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**AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF STRESSORS, CONSEQUENCES AND
OUTCOMES AMONG A GROUP OF HOSPITALITY WORKERS IN THE
WESTERN CAPE**

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COMPULSORY DECLARATION:

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signature:..... Date: 31st August 2006

Abstract

Stress in the South African hospitality industry is an important but neglected topic in the stress literature. This research report investigates the stressors affecting hospitality workers, the consequences of stress amongst hospitality workers and the coping mechanisms that they employ to deal with these stressors. Ten focus groups sessions with six participants per session were conducted, giving an n=60. All participants were employed in the hospitality industry. The data was analysed qualitatively using thematic analysis. The results indicate that hospitality workers experience very high levels of stress and are not typically assisted by their employing organisation to cope with this stress. The results further show that this stress causes a decrease in the service given as well as a decrease in motivation. Resultantly, participants turn to others like family members, partners, friends or spiritual leaders to help with stress relief. A number of other mechanisms like alcohol and “me time” were also shown to be used. The findings of this study also show that ignoring this stress could prove costly for the hospitality industry. Lastly, suggestions are made to the hospitality workers as well as the hotel. It is suggested that these suggestion could help to ameliorate these current problems and sharpen future research in this particular field.

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University of Cape Town

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

In the changing dynamic of the competitive hospitality industry in South Africa, and as the industry becomes more service oriented, hospitality workers are finding that more and more pressure is being placed on them to perform to a higher standard and as a result, they are beginning to experience higher levels of stress (Mullins, 1998).

This study examines stressors, consequences and coping mechanisms among a group of hospitality workers in the Western Cape.

It also provides useful insights for management, to assist them in their role as managers dealing with a workforce that is experiencing higher levels of stress than in the past. Although causality is not implied, the study makes some practical suggestions on how to relieve this stress.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research is to examine the stress experienced by a group of hospitality workers in the Western Cape, the consequences of this stress and what mechanisms they employ to reduce or alleviate this stress.

Selye (1964) was the first to use the term “stress” to describe a set of physical and psychological responses to adverse conditions or influences. Originally, the syndrome of just being sick covered the stereotypical response of an organism to a wide range of chemical, biological, or physical stimuli. Later, Selye (1956) used the term “stressor” to describe the external force or influence acting on the individual and “stress” to denote the resulting reaction, terminology adopted by many others.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines stress as:

“A state of affair involving demand on physical or mental energy”. A condition or circumstance (not always adverse), which can disturb the normal physical and mental health of an individual.

From the above definitions, it is clear that stress is a process that requires attention, if indeed this definition is to be accepted.

Hence, this study focuses on three components relating to hospitality workers and stress: stressors, consequences of stress, and coping mechanisms. These issues provide the basis for the current research.

Thus, hospitality worker stress is examined in terms of what stressors these workers out. Secondly, the consequences of stress (what happens). Thirdly, what coping mechanisms are employed by hospitality workers to relieve this stress?

1.3 Background of the Study

1.3.1 General Statement of the Problem

A great deal of research has been conducted in America, the United Kingdom, Israel and South Africa regarding stress, however, most of this research has been quantitative in nature and very little research has specifically investigated the stress experienced by hospitality workers.

After an extensive search of the current literature by visiting the UCT and Wits libraries and going through the current journal sections, as well as making use of on-line resources such as Ebsco, Emereald, Science Direct and JStor, limited literature that deals directly

with this topic was found. Resultantly, there seems to be a gap in the hospitality industry literature and this research report hopes to fill some of these gaps. As a result, what was found was literature that deals with other service industry stress in general, and it is that literature which is included in the review that follows.

Similarly, relatively little attention has been paid to non-professional service workers, such as hospitality workers, in the literature, even though they constitute a very large occupational category in Western societies (Cooper & Marshall, 1976). As a result, during the last two decades, some research has been conducted in order to enhance our understanding of stress as it relates to hospitality workers – its nature, antecedents and consequences (Johns & Saks, 2005). Through this research, it has become increasingly apparent that stress is a complex and multifaceted construct. Resultantly, the importance of stress in the workplace is being given more attention and recognition due to its perceived effect on employee's performance and conduct (Nelson & Burke, 2000).

To date little empirical data exists in South Africa exploring the relationship between stressors, consequences and coping mechanisms, despite there avowed linkages. It is therefore deemed an important area of research.

This study aims to empirically examine hospitality worker stress through looking at its causes, the consequences and the coping methods employed, using a group of hospitality workers based in Cape Town as a case study.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

Cooper & Shindler (2001) write, 'Research objectives addresses the purpose of the investigation. It is here that you lay out exactly what is being planned by the proposed study. It is best to list the objectives either in order of importance or in general terms first, moving to specific terms.'

The objectives of this study are listed below:

- 1) To determine what causes these hospitality workers stress. In other words, what stresses them out?
- 2) To examine what the consequences of such stress are.
- 3) To explore the coping mechanisms employed by this group of hospitality workers.

1.5 Structure of the study

Chapter 1 is the current chapter and provides a brief overview of the study, introducing the concepts and the scope and purpose of the dissertation. Chapter 2 provides a literature survey that explores the variables used in the study. Chapter 3 describes the research methodology and the manner in which data was collected for this study. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the research. Chapter 5 discusses the research's findings. Chapter 6 concludes with recommendations and limitations of this study.

1.6 Conclusion

This chapter outlines the overall purpose, background, objectives and structure of the study.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1) Introduction

There has been a significant amount of research in the field of stress over the last decades, although not generally exploring stress as it relates to hospitality workers. This chapter reviews the current research and thinking within the field of stress, where the current research is located. It identifies the theory currently in use and sets the theoretical context for this study. Lastly, a conclusion and summary of the chapter is offered.

The relevance of workplace stress to well-being has been recognized (Cooper, Sloan & Williams, 1988), but little attention has been given to the incidence of this problem in the service industry, despite the growth of this sector, and the obvious relevance of stress to fluid situations where much depends on inter-personal relations (Law, Pearce and Woods 1995). Even less attention has been given to work-induced stress specifically in the hospitality industry (Zohar, 1994; Faulkner and Patiar, 1997).

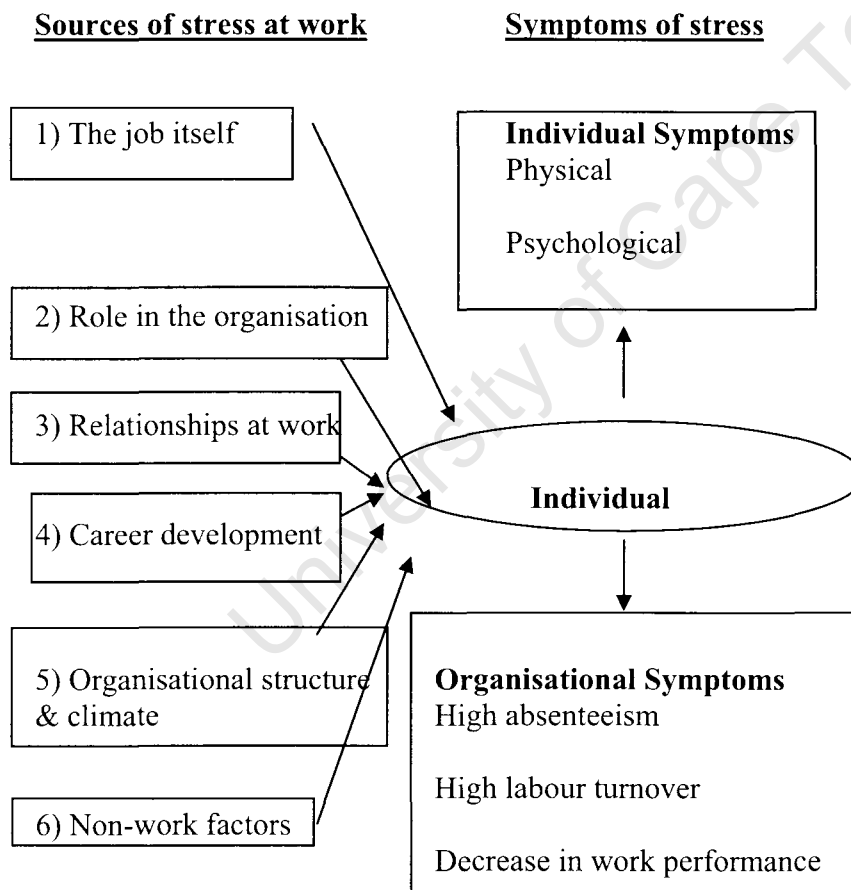
Four main considerations make the incidence of work-related stress highly relevant to hospitality work.

- Firstly, the emphasis on face to face contact with guests and the real time nature of service delivery means that workers are required to respond promptly (Dann, 1990), and they are often subjected to a mass of competing, and often contradictory or conflicting demands and expectations from a variety of sources (Hales & Nightingale, 1986).
- Secondly, if workers are unduly stressed and therefore unhappy, this will be reflected in their dealings with guests, and the quality of the service provided will suffer (Zohar, 1994).
- Thirdly, high stress levels have the potential to result in high levels of staff turnover and this will in turn, result in higher training costs and problems in service quality maintenance. This can be a particularly significant problem in a labour-intensive industry such as the hotel industry (Zohar, 1994).

- Finally, managers have a moral obligation to protect the welfare of their staff by adopting management practices that reduce their employees' exposure to situations where stress may become a problem (Hales & Nightingale, 1986).

Cartwright and Cooper (1997) developed a model of work stress. It is presented here in adapted form. Points 1, 3, 4 and 5 are of particular relevance to this study. Therefore, the model is worth noting here.

Figure 1: Adapted Dynamics of Work Stress (Cartwright & Cooper, 1997)

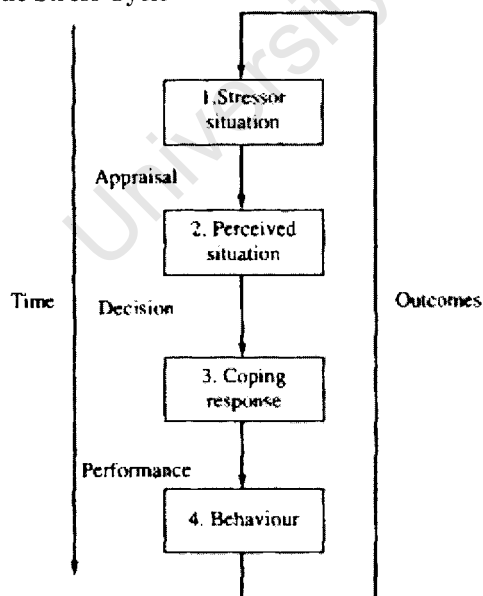


Stress management is a continuous process of monitoring, diagnosing, and prevention of excessive stressors that adversely affects employees, managers, and productivity. These

stressors are as much a function of the environment as one's perception of the environment. Therefore, stress management is as much the responsibility of employees as it is managers (Raitano & Kleiner, 2004).

A model useful in understanding stress and coping is the one developed by McGrath (1970), adapted by Law et al., (1995), and is presented below. They described stress as a process involving four distinct stages. A simplified version of the stress cycle is presented in Figure 2. The first stage is the environmental sources of stress - both physical and social. The next stage is individual perception, recognition appraisal and acceptance of the stressor demand. The third stage is the individual's response to the subjective demand. Finally, there is an array of potential behaviours, which occur because of the coping response. It is the first, third and fourth stages of this model that are of greatest interest to the present study – identifying the major stressors and everyday annoyances in the hospitality workplace and revealing the coping mechanisms used to deal with stress.

Figure 2: The Stress Cycle



Stress has always been an integral part of our daily life since prehistoric times. Stress was there when our predecessors were required to fight or flight for their survival. In modern times, stress plays an important role in how successful or unsuccessful we are in our productive work activity, and in general in enjoying our lives (Rojas & Kleiner, 2000). Stress is not necessarily negative for ones performance. Some level of stress is desirable to generate enthusiasm, creativity, and productivity. However, excessive levels of stress could become counterproductive if the situation does not require this elevated level of stamina (Burgess, 1996). It is important that organisations take a serious interest in procuring that their employees develop the ability to control the level of stress. This adequacy of stress level will yield higher levels of productivity in a business organisation (Rojas & Kleiner, 2000).

The experience of stress reactions in the workplace is not an isolated phenomenon. A number of aspects of working life have been linked to stress, such as the work itself being stressful and role-based factors such as lack of power, role ambiguity, and role conflict (Nelson & Burke, 2000). The quality of the social environment in the workplace can also be associated with stress as are certain behaviours of a leader or manager. Threats to career development and achievement, including the threat of retrenchment, being undervalued and unclear promotion prospects are also stressful (Nelson & Burke, 2000).

Stress also associated with impaired individual functioning in the workplace. Negative effects include reduced efficiency; decreased capacity to perform, decreased initiative, reduced interest in working, a lack of concern for the organisation and colleagues, and a loss of responsibility (Greenberg & Baron, 1995). Stress has also been associated with important occupational outcomes of job satisfaction, organisational commitment and employee withdrawal behaviour. Not always are high levels of work stress associated with low levels of job satisfaction. In certain individuals, higher stress enhances job satisfaction (Tett & Meyer, 1993).

Stress is typically considered to be experienced when an individual is overloaded with work or has to fulfil multiple roles (Johns & Saks, 2005). However, stress can also be experienced if an individual is bored or frustrated at work for any number of reasons. Stress has been defined in different ways over the years. Another definition states that it is the psychological and physical state that results when the resources of the individual are not sufficient to cope with the demands and pressures of the situation (McShane & Von Glinow, 2005). Thus, stress is more likely in some situations than others are, and in some individuals than others. Stress can undermine the achievement of goals, both for individuals and for organisations (Michie, 2002).

