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# **Work-related employee stress in 4 and 5\* hotels in Greece.**

## **A study about the city of Thessaloniki.**

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I hereby declare that the work submitted is mine and that where I have made use of another's work, I have attributed the source(s) according to the Regulations set in the Student's Handbook.

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## **Abstract**

This dissertation was written as part of the MSc in Hospitality and Tourism Management 2017-2019 at the International Hellenic University.

Work-related stress has been a major subject of study in recent years because it has realized its role in the mental and physical health of employees and in the overall effectiveness of the organization. Indeed, psychosocial risks and occupational stress are among the major challenges in occupational safety and health, as they appear to have a significant impact on the health of individuals, businesses and national economies. Stress is considered by about half of European ordinary working people to be a workplace phenomenon and is responsible for about half of all lost work days. People with stress usually feel that they have to manage more than they can handle, and in general they are unable to manage the demands of the tasks assigned to them. Of course, the opposite can happen. That is, when an employee is more qualified than is required for the job he or she is assigned, he or she is likely to lose motivation for work progress, experiencing stress and frustration. The symptoms of experiencing prolonged stress are divided into three categories: physical, psychological and behavioral symptoms.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the work stress of employees in 4\* and 5\* hotel units in the city of Thessaloniki. For the purpose of the present study, a non-experimental quantitative research methodology was adopted using an appropriate questionnaire. The study involved 101 employees of 4\* and 5\* star hotel units in the Prefecture of Thessaloniki. The results of the survey showed that employees at 4\* and 5\* hotel units experience moderate job stress while having a moderate level of support from co-workers and a moderate level of work-life balance.

I would like to thank the following people, without whom I would not have been able to complete this project, and without whom I would not have made it through my masters degree. The International Hellenic University for giving me the chance to study at this program and the whole academic committee for its valuable help during this 2 years time. My supervisor, Dr Stefanos Giannikis for his help and guidance through this project. Of course, my friends and family and especially my mother Fani, who has always been by my side during this process, supporting me and giving me hope.

Sofia Siganiidou  
15/12/2019

## **Preface**

Since my permanent residence of living is in Thessaloniki and given the chance to study at the International Hellenic University in the program of Hospitality and Tourism Management, i really desired to explore and expand the knowledge in the field of work-related employee stress , especially in 4\* and 5\* hotels in Thessaloniki. Thanks to the 101 hotel employees that took part in the survey, this project was made possible to complete .



# Contents

<b>ABSTRACT.....</b>	<b>III</b>
<b>PREFACE.....</b>	<b>II</b>
<b>CONTENTS .....</b>	<b>III</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>CHAPTER 2. STRESS AND WORK-RELATED STRESS.....</b>	<b>5</b>
2.1. INTRODUCTION - THE CONCEPT OF STRESS .....	5
2.2. THE CONCEPT OF WORK-RELATED STRESS.....	6
2.3. ENDOGENOUS OCCUPATIONAL FACTORS .....	7
2.4. THE ROLE WITHIN THE ORGANIZATION.....	9
2.5. FACTORS RELATED TO INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS IN THE WORKPLACE ...	12
2.6. CAREER DEVELOPMENT .....	13
2.7. CLIMATE OF ORGANIZATION .....	14
2.8. EFFECT OF WORK-RELATED STRESS .....	15
<b>CHAPTER 3. ANXIETY OF EMPLOYEES IN HOTEL INDUSTRY .....</b>	<b>17</b>
3.1. CRISIS, TOURISM AND WORK-RELATED STRESS .....	17
3.2. HOTEL INDUSTRY AND WORK-RELATED STRESS.....	19
<b>CHAPTER 4. METHODOLOGY.....</b>	<b>23</b>
4.1. AIM AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....	23
4.2. PROCEDURE .....	23
4.3. QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH .....	24
4.4. RESEARCH TOOL .....	25
4.5. SAMPLE.....	25
4.6. STATISTICAL ANALYSIS.....	25
4.7. RESEARCH ETHICS.....	26
<b>CHAPTER 5. RESULTS.....</b>	<b>27</b>
5.1. SAMPLE DEMOGRAPHICS .....	27
5.2. RELIABILITY ANALYSIS .....	27
5.3. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS ABOUT WORK-RELATED STRESS .....	28

5.4. CORRELATION BETWEEN WORK-RELATED DIMENSIONS .....	31
5.5. WORK-RELATED STRESS REGARDING GENDER .....	32
5.6. WORK-RELATED STRESS REGARDING AGE.....	33
5.7. WORK-RELATED STRESS REGARDING WORK EXPERIENCE .....	34
<b>CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>37</b>

## **Chapter 1. Introduction**

The work environment is a complex concept, especially as it relates to human behavior and human development. In addition, the work environment can be particularly stressful for employees in a range of occupations, and this in turn may be related to employees' job satisfaction, their commitment to their work, their performance and their performance. decisions about whether or not to stay in the business in which they work. For all of the above reasons, the subject of employee behavior in their work environment has become particularly popular in the research community, and has been the subject of numerous surveys: (Bickford, 2005; Chen & Spector, 1992; Fox et al., 2001; Olulana, 2015; Olusegun et al., 2014; Payne & Gainey, 2004).

