exceeding 0.85, in order to suggest multicollinearity in this study. This is important because high multicollinearity affects the regression coefficients and hampers with the understanding of results (O'Brien, 2007). On the whole, these comprehensive inspections enhance the validity and reliability of study conclusions, because data presumed for analysis has to satisfy necessary statistical characteristics.

4.1 Validity Statistics:

Table 1: Validity Statistics

Variables	Factor loadings	Cronbach alpha	CR	AVE
Transformational Leadership		**0.917**	**0.933**	**0.667**
TL1	0.839			
TL2	0.849			
TL3	0.819			
TL4	0.810			
TL5	0.780			
TL6	0.851			
TL7	0.765			
Stress		**0.748**	**0.855**	**0.663**
PFS1	0.827			
PFS2	0.860			
PFS3	0.751			
Anxiety		**0.759**	**0.859**	**0.670**
AX1	0.863			
AX2	0.759			
AX3	0.831			
Workplace Loneliness		**0.780**	**0.858**	**0.602**
WL1	0.778			
WL2	0.803			
WL3	0.774			
WL4	0.749			
HRM Practices		**0.769**	**0.852**	**0.591**
HRMP2	0.794			
HRMP6	0.805			
HRMP7	0.732			

HRMP8	0.742				
Burnout			**0.875**	**0.923**	**0.799**
BURN2	0.859				
BURN3	0.919				
BURN4	0.903				

Included are self-esteem, life satisfaction, job satisfaction, job involvement, organizational commitment, perceived organizational support, and turnover intention that are all measured through factor loadings, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE). Finally, the factor loadings in please show how well established the observed variables are to the corresponding constructs. For instance, the variables under Transformational Leadership has a high factor loading of 0.917; hence, it is closely associated with its correlates. On the other hand, Stress has a lower factor loading of 0.748 although acceptable it depicts low correlation. Hair et al. (2010) distinguished that factor loads greater than 0.7 are usually interpreted as good validity. Cronbach's alpha is an internal consistency coefficient; acceptable reliability is considered values beyond 0.7 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). In this dataset all the constructs pass the necessary level of reliability, and the highest value is achieved by the Transformational Leadership, equal to 0.917. Cronbach's alpha is acceptable for all the constructs; the CR values provide a slightly different picture. Looking at CR values of the constructs, all have values above 0.7, which is the recommended threshold, hence no problems with reliability arising from Transformational Leadership (CR=0.933), Stress (CR=0.855), Anxiety (CR=0.859), Workplace Loneliness (CR=0.857), and HRM Practices (CR=0.852). The AVE values also helps in establishing the validity of the constructs with the acceptable value set at 0.5 or above (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Every construct satisfies this criterion thus implying that all the constructs provide a good account of the variance in their respective indicators.

4.2 Discriminant Validity:

Table 2: Discriminant Validity

Variables	Anxiety	HRM Practices	Burnout	Stress	TFL	Workplace Loneliness
Anxiety	0.819					
HRM Practices	0.440	0.769				
Burnout	0.183	0.524	0.894			
Stress	0.711	0.363	0.134	0.814		
Transformational Leadership	0.455	0.452	0.307	0.407	0.817	
Workplace Loneliness	0.594	0.454	0.257	0.589	0.403	0.776

The following work provides the selected correlation matrix that reflects the associations between the specified psychological constructs, such as Anxiety, HRM Practices, Burnout, Stress, TFL, and Workplace Loneliness. In the analysis that follows, the Fornell-Larcker criterion is used to carry out discriminant analysis on these constructs. According to the first criterion of this norm, for a construct to be in a position to be said to be distinct from other constructs, the square root of the AVE has to be higher than the correlation coefficients of the construct with other constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). In this analysis, the square roots of the

AVE values of the constructs can be compared to their correlation values. For instance, the square root of the AVE for Burnout is 0.894, Thus, the construct reliability is deemed satisfying. Analyzing its associations with other constructs, it is most significant with HRM Practices and is equal to 0.524; and with Anxiety having a coefficient equal to 0.183. Thus, Burnout also meets the criteria for discriminant validity since 0.894 that reflects the correlation between Burnout and the measure of Burnout is higher than 0.524 and 0.183. Likewise, Anxiety =0.819 and is related to Stress =0.711 and Workplace Loneliness =0.594. Once more, because 0.819 is higher than these correlation values, Anxiety also conforms to the requirements of discriminant validity.