The workplace is an important source of both demands and pressures causing stress, and structural and social resources to counteract stress (Cox & Griffiths, 1995). The workplace factors that have been found to be associated with stress and health risks can be categorised as those to do with the content of work and those to do with the social and organisational context of work. Those that are intrinsic to the job include long hours, work overload, time pressure, difficult or complex tasks, lack of breaks, lack of variety, and poor physical work conditions (for example, space, temperature, light) (Burke, 1988). Unclear work or conflicting roles and boundaries can cause stress. The possibilities for job development are important buffers against stress, with under promotion, lack of training, and job insecurity being stressful (Michie, 2002). There are two other sources of stress, or buffers against stress: relationships at work, and the organisational culture. Managers who are critical, demanding, unsupportive or bullying create stress, whereas a positive social dimension of work and good teamwork reduces it. On the other hand, a culture of involving people in decision-making, keeping them informed about what is happening in the organisation, and providing good amenities and recreation facilities reduce stress (Cox & Griffiths, 1995; Sparks & Cooper, 1999).

There have also been various categories of work stressors suggested by a range of commentators. Cooper and Marshall (1976) suggest five clusters of work stressors: those intrinsic to the job, those resulting from one's role in the organization, career

development, relationships with others, and organizational structure and climate. Quick and Quick (1984) offer four categories of stressors: task demands, role demands, physical demands (elements in one's physical setting or environment), and interpersonal demands. Ivancevich and Matteson (1980) also divide stressors into four categories: physical environment, individual level (a mixture of role and career development variables), group level (primarily relationship-based), and organization level (a mixture of climate, structure, job design, and task characteristics).

2.2) Role Stress

This is a condition where employees have difficulty understanding, reconciling or performing the various roles in their lives (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek & Rosenthal, 1964). What follows is a brief explanation of the components that make up role related stress, 1) Role Conflict, 2) Role Ambiguity and 3) Role or Work Overload.

2.2.1) Role Ambiguity (RA)

This role characteristic refers to the lack of clarity and predictability of the outcomes of one's behaviour (House & Rizzo, 1972). Additionally, role ambiguity is said to result when an individual's role is not clear, including lack of clarity about the objectives of the job or the scope of an individual's responsibilities (Ivancevich & Matteson, 1990).

2.2.2) Role Overload (RO)

Role overload occurs when an individual is not able to complete the work that is part of a particular job (McShane & Von Glinow, 2005).

The concept of “Too much work” can be divided into two categories:

- The first, quantitative role overload, which is said to occur when the employee does not have enough time to complete all the work that is required of a particular job (Ross, 1997).
- The second type, qualitative, is not associated with time but instead involves not having enough adequate skills (E.g. wine training, computer literacy) to perform a particular job. Qualitative role overload occurs when employees do not believe that they can perform adequately with the effort or skills they possess (E.g. checking in and out guests on the computer) (Ross & Altmaier, 1994).

2.2.3) Role Underload (RU)

This form of stress occurs when employees feel that their skills are being underutilised. While role overload represents a demand, role underload is characterised by constraint. Role underload is said to be present when employees have too much ability for the jobs that they hold. As early as 1911, Taylor noted the negative effects that can arise when an employee is over-skilled for the job. An example of role underload occurs in production jobs at the bottom of the organisational hierarchy. In these jobs, workers might be required to do simple repetitive tasks that could be done by machines or computers (Ross & Altmaier, 1994). RU seems to be a cause of stress for hospitality workers as much of their daily work is routine and unexciting (Ross & Altmaier, 1994).

2.2.4) Role Conflict (RC)

Role conflict refers to the degree of incongruity or incompatibility of expectations associated with a person’s role (McShane & Von Glinow, 2005). This is particularly important to hospitality work because often a situation arises where two managers from different departments are giving conflicting instructions (Rizzo, House & Lirtzman, 1970). In such cases, the expectations and pressures that are directed towards the role

occupant not only from intra-organisational sources but also from extra-organisational sources create the conflict (Heany, Price & Refferty, 1995).

Johns and Saks (2005) identified four types of role conflict:

- **Intersender** role conflict is a situation in which expectations, pressures and or demands from one-person conflict with the demands of another person (E.g. having two supervisors giving different instructions).
- **Intrasender** role conflict occurs when the same member of the role set asks an employee to perform activities that are mutually exclusive or incompatible.
- **Person-role** conflict happens when the demands of an individual's work roles conflict with the individual's personal values.
- **Inter role** conflict is the final type of role conflict. It results when an employee experiences conflict between the expectations and demands of people at work and the expectations and demands of people outside of work.

2.2.5) Boundary Spanning Roles (BSR)

Boundary activity is defined as any task in which an organizational member engages in job-related interaction with a person, who is considered part of the environment, that is, who is not a member of the organization (Shamir, 1980).

These are those roles that link the organisation with its environment. Organisational theorists have noted that BSR personnel represent organisations by:

- Acquiring and/or disposing services/products/resources;
- Maintaining the image of the organization; and;
- Sustaining or improving the organization's legitimacy (Johns & Saks, 2005).

BSR personnel are especially important in services because they often interact with the customer in the creation of the service and because customers tend to rely on their behaviour in forming service evaluations (Shamir, 1980).

2.2.6) Stress in the Hospitality Industry

It has been established that hotel and restaurant managers often experience higher levels of work stress than managers in many other fields do (Ross, 1997). Stress may thus be regarded as one of the more common outcomes of work for many employees in highly competitive and challenging industries such as the hospitality industry (Ross, 1997).

2.3) Antecedents of Stress

This section deals with the antecedents and causes of hospitality worker stress.

2.3.1) Job or Work Related Stress

Job/Work related stress is regarded by many commentators as one of the most important issues facing management in this decade. A number of commentators have put forward conceptualizations of stress in the workplace (Ivancevich & Matteson 1990; Quick & Quick 1998). The frameworks offered by these researchers involve two sets of factors: those involving occupational stressors in the workplace, and those involving individual differences among workers. They are often referred to as person-environment fit approaches wherein a mismatch between an inappropriate or unsatisfactory work environment and particular types of individuals is likely to engender a stress response (Wetzels, de Ruyter & Bloemer, 2000).

There have also been various categories of work stressors by a range of commentators. Cooper and Marshall (1976) suggest five clusters of work stressors:

- ❖ Those intrinsic to the job – These relate to what the job is about,

- ❖ Those resulting from one's role in the organization – This relates to one's position or what one does for the organisation,
- ❖ Career development – This relates to what the future holds,
- ❖ Relationships with others – This relates to the type of relationships with colleagues, and,
- ❖ Organizational structure and climate – How the organisation is designed and what type of work environment one works in.

Some authors also include extra-organizational stressors such as family in their list of stressors (Ivancevich & Matteson, 1990). The conflict between work and family life can be a cause of stress. Who looks after the children, who fetches them from school, can cause stress for those affected (Ivancevich & Matteson, 1990).

Two other sources of stress mentioned in the literature may also act as buffers to help workers cope with stress. These relate to relationships at work, and the organisational culture (Ross, 1993).

Butler and Snizek (1976) in the Waitress-Diner Relationship as well as the Bigus (1972) in The Milkman and His Customer both deal with promoting service providers and the services that they offer in order to maintain or increase the business already gained as well as using buttering-up techniques and cultivation techniques as forms of customer manipulation. This approach creates its own kinds of stress, the stress to perform or to meet certain quotas concerning tables served or tips received during a particular shift / session (Rees & Redfin, 2000).

In the emerging body of literature on the service encounter, several authors have pointed to the fact that customer contact personnel have to deal not only with the needs of the customer but also with the “back stage” demands from supervisors as well (Bitner, 1990).

Shamir, (1980) introduces the concept of Subordinate Service Roles (SSRs) to denote organizational boundary roles in which an organization member performs direct service to a non-member whose status is higher than that of the service giver. It is generally accepted that certain organizational conditions tend to bring about a particularly high level of role stress such as retrenchments and downsizings.

2.3.2) Service Interactions

Due to the subordinate position of the role occupant (hospitality worker) and his or her exposure, the right to determine the beginning and the end of the interaction is mainly in the hands of the client/guest. This leaves an important aspect of the role outside of the role occupant's control, but also the nature of the relationship can be determined by the client and in many cases ignoring the wishes of the service provider (Shamir, 1980).

2.3.3) Interactions between Work and Home

Increasingly, the demands on the individual in the workplace reach out into the homes and social lives of employees. Long or unsocial hours, working away from home as is the case in the hospitality industry, high levels of responsibility (I.e. working with money), job insecurity, and job relocation all may adversely effect family responsibilities and leisure activities (Champoux, 2006). This is likely to undermine a good and relaxing quality of life outside work, which is an important buffer against the stress caused by work. In addition, domestic pressures such as childcare responsibilities, financial worries, and bereavement, transport and housing problems may affect a person's robustness at work (Champoux, 2006).

2.3.4 Hours Worked

Michie (2002), found some of the key factors that increase stress to be long hours worked, work overload and pressure, the effects of these on personal lives, lack of control over work and lack of participation in decision making, poor social support, unclear management and work role, and poor management style.

In terms of the above, individuals differ in their risk of experiencing stress and in their vulnerability to the adverse effects of stress owing to certain factors. Individuals are more likely to experience stress if they lack material resources (E.g. financial, security) and psychological resources (E.g., coping skills, self-esteem), and are more likely to be harmed by this stress if they tend to react emotionally to situations and are highly competitive and pressured (Michie, 2002).

The above association between pressures and well-being and functioning can be thought of as an inverted \cap , with well being and functioning being low when pressures are either high or very low (E.g. in circumstances of unemployment). Different people demonstrate different shapes of this inverted \cap , showing their different thresholds for responses to stress. A successful strategy for preventing stress within the workplace will ensure that the job fits the person, rather than trying to make people fit jobs that they are not well suited to (Johns & Saks, 2005).

2.4) Theories of Coping

The following section reviews some of the theories of coping as they relate to the hospitality industry.

2.4.1) Models of Coping

1) Hammer and Marting (1988) developed what they called the Coping Resources Inventory. It lists five coping resources that people employ. All five of these in one form or another were shown to be applicable / relevant to this study. The resources are:

- Social
- Emotional
- Spiritual
- Physical
- Cognitive

2) In order to cope with stress, employees can make use of the following two paradigms:

a. Control Model

The Control Model and is based on the assumption that hierarchy and mechanistic bureaucracy will enhance productivity and quality through standardisation of services. This in turn reduces stress by giving the employee a framework to work within thereby making decision making easier and more streamlined. Levitt (1972) recommended this model for service industries, arguing that efficiency as well as quality would be ensured by standardization and formalization of tasks and limited decision-making by employees. There is a set procedure for serving customers, giving the organization control over customer-employee encounters, with McDonalds and Disney often being cited as examples (Tansik, 1990). According to advocates of this model, this approach leads to efficient service operations and improved service quality. Central to the control paradigm is the concept of formalization, which can be described as the extent to which rules, procedures, instructions, and communications are written (Tansik, 1990).

b. Involvement Model

The Involvement Model (Behrman & Perreault, 1984). According to this model, which has its roots in participatory management, customer contact employees are capable of coordination and control of service quality using self-managed work teams where they take and make all the decisions necessary to get the job done. As a team, the responsibility of decision-making is shared by the team, thereby not putting the responsibility on the shoulders of one person and thereby reducing individual stress substantially (Behrman & Perreault, 1984). Burger King and Marriott Hotels are often cited as role models of this approach (Zemke & Schaaf, 1989). A central concept to the involvement approach, which has become increasingly popular in service organizations of late, is the concept of empowerment. The essence of empowerment may be best captured as, “the reverse of doing things by the book”. Employees must feel both capable of performing their jobs in a competent way as well as being given the authority

to make decisions. According to Behrman and Perreault (1984), there has been little empirical evidence to support the hypothesis of the influence of empowerment on stress.

Levitt (1972) suggested that the use of resources that help meet the pressures and demands faced at work, include personal characteristics such as coping skills (for example, problem solving, assertiveness, time management and the work situation such as a good working environment and social support. These resources can be increased by investment in work infrastructure, training, good management and employment practices, and the way that work is organised (Kagan, Kagan & Watson, 1995).

Historically, the typical response from employers to stress at work has been to blame the victim of stress, rather than its cause (Tansik, 1990). It is also in their long-term economic interests to prevent stress, as stress is likely to lead to high staff turnover, an increase in sickness absence and early retirement, increased stress in those staff still at work, reduced work performance, increased rate of accidents, and reduced client satisfaction (Karasek & Theorell, 1990). A good employment practice is something that includes assessing the risk of stress amongst employees. This involves looking for pressures at work that could cause high and long lasting levels of stress, deciding whom might be harmed by these and deciding whether the organisation is doing enough to prevent that harm (Karasek & Theorell, 1990).

2.5) Coping Mechanisms

2.5.1) Social Support

Social support groups create a buffer between the cause of the stress and the extent of the stress response (Behjat, 1998). The buffer can be emotional, instrumental or informational. An emotional buffer uses support groups to give individuals an opportunity to express discomfort and provide a release of emotional pressure, sometimes called catharsis. Support groups are also instrumental in allowing employees to draw upon the expertise of co-workers for assistance. Lastly, social groups can act as

informational buffers by providing insight, or an alternative perspective as to how best resolve the problem causing the stress. However, social groups can also be stress modifiers (Levi, 1990). Many times support groups dictate the coping methods individuals use. Such methods as physical exercise, group sports, are a constructive means of coping. Ultimately, these methods decrease the stress response and improve physical endurance toward stressors (Raitano & Kleiner, 2004).