Occupational stress is now recognized worldwide as one of the biggest health problems that workers and employers have to deal with today. Recent data from the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) show that stress consistently ranks second among work-related health problems after musculoskeletal disorders, while 46% of European workers report that they are very common and 36% that workplace stress is rather common (EU-OSHA, 2013). Statistical estimates indicate that around 22-28% of European Union workers, ie about 1 in 3 workers, suffer from excessive work-related stress (EU-OSHA, 2009; Toukas, 2010). Taking into account both the costs incurred by a business and / or an organization as hundreds of business hours are lost each year due to work-related illnesses, absenteeism and / or reduced work performance, and on the other side of the economic challenges stemming from the economic insecurity that characterizes the 21st century, effectively tackling occupational stress seems to be a key prerequisite for survival and a critical parameter for sustained competitiveness and success for modern businesses and organizations.

Occupational stress has been the subject of much and extensive research worldwide. These studies focus both on the effects of work-related stress on the employee's - physical and mental - health and on the business, as well as on the exploration of those conditions that are intense. stress on the individual, his feelings, thoughts and behavior and which subsequently influence, through specific mechanisms, his "occupational health" (Antoniou, 2006; Siegrist, 1995). In recent decades, given the ever-increasing scope of the problem, researchers have placed particular emphasis on the study of these two factors, focusing on the factors that act on them and contribute to reducing work

stress and occupational stress, and prevention at the level of human resources management (Hannigan, Edwards & Burnard, 2004).

The reasons for this strong research interest are many:

1. The workplace is objectively a place that requires high efficiency and productivity. The worker operates under conditions that are quite stressful, with the factors of time and the surrounding economic and job insecurity and uncertainty often playing an important role. These elements seem to be increasing in the modern labor market (Cooper, Cooper & Eaker, 2002).

2. In the modern reality, the workplace is one of the most important social contexts for acceptance and recognition of the adult (Siegrist, 1996). Its importance is more easily understood when one considers the state of unemployment and its effects on one's life (Winefield, Tiggemann, & Winefield, 1991).

3. The multitude of research data demonstrating the particularly negative effects of work stress not only on the quality of work itself, on the level of productivity and safety, but also on the health of workers (see, for example, Burke, Greenglass, & Schwarzer, 1996; Guglielmi & Tatrow, 1998; Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001, etc.). Research has been concerned with both the psychophysiological mechanisms responsible for the impact of the work environment on the health of the employee as well as the study of psychosocial and occupational factors (Antoniou, 2006; Cox & Ferguson, 1994). If interpersonal and interpersonal tensions and conflicts are added, which are not confined to the workplace but also transferred to the family environment (Burke & Greenglass, 2001), then a nearly complete picture of the consequences of work stress and exhaustion is obtained for individuals and organizations.

The subject of the present study deals with the phenomenon of work stress in hotel industry. This subject is a longitudinal topic that has been explored and analyzed by a variety of researchers in different work environments. However, given the current economic crisis of recent years in Greece and worldwide, this study is of particular importance. This is because the study of counterproductive behaviors, which can clearly influence the overall outcome of a firm's performance (Olusegum et al., 2014), can provide a basis for more effective human resource management in terms of creating working conditions and a climate that will not increase work stress (Luthans, 2003). Employees nowadays are already under the burden of multiple pressures, stemming from reduced pay, rising unemployment, increased taxation, and situations that increase

work stress. Under these particular circumstances, the study of the relationship of work stress is of particular interest.



## **Chapter 2. Stress and work-related stress**

This chapter presents the key concepts related to this thesis. The basic definitions of stress and work-related stress is given, while the theoretical approaches to work-related stress and factors that are likely to be related to work-related stress are presented.

### ***2.1. Introduction - The Concept of stress***

Since the very first time the concept of stress has been formulated, and by extension, work-related stress, it has proved to be quite complex and appears to be very confusing in its definition in the epistemological field. Although it is not certain that we have a clear and universally accepted understanding of the meaning of the term. When most people talk about stress or anxiety, they usually refer to the stress they feel when something unpleasant or out of control happens to them in their daily lives, when they feel almost any form of distress caused by noise, cold or fatigue until anger, frustration, or confusion (Di Matteo & Martin, 2011).