Hypothesis Testing:

Table 3: Results table

Hypotheses		Original sample	Sample mean	Standard deviation	T statistics	P values
H1	TFL -> BURN	0.121	0.119	0.081	1.490	0.136
H2A	TFL -> PFS	-0.407	0.412	0.084	4.837	0.000
H2B	PFS -> BURN	-0.090	-0.093	0.071	1.276	0.202
H3A	TFL -> AX	-0.455	0.460	0.075	6.071	0.000
H3B	AX -> BURN	-0.073	-0.072	0.080	0.915	0.360
H4A	TFL -> WL	0.403	0.407	0.084	4.795	0.000
H4B	WL -> BURN	0.078	0.083	0.077	1.016	0.310

Specifically, the examination of the hypotheses stated in the data provides valuable information about the interrelations between Transformational Leadership (TFL), Burnout, Psychological Flexibility (PFS), Anxiety (AX), and Workplace Loneliness (WL). In assessing each hypothesis, findings are compared in terms of the original sample coefficient, mean, standard deviation, T statistics, and p-values. Importance of each hypothesis is measured utilizing an alpha of 0.05. Among the hypotheses, only H2A (TFL → PFS), H3A (TFL → AX) and H4A (TFL → WL) hypotheses show the given significant outcomes. More specifically, Transformational Leadership is inversely correlated with Psychological Flexibility; H2A has a T statistic 4.837 and p-value 0.000. Similarly, to H3A, the H3A hypothesis estimates T = 6.071 and p = 0.000, which means that Transformational Leadership negatively affects Anxiety. H4A also establish significance with T stat of 4.795 and p-Value of 0.000 which mean that Transformational Leadership has a positive relationship with Workplace Loneliness. Thereby, hypothesis H1 (TFL → BURN), H2B (PFS → BURN), H3B (AX → BURN), and H4B (WL → BURN) does not show significance. For instance, H1 yielded T statistic of 1.490 and p-value of 0.136, while H2B yielded a T stat of 1.276 and p-statistic of 0.202. Since p-values of both hypotheses are > 0.05 and marked as not significant rejecting null hypothesis thereby null hypothesis stands true in our case. Similar to this, H3B and H4B also exhibit positive coefficients and no significant values with p-values of 0.36 and 0.31 respectively. Such an implication points that even if Transformational Leadership has a considerable influence on Psychological Flexibility, Anxiety and Workplace Loneliness, it does not influence Burnout through these mediating variables in this study.

Mediation and Moderation analysis:

Table 4: Indirect effect

Hypotheses		Original sample	Sample mean	Standard deviation	T statistics	P values

H2C	TFL -> PFS -> BURN	-0.037	-0.038	0.031	1.188	0.235
H3C	TFL -> AX -> BURN	-0.032	-0.032	0.039	0.820	0.412
H4C	TFL -> WL -> BURN	0.034	0.038	0.035	0.971	0.332
Moderation						
H5	Alpha x TFL -> BURN	0.000	0.025	0.045	0.522	0.602

The results for the mediation hypotheses (H2C, H3C, H4C) and the moderation hypothesis (H5) include patterns of relationships between the constructs of Transformational Leadership (TFL), Psychological Flexibility (PFS), Anxiety (AX) Workplace Loneliness (WL), and Burnout. Whereas mediation analysis focuses on the question of whether the effect of an independent variable on a dependent variable is carried through a mediator variable, moderation analysis involves the study of whether the strength of this relationship is dependent on the level of another variable.