Social support can also be understood quantitatively, as in the number of persons one has whom one would call "friends" or the number of people, one has social contact with in a typical week (Ross & Altmaier, 1994). When one looks at support in this way, one is concerned with an individual's "network," the social relationships that surround an employee. These relationships are then studied in terms of measurable aspects of the network, like its size, geographic dispersion and the frequency of contact with the individual and the network members (Fletcher, 1988). However, social support can also be studied qualitatively, that is by understanding the employee's perception of the degree to which the support relationships one has, meets ones needs. Many researchers have proposed definitions of social support, but a principal similarity is that the definitions emphasize a prime role of social support as emotional support, when individuals feel they have other people to turn to for comfort during difficult times (Robbins, Odendaal & Roodt, 2001).

Another similarity is that all these models emphasize social integration, when employees feel they are part of a larger group where their interests and concerns are shared. Thirdly, support can operate as tangible support, where one's request for money and tools are positively met (Levi, 1990). The fourth similarity is that support can provide informational support, where one can depend on others for advice concerning a problem. The fifth similarity is esteem support, where social relationships serve to help people feel better about themselves and their skills and abilities. Some authors like Robbins, Odendaal and Roodt (2001) have added a sixth provision of social support, and that is the opportunity that social relationships give one to nurture others.

2.5.2) Employee Absenteeism

Absenteeism has been studied extensively over the past decade. It was and still is a costly organizational phenomenon that also affects the hospitality industry (Williams, Michie & Patani, 1998; Michie, 2002). What is interesting to note is that in the management literature, the importance of leadership behaviour as a potential cause of employee absenteeism is widely emphasized. What is not emphasized is the importance of co-worker absenteeism.

2.5.3) The Buffering Model

Ross, (1997) proposes an alternative model of support, the buffering model. The buffering model suggests that social support operates as a buffer for stress. Thus, when individuals are under low levels of stress, both those with high social support and those with low social support will show few negative effects (DeFrank & Ivancevich, 1998). However, during stressful times, individuals with low levels of support will begin to show negative effects, individuals with high support will show few negative effects since their support "buffers" them from the effects of stress (Johns & Saks, 2005).

2.5.4) Other Forms of Support

2.5.4.1) Personal Resources

Rice (1992) suggested eight rules for dealing with job stress by drawing on personal resources. According to his suggestion:

- 1) Maintain good physical health.
- 2) Accept yourself as you are with all your strengths and weaknesses.
- 3) Keep a confident, a close friend or work colleague.
- 4) Take a positive action to deal with stresses in your job.
- 5) Maintain a social life outside work.
- 6) Engage in meaningful work.
- 7) Engage in creative work activities outside the workplace.
- 8) Apply an analytic method to personal stress problems.

These methods are merely a suggestion and are not empirically based or tested but are included because of their practical application and because they are easy to implement and do not cost money to adopt or employ.

2.5.4.2) Withdrawal

Newton, Handy and Fineman (1995), propose a different strategy. They propose that one can either withdraw from the stressor on a temporary basis like taking time off work or if this does not work, withdraw on a permanent basis, in other words leave the organisation. Beehr (1995) outlined two major organisational outcomes of work stress, namely employee withdrawal and reduced job performance. Four types of employee withdrawal can be identified, namely, lateness, absenteeism, turnover and psychological withdrawal.

2.5.4.3) Substance / Alcohol Abuse

Another mechanism of support used by individuals is that of alcohol or drug use, often in excessive quantities (Comer, 2003). Substance abuse can be defined as a pattern of behaviour in which people rely on drugs or alcohol excessively and regularly, bringing damage to their relationships, functioning at work, or putting themselves or others in danger (Comer, 2003).

2.5.4.4) Spirituality

The issue of spirituality as a coping mechanism has been mentioned in some of the stress literature (Karasek & Theorell, 1990). It is mentioned in relation to making use of spirituality in the form of prayer or meditation or spiritual leaders as a sounding board or confidant or as a mediating factor to reduce stress.

2.6) Consequences of Stress

What follows is a brief discussion of some of the consequences of stress mentioned in the literature.

There are several possible consequences of job stress. Michaels and Dixon (1994) examined the relationship between stress and job satisfaction, organizational commitment and performance. Sager (1994) included job satisfaction, organizational commitment and intention to leave in his stress model. While Woods (1997) also considered turnover as a consequence of stress.

High turnover is generally acknowledged to be one of the distinguishing features of the hotel and hospitality industry. It is both problematic and topical as a managerial issue. Commentators such as Woods (1997) and Manley (1996) highlight the positive and negative effects of the industry's high turnover rate. Some commentators (Sager, 1994) do not view employee turnover to be dysfunctional; however, at the organisational level there is strong evidence indicating both business and subliminal effects of high turnover including replacement and recruitment costs and the view that regular guests expect to recognise people and are likely to follow favourite staff to another organization (Manley, 1996). They also argue that excessive rates of turnover contribute to employee morale problems. Manley (1996) posits the concept of the "subliminal" effects of turnover. These include a lack of recognition from new staff members for regular guests and the guests who follow favourite staff to another organisation. Under this heading also comes intention to leave the organisation (Sager, 1994).

2.7) Chapter Summary

This chapter reviews the salient theoretical literature and research conducted in the field of stress, consequences of this stress and coping mechanisms.

Research both in South Africa and abroad suggests that stress as a construct is a common phenomenon in all professions, and is therefore well documented in the literature. From an organisational perspective, most modern organisations try to mitigate their employees stress in some way. Hospitality stress, on the other hand, has only received superficial attention in the extant literature, and is therefore not as well documented and therefore needs to be addressed in a more rigorous way (Johns & Saks, 2005).

The concepts of stress, consequences of stress and coping methods employed provide the basis for the current research project. The following chapter details the qualitative methodology employed in this study amongst a group of South African hospitality workers, where the stress they experience, the consequences of this stress and the coping methods employed are explored.

University of Cape Town

CHAPTER THREE: METHOD

This chapter discusses the method employed in this research and places within the current thinking of qualitative research by drawing on the advice and techniques of experts in the field.

Objectives of the Study

Cooper & Shindler (2001) write, 'Research objectives addresses the purpose of the investigation. It is here that you lay out exactly what is being planned by the proposed study...It is best to list the objectives either in order of importance or in general terms first, moving to specific terms.'

The objectives of this study are listed below:

- 4) To determine what causes these hospitality workers stress. In other words, what stresses them out?
- 5) To examine what the consequences of such stress are.
- 6) To explore the coping mechanisms employed by this group of hospitality workers.

3.0) Method Employed - Qualitative Research

The method employed in this study can be broadly described as *qualitative* research. Qualitative methodology has emerged as part of a broad movement that has been referred to as an 'interpretive turn' in social science epistemology (Terre-Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). In practical terms, this refers to a turn towards 'contextual' research that is less immediately concerned with uncovering universal, law-like patterns of human behaviour, and is more concerned with making sense of human experience from within the context and perspective of the human experience (Terre-Blanche & Durrheim, 1999).

The goal of qualitative research is to uncover patterns and themes, which emerge after close observation, careful documentation and thoughtful analysis of the research topic

(Terre-Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). Qualitative analysis research produces contextual findings rather than sweeping generalizations. The process of uncovering is basic to the philosophic underpinnings of the qualitative approach (Terre-Blanche & Durrheim, 1999).

The present study therefore adopted a qualitative approach because it focuses on examining hospitality workers in a specific context and concerns the personal expectations, experiences, coping mechanisms and outcomes of stress in this group. Information was obtained directly from research participants who described their perceptions of the work environment and their responses and behaviours within that particular environment, namely the hospitality industry. This study therefore justifies the use of a qualitative method / paradigm, which is characterized by local “groundedness”, as the research data was collected in close proximity to a specific situation / environment (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Furthermore, the qualitative approach is fundamentally suited to eliciting experiences, attitudes and expectations of individuals / groups as well as their personal responses to the work environment in which they operate (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

3.1) Research Context

Few single organizations in Cape Town employ sufficiently large numbers of employees to provide a reliable and significant sample worthy of research. However, the hotel chain chosen in this study is one such organization.

The hotels chosen are situated on the outskirts of the CBD of central Cape Town, and within walking distance of the famous Victoria & Alfred Waterfront. The hotels serve on average 450 guests a day and over weekends, this figure can be double. The group also manages twenty other units located in other regions and provinces throughout South Africa.

3.2) Sample

Participants in this study can be described as consisting of hospitality workers employed at two hotels in Cape Town.

3.2.1) Demographics

<u>Ages</u>	<i>20-25</i>	<i>26-30</i>	<i>31-35</i>	<i>36-40</i>	<i>41-45</i>	<i>46-50</i>	<i>51-59</i>
	2	30	3	8	11	4	2

<u>Gender</u>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Total (n)</i>
	11	49	60

<u>Ethnicity</u>	<i>Black Males</i>	<i>Coloured Males</i>	<i>Coloured Females</i>	<i>Black Females</i>	<i>Indian Females</i>	<i>White Females</i>
	7	4	30	11	6	2

<u>Hotel Departments</u>	<i>Front Office</i>	<i>Back Office</i>	<i>Food & Beverage</i>	<i>Housekeeping</i>	<i>Concierge</i>
	13	4	24	16	3

Only four of the participants held a post- Matric qualification. Each of the participants had on average more than 5 years hospitality work experience. Only three of the participants were new to the hospitality industry.

Participants represented a range of different religious beliefs and cultures. Seventeen (17) individuals are married, three (3) are engaged and the remainder of the respondent

are not married but have significant others or are single. All except eight (8) of the participants were born in Cape Town.

3.3) Sampling Strategy

A '*typical cases*' sampling strategy, which highlights what is normal or average in the research field, (Miles & Huberman, 1994) was used because typical cases serve to increase confidence in findings (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Typical cases were also selected by inviting all employees of the chosen departments to participate in the study. Once the requisite participant numbers were reached (n=60) no more people were selected (Frost & Stabelein, 1992). This was done so that the learning gleaned from this research report may be of value to those people who are employed in the hospitality industry. In this instance, typical cases refer to those selected to participate in this research. The participants were drawn from the various departments for no particular reason except that they were representative of their hotel department (Cresswell, 1994).

3.4) Focus Group Discussion Guide Design

The focus group discussion guide was developed using the existing literature and based on the information that needed to be elicited for this research report (Morgan, 1988). The discussion guide was made deliberately broad, to facilitate open discussion (Morgan & Spanish, 1984). (See Appendix 2)

3.5) Focus Group Method

Focus groups, also sometimes referred to as 'group interviews' or 'group discussions', may take many forms but their defining feature is that a small group of people engages in collective discussion of a topic pre-selected by the researcher. Focus groups are a form of group or mass interviewing (Flores & Alonso, 1995). The aim of the group discussion is to gain insight into the personal experiences, beliefs, attitudes and feelings that underlie behaviour. The topic of the discussion is introduced in the form of a set of questions. Unlike one-to-one interviews, in which the researcher asks questions of and elicits

responses from each individual in turn, focus groups are characterised by *collective discussion* in which group members interact with each other as well as with the researcher. Discussions are usually tape-recorded and transcribed.

Focus groups are best suited to research where factors relating to complex behaviours and motivations need to be uncovered, as is the case with service stress in this study (Morgan & Kreuger, 1993). They provide for a deeper insight into the complex workings of the service providers' minds, thus allowing the researcher to obtain far richer data than could be elicited in a one-on-one interview setting. The aim of focus groups is to stimulate a forum/structure, which allows for open and frank discussion of the topic at hand (Smith, Scammon & Becks, 1995). Through interacting with the participants, the researcher is able to hear the questions that the participants want to ask each other and not only hear answers to the researcher's questions (Holbrook & Jackson, 1996). Another strength of focus groups as an interview technique is linked to the ability of the researcher to observe the interactions of the group on a specific topic. The interactions found in focus groups provide a window of opportunity into their world as well as providing an opportunity to see how participants think and feel, acting as a powerful tool through participants and researcher alike (Kreuger, 1988).

Some of the advantages of focus groups are:

- Focus groups are useful for exploratory research into under-researched topics. In this case, to find out what causes these employees stress and what they and the organization can do to reduce the levels of stress experienced.
- Focus groups can enable the researcher to learn the language and vocabulary typically used by participants in talking about their activities, in this case to become familiar with hospitality "lingo", and,
- Focus groups provide conditions under which people feel comfortable discussing their experiences (Morgan & Spanish, 1984).

Focus groups prove useful in these situations because they allow researchers to gather diverse opinions, experiences and attitudes at the same time, and because their often relatively unstructured format allows for the discovery of unanticipated issues (Merton & Kendall, 1946). Despite the use of a carefully prepared focus group schedule, the lively discussions that result, often lead to unanticipated areas of interest, which can dramatically change the course of the research (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1992; Flores & Alonso, 1995).

Focus groups can help to explore or generate hypotheses (Powell & Single, 1996) and develop questions or concepts for questionnaires and interview guides, as was the case here. They were used to explore the stress experienced by a group of hospitality workers (Lankshear, 1993).