In Greek and foreign literature, in recent years it is preferred to use the English term "stress", which according to the Dictionary of Modern Greek Language by G. Babiniotis is defined as (a) "... any disturbance in the functioning of the organization, which due to external environmental stimuli or psychological factors ..." and (b) "... the organic reactions caused by the above ..." (Babiniotis, 2002). Correspondingly, Karadimas (2005) states that the concepts of "stress" and "anxiety" are not synonymous, as the term "stress" refers to a process that encompasses both stressful stimuli and the individual's psychological, physical, and social reactions to stress. In them, while the term "anxiety" refers to the relative mental disposition only, that is, the person's reaction to external and internal stressors. In the present work, stress and anxiety will be considered as identical concepts. Stress is a condition associated with intense feelings of fear, accompanied by physical discomfort, such as coronary heartbeat and sweating, which indicate overactivity of the autonomic nervous system. Anxiety affects cognitive ability and tends to distort perception (Sadock & Sadock, 2015).

## ***2.2. The concept of work-related stress***

Corresponding to the concept of stress, the concept of work-related stress also seems to present a difficulty in rendering a clear definition, although it is a well-known concept. In this regard, Williams (1994) states that this difficulty lies in the fact that the term work-related stress is used in the scientific literature to describe both the sources that cause it and the effects observed. Mc Lean (1985) notes that the word work-related stress is sometimes used to describe stressful situations, sometimes to describe the effects of stressful conditions on employee performance and other times to describe the effects of anxiety on an employee's health. Therefore, it is understood that the difficulty of formulating an acceptable and clear definition of the concept has to do with how work-related stress is approached. That is, if it is perceived as a characteristic of the environment, as a feeling experienced by the employee or as a result resulting from the employee's interaction with the environment (Schuler & Jackson, 1986).

For these reasons, it seems that there has been agreement that work-related stress is an expanded conceptual framework that describes situations involving both the conditions and the external factors that cause them, as well as the effects and consequences (Jex, Beehr & Roberts, 1992). In addition, work-related stress is seen as a situation in which work-related stressful situations accumulate or as a state of anxiety arising from a particular work condition (Ross & Altmeier, 1994).

In its definition, the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) defines work-related stress as "... the anxiety that the employee feels when it realizes that there is a balance between the requirements it must meet and the resources it has to meet those demands ... "(EU-OSHA, 2002). Accordingly, the American Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) defines work-related stress as "... the harmful physical or psychological reactions that occur to the employee when the job requirements are not met. are in line with the employee's abilities, available resources or needs ... and these reactions can lead to health problems or even injuries ... "(NIOSH, 1999).

Therefore, work-related stress seems to be a condition that the employee faces and overloads and / or exceeds his or her physical and mental resources, thereby leading the body to an over-excited state and being put into risk to one's mental health and balance (Kant, 1998). Cox (1987) also stresses the importance of having a balance between work obligations and requirements and the capabilities and resources available to the employee to ensure their good mental health. It is worth noting here that the World

Health Organization's definition of employee mental health and well-being states that "... well-being is a dynamic state of balance characterized by a reasonable harmony of competences, needs and expectations. a person on the one hand and the demands and opportunities of his or her environment on the other ... "(World Health Organization, 2003).

The Health and Safety Executive Board (HSE) defines work-related stress as "... the response of individuals to constant and persistent stress or other demands on them ..." (Health and Safety Executive, 2009). This definition is based on Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) Stress Transaction Model (1984) and defines work-related anxiety as an emotional and psychosomatic response to negative aspects of work, the work environment, and organizations. It is a mainly emotional state characterized by high levels of arousal, negative stress and often feelings of impotence (Antoniou, 2006). Among the effects of work-related anxiety on work behavior are speech problems, decreased job interest, reduced energy, increased absenteeism, shifting responsibilities, and superficial handling of work problems and issues. At this point it should be noted that occupational burnout is closely linked to work stress but is not a synonym. Separate reference should be made to occupational burnout as it is a psychological process similar to but not identical to occupational stress.

Lastly, it is important to note that stress is viewed as a constant in relation to stress and its effects on individuals. It should also be noted that in addition to the distress most commonly used in international literature and referring to negative physical and psychological symptoms of stress and inappropriate behaviors, there is also positive stress (eustress), which can help individuals respond quickly, develop more effective coping strategies, and achieve better performance (Alder, 2005; Antoniou, 2006; Cooper, Cooper, & Eaker, 2002).

Researchers identify five major categories of work-related stress common to all occupations. Overall, it can be said that stressors in the workplace can fall into the categories presents in the following sections.