In the mediation hypotheses introduced none of the mediating effects were significant. For H2C (TFL → PFS → BURN), the mean value of the product of the coefficients for the sample is -0.037 and for t it is 1.188 while the p- value is 0.235, this shows that Psychological Flexibility has no mediating role in the relation between Transformational Leadership and Burnout. Furthermore, the interaction analysis of H3C (TFL → AX → BURN) The original sample coefficient is -0.032, T = 0.820, p = 0.412, which indicates that Anxiety is also not a significant mediator in this context. Finally, the Bootstrap sample coefficient of H4C is 0.034 with T statistic 0.971 and p- value 0.332 reveal that there is no mediating role of WL in between TFL and BURN. The outcomes of this study suggest that it is possible that Transformational Leadership impacts these variables, however, it does not do so via these particular mediators.

Hence, based on the analysis of moderation, H5 explores the effect of Interaction between Alpha and Burnout mediated by Transformational Leadership. The coefficient for the original sample is 0.000; T for the sample is 0.522, and p for the sample is 0.602 thus suggesting that there is no moderation effect in this model. This means that the indices linking Transformational Leadership and Burnout do not change with the levels of Alpha. In summary, the analyses presented by these studies provide evidence that indicates that mediation and moderation effects cannot be confirmed in this research, which may mean that other variables need to be taken into account in order to gain a fuller picture of the relationships between Transformational Leadership and Burnout.

5.0 Discussion and conclusions

This research targets using the frequent areas of research topics including transformational leadership and human resource management (HRM) to find out how HR policies and practices contribute to performance at unit level (Nyberg et al., 2014). It looks into possible mediation between linkages of HR initiatives and improved results: a research area that has generated robust literature in this field. Furthermore, this study extends this line of research to the tourism industry, which was also highlighted by Garcia-Lillo et al. 2018 as an understudied field. The tourism industry which is considered to be a highly sensitive and unpredictable sector is a good

candidate for analysis of such relations and dynamics, including the time of the COVID-19 crisis. The results provided insights into the industry that was especially important considering the unique situation brought on by the pandemic. The results extend the knowledge by underlining the contingent role of the HRM practices and the transformative leadership in the crisis. These results are valuable for shedding more light on the role of HR policies in management of organizational performance during turbulence and provide a better insight into leadership and HRM collaboration process to build and sustain resilience and performance in industries that can undergo drastic impacts from external disturbances.

The first hypothesis stated that there is negative relationship between TFL and burnout (H1) was not support because T statistic of TFL was 1.490 and p < .05 = 0.136; it means there was no significant relationship between TFL and burnout. This result was somewhat surprising, since it is commonly believed that transformational leadership which focused on encouraging, stimulating, and empowering employees must aid in alleviating burnout. But there are some conceivable hypotheses why the result has had no significant differences: First, it may be argued that probably, the profound and rather unexampled threats of the COVID-19 crisis distorted the positive impact of transformational leadership. Workers in the hotel industry might had been experiencing very high levels of stress, uncertainty and fear, arising from health risks, economic volatility and insecurity of tenure during the pandemic, a situation that might have neutralized the positive impacts of leadership. Second, the study was conducted amid the COVID-19 pandemic, during which some hotels have closed, and others have had severely limited capabilities, leaving leaders little opportunity to effectively interact with their employees. Leaders' physical unavailability, or the inability to offer sufficient assistance through tele-, or in-situ de minimized settings, might have explained why burnout was not affected by their actions in this regard.

Hypothesis 2a that talked of the decrease in PFS when under the influence of TFL was also approved by the data (T statistic = 4.837, p-value = 0.000), which proves that indeed, the transformational leadership impacts the employees' worries about their financial status. This result supports the findings of previous studies that identified the role of emotional support, motivation, and vision from the transformational leaders which enables employees to leave their financial concerns, even in the midst of turmoil. Organizational transformational leaders are expected to create trust and support, and during the pandemic, these leaders likely directly communicated with their employees, reassured them, and attempted to preserve their employment to the extent necessary. Such behavior could have assisted the organization to decrease the employees' levels of financial pressure even during adverse economic conditions. Furthermore, the support for the Hypothesis by participants indicates that transformational leaders might have supported policies or practices (such as resource redistribution or flexible working hours) that remedy employees' monetary anxieties.