The recommended number of people per group is usually six to ten (MacIntosh, 1981), but some researchers have used up to fifteen people (Goss & Leinbach, 1996) or as few as four (Kitzinger, 1994, Kitzinger, 1995). In the case of this research report, ten (10) groups of six (6) participants were used per session. Each session lasted between 45-60 minutes. Neutral locations can be helpful for avoiding either negative or positive associations with a particular site or building (Powell & Single, 1996). In this instance, a conference room was used, as it was the easiest way to get participants together.

A set of the core questions was asked in each of the focus group discussions. The opening question in each focus group session was, "Why did you all decide to work in the hospitality industry?" This was intended to set the tone as non-threatening and thereby ease the participants into the ensuing conversation about stress and its associated outcomes (Morgan & Krueger, 1998). This first question was followed by a question relating to where participants have worked before, which department of the hotel is preferred and whether or not the participants intend on staying in the hospitality industry.

Finally, focus groups are not fully confidential or anonymous, because the material is shared with the others in the group (Morgan, 1988). This was overcome in this research by asking that no one mention names when talking about particular or personal stories.

3.6) The Process

The American Psychological Association (APA) accepted ethical procedures and practices were adopted throughout this study. Upon obtaining telephonic permission to contact the employee heads of departments within the hotel with a view to asking them to form part of the study/focus groups, the researcher gave a written undertaking to the organization and each participant that everything stated for the record would be kept confidential (Hoppe et al., 1995). This undertaking confirmed that confidential information (such as unit level or position within the organization) would not be sought, and outlined the areas and parameters of the study. A short report detailing the findings and recommendations of the study was also promised to the participating organization. The researcher contacted each of the potential hotels telephonically and spoke to a contact person (department head), who in turn helped to sort out the logistics of the focus groups (See Appendix 1 for Letter). The researcher explained who he was, how he obtained their numbers (from the Front Office Manager), and briefly explained the focus of the study (Stress in the hospitality industry in South Africa) and a bit about focus group research.

Participants were invited to participate as subjects in the study. Only two department heads agreed to participate, the rest of the department heads declined, due to work commitments, but were willing to allow their staff to participate in the research.

Upon acceptance for inclusion, all subjects received not only written confirmation of the time, date and venue for the focus group discussion, but those who had e-mail, received an e-mail as well together with a guarantee of confidentiality. They were also asked to

give some thought prior to the focus group discussion to the topic as explained to them in the letter (Informed Consent) they received prior to taking part (See Appendix 3).

Participants were thanked before and after each focus group session. They were also reminded of the purpose of the study and reminded that they were at liberty to refuse to answer any questions posed at any time if they so wished (this occurred twice).

3.7) The Role of the Facilitator

Once a session has been arranged, the role of facilitator becomes critical, especially in terms of providing clear explanations of the purpose of the group, helping people feel at ease, and facilitating interaction between group members (Morgan, 1988). In this instance, the researcher did the above by setting the scene and explaining to all the participants the purpose of the sessions.

During the session, the researcher focused on promoting debate. This was done by making use of and by asking some open-ended questions. Facilitators may also need to challenge participants, especially to draw out people's differences, and tease out a diverse range of meanings on the topic under discussion. The researcher often needed to probe for details, or move things forward when the conversation was drifting or reached a conclusion. In order to keep the session focused, the researcher had to deliberately steer the conversation back on course (Kitzinger, 1994).

3.8) Some Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations for focus groups are the same as for most other methods of social research (Homan, 1991). It is therefore necessary to consider the following: when selecting and involving participants, researchers must ensure that full information about the purpose and uses of participants' contributions is given. Being honest and keeping participants informed about the expectations of the group and topic, and not pressurizing

participants to speak is good practice. A particular ethical issue to consider in the case of focus groups is the handling of sensitive material and confidentiality given that there will always be more than one participant in the group (Morgan, 1988).

At the outset, facilitators will need to clarify that each participant's contributions will be shared with the others in the group as well as with the facilitator. Participants need to be encouraged to keep confidential what they hear during the focus group sessions and researchers have the responsibility to keep the data obtained anonymous from the group. All of the above issues were taken into account and explained upfront to participants (Kreuger, 1988). Any participant, who still felt uncomfortable, was allowed to leave.

3.9) Potential Benefits and Limitations

This section discusses some of the limitations and potential benefits of using focus groups with reference to this research.

It is not always easy to identify the most appropriate participants for a focus group (Morgan & Krueger, 1998; White & Thomson, 1995). Once the type of participant has been decided, locating them is the next challenge. Recruitment of participants can be time consuming, especially if the topic under consideration has no immediate benefits or attractions to participants. In this case, the topic under discussion was very relevant to the participants and thus it was not difficult to find willing participants (Hoppe, Wells, Morrison, Gilmore & Wilsdon, 1995).

On a more practical note, focus groups can be difficult to assemble. It may not be easy to get a representative sample and focus groups may discourage certain people from participating, for example those who are not very articulate or confident, and those who have communication problems or special needs. In the case of this research, assembling

people was not difficult as all enjoyed the break from the daily routine of work (Morgan 1997).

Focus groups were used because they are characterized by high levels of interaction. This interaction between participants highlights their view of the world, the language they use about an issue and their values and beliefs about a situation (Morgan, 1988). This interaction also enables participants to ask questions of each other, as well as to re-evaluate and reconsider their own understandings of their specific experiences. As with many industries, the hospitality industry has its own language as well. Making use of focus groups allows the researcher to speak the language of the industry and thereby get far richer data (Kitzinger, 1995). In this case, the hospitality industry was chosen because the researcher had worked in the hospitality industry for a number of years and was familiar with the industry. At the time of compiling this report though, the researcher was no longer involved in hospitality work.

Another benefit of focus groups is that they elicit information in a way which allows the researcher to find out why an issue is relevant, as well as what is relevant about it (Morgan, 1997). As a result, the gap between what people say and what they do can be better understood (Lankshear, 1993).

The focus groups were run over a two-week period at varying times, to accommodate the unusual working hours of the hospitality workers. The focus group guide was not given to participants ahead of time but instead they were told what the research was about before meeting (Race, Hotch & Parker, 1994). The schedule used in this research report was made up of a number of open-ended questions that were purposely set up and asked in a particular order, in order to stimulate debate, as discussed earlier in this section (race et al., 1994). The schedule was also used to prompt the researcher in instances where the discussion was faltering. Finally, the schedule was used to direct the discussion (Powell, Single & Lloyd, 1996).

3.10) Data Analysis and Interpretation

Like other qualitative methods, data collected through focus groups can be analysed in many different ways (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999), including narrative analysis or discourse analysis (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999), although usually some, kind of content or thematic analysis is performed.

The data analysis process used in this study was fundamentally a non-mathematical analytical procedure that involved examining the raw data in the form of typed transcripts in order to generate meaning from the participants' words and actions.

Strauss and Corbin (1990) suitably describe the approach to data analysis followed in the present study. They offer a view of the researcher who is primarily concerned with accurately describing what he or she has understood and reconstructs the data into a recognisable reality for the people who have participated in the study.

In order to make sense of all the raw data obtained during the focus group sessions, which consisted of five and a half hours (5.5 hrs) of tape-recorded responses, 50 pages of typed transcripts were compiled and analysed using the following steps:

3.10.1) Coding

In the present study as each transcript was read and reread, a short code was written in the margin next to data that could be potentially classified with similar data from other focus groups, into a pattern or theme. Repeated readings of transcripts enabled successive waves of condensing data into coherent clusters of themes (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

3.10.2) Setting and Entering the Display

In this method, as each new theme is selected for analysis, it is compared to all the other themes subsequently grouped (categorised). If there are no similar themes, a new

category is formed, thus allowing constant refinement of categories (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Each theme contained a number of summary phrases or quotes from participants.

3.10.3) Drawing conclusions

Reading across the rows of themes gives the researcher a brief profile of each theme and provides an initial test of the relationship between responses to different questions (Miles & Huberman, 1994). By analysing the information in this way, conceptual or theoretical coherence is established (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

3.11) Generating Meaning

The following steps / processes was used to generate meaning from the data obtained.

- 1) In the present study, clear patterns began to emerge from the data, in respect of both variables amongst categories of responses as well as processes within a certain context (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Distinct patterns emerged for example, with respect to some of the expectations held by participants concerning advancement.

With respect to establishing patterns, the researcher sought added evidence of the same theme from different focus groups whilst remaining open to disconfirming evidence, advice offered by Miles and Huberman (1994). In order to generate meaning from results, a researcher uses notions or concepts in order to explain facts that emerge from a study (Miles & Huberman, 1994). It is in this application of theory to data that meaning of results is generated (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

In order to generate meaning from all the raw data obtained, all the themes were highlighted using different colours. The three core themes were assigned a dark red, dark green and dark blue colour. All of the sub-themes

that fell under each of the core themes were assigned a lighter red, green and blue colour. For example, stressors were assigned a dark blue colour and all the sub-themes were assigned a light blue colour for easy reference. The same process was applied to the other core and sub-themes respectively (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999).

- 2) A further technique called counting was employed. As a term, this tends to be associated with quantitative research rather than qualitative. However “a lot of counting goes on in the background when judgements of qualities are being made” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p253). In the present study, when themes or patterns are identified, they are based on the fact that a number of responses or behaviours occurred consistently. Therefore, in this sense, counting is employed in order to report clear patterns of response from participants. Whilst actual numbers are not always used, words such as ‘most’ or ‘all’ imply that counting as a verifying tactic is used.
- 3) Drawing contrasts or comparisons between two sets of variables such as persons or events is a classic way of testing a conclusion (Miles & Huberman, 1994). On more than one occasion, contrasts are employed in the present study to offer reasons for differing responses from participants. Examples of consistent contrasts include different responses from those employed in the different departments of the hotel.

3.12) Quality of the Results

Those who subscribe to the positivist paradigm of research frequently question the quality of qualitative research. Qualitatively derived findings are often in doubt (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

As already, stated, qualitative research emphasises description, analysis and interpretation. Qualitative analysis attempts to be non-reductionistic and seeks to

preserve wholeness and continuity in the phenomenon analysed. The researcher has to exceed the description to have a rational understanding of what is studied and thereby give the analysed phenomenon a theoretical basis (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

One issue central to the quality of gathering data during the research process is the sensitivity that the researchers must retain to themselves as an instrument of the research (Morgan, 1988). This is critical, as the gathering of data through focus groups is a subjective experience. To aid this sensitivity, the process of 'epoche' is offered as a method by which the researcher suspends personal judgement of the data obtained during the phenomenological investigation in order to retain objectivity (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994).

The research process itself must be as free as possible from researcher bias in order to retain validity (Morgan, 1988).

Validity designates that something is credible and reliable and that what is stated really is the case (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Inter-subjective validation, that is, a common understanding exists between researcher and participant of what is being investigated, is particularly important in focus group research. During the data collection phase of the current study, this was achieved by the facilitator constantly presenting his understanding of what was being said back to the focus group participants for their confirmation (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999).

In order to assure the quality of the results, Miles and Huberman's (1994) five ways to ensure the quality of results of a qualitative study, including (1) Objectivity, (2) Reliability, (3) Internal Validity, (4) External Validity and (5) Application were used. Each will be discussed in turn.

3.12.1) Objectivity

Objectivity refers to whether the research process and its results can be assumed to be relatively neutral and free from researcher bias (Miles & Huberman, 1994). To ensure objectivity in this study, all methods and procedures followed were explicitly described and conclusions were linked directly to the obtained data.

3.12.2) Ensuring Reliability

The underlying issue here is whether the research process is consistent and reasonably stable over time and whether replicated studies would yield comparable results (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Although no two qualitative studies are likely to produce identical results, the researcher took care to ensure reliability by clearly specifying basic paradigms and analytic constructs because reliability depends in part, on its connectedness to theory (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Furthermore, data was collected and analysed by the researcher only, which eliminates multiple observer distortion.

3.12.3) Internal Validity

Internal validity refers to truth-value (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In other words, an assessment of the credibility of the findings. Apart from the fact that context rich descriptions that appear convincing were obtained, two main areas of reassurance in this regard can be noted with respect to the present study. Firstly, the findings are linked to prior theory and secondly, the conclusions are considered accurate by the original participants. Both these issues offer strong support for the internal validity of the current research.

3.12.4) External Validity

It is necessary to consider whether the conclusions of a study are transferable to other contexts (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In the present study, certain of the unique work environment issues may limit the transferability of the study. For example, the overwhelming 'service culture' that pervades every decision made. However, despite

this possible limitation, it should be possible to replicate the study in other large hospitality organisations because what is reported is of concern to other work environments beyond the hospitality one. Furthermore, external validity is enhanced by the fact that some of the findings are consistent with prior theory based research in different settings.

3.12.5) Application

Finally, studies are considered to have pragmatic validity if their findings lead to intelligent action (Miles & Huberman, 1994). It is hoped that the recommendations offered by the present study will be of value to both hospitality workers and hotel managers alike. Certainly the recommendations are intellectually and physically accessible to potential readers and do offer suggestions to guide action or at the very least, raise awareness of issues.

3.13) Chapter Summary

The method employed in this research report is qualitative in nature. Although often criticized by supporters of quantitative research, qualitative investigation and reporting thereof has increased in popularity within the social sciences. This is because qualitative research analysis produces rich contextual findings as in the case of this research (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999).

The current research investigated stress, consequences of stress and coping mechanisms employed by a group of hospitality workers. The responses obtained are a function of individual work personalities within a specific work environment. Therefore, qualitative research is ideally positioned to be employed in the current study.

This chapter details the choice of methodology and in particular, focus groups as a data collection method. Furthermore, this chapter has recorded the parameters of the sample selected for study and how the sample was obtained. A detailed description is offered of

the instrumentation employed, both in terms of content and in terms of method of application.