### ***2.3. Endogenous Occupational Factors***

- Inappropriate working conditions

Several studies have identified the association between mental health and working conditions. Specifically, it has been found that mental illness is directly linked to unpleasant working conditions, the obligation to work fast or to work hard, long hours and long hours, as well as the routine of most work activities (Cooper, Cooper & Eaker, 2002; Fontana, 1993). An important source of work stress is also exposure to physical hazards (occupations at risk) but also to hazardous physical health conditions (Cooper, Cooper, & Eaker, 2002). Factors such as poor lighting, high noise levels, poor ventilation of the room, inadequate temperature, poor architecture and ergonomic arrangement of the space, exposure to chemicals and radioactive substances, etc., have been found to be seriously detrimental to health of workers and are often an important cause of accidents (Hedge, Sims, & Becker, 1995; Hilderbrandt, 1995; Hoyos, 1995; Melamed, Luz, Najenson, Jucha, & Green, 1989).

- Shift work

Studies have shown that shift work is a common factor in work stress. Violation of the employee's normal functioning cycle, through irregular working hours and shifts, has long been found to cause chronic health problems and psychological problems (Ferri et al., 2016), as well as repeated work accidents. Researchers argue that the good mental and physical health of shift workers depends largely on the successful handling of three interrelated factors: sleep, social and family life, and circadian rhythms (Antoniou, 2006).

- Extended working hours

Like shift work, prolonged working hours are a stressful condition for the employee. There is a specific time for each person during the day who works more effectively and thinks more clearly (Ferri et al., 2016). Prolonged working hours have the effect of reducing both the level of mental and physical health and the quality of one's work (non-productive working time) (Cooper, Cooper & Eaker, 2002). As above, long working hours can also cause problems in one's social and family life (Lee et al., 2017).

- New technologies

Adapting to constantly new equipment and systems is probably a source of stress for some employees, as they have to change their learned way of working. On the contrary, the work of a new employee, trained according to modern methods, in an organization using obsolete systems, is an additional burden for him and may result in lack of

communication and inability to achieve the required task. It also creates doubt and insecurity in people who do not keep up with new technology (Alder, 2005; Cooper, Cooper & Eaker, 2002).

- Excessive workload

Excessive workload is one of the main factors causing stress and is responsible for a number of different symptoms of physical and mental stress (Cooper, Cooper & Eaker, 2002). Workers, who are required to work longer hours (longer hours), work harder (quality workloads) and have multiple tasks at the same time (workloads), have been found to have unhealthy habits, e.g. increased smoking, and are at greater risk of getting sick than non-overworked workers (Lee et al., 2017; Repetti, 1993). It is very important that excessive workload is examined in the context of the "human-environment" interaction associated with one's abilities and personality traits (Antoniou, 2006).

- Underemployment

On the other hand, underemployment is also linked to stressful situations. An employee has a small workload either when he or she has to perform few jobs over a specified period (quantitative underemployment) (Cooper, Cooper, & Eaker, 2002) or when he or she does not have the opportunity to develop their skills or develop new job skills. Underemployment is associated with routine tasks that do not motivate or stimulate one's creativity and may affect one's physical and mental well-being, causing irritability, depression, and occupational dissatisfaction (Antoniou, 2006).

#### ***2.4. The role within the organization***

Role-ambiguity, role conflict and the degree of responsibility for others appear to be the most important sources of stress regarding the employee's role in the organization.

- Challenge - Ambiguity of Role

Role-ambiguity is defined as the condition that the employee does not know exactly what the purpose of his / her job is, what his / her job duties are, what the evaluation criteria are. of his / her work and what his / her colleagues' expectations are for him / her (Fontana, 1993). Role-playing arises from both organizational and individual factors. Specific situations or changes occurring in the workplace, such as a first job, a new job, a promotion, a transfer, etc. can bring about a temporary stage of role dispute (Antoniou, 2006; Cooper, Cooper & Eaker, 2002).

- Conflict of roles

A role conflict is defined as the condition in which the employee (a) receives conflicting and unclear messages about his / her job duties from different individuals each time, (b) is involved in tasks that he or she usually does not wish to (c) undertake tasks that are not part of his / her duties (Cooper, Cooper & Eaker, 2002; Wu et al., 2019). There are five types of role conflict:

- (i) internal role conflict, e.g. conflicting demands from the boss,
- ii) role conflict between actors, e.g. incompatible pursuits by the heads of different departments,
- (iii) the conflict of individual roles, e.g. perceive the gap between the values of the individual and those who adopt but individuals or institutions,
- (iv) the conflict of individual and general roles, e.g. when the requirements / claims of a role conflict with those of a second role of the same person, and finally
- (v) role overload, e.g. when either a variety of behaviors are expected from an individual or when the expected behavior is very difficult for the individual to manifest (Antoniou, 2006).

Often organizational problems are also caused by insufficient employee support, eg. a shortage of secretarial staff, where employees are forced to take on tasks irrespective of their job. These tasks may not meet their training level and are usually time consuming. Similar problems arise from the possible lack or delay of suitable equipment (Nixon et al., 2011).