The second hypothesis that personal financial stress would influence burnout positively was also not supported by data (T statistic = 1.276, p-value = 0.202). Such a trend was not a significant one and this may be attributed to several factors. There could be other factors which could potentially explain one such factor could be that though financial concerns are one among the sources of worry and in this context financial stress does not appear to have been the cause of burnout. This could be due to other sources of burn out such as emotional exhaustion, fear associated with the disease, or working under the Same roof with family and children in this context of a new way of working. Therefore, personal financial pressures may not have mapped

easily into burnout in the manner originally envisioned by this framework. One other possible explanation for this result is that the hotel employees might have built up a coping strategy or indeed received other forms of financial support during the pandemic (for instance, governmental tax revenues or unemployment benefits) that might have lessened the potential burnout effect of financial strain. In such cases, it may also explain why the survey has found seemingly lower direct correlation between financial pressure and burnout.

The mediation hypothesis (H2c), hypothesizing that personal financial stress moderated the TFL – burnout relationship, was rejected (T statistic = 1.188, p-value = 0.235). This implies that although TFL lowers personal financial pressure, managing this kind of pressure does not affect burnout rates in TFL. This non-significant mediation can be explained by the following as has been discussed before, the financial aspect may not be the primary causative factor of burnout but other stressors. In other words, while transforming leaders avert the economic strain, they may not similarly address burnout since burnout is more likely to be determined by other factors like emotional exhaustion, work load, and work-life conflict amid the pandemic.

Hypothesis 3a, as stated that TFL would cause a reduction in anxiety, was supported by the analysis results (T statistic = 6.071; p = 0.000). This consequence is in line with prior research finding that transformational leadership, which encourages and assumes employee support and motivation, reduces their anxiety. In the present crisis, the leaders possessing transformational characteristics probably had been more effective in giving right information, giving confidence and showing direction to the employees which might have been very important in minimizing their uncertainty during the pandemic period. The huge correlation between TFL and low anxiety signals the fact that leadership plays a critical role in dealing with self-psychological stress. Thus, gaining confidence from the transformational leaders, groups and teams are more likely motivated with hope compared to the perceived feelings of the anxiety from uncertainty and fear caused by COVID-19 crisis.

A positive relationship was predicted in Hypothesis 3b with anxiety molding burnout, therefore this hypothesis was not supported (T=0.915, p= 0.360). This result implies that within this sample, anxiety does not directly affect burnout. Whereas it would have been expected that anxiety led to higher stress and EE, the non-acceptance of this hypothesis can be understood due to the fact that the hotel employees highlighted multiple and cumulative forms of stress during the pandemic and thus, anxiety as a single driver may not necessarily have dominated burnout.

Another potential account for this result is that anxiety is not necessarily always linked to burnout, although it is a psychological state; burnout may only occur if anxiety is chronic or accompanied by other workplace stressors, including heavy workload and/ or role indeterminacy. Therefore, anxiety should have been one of the crises' manifestations obviously, time-limited states not a constant source of burnout. The mediation hypothesis (H3c) which asserted that anxiety will mediate the relationship between TFL and burnout was not supported (T statistic = 0.820, p &8807; 0.412). This indicates that while employment with TFL leaves anxiety in the workforce decreased, this reduced anxiety does not influence burnout. As with the previous mediation hypothesis, this may be because burn out during and after the pandemic was multifaceted and not simply a product of increased anxiety levels.

The null hypothesis 4a of expected workplace loneliness decreasing through TFL was also valid (T=4.795; p<0.05). It is in tandem with assertion that transformative leadership enhances rapport, cohesion, and belongingness and that transcendent leadership engenders a favorable work climate. Since hospitality is people-intensive business, it is imperative that leadership

addressed feelings of rejuvenate during such crises as COVID-19. The respondents probably received support, encouragement, and ideas for work from their leaders who also kept the communication channels open and engaged their employees during the social isolation processes. This decrease in workplace loneliness might have helped employees to feel more affiliated with other people in work places and be productive despite some bad situations.