Finally, the chapter explains how issues pertaining to the quality of the research have been addressed in the present study. The following chapter records the findings of the study.

University of Cape Town

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

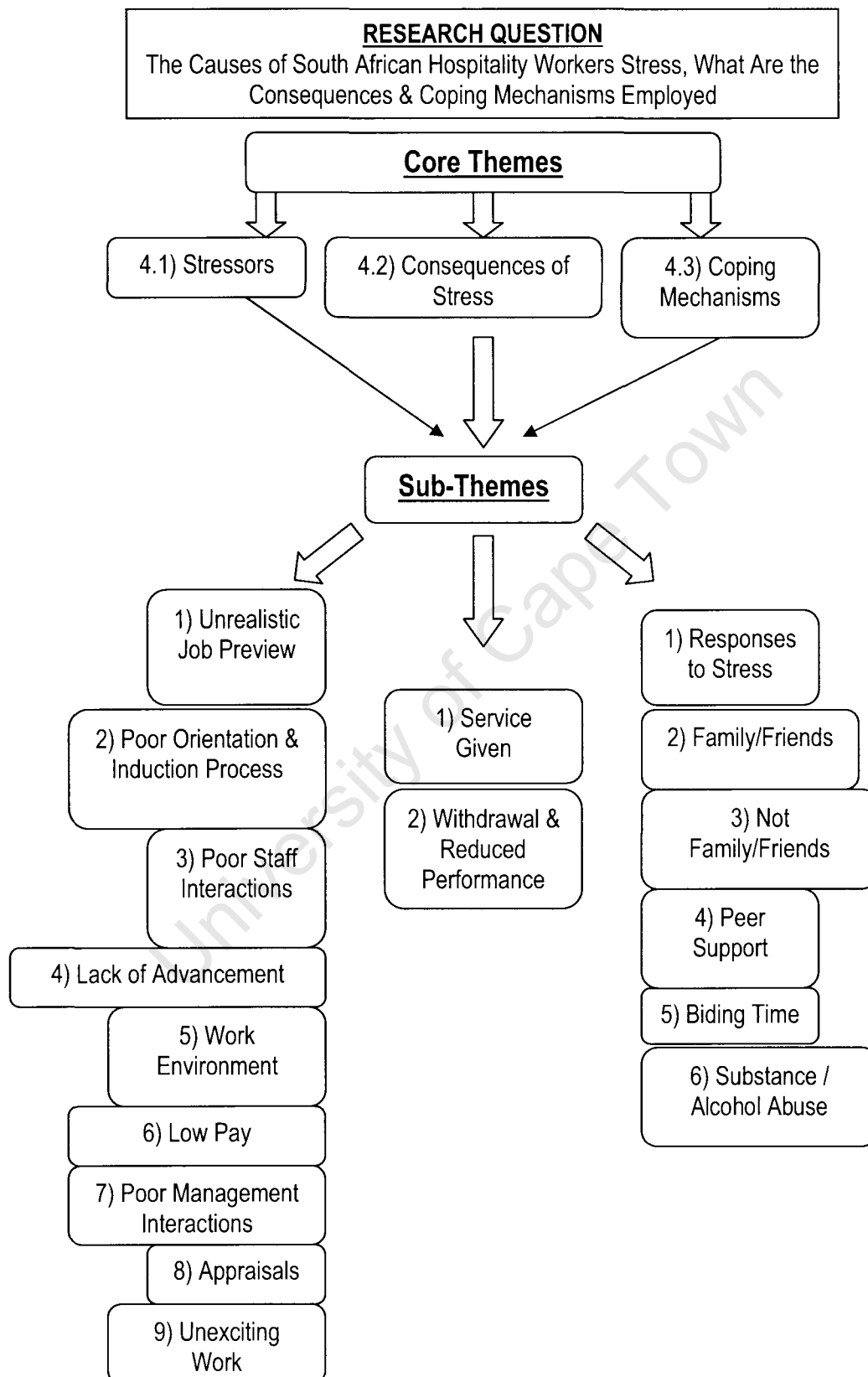
This chapter articulates the answers given by participants during the focus group sessions. All the questions were related to the main research question looking at what causes South African hospitality workers stress, what the consequences are and coping mechanisms employed. This chapter further reflects the results obtained from a thematic analysis of the responses given by the participants during the focus group sessions. Ten sessions, with six participants per session were used. This chapter is structured according to the patterns or themes of responses / comments that emerged from the results. Each theme is defined and briefly explained, followed by a summary of the collective responses of the participants. Direct quotations from individuals within the focus groups are presented in italics in order to illustrate results. Selective quotations are provided as well, many of which reflect the views of many of the focus group participants.

There were three primary themes that emerged from this research, each having a number of sub-themes.

- The first primary theme that emerged out of this research was that of *Stressors*.
- The second primary theme that emerged was that of *Consequences of Stress*. Specifically, the areas or sub-themes in which outcomes are faced include the appraisal of work standards, the repercussions of particular coping strategy and career advancement issues.
- The third primary theme, *Coping Mechanisms* includes the various coping mechanisms employed by hospitality workers to cope with their daily experiences of stress on the job. Sub-themes of Coping Mechanisms include the strategies employed, how they employ them and when they are employed.

Figure 3 below is a diagrammatic representation of the results obtained in this research.

Figure 3 – Diagrammatic Representation of Research & Results



4.1) Stressors

This section articulates the issues that the participants described as contributing to their stress.

4.1.1) Unrealistic Job Preview

This theme relates to how the job was portrayed to prospective employees of the organisation. The first factor, which emerged as contributing to stress, was the recruitment experience of participants. It appears that certain expectations are created in the minds of job applicants when they read recruitment advertisements, *“You know they advertise the jobs as exciting, cutting edge, that’s what caught my eye – we’re to be working at one of the biggest and newest hotels in South Africa – that should be very exciting. Then it slowly hit – you are just another worker, like all the other workers around you. Therefore, that is misleading ‘cos you know, newest – that’s exciting stuff.”* The above are related to being given a realistic job preview/expectation of working life.

An overwhelming number of participants recalled the recruitment process as one that stimulated excitement towards their new role of employee. However, a minority of all participants disagreed. Three participants mentioned, *“Being warned”* during the interview about the slow pace of change in the organisation. They therefore anticipated slow changes and decided before joining that they would be able to cope with this.

4.1.2) Poor Orientation and Induction Process

This relates to how employees were acculturated into the organisation. The second key sub-theme to emerge was that of the orientation and induction process.

It emerged that participants were not prepared enough for the work that they were going to do through the above processes. This feeling of anxiety and unpreparedness was confirmed when they began working in their respective departments. Eight of the

participants reported high levels of anxiety upon reaching their departments. Not all of these experiences were at the same hotel as nine started working in other units / locations. Nonetheless, all felt insecure and inexperienced, *“I was lost, completely lost, I thought, ‘how am I going to manage?’”* Another said, *“I didn’t have a clue what was going on around me.”* Ten participants were assigned to departments that did not anticipate their arrival, *“No one knew what I was supposed to be doing, and they actually asked me what I was doing there and how long I was supposed to be there.”*

The induction process did not prepare participants for how they would be received in their departments. This reception served to heighten feelings of alienation amongst participants. However, once placed within a particular department in the organisation, the participants settled down to *“work”*. This leads into the second core theme of this research labelled *Consequences of Stress*. This theme addresses the multiple areas in which participants’ expectations were tested against reality and in many cases, disconfirmed.

4.1.3) Poor Staff Interaction

This theme relates to how staff relate to each other. The interaction between most of the young newly appointed employees and colleagues is often fraught with tension and conflict partly due to fear and jealousy, *“The older staff dislikes us and will not help us out.”* This presents immense difficulty for the correct and smooth assimilation into the organisation of newcomers.

They all expressed a genuine desire to learn from each other and readily acknowledged their lack of exposure to hospitality issues within the hotel. *“You’re completely cut off, you only do your job and everyone knows this.”*

At least eleven participants report coping with this conflict by behaving in a normal and respectful fashion. Three participants ascribed playing soccer for the company’s social

club team as an effective method of breaking down barriers between staff. This is also used as a good stress relief and coping mechanism. It also helps with enhancing work-related interactions.

4.1.4) Lack of Advancement Opportunities

Another factor that emerged in this research concerns the career mobility issue of advancement. As a group, the participants display ambition and have given thought to promotion and the advancement of their careers. All but two have clear time frames, which range from one to five years in order to achieve self-stated objectives. However, the reality of slow progression through the organisations' ranks has caused many to adjust their expectations. One participant mentions, *"I know that I am not going to be promoted anytime soon, so I must just accept that"*. Another of the participants remarked, *"I will find another job before they promote me because it takes so long here"*. This seemed to be the norm in this organisation.

Apart from extrinsic motives for increasing their knowledge, a number report wanting to *"learn new things"*, to compensate for feeling *"let down"* or *"stuck"* in their current positions. Concern is expressed that *"I am not moving"*. In order to address this issue, half of the participants are engaged in some form of further education. These include certificate courses, diploma courses and short in-house courses management. Others report developing their skills in work related projects, like catering outside of the organisation in order to *"get the upper hand"*.

Seven participants expressly rejected the idea of becoming a manager. Their reasons include *"too much paperwork"*, *"you need to please everyone"* and *"I dislike conflict"*. One dislikes the idea of being a manager but knows he would be good at it because *"I am good with people"*. Of those that are keen to manage people, most would still like to retain some technical responsibilities.

4.1.5) Work Environment

Within the work environment, participants have to adjust their perceptions of time (shift work), responsibility and interpersonal interactions and this contributes to the stress experienced. Beyond the work place, they have to adjust to changes in their personal lives that are typical of hospitality work. Some of these changes are:

- Less free time
- Working on weekend/public holidays
- Shift work
- Days off during the week

4.1.6) Low Pay

Finally, the perception of participants around *financial reward* will be addressed. This theme relates to how much participants were paid.

Thirteen of the sixty participants report being satisfied with the financial rewards they currently receive. It is important to note that two of these thirteen were managers. Traditionally, managers are paid more than line staff. However, one stated, "*Well, money is definitely not good here, but the young single person who is ambitious and hard working, that might to keep him or her going*". Other participants echoed this statement as well.

A number of participants admitted that their financial expectations were perhaps unrealistic from the outset. "*You know you expect to be able to buy whatever you want, but that doesn't quite work*".

4.1.7) Poor Management Interactions

This relates to how management interacts with line staff. The majority of participants (41) reported that having a good relationship with their manager was a mediating factor. The majority of participants (41) report polite, helpful interaction from their managers.

However, at least six participants, of whom two were management, felt that this respect had to be earned through job performance and was not granted automatically. Some felt that respect was only given once you *“had paid your dues”* or *“done your time”*, implying that they received respect based upon their own input even though *“line staff are viewed as low down when it comes to the food chain”*.

In the main, the majority of participants seemed comfortable with this status quo. Thirteen participants recalled very negative experiences when working for previous organisations where offensive language was used freely and they appreciate that this is not the case in the present organisation.

Respect and credibility are clearly important values to these individuals. As one put it, *“I want to be known as a front office clerk who knows his stuff”*. Often it is felt that to gain this credibility, it is important to be noticed by the *“right people”* and the onus for this rests upon the individuals concerned.

Participants, who, by their own definition, describe themselves as quiet-natured, encounter difficulty with this aspect of being noticed. On three occasions, participants reported observing managers *“just talking a lot”* in meetings as a way of attracting attention without offering constructive input. This is regarded contemptuously by those doing the observing, *“If you can blow your own horn, you go up the ladder”*.

4.1.8) Appraisals

This sub-theme of consequences addresses the actual appraisal of daily tasks performed by the hospitality workers, by their managers. Appraisals whose purpose is to assess those ready for promotion, salary increases and those who are not performing to the desired level of performance, are done twice a year. An overwhelming number of participants (50) blame their low appraisal scores on work stress. They feel that if they could spend more time concentrating on their jobs, and less time being stressed, they would perform far better.

4.1.9) Repetitious and Unexciting Work

This sub-theme relates to the fact that most tasks performed are repetitive and most of the working day is made up of unexciting work. Because of the high levels of stress, all work becomes repetitious and unexciting as work is completed purely to allow for the next task to be completed. This seemed to be the order of the day. Many participants reported that initially they were excited, but later reported being bored with trivial, uninteresting tasks assigned to them that require *“very little brain work”*. *“What I expected was to interface with the guest more so that I could speed up my process of learning hospitality work. However, I did not. Check-in, check-out, every day. That was a bit much.”* One participant said: *“You know you have these fantastic hopes that you will be doing this amazing work or being involved in something life changing, you know, but that expectation is shattered quickly because you end up doing check-in and check-outs all day, every day and this creates stress for us.”*

Six of the participants reported being surprised by the presence of outdated technology (e.g. still using metal keys and not key cards to open room doors). A hotel of this size is perceived to be a stimulating environment offering exposure to cutting-edge hospitality technology.

Of the participants who reported satisfaction (15 participants) with the nature of their duties, seven have been with the organisation less than four months, two have just had a temporary promotion, two are directly employed in the hotel operations department, and three like the work but *“do not feel fully utilised”*. The fifteenth individual describes himself as being *“in a unique position”*, because he is the IT engineer.