Research shows that conflict and role-play are closely linked. The unclear segregation of work duties, the conflicts between the multiple roles that the employee can take on, and the complexity of roles, cause a significant number of stressful workers every day. Research in this area has shown that people who work under these conditions are dissatisfied with their job and want to quit, often presenting with symptoms of occupational exhaustion and general health problems such as headaches, stomach ulcers, sleep disorders, musculoskeletal disorders. diseases etc. (O 'Driscoll & Beehr, 1994). Consequently, high levels of conflict and role-play are associated with reduced performance at work (Antoniou, 2006).

Conversely, when employees receive adequate and clear feedback on their roles and job duties, then the level of stress they experience falls sharply (Wu et al., 2019). In general, multiple and conflicting roles have a multitude of effects, as the person is burdened with tasks and duties. On the other hand, multiple roles can provide a protective shield,

compensating, if one of these roles presents a problem (Cooper, Cooper, & Eaker, 2002).

Role conflict occurs when different individuals or different groups of people with whom the employee interacts (eg family, colleagues, friends, parents) have conflicting and / or conflicting expectations about their behavior (Wu et al., 2019). In addition, a role conflict can be experienced by an employee even when there are two more conflicting demands on him / her when the behaviors expected of him / her violate his / her personal values (Brewer & Clippard, 2002).

Many researchers agree that role conflict (Low, Cravens, Grant, & Moncrief, 2001; Wu et al., 2019) as well as role ambiguity (Tarrant et al., 2010) are equally important factors leading to burnout. In particular, Tarrant et al. (2010) found that role ambiguity and difficult working conditions predicted two of the three dimensions of burnout, emotional exhaustion and diminished personal achievement, and that occupational burnout was positively correlated with increases in burnout. frequency of sick leave, absences, and mental health problems.

A common form of role conflict is that of role overload, where many expectations are attributed to one employee at a time (Brewer & Clippard, 2002), and this form has been identified as one of the most important causal factors of burnout by many researchers (Posing & Kickul, 2003). Indeed, a study by Posing and Kickul (2003) of a sample of employees with both family members showed that confusion, conflict, and role ambiguity, as well as the denial of professional expectations, are associated with occupational burnout. Researchers have found significant correlations of family and work role conflict with emotional exhaustion (especially in women), which is one of the factors of occupational burnout.

- Degree of responsibility

Another factor stressing the organizational role is the employee's responsibility, e.g. supervisor or manager, for items such as equipment, budget, etc. as for people. Specifically, responsibility for people requires more time spent communicating with others, attending conferences and striving to meet deadlines and consequently creates increased stress levels, has a negative impact on individuals' mental and physical health and affects interpersonal relationships in the workplace. (Antoniou, 2006; Cooper, Cooper & Eaker, 2002).

## ***2.5. Factors Related to Interpersonal Relationships in the Workplace***

Coexistence with other people is in itself one of the most stressful events in life. Good interpersonal relationships at work are often sources of social support for individuals and help to cope with perceived work stress. They can function not only against the excessive demands of a job role, but also on their potential impact on physical and mental health (Tran et al., 2018).

In contrast, incomplete, restricted or poor interpersonal communication is yet another stressor at work as it can lead to occupational dissatisfaction and feelings of threat to the employee's physical and mental well-being. In particular, poor interpersonal relationships have been found to be largely responsible for general physical discomfort, stomach ulcers, depressive tendencies, and frequent absences from work (Bhui et al., 2016).

Interpersonal relationships are distinguished by the hierarchical profile within a work context at three levels: in relationships with colleagues, subordinates and bosses (Antoniou, 2006). Often there is also a distinction between different types of interpersonal relationships concerning the presence or absence of emotional support, general supportive framework, recognition, acceptance (Bhui et al., 2016).

- **Interpersonal relationships with colleagues**

Most of the working time seems to be devoted to interpersonal relationships, especially interpersonal relationships (Antoniou, 2006). Relationships between colleagues can be both helpful and a source of difficulty for individuals (Bhui et al., 2016). Two key stressors regarding interpersonal relationships are competition, which can lead to feelings of distrust and isolation, and a lack of a group of colleagues, which in turn can lead to a lack of adequate support, especially when combined with difficult times. character of colleagues. On the contrary, balanced brotherhood enhances social support, interpersonal confidence, team cohesion, shared non-work activities, and is positively related to one's good mental and physical well-being as well as lower levels of work stress (Antoniou, 2006; Tran et al., 2018).

- **Relations with Supervisors**

It is widely accepted that certain personality traits of a leader / boss such as difficult character, perfectionism, high motivation, job orientation, authoritarianism, non-constructive criticism, lack of encouragement, lack of information, etc. are important

variables that negatively affect manager-employee communication and increase work stress levels (Antoniou, 2006; Yang et al., 2016).