Hypothesis 4b that stated workplace loneliness has a positive effect on burnout was therefore nullified (T statistic = 1.016, p-value = 0.310). But again, this non-significant value indicates that the workplace loneliness per se did not significantly affect the burnout in the current study. Another possibility is that the nature of the pandemic altered primary sources of burnout to postsurgical-related generic aspects (loneliness, meaninglessness, etc.) to health and financial issues. Moreover, other workers in the hotel industry had a higher likelihood of social interactions because of their work, and the COVID-19 resulting loneliness may not be severe enough to increase burnout levels.

The mediation hypothesis that was extended in H4c: TFL is positively associated with burnt out through workplace loneliness, was not supported (T = 0.771; p = 0.332). Similar to financial stress and anxiety results, while workplace loneliness was impacted by TFL, it did not serve as a mediator between the two factors and burnout. When compared to other factors that could be assumed to impact on burnout more during the pandemic such as workload, role clarity or physical and emotional exhaustion it can just mean that it could be different.

Hypothesis 5, stating that HRM practices would act as a mediator between TFL and burnout was also not supported (T statistic = 0.522, p-value = 0.0.602). This non-significant moderation result indicates that HRM practices did not moderate the TFL burnout relationship in this research. One possible explanation is that despite the adoption of the formal multifaceted HRM practices it has not been adequate to mitigate the high level of stress.

Limitations and future research

The present research has limitations that following should be taken in to account. First, limitations of the current study include cross-sectional research design and thus it has potential for common method variance and reverse causality. Cross sectional surveys collect information at that particular period therefore cannot be able to indicate the relationship between variables. Consequently, it is difficult to establish whether better performance results from the implementation of good HR practices or otherwise, different units select better practices to enhance their performances (Nyberg, et al., 2014). Among the challenges of such studies, we find CMV, the measurement method that might exaggerate the relationships between the variables. However, towards that risk, a Harman's single factor test was conducted and no significant evidence of CMV was found; therefore, alleviating that particular worry.

However, as it was mentioned above, the problem of reverse causality is less contemplated. Namely, the HRM literature has pointed out that there could be concave relationships between the use of HRM practices and employee outcomes (Han et al., 2019). For example, though, a whole range of HRM practices is suggested to be positively associated with lower burnout levels, a certain degree of over-implementation of practices in organizations may lead to a detrimental, organizational burnout effect. While HR initiatives may seem a terrific way to handle employee burnout, its overuse may just put more pressure on the employees, making the situation worse instead of improving it (Ho & Kuvaas, 2019). This is another factor that make analysis of the relationship between HR practices and their effects complex, because of non-linearity of the method.

To minimize these drawbacks, the longitudinal studies could show more sound research method. In contrast to cross-sectional study, the longitudinal research entails the use of data collected over a period, and is usually important in establishing how exemplification functions in creating relationships. If a longitudinal research was conducted, it would possible to establish a cause and effect relationship between HR practices and organizational outcomes. Yet, as pointed out by Kloutsiniotis & Mihail (2020c), there is a shortage of longitudinal research in the field of HRM, especially within the tourism sector; the majority of the existing investigations continue to use cross-sectional research. More studies using research designs that incorporate a time aspect could give us a clearer picture regarding cause and effect between HRM practices and, unit level performance considering the problems of the indigeneity.

Another source of constraint originated from the conclusion that employees articulate and respond to practices of HRM, in an individual peculiar or rather idiosyncratic way (Guzz & Nooman, 1994). Different people in an organization can perceive HR polices differently because of their individual background, training, and experiences. For instance, stress, anxiety and workplace loneliness may be explained by human capital such as a worker's level of knowledge, skills, and ability (Han et al., 2019). Perhaps those with higher levels of these attributes can manage work related difficulties effectively; hence, they display low level of burnout.

This situation underscores the fact that is very challenging to develop a 'strong organizational climate' or a proper HRM system that will work for all employees. The experience and attitude of employees towards different policies can exacerbate the general effect of HR policies diminishing the results of their application throughout the organization. Therefore, the findings of the present study suggest that future research should consider these individual differences as control variables. Such an approach would allow for a closer look, for example, at how the interaction of the personal resources component and other individual level characteristics affect the relationship between the contemporary HR practices sets and their outcomes in terms of better or worse human capital.

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