Although the majority of participants reported being stimulated, challenged, and less stressed at work only when they were assigned to a specific, meaningful task, they still felt that their expectations were not being fully met by the organisation. *“We do not feel like the organisation is doing enough for us to keep our minds busy”*. The two managers interviewed expressed the view that *“creative opportunities in the hospitality field are*

only possible outside South Africa and that they may have to travel abroad to find the stimulation they seek". As a postscript to this, one of the two managers interviewed has since left her position and is travelling and working in the United Kingdom.

The general feeling of most of the participants with respect to the nature of the work that they perform is one of disillusionment, frustration and a lack of opportunity to show what they can offer. The repetitiveness of work and the unrealistic expectations further contribute to the stress experienced. In the words of one participant, *"hospitality workers are high energy people, but when you get here all you do is maintain your job"*. This sentiment was endorsed by most of the participants and is another consequence of working in a very stressful environment.

4.2) Consequences of Stress

The second primary theme that emerged in this study reflects the consequences of stress for participants in key areas of their daily working lives. The specific sub-themes identified in the analysis of the data, which are addressed in this section include two groups of issues related to: (a) service given and (b) job withdrawal / reduced performance.

4.2.1) Responses to Stress

What emerged from the focus group sessions were what participants' responses were to the stress they experience. The participants articulated that their responses to stress can be labelled as 'active', that is, they try to change the situation, or 'reactive', that is, they try to change themselves. Actions taken by participants include initiating contact with mentors, finding their own mentors, pushing to attend training courses and even sourcing external training courses they felt they needed, *"and believe you me, I went to look for courses"*.

Further actions included asking for work if they felt underutilised, demanding transfers even if it required bypassing conventional channels of communication and enrolling for further studies with or without financial support from the organisation.

Despite these active responses, many of which are still practiced, five participants report shifting their response to one of 'reactiveness' after a period of time. One participant reasoned that *"I have to adapt or find a place where I can live out what I expected but I've got lots of bills to pay and a family so ..."*

Two others report feeling that a change has been subtly wrought in their attitude, *"It's a terrible thing because one day you realise 'wait a minute, there's something wrong, I never used to be like this'"*. Another recognises having become *"complacent"* after *"banging his head against the wall"*. Of those who experience frustration at work, most employ one or other coping mechanism to deal with their feelings.

4.2.2) Service Given

One reason given for the substandard service relates to the stress experienced on the job. *"I feel so stressed all the time that I can not do my job properly"*. Another reason could be related to the lack of training mentioned in this report as well as inadequate resource utilisation. *"If we had the tools to do our job, we would score 100% on guest surveys"*.

In this study, participants repeatedly expressed the fact that they knew they were not giving the service that they should or that the organisation desired. When the participants in this study experienced frustration at being unable to give the service that they would like to give, they experience even greater levels of stress and they react by channelling their energy into activities beyond the work environment.

4.2.3) Job Withdrawal / Reduced Performance

What emerged from the focus group sessions were what participants mentioned regarding the above. An overwhelming number of participants reported that they felt that *"they*

were not giving guests the correct level service”. “We do not perform well because the stress is so high”. Job withdrawal was also mentioned as a contributing factor.

4.3) Coping Mechanisms

The final core theme to emerge from this research with respect to stress is how the participants employ coping mechanisms to reduce their stress. This section reports on the mechanisms employed by participants in coping with stress.

4.3.1) Use of Family & Friends

The majority of focus group participants indicated that their primary coping strategy was to use other people to help cope with the stress of the job. Most reported that they have always used other people to help “cope” and said that they would continue to do so in the future. The people most often used to help cope were a combination of family members, close friends, work colleagues and, lastly, spiritual leaders.

A desire to use people who understand their situation, “*know how things work in hotels*” and “*know how one feels*” reflects empathy and concern on the part of the “other” person that seems to be lacking in hotel managers. The field of hospitality work is perceived as dynamic and, at the same time, very stressful, as one focus group participant put it, “*I don’t like working in a work that is the same every day with no stress*”.

Secondary motives for this choice of career include the need for a career that is considered being ‘professional’ and likely in the longer term to result in good financial rewards once one progresses up the ladder. One participant expressed his motivation for working in the hospitality industry as follows, “*I wanted a more worldly feeling. I wanted to leave something behind when I am not there anymore. So it’s more of a spiritual, emotional type of thing where I can contribute to improving the daily life of guests.*”

Participants employ distinctly different mechanisms in order to cope with work adjustment. Some relieve frustration external to the organisation through activities or family contact. Others rely on peer support within the organisation, like colleagues. A further group consciously decide not to adjust themselves but bide their time whilst seeking opportunities to disengage from the organisation.

4.3.2) Mechanisms Other Than Family / Friends

This relates to external methods used to cope. Outside of the work environment, eleven participants re-channel their energy, for which they find no outlet at work, into other projects. This energy goes into playing football, studying formally for advanced degrees, increasing their learning by engaging in projects at home and seeking sources of mental stimulation, *“You’ve got to keep the momentum going”*.

One participant, who describes himself as a loner, makes use of introspection to cope. He mentioned that he spends a lot of time going on long walks along the beachfront to “clear his head” and to think about the day’s events. Two further methods of coping include contact with family members and spiritual matters.

The majority of participants (48) revealed strong ties with their immediate or extended families. Those married or in stable relationships display distinctly greater acceptance of work related disappointment than those who are single. Possibly these relationships compensate for unachieved work goals. Certainly, participants report being able to talk and share their feelings with their partners: *“My wife really helps me cope”*.

Five participants mentioned that they have a profound spiritual commitment to religion ranging from mainstream to peripheral faiths. Prayer and meditation offer not only comfort, but the worship of a higher power appears to offer a broad perspective of life. This enables individuals to contextualise work related frustration, *“I think about God and ask will I go to hell if I don’t meet this deadline and if the answer is ‘no’ then I don’t get worked up over it”*.

4.3.3) Peer Support

Participants stated that they make use of others to help cope with stress. By far the most utilised method of coping at work is the employment of peer support. Twelve of the participants frequently refer to “*learning the ropes*” from other young employees within the organisation, “*I picked it up from the guys as they spoke*”. Another said, “*Luckily I had someone next to me who knew what the set up was*”.

Evidently contact with others who understand what the individual is experiencing helps significantly, “*There was another guy in my office; I think he was my link to sanity.*” These interactions with colleagues develop into friendships and relieve the pressure felt by newcomers. It appears that peers provide a support network, which is a positive method of coping as one participant put it, “*I would not have been able to last here, had I not had help from my colleagues here at work*’.

4.3.4) Biding Time

Concerning this sub-theme, participants mentioned that many of them acknowledge that this is not a permanent job and that they are on the lookout for other work. Therefore, while they are employed by the hotel, they cope with the stress by knowing that they are just passing the time until something better and less stressful comes up, as one put it, “*There’s not much else I can do. I mean there’s no point in fighting with reality*”.

Five participants indicated clear intentions to leave the organisation in the near future, particularly if their career ambitions were not met within what they perceive as an acceptable time frame, “*I mean, I’m not going to stay here forever*” and “*I don’t imagine myself working in any company for longer than five years*”.

Some of those studying further are doing so to “*remain marketable*”. Clearly, contact with individuals in other organisations has created the perception that better opportunities for advancement exist outside the organisation, “*It will take five years here. That is too*

long for me. I'm young, I want to do things quickly and the experience you get here in one year is probably the same as half a year in the outside world."

Another participant tells of friends working under pressure in smaller organisations, which he perceives as stimulating, *"It's not like here where you come to work and relax"*. By far the majority of the individuals interviewed display a strong desire to remain living in Cape Town.

4.3.5) Substance / Alcohol Abuse

None of the participants suggested that they have a problem with substance abuse, but a number mentioned that they do make use of these substances on occasion to help relieve the stress.

4.4) Chapter Summary

This chapter records the results obtained in this research as derived from focus group sessions conducted with the participants. Attention is given to stressors, consequences of this stress together with the coping methods employed. This qualitative approach reveals a holistic, coherent picture of the life world of the participant's with respect to their experiences at work.

The chapter is a thematic representation of results, grouped into three primary themes. The first theme, stressors, includes the factors, which contributed to participants stress.

The second core theme records the consequences of this stress, while the third core theme reflects the coping methods employed.

The following chapter relates the results obtained, to prior literature and research conducted in the field.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

This chapter offers a discussion of the results obtained in this study as interpreted in light of prior research in the field. The analysis and contextualisation of these results in the hospitality industry is critical to their understanding in order to extract meaning from this research. To this end, the results of this study require location within the context of the broad research on stress and coping, a field of study within organisational psychology and psychology. Stress occurs when an individual is overloaded with work or has to fulfil multiple roles in the execution of his daily work and private life (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2006).

This chapter is structured according to the three core themes that emerged from the results of this study. The first theme, *Stressors*, considers the construct as it applies to this study. The second theme, *Consequences of Stress*, focuses on responses because of the stress experienced. Finally, *Coping Mechanisms* addresses how and what hospitality workers do to cope with the stress that they experience.

Each section of this chapter contains a brief summary of the results obtained, followed by a discussion thereof as supported by similar findings in the field.

The following discussion offers a theoretical context in which the results of the present study can be understood.

5.1) Stressors

This section discusses the issues that the participants described as contributing to their stress and links it with the literature.

5.1.1) Unrealistic Job Preview

Childhood experiences of going to or seeing a hotel led many participants to decide to become hospitality workers in adulthood. They expected to be involved in a dynamic and ever changing environment, which would improve their social standing and income

potential. The participants in this study chose to become hospitality workers primarily because of their expectations around the nature of the work. It therefore came as a shock to them that daily responsibilities were significantly more routine than anticipated and they were forced to adapt accordingly.

Nelson and Quick (2003), explain that people entering the world of work may expect to receive explicit instructions on what to do. When this does not happen, or they are not told about the long hours and hard work, stress develops. This theme relates to how the job was portrayed to prospective employees of the organisation. The first factor, which emerged as contributing to stress, was the recruitment experience of participants.

According to McShane and Von Glinow (2005), giving prospective job applicants a realistic job preview reduces turnover, increases the chances of making the correct hiring decisions and allows the candidates to decide if this is the organisation that they want to work for.

It appears that certain expectations are created in the minds of job applicants when they read recruitment advertisements, *“You know they advertise the jobs as exciting, cutting edge, that’s what caught my eye – we’re to be working at one of the biggest and newest hotels in South Africa – that should be very exciting. Then it slowly hit – you are just another worker, like all the other workers around you. Therefore, that is misleading ‘cos you know, newest – that’s exciting stuff.”* Nelson and Quick (2003) posit the view that this leads to unhappy, unmotivated employees and withdrawal behaviour and ultimately high turnover. This type of advertising only adds to the creation of unrealistic job expectations in the minds of the applicants and sets them up for disappointment.

On the other hand, an overwhelming number of participants recalled the recruitment process as one that stimulated excitement towards their new role of employee. However, a minority (21) of participants disagreed. This could on the other hand be a result of these respondents finding out about the organisation before joining (Champoux, 2006).

5.1.2) Poor Orientation and Induction Process

Induction is the period, which covers the first few days, or a week after the person actually joins the organisation (Johns & Saks, 2005). It is intended to ease the new employee into the work environment by orienting and reassuring the individual, who may be feeling apprehensive (Johns & Saks, 2005). In the present study, it was found typically, that newcomers to the hotel attend a two-day orientation course that takes place on the job. This course orientates them to the layout of the hotel, indicates the 'no-go' or "guest areas" and outlines the importance of on the job safety. Four participants only attended this course after two months at work. This was explained away as being a result of work demands and the fact that no department could afford to lose employees for two days of orientation.

5.1.3) Poor Staff Interaction

Beehr (1998) suggests that behaving in a respectful way to superiors can lead to better work interactions and thereby reduce stress levels significantly. The findings in this study suggest that participants feel that poor staff interactions are causing them undue stress. This further suggest that even though a number of the participants do not get on with their managers, they are still respectful. Three participants ascribed playing soccer for the company soccer team as an effective method of breaking down barriers between line staff and management. This was further mentioned as a good stress reliever and coping mechanism, as well as enhancing work-related interactions.

5.1.4) Lack of Advancement Opportunities

One participant mentions, "I know that I am not going to be promoted anytime soon, so I must just accept that". Another of the participants remarked, "I will find another job before they promote me because it takes so long here". The findings in this study seem to suggest that participants are aware of the slow progression through the ranks of the organisation, but are none the less still working for the organisation. The lack of advancement appears to also be a de-motivator for a number (31) of the participants. These findings are in keeping with Kinman and Jones (2005), who suggest that an

individual's beliefs in relation to lack of advancement are likely to affect their perceptions, and hence their work related actions (such as absenteeism).

5.1.5) Work Environment

Rice, (1992) suggests that in order to deal with these stressors people need to employ various personal strategies to cope with this stress. These have been discussed previously in this report but are alluded to again as they are deemed important. Maintaining a good and healthy social life is one way to reduce the stress of hospitality work. Another is to engage in creative activities outside work, so that days off are spent meaningfully (Gibson, Ivancevich and Donnelly, 1987). A further approach is to use time away from work in a meaningful way, be it spending time with family and friends or catching up on chores or activities.

5.1.6) Low Pay

This sub-theme relates to how much participants are paid. Research has shown that money is an important factor in satisfying individual needs (Hoon & Lim, 2001). Furthermore, money is said to symbolise personal accomplishments and, consequently, relates to growth needs (Hoon & Lim, 2001).

A number of participants admitted that their financial expectations were perhaps unrealistic from the outset. *"You know you expect to be able to buy whatever you want, but that doesn't quite work out on this salary"*. Research by Hoon and Lim (2001) tends to support this finding. They mentioned that an employee's expectation of salary is often inaccurate to start with. The employee often wants or expects more than the organisation is willing to pay (Goffman, 1959).