- **Interpersonal Requirements**

Three more factors are considered capable of causing work stress. These interpersonal stressors stem from the demands and pressures of industrial relations and are: team pressure, social density and diversity. A common source of stress at work is created by the pressure that formal and informal groups exert on a workplace or organization. Each group adopts some unwritten, informal rules of conduct, clothing, etc., which act as consistent patterns of behavior for its members and can limit the freedom of choice and even affect the performance of individuals.

The personal space for the employee is very important. Some people do not feel comfortable working very closely with others or vice versa, they cannot perform when they are isolated. Both overcrowding in some cases and lack of proximity to others can be a stressful condition for individuals who may exhibit physical symptoms, have low performance, and reduced job satisfaction (Cooper, Cooper, & Eaker, 2002).

The variety refers to individual differences such as gender, age, nationality, religion, culture, personality traits and more. These differences between employees can cause a great deal of tension in their interpersonal relationships since people who work in the same workplace often have few common points of reference (Antoniou, 2006; Cooper, Cooper & Eaker, 2002).

## ***2.6. Career development***

In recent years, the financial crisis, new technologies, the abolition of some traditional occupations, organizational changes and more. lead to job loss and consequent temporary or long-term unemployment. In particular, the lack of occupational safety, the fear of being fired (Deng et al., 2019), the feeling that one's knowledge and skills are outweighed by technological developments, various performance appraisals or a possible retirement can be important causes of work stress (Antoniou, 2006).

These stressors can have an adverse effect on the employee's mental health, especially when the organization requires a high level of commitment from employees. Career stress is usually associated with decreased job satisfaction and job performance, job mobility, limited work relationships, mental and physical problems, etc. (Siegrist,

1996). Work experience and work pay can be cited as compensatory factors in career stress.

In terms of career development, it seems that the age of the employee makes a difference. New employees have specific expectations that are likely to be disproved by the working reality. The stressors they have to deal with in their new job relate to adapting to their work and socializing, creating interpersonal relationships, rewarding or not (financial rewards, promotion), feeling of recognition and more. (Cooper, Cooper & Eaker, 2002).

In middle age, many employees find that their career has slowed or stopped. Often, their knowledge may be outdated, the acquisition of new skills takes longer, and their stocks of energy are weakened. The threat of relegation, isolation, loss of status, entrapment in the same organization and retirement are particularly stressful situations (Antoniou, 2006; Cooper, Cooper & Eaker, 2002).

### ***2.7. Climate of organization***

The climate of the organization is broadly defined by autonomy, structure, reward and awareness of orientation. The fact that the individual belongs to a particular organization and therefore the potential endangerment of his / her freedom, autonomy and identity can be a source of work stress. The levels of job satisfaction and dissatisfaction are largely linked to the concept of organizational structure and climate (Kjellstrom et al., 2009).

Research has shown that perceived work stress is influenced by situations such as: lack of opportunities to participate in decision-making processes, feelings of being disenfranchised, lack of sense of belonging, lack of counseling and communication, behavioral / office constraints and tactics. Regarding the climate and culture of the organization, an important stress factor is the cultivation of a competitive climate among employees, the cultivation of a micro-political, clique and intrigue climate. Such situations are likely to lead to disintegration of the organizational climate, loss of confidence and a strong sense of insecurity among employees (Antoniou, 2006; Cooper, Cooper & Eaker, 2002).

## *2.8. Effect of Work-related Stress*

Stress is usually associated with three categories of symptoms or manifestations: physical, psychological and behavioral. Experts estimate that 70% to 80% of all illnesses are related to stress (Seaward, 2012). Some diseases have a background in stress and are thought to be likely to be caused or aggravated by it. Thus, stress seems to be an independent risk factor for causing and leading to many physical health problems, including the aging process (Epel, Blackburn, Lin, Dhabhar, Adler, Morrow, & Cawthon, 2004). In addition, there is sufficient evidence to confirm the role of stress in the occurrence of cardiovascular disease, as well as in the course and prognosis of an already existing cardiovascular disorder. Stress has also been associated with the development of neoplasms, and with other health problems such as diabetes, pain, various forms of infections and more. (Karadimas, 2008). It is also linked to minor health problems: colds, flu, stomach ulcers. In addition, stress-related illnesses include asthma, hypertension, heart disease, back pain, colitis, chronic fatigue syndrome, and even cancer.

The effects of work stress on individuals have been studied by several researchers (Murphy & Cooper, 2000). It is important to note that problems have been observed in the organization and handling of professional and family obligations (American Psychological Association). Psychosomatic problems such as migraines, stomach disorders, allergies, as well as physical ailments such as heart dysfunctions and mental fatigue are the most common consequences of work-related stress.