5.1.7) Poor Management Interactions

This finding indicates that participants have to adjust to interacting on a daily basis with a culturally diverse workforce. In this study, antagonisms emerge particularly between new employees and management. Apart from racial differences, disparity in age,

education, experience and remuneration compound the friction. The participants report having to exercise humility in order to gain co-operation from co-workers and managers. They also modify their patterns of speech and vocabulary when interacting with different sub-groups of co-workers.

In South Africa, culturally diverse workgroups add a further dimension to the workplace in general because our ideological past imposed severe restrictions on inter-cultural interaction. Simply put, employees are now forced to work with managers who have different values and perceptions shaped by diverse cultural backgrounds.

Tensions between managers and employees are cited as common problems in organisations (Schreuder & Theron, 1997). They ascribe this tension to the difference between the textbook approach of problem solving by younger employees and the experience based approach of older employees. Schreuder and Theron (1997) suggest that older employees often feel threatened by younger employees but that this threat is more a reminder of their mortality than of concern for their position in the organisation.

Participants in this study appear to recognise and understand the reasons for the antagonism they experience and are mature enough to cope with it by not responding aggressively. Although they do not like the situation, they are prepared to moderate their approach in order to contain outright conflict. The organisation needs to consider ways to address the negative impact of underlying conflict between employees and management.

5.1.8) Appraisals

This sub-theme addresses the actual appraisal of daily tasks performed by the hospitality workers. Appraisals are the process through which the organisation gets information on how well an employee is doing in his or her job (Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart & Wright, 2003). Because of work stress, many participants felt that their scores were unfairly low, because they were just doing what had to be done and no more, due to the high levels of daily stress. Of the sixty participants, forty-four reported major dissatisfaction with the

nature of the distribution of duties as well as the way their performance was appraised. Because of the above, a number of participants mentioned that this was one of the causes of unhappiness and stress at work. It appears that this process is viewed with suspicion and mistrust. The organisation needs re-look at its appraisal process.

5.1.9) Repetitious and Unexciting Work

According to Noe et al., (2003) in order to alleviate this boredom, new and innovative ways to do the work need to be developed. They further suggest that a move away from routine could also be used where employees do not do the same tasks day in and day out. The idea of job rotation or job enlargement could be employed here (Noe et al., 2003).

Six of the participants reported being surprised by the presence of outdated technology (e.g. still using metal keys and not key cards to open room doors). *“A hotel of this size is perceived to be a stimulating environment offering exposure to cutting-edge hospitality technology”*. This was explained by management as being something that was in the process of being rectified. The organisation had just signed a deal with Siemens to supply new IT equipment. The use of IT is one way to keep your competitive edge in an industry that always looking to use technology to make work easier (Mullins, 1998). Although the majority of participants reported being stimulated, challenged, and less stressed at work only when they were assigned to a specific, meaningful task, they still felt that their expectations were not being fully met by the organisation. Johns and Sacks (2005) support this contention of being stimulated at work by being assigned specific, meaningful tasks. The two managers interviewed expressed the view that creative opportunities in the hospitality field are only possible outside South Africa and that they may have to travel abroad to find the stimulation they seek. Management appears to understand this thrust to leave for overseas to not only gain international experience, but to expand opportunities. This is an international phenomenon and not restricted to the hotel used for this research. Almost as a way of validating this finding, one of the two managers interviewed left her position to work abroad.

The general feeling of most of the participants with respect to the nature of the work that they perform is one of disillusionment, frustration and a lack of opportunity to show what they can offer. The repetitiveness of work and the unrealistic expectations further contribute to the stress experienced.

5.2) Consequences of Stress

The second primary theme that emerged in this study reflects the consequences of stress for participants in key areas of their daily working lives. The specific sub-themes identified in the analysis of the data, which are addressed in this section, include three groups of issues related to:

- 5.2.1: Service given
- 5.2.2: Advancement
- 5.2.3: Job withdrawal / quitting and reduced job performance

5.2.1) Service Given

Excessive on the job stress in the hospitality industry can translate into poor service given to guests (Mullins, 1998). Because of the on-the-job stress experienced, the service that they give to guests is in most cases, substandard.

The above points not only legitimise the role that hospitality workers play in the process and hence in the organisation's success, it also defines the role that management play in the process of outcomes. As the persons spend more and more time in a work environment, they start to identify for themselves which important issues are being addressed by management, and often take their cues from their actions (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984)). This may or may not lead to positive outcomes for all concerned. In this study, participants repeatedly expressed the fact that they knew they were not giving the service that they should or that the organisation desired. This concept of

identifying for themselves is what is important to the participants with regard to the content and outcome of their work.

When the participants in this study experienced frustration at being unable to give the service that they would like to give, they experienced even greater levels of stress and they reacted by channelling their energy into activities beyond the work environment. Research by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1988), supports this finding and note that individuals who hold the service imperative as core to the job experience have great difficulty in coping with routine organisational processes and often get bored or leave. This research corroborates these findings. Participants in this study also expressed these sentiments. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) explained that service oriented individuals sometimes cope better in rule-bound organisations by channelling their energies elsewhere. This research's findings confirm this, as many of the participants were wanting to leave, but did not have other employment, so were forced to stay with the organisation.

5.2.2) Advancement

This finding is supported by research in other countries, such as the United States and the United Kingdom, which has shown that young hospitality workers who start out in the hospitality profession hold a strong desire for development and are generally ambitious and in search of advancement (Quick & Quick, 1984).

Pierce and Gardener (2002) noted that individuals who identify promotion as important for themselves make career choices and decisions based on the actual content of the work they do. Research has shown that those employees who are experiencing higher than normal levels of stress are not good candidates for advancement, because they are just trying to get by and are not impressing in their work output (Stafford, 1994). The ability to get the job done and thereby receive promotion is directly related to their feelings of competence in their assigned jobs. This means that they are not interested in management per se, but will accept management responsibilities within their functional

area of competence. In this study, it is clearly the field of hospitality management. Further understanding of this finding is offered by Tansik (1990) who suggested that some individuals do not seek the managerial route for advancement of their careers because of the higher commitment and broader responsibilities such positions demand.

Thus, it is clear that in order to retain these individuals in this organisation, careful note should be taken of how to offer advancement and promotion opportunities to all who seek and have the ability to do so.

5.2.3) Job Withdrawal / Quitting and Performance

Intentions are, according to researchers such as Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) and Igarria and Greenhaus (1992), the most immediate determinants of actual behaviour. They are also of practical merit from a research perspective, as once people have actually implemented the behaviour to quit; there is little likelihood of gaining access to them to understand their prior situation.

Among the variables consistently found to relate to intention to quit are:

- The experience of job-related stress (job stress);
- The range of factors that lead to job-related stress (stressors);
- .Lack of commitment to the organization; and;
- .Job dissatisfaction (Igarria & Greenhaus, 1992).

These variables can be mediated by personal or dispositional factors and by environmental or organizational factors. Among the personal factors that mediate between stressors and intention to quit are aspects of personal agency, self-esteem and social support (Avison & Gotlib, 1994).

Thus, it is clear from the above, that the above factors are important in understanding participant's intention to quit or poor on the job performance.

The following section explains the findings of this study with respect to the coping responses of the participants to the stress they experience on the job.

5.3) Coping Mechanisms

As mentioned in the previous chapter, one of the primary themes, coping, reflected the variables that collectively were used by participants in this study. The findings of this study and the literature reviewed clearly show that robust coping strategies are a crucial part of daily survival in the hospitality industry. They believed that they would be rewarded for their hard work and any innovative contributions they would make to the smooth running of their respective departments. In many cases, this belief never materialised, as more often than not, participants were given very little in the form of rewards.

The results of this study suggest that individuals currently engaged in working for this organisation employ a variety of methods to cope with the stress that they experience. The participants in this study report high levels of frustration in respect of time to get things done as well as the nature of the work they perform. In these respects, the participants are 'stressed'.

This distress may manifest itself behaviourally, psychologically or physiologically and result in costs to the organisation culminating in staff turnover (Nelson & Quick, 2003). Tansik (1990) argued that individuals typically begin their careers with very high expectations of what they can achieve for themselves. Failure to achieve these expectations leads to stress and possible low job satisfaction. When stress is experienced, individuals employ coping strategies to deal with it, as is the case with these employees.

Redirecting energy that is not satisfactorily expended at work into projects outside of the organisation, is a third common strategy employed by participants. By seeking spiritual fulfilment, participants find outlets for their frustration at work. Schein (1978) identifies

redirecting energy into other interests as typical of individuals wanting to cope with work stress.

As shown above, hospitality workers employ a number of coping strategies to help them deal with the stress that they experience on the job. There are many different types of coping strategies available (Ornelas & Kleiner, 2003). Participants in this research fell into the following categories:

Emotion focussed:

- “Me Time” or Time Alone
- Religious

Work focused:

- Close Colleagues/Peers

Personal focused:

- Friends or Family
- Significant Others/Partners

Other:

- Sport/Recreational Activities
- Alcohol

From the above list of coping mechanisms hospitality workers often use a variety of methods to help with relieving the stress experienced. There is support for the above in the literature. Rice (1992) mentioned a number of the above coping mechanisms as ways to reduce stress. Although these methods were employed, they were not always successful. Participants mentioned that it was not always easy to forget about the stress at work when one leaves work or goes home. Cox and Griffiths (1995) suggested that making use of the above coping strategies could minimize the impact of stress and alleviate its negative consequences.

5.3.1) Coping Strategies – External Mechanisms

5.3.1.1) Peer Support

By far the most utilised method of coping at work is the employment of peer support. According to McShane and Von Glinow (2005), the use of peers to cope with stress at work is one of the most common methods employed. Employees like to use peers because they can relate to what they are feeling or going through, often because they are experiencing the same things (Johns & Saks, 2005). Another reason for using peers is that they are easily accessed (Champoux, 2006). The research findings support the literature around peer support. These interactions with colleagues develop into friendships and relieve the pressure felt by newcomers. Peers provide a support network, which is a positive method of coping (Nelson & Quick, 2003).

Social support has been shown to play an important role in mitigating intention to quit, although not all findings have agreed. Moore (2002) found that social support from supervisors reduced the level of nurses' burnout and indirectly, through reduced levels of burnout, reduced nurses' intention to quit. Other researchers like (e.g. Kelly & Cross, 1985) have found that rather than supervisors' support, it is the support gained from talking with peers, family and friends that is frequently cited as a source of stress reduction.

The vast majority of participants reported relying on some form of social support network, be it colleagues, friends or family.

5.3.1.2) Biding Time

The participants mentioned that for many of them, they knew that this is not a permanent job and that they are on the lookout for other work. Therefore, while they are employed by the hotel, they cope with the stress by knowing that they are just passing the time until something better and possibly less stressful comes up.

Some of those studying further are doing so to “*remain marketable*” (Robbins et al., 2001). Clearly, contact with individuals in other organisations has created the perception that better opportunities for advancement exist outside the organisation.

A further motivation to leave the organisation would be more money, although by far the majority of the participants display a strong desire to remain living and working in Cape Town.

5.4) Summary

This chapter offers discussion and interpretation of the results of this study. Three core themes have been identified, stressors, consequences of stress and coping mechanisms employed. All of these three themes can be understood within the broad literature around organisational stress and coping.

The first core theme discussed in this chapter refers to the stressors as experienced by participants in this study and their respective responses. Generally, participants responded to these stressors and tried to reduce or eliminate these stressors. When these attempts proved unsuccessful, they resorted to employing further coping strategies. In the second theme, consequences of stress, many of the consequences reported by the participants have been reported in the existing literature.

In the final theme, coping mechanisms, it appears that the contributing factors of support mechanisms and ancillary mechanisms all aid in the process.

Even if individuals do not actually leave the organisation, they lose motivation as evidenced by those participants who reported feeling complacent or “stressed”.

Greenberg and Baron (1995) warned that when a worker is constantly stressed, expectations start to resemble limitations of the job and energy levels decrease with the possibility of causing low motivation and poor morale, which ultimately leads to job search behaviour.

The following chapter offers recommendations to the parties involved in this research in the hope that such suggestions may facilitate the reduction of stress and create a more balanced work environment for all.

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CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

This research focused on the stress experienced by a group of hospitality workers in the Western Cape as determined by the relationship between themselves, their managers and the customers that they serve. The results of this study are offered in the form of a thematic analysis based on the responses obtained from a sample of participants. They reveal distinct areas where actions could be taken by the organisation to facilitate the reduction of stress.

This chapter outlines two separate issues pertaining to this research. Firstly, recommendations are offered with respect to possible actions that could be taken, respectively, by the organisation, which employs these participants, and the individuals themselves, followed by some general recommendations. Furthermore, this chapter records the limitations of the present study and finally it offers suggestions for future research in this field. A summary of this chapter is also presented.

6.1) Recommendations

The recommendations offered in this section include suggestions for facilitating the reduction of stress and have been obtained in part from the participants in this study as well as the researcher.

6.1.1) Recommendations for the Hotel

These recommendations are offered for the hotel. They are in no particular order of importance. They are all deemed equally important.

6.1.1.1) Staffing & Recruiting Policy

One of the biggest concerns of those interviewed was the fact that the organisation does not employ enough support staff in the front office, housekeeping and food and beverage

departments. The researcher is well aware that this aspect is constrained by resources. The concern was though, that the organisation was spending money on equipment and infrastructure but not on retaining and hiring of new staff. Therefore, it is suggested that the staffing and recruitment policies of the organisation be communicated to all organisational members and done so in such a way that all staff fully understand these policies.