More specifically, the University of Cambridge categorizes the effects that individuals experience into four categories. Physical problems include headaches, high blood pressure, heart disease, and sleep disorders. Emotions include depression, nervousness, and emotional instability. Failure to concentrate, lack of motivation, loss of memory and inability to make decisions are intellectual consequences. Finally, isolation, unacceptable behaviors, substance abuse, and inability to perform work tasks at the right time are the effects on a person's behavior. Several studies have used the effects of ambiguity and role conflict to examine job stress in relation to job satisfaction (Herr et al., 2018).

Reduced work commitment and satisfaction are common effects on employees. Important is the reference to unhealthy habits, such as increased use of alcohol, tobacco, and unhealthy dietary choices (Herr et al., 2018)). Arsenault & Dolan (1983) write that a person's tolerance for stressors depends on one's personality traits, genetic

predisposition, and the culture he has adopted. Concerning personality, researchers Friedman & Rosenman (1974) report two types of personality that explain the pathological effects of work-related stress on health. Type A is characterized by nervousness, rush, tension, and impatience. On the contrary, Type B shows a lack of nervousness, tension and impatience, and works at a slower pace. It is also noteworthy that the levels of work stress experienced by individuals vary greatly depending on the workplace. Jobs that require constant and increased use of emotion lead employees to greater levels of stress. Typical examples are teachers, educators, nurses, physicians, and people providing social services (Cooper et al, 1999).

Deng et al. (2019) report that the impact of work stress on employee performance has shown that workplace stress has a significant effect on performance. The same study shows that absence from the workplace, illnesses, and the use of tobacco and alcohol are additional effects of work stress. Work stress can adversely affect employee productivity and health and lead to increased workforce renewal through increased sick days lost due to illness, and accidents at work. Research is increasingly focusing on work stress as its effects on production and the economy in general are slowly being recognized. In Europe, the financial cost of work-related stress amounts to € 20 billion annually (Tennant, 2001). Occupational stress leads to irritability, reduced precautions and risk reduction, avoidance of work, and accidents. A stress worker makes the wrong decisions and has bad relationships with other people in his team. Reduced productivity, mistakes, poor quality of work and absenteeism are obvious signs of stress at work. Therefore, stress affects not only the health of employees but also the organizations and the quality of the product provided. Thus, a satisfied employee is an essential prerequisite for the effective functioning of an organization. More specifically, there seems to be a negative association between work stress and job satisfaction, whereas work stress is associated not only with poor work performance and unjustified absences from work, but also with the abandonment of the profession (Robin & Leslie , 2006).

## **Chapter 3. Anxiety of employees in hotel industry**

### ***3.1. Crisis, tourism and Work-related Stress***

Like any social and economic phenomenon, tourism could not be left unaffected by the international economic crisis. According to Styliadis and Terzidou (2013), during the crisis period, not only citizens' financial capacity for tourism is affected, but also their psychology, as a result of their various impressions but also of their perceptions of the economic situation, and for other elements associated with their choices at all levels. Having greatly influenced the lives of citizens in Europe, but also internationally, the economic crisis has also had a major impact on tourism. Indeed, according to data provided by Styliadis and Terzidou (2013), tourism declined in 2008. Increasing unemployment, falling incomes, high insecurity for the immediate and indirect future create a state of anxiety and insecurity for citizens who now live in an environment dominated by pessimism and depression. This situation also affects tourism, as the behavior of tourists and the choices they make are primarily influenced by this situation, but also by other events that are consequences, indirect or direct, of the economic crisis, such as memoranda and structural changes.

However, Greek tourism was not only affected by the global financial crisis as it is characterized by its structure but also by its various pathogenic and structural problems, such as the licensing system and the tax system of tourism businesses. These problems, according to Zimbidou and Solkidis (2009), led to a gradual loss of competitiveness of Greek tourism, but also a loss of its competitive advantage. The increased cost of accommodation, transport and the cost of services directly or indirectly related to tourism have created a major problem for Greek tourism, as competing destinations are more economical, attracting tourists who would probably prefer Greece as a tourist destination. Combined with the fact that the main countries of origin of tourists from abroad are also in a financial crisis (eg Germany, Italy, Britain), then the impact of the financial crisis on the tourism industry can be understood. At the same time, the fact that the Euro proved to be a hindrance for Greece, as an expensive currency for tourists coming from outside the Eurozone, due to our inability to devalue the currency, added further pressure to the already expensive Greece.

Henderson (2006) as well as Sian and others (2009), confirm the above as the general consequences of an economic crisis. In addition, they report that there are two categories of threats to tourism during a crisis.

- External threats. Recession, currency fluctuations and taxation
- Internal threats: rising cost of living, falling income and falling profitability.