6.1.1.2) Recruitment & Selection

Advertisements intended to attract suitable candidates to the organisation should be carefully worded to reflect the true nature of daily tasks. It is accepted that it is incumbent on the individual applicant to make enquiries about what to expect should they be given a job, but it is suggested that during the interview process the organisation should provide applicants with realistic job previews. These previews should emphasize the nature of the duties to be performed and a clear message should be sent to the applicant around the volume and hours required. If the process is to be a protracted one, then applicants should be informed of this.

Concerning selection, the organisation should make the selection criteria available to all employees, particularly if they were to utilise internal recruitment over external recruitment. In addition, when the organisation decides to make an offer of employment to an individual, it should consider, inter alia, personality traits together with prior job performance. Psychometric instruments like the Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) or 16 Personality Factors could be used to assess personality. Some of the personality traits that might be useful are:

- Extroversion / Ambitious
- Outgoing
- Detail Oriented

Furthermore, it may be in the interests to both the organisation and the individual if the selection process included a 'value matching' component. A comprehensive profile of the individual's work values compared with the organisation's values may reveal potential congruence between the two. This could also help in ensuring person organisation fit.

6.1.1.3) Training

The content of training courses offered by the organisation is regarded as being of an average standard. The areas of difficulty with respect to training are that new employees have very little input in terms of deciding which courses to attend. This is solely the responsibility of the employee's immediate supervisor. It is suggested that as part of the recruitment process, potential candidates develop a list of their areas of development / training needs that can be used by the organisation to determine specific training needs of individuals. Then the manager can make a determination as to what training programmes to send employees on. Resultantly, it is further suggested that during their first year of employment, the training schedule be more structured and directive. Thereafter, the use of self-initiated training could be employed. According to Schein (1978), a satisfactory mix of training and meaningful work together with valid feedback, is ideal for both the individual and the organisation. Participants consider training as a means to an end and the end that is valued is the improvement of their competence as hospitality workers.

6.1.1.4) Work Relationships

Relationships with other staff members at the same level seem to be fine. The relationships with managers and employees are cause for concern. Management and line staff interacting more through monthly meetings could overcome this or lunches where "Employees of the Month" are chosen to have lunch with the general manager. Another suggestion in this regard would be to flatten the organisation's structure so that access to managers is easier. This again, would facilitate more interaction between the parties.

6.2) Recommendations for the Hospitality Workers

It would appear that hospitality workers at all levels and in particular at the lower levels of the organisation need to strike a fine balance between work and recreation time. At present, it would seem that the emphasis is clearly placed on work and not on finding a balance between the two. Whilst work should be the primary focus, other activities should also be included in the routine.

6.2.1) Interpersonal skills

Participants reported that one of their greatest work adjustments was cultivating the ability to communicate with other people in the organisation, as well as guests who represent diverse cultural backgrounds. Whilst written skills are important, an effort should be made to include interpersonal skills such as conflict resolution, interaction in meetings and sensitivity training. Employees should be encouraged to work in culturally diverse groups that reflect the real work situation. Therefore, it might be useful for the organisation to send all new employees on a short course on communication and interpersonal skills training, as lower level employees appear to have difficulty with this aspect of their jobs. The responsibility for preparing for the realities of work life ultimately rests with the individual.

6.2.2) Unrealistic Expectations

Hospitality workers should, as far as possible, hold realistic expectations about their future work life. They should take note of their duties during any part-time work and not assume that 'things will be different' when they eventually assume full time positions of employment. Another way to counter this to do what some of the local hotel schools do. They require potential students to work in the hospitality industry for a year prior to commencing their studies. Hotels can require potential employees to have worked in the hospitality industry for a period of at least six months before considering them for employment. Through this, employees can develop realistic perceptions of hospitality work.

6.2.3) Coping

The most commonly used strategy for coping in this study is the seeking of peer support. Quick and Quick (1984) suggested that peers and co-workers may meet the social needs of employees and that seeking out social support is a strategy used by employees to adapt to the organisation and its ebbs and flows.

Participants also report receiving help from family members. Schein (1978) recommended opening up channels of communication with family members, friends and peers as a useful coping response to dealing with problems.

6.2.4) Attitudes

Lastly, when joining an organisation for the first time, the primary advice offered by current employees is to exercise humility. By acknowledging that they (new employees) still have much to learn from employees with more experience than themselves, interpersonal interactions are significantly eased.

Humility needs to be balanced with a proactive approach to seeking information. Whilst this research has uncovered a variety of results and consequent recommendations, it is only one contribution to the field of hospitality worker stress. Limitations of this study are discussed in the following section.

6.3) General Recommendations

Research by Cox and Griffiths (1995) revealed that in order to increase the level of service given to guests as a result of stress a number of key areas need to be addressed. Amongst these are the following: Firstly, embarking on customer oriented leadership, which relates to the principles of being driven by what the customer's needs, wants and desires are and making sure that all employees are focused on these aspects. Though this might seem superfluous, there are many hotel employees who do not see this as a

priority, rather their focus is on getting the job done in order to receive a pay cheque at the end of the month. Hotels need to bring service back into hospitality.

A second factor is creating a supportive culture, in other words, a culture that supports all employees and not just management. Participants mentioned that their concerns were not taken up seriously, especially if it had to do with hours worked or overtime pay. Neither were they supported if they had personal problems that needed to be addressed.

A third factor relates to rewarding and celebrating customer-focused success. Concerning this factor the organisation needs to reward and recognise employees that exceed the required levels of service. Though this might be done in many hotels, participants in this study felt that their efforts were not being adequately rewarded.

The fourth factor relates to recruitment and selection. Concerning this factor the organisation needs to give a realistic depiction of what it is like to work in the hospitality industry and to select the best people for the job.

The fifth and final factor relates to the introduction of a stress reduction programme. It appears that no programmes are in place. Many organisations now days have such programmes in place, e.g. Hollard Insurance. This could entail the use of the hotel gym after work hours. Whatever is chosen, something would be better than nothing would.

Cox and Griffiths (1995) posited that if the above factors are taken into account, it should be possible to reduce the outcomes of poor service levels. Indeed, the above points were highlighted to the researcher during a number of the focus group sessions.

6.4) Limitations of the Study

This research has a number of limitations, which need to be recognised when consideration is given to the results obtained:

6.4.1) Research Design

A primary limitation of this study is the fact that data was collected at one point in time. The implications of this are, simply, that each respondent offered a snapshot view of stress at the time of data collection. This cross-sectional approach was unavoidable due to time constraints imposed upon the study.

Retrospective recall was used where participants were asked / required to 'think back' to the times of great stress and recall what happened. This retrospective approach may have resulted in some unintended distortion in their responses.

6.4.2) Sample

As the sample employed in this study consisted of 60 individuals within two hotels in Cape Town, a further possible limitation with respect to the sample is that not all 60 individuals were from the same department of the hotel and only one hotel group was used.

6.4.3) Limited Literature

As there is limited research available relating to hospitality workers stress, general stress literature was used? It is hoped that this research will serve as an impetus for further research in the field to be done in South Africa.

6.4.4) Transferability of Results

One important issue that should be considered with respect to the transferability of results to other organisations is the nature of 'product' at this organisation. Hospitality does not always have a tangible output.

With the aim of qualitative research not being generalisability, but rather the gaining of insight into the phenomenon under investigation in mind, this study was conducted within one hotel group; the results should have transferability to other hotel groups.

Despite this possible limitation, the stress and coping mechanisms employed by participants in this study can be considered consistent with the literature. Certainly, the results may be of value to other large hospitality organisations, particularly other hotel chains.

The results may be less relevant to smaller hotels and bed and breakfasts whose focus is smaller, more personal service, instead of large numbers and groups.

6.5) Contribution of Study

This study is an attempt to increase and add to the current level of knowledge of the existing literature on stress in the hospitality industry by empirically testing the researcher's understanding and ideas of stress.

In terms of this research's theoretical contribution, firstly, this study contributes to the body of literature on stress among hospitality workers by exploring how individual hospitality workers first experience stress and how these experiences affect the way hospitality workers perform their jobs. Specifically, this study explores the stressors, coping mechanisms and the consequences of this stress.

Secondly, this study provides some insight and understanding into hospitality stress and the way hospitality workers deal with it. While much attention to stress has been paid in service industries, little research has focused on the nature of, and coping mechanisms employed by hospitality workers in the field. A number of empirical studies on stress have been conducted in other industries. This research therefore contributes to the body of knowledge relating to stress and the South African hospitality worker by examining how hospitality workers deal with the situation where "the customer is always right." As many hotels challenge their employees to provide world class service, this thrust increases service quality, but adds a burden on employees in terms of intensified stress.

Therefore, this study contributes to the stress literature by understanding how hospitality workers, who it has been shown experience a higher than normal degree of on the job stress, all the while dealing with the associated consequences.

6.6) Future Research

There are a variety of issues in this field that deserve further investigation. This research focused on the stress experienced, its outcomes and coping methods employed from the perspective of 60 employees of a large hotel chain in Cape Town. Further research into how hospitality workers can reduce the stress they experience is desirable. Further research into the use of coping mechanisms and developing these into a model may yield useful results. Understanding how to adjust perceptions of time to accommodate a career-long perspective and still achieve personal goals may reduce anxiety over the slow rate of personal advancement. In each study, the specific work environment in which each individual engages, contributes significantly to the individual experience of stress and must therefore be considered. To this end, quantitative research in the area of hospitality workers and stress, of which there is very little in South Africa should be employed in order to obtain results that are more rigorous.

6.7) Summary

This chapter offers recommendations to organisations around reducing stress experienced by their employees as well as recommendations to the employees themselves. It is further suggested that all parties hold joint responsibility for helping to reduce the stress levels experienced.

Limitations of the present study are also identified in this chapter specifically with respect to the cross-sectional methodology employed and the transferability of the study. Finally, areas for future research are identified as certain topics emerged from this research that requires further investigation. Exploration of such issues may well add value to the field.

6.8) Conclusion

This research investigated the effects of stress, outcomes and coping mechanisms employed of a sample of hospitality workers. Attention was also given to the nature of these three constructs and how they affect the individual and the organisation.

The results of this research offer a qualitative reflection of the participants' world of work and contribute to the understanding of stress and its outcomes through an in-depth investigation of the constructs. In the current South African environment of limited professionally qualified human resource managers, a greater understanding of individual employees and their life experiences is essential.

This research is deemed important because it highlights the experiences of a group of people in the hospitality industry that are often overlooked when it comes to empirical research.

Critical to the retention of these employees is their psychological well-being at work. The results of this study indicate that psychological well-being is negatively affected, which has adverse consequences for the organisation and the individual. It is further noted that in a work context individuals who have variety in their jobs, opportunities to learn, autonomy to make decisions, social support and recognition and opportunities for advancement will experience less stress and therefore be more productive. The results of this study indicate that almost all of these elements are absent amongst the research sample.

A concerted effort is required to address this situation. Hotel managers and line managers in hospitality organisations have a responsibility to provide realistic information to job applicants around the true content of work and the context in which it will be performed, in an effort to foster realistic expectations.

Lastly, it is suggested that some adjustment of current practices in hotels is required in order to facilitate the reduction of stress and increase the use of organisational wide coping mechanisms, which will in turn benefit the employees and organisation alike.

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8) Appendices

Appendix 1 – Letter of Entry

Appendix 2 – Focus Group Guide

Appendix 3 – Informed Consent

University of Cape Town

8.1) Appendix 1 – Letter of Entry

The Manager
Southern Sun Hotels
Cape Town
8000

Bradley Mendelowitz
Leslie Commerce Building
University of Cape Town

20th August 2001

Dear Sir

Re: Masters Research & Focus Group Sessions

I am writing in reference to the above. I am a Masters student in Organisational Psychology at the University of Cape Town doing my thesis on stress amongst hospitality workers.

What I would like to do is set up a number of focus group sessions with your staff. This will entail getting random groups of 8-10 staff members together in a room and having a conversation with them about what stresses them out etc. The process will take about 45 minutes per session. I can run the sessions anytime that is convenient to you even if it means coming in on a weekend.

Please do not hesitate to contact me on 082-738 6688 should you have any further questions regarding the above. All information will be confidential and I will be happy to give you a copy of my final report.

Thanking you in advance.

Yours Sincerely,

Bradley Mendelowitz

8.2) Appendix 2 – Focus Group Guide

Focus Group Guide (General Questions)

- 1) What part of your work stresses you out the most?
- 2) How do you find working in the hospitality industry?
- 3) Why did you choose hospitality work?
- 4) What do you do to cope with your stress?
- 5) Whom do you talk to about work stress?
- 6) How do you get on with colleagues and managers?
- 7) What if anything does the hotel do to help relieve the stress you are experiencing?
- 8) What would you say could be done to help with your work stress?
- 9) What resources do you have at your disposal?
- 10) How do your families cope with your high stress levels?

Note: Any other issues that need to be probed

8.3) Appendix 3 – Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent Form

This study is being conducted by a Masters student at the University of Cape Town. This study is concerned with stressors, consequences and coping mechanism as I experience them on the job.

By signing this informed consent form, I am acknowledging that I have agreed to participate in this study of my own free will and that I have not been forced to participate in this study in any way. I am further aware that I can withdraw my participation at any time.

The risks associated with participation have been explained to me and I am comfortable with said risks. No names will be used and everything that I say during the research process will be kept in the strictest confidence and used only for research purposes.

Signed

Date