The effects of an economic crisis are also seen at the micro level, with businesses in the sector seeing sales and revenue down, and at the macro level, with the decline in tax revenue from tourism, employment decline in the sector. with a corresponding decrease in employer contributions as well as a decrease in the collection of taxes by local administrative organizations (municipalities, prefectures, regions, professional bodies, etc.).

It is widespread that tourism has emerged as a major economic activity both globally and in the domestic economy, contributing greatly to shaping Greek GDP (given that Greece ranks 17th in the world in terms of number). World Tourism Organization 2012 arrivals data).

In particular, according to "Stamatina Panteleiou" (ICAP GROUP's Director of Economic and Sector Studies), tourist traffic recorded an increase of 15% in 2013 compared to 2012, with a further increase of 3% in 2014. The same report (ICAP 2013) as the "Pillar" of the Greek tourism product is judged by the hotel industry, as 2014 is expected to be a year of growth for incoming tourism in Greece, following the highly significant increase in 2013.

All this data marks the hotel sector as a sector of paramount importance for the development of Gross Greek Domestic Product. In this regard, it is necessary for hotel units to develop their competitive strategy in order to help them climb both to the top of the World Tourism Organization list and to the growth of the Greek economy which has been severely affected in recent years by the financial crisis.

This projection is what the hotel industry employees, who are the driving force behind the business, which in combination with the nature of work, high levels of stress, and intense clashes between staff under the economic crisis, are called upon to do. difficult working conditions and working hours will require more stress, stress and stress to serve the above purpose. Thus, the only option for achieving this is the possibility of having good working relationships and working conditions, satisfied employees with a positive attitude about their work environment with reduced stress levels. All of this in an effort to maximize their potential and meet their workload. Because, as Hosmer

(1996) puts it, "companies today because of increased global competition and increased technological complexity - are much more dependent than ever before on employees' trust in the business and their bosses." , organizational commitment and satisfaction are the most important factors in achieving the above objective in the tourism industry and in particular in the hotel sector, where employee and customer can be regarded as two key factors. the concepts strongly intertwined for the successful delivery of the service. Because, based on the level of satisfaction, the employee's performance and commitment to the organization are affected. Thus, increased satisfaction results in high employee productivity (Robbins 2003; Sargent & Terry 2000) and high commitment to the organization signifies greater productivity and responsiveness on the employee side (Organ & Ryan, 1995; Wang & Wong, 2011). employees with a high commitment to the organization are more productive and responsible (Organ & Ryan, 1995; Wang & Wong, 2011)

As a result, a satisfied employee who is dedicated to the business will project the best image that the business can bring to society. In tourism industry, employees is common to switch jobs frequently. In this context, one employee can easily decide to quit one company and work for another. This mobility, therefore, entails many costs for the hotel unit (Gunlu, Aksarayli, Percin, 2010). It is therefore understood that the high satisfaction of the employee with the hotel unit drastically reduces the likelihood of the above, contributing to the viability of the business unit and maintaining its competitive advantages. In the context of the financial crisis, employees' fear of losing their job is likely to have a negative impact on their health for many reasons. The economic reason is that a high likelihood of job loss heralds a potential period of unemployment and lower future earnings (Green, 2015).

### ***3.2. Hotel industry and Work-related Stress***

Work stress or job variables affect employees' job satisfaction, job performance, and turnover. The stress of employment exists when an employee is unable to meet the requirements of his job” (Price, 1997). Although stress can stimulate people to work at higher levels, chronic stress can cause health problems, loss of productivity, accidents, increased absences and turnover (O'Driscoll & Cooper 2002). The intrinsic characteristics of work, risky work, role conflict, role ambiguity, high workload, resource scarcity, interoperability between employees (work-family), job insecurity,

interpersonal relationships, Lack of career development and organizational structure and climate are the main variables of stress (O'Driscoll & Cooper 2002). The tourism industry in particular can be seen as a particularly stressful working environment both because of the constant contact of the employee with the public and the need to handle multiple issues at the same time. In addition, difficult times and time pressures can sometimes occur, which can lead the person to experience work stress (Kirstensen et al., 2002).

For the tourism industry, the main stressors are job characteristics, interpersonal relationships (management style and cohesion, support and co-operation), role conflict, role ambiguity, high workload, workplace stress, insecurity, conflict between work and family and lack of professional development. In terms of conflict and ambiguity of roles, employees are often divided between the requirements of management and organization, their clients and their personal responsibilities (Kirstensen et al., 2002).

To reduce this stress, the roles of employees should be clearly defined and should be able to decide when adherence to customer wishes overrides supervisor or organization guidelines (Lo & Lam, 2005). Overloading can be reduced by redressing staff shortages, hiring extra staff during periods of high demand, and reducing long and irregular working hours. Ensuring job security is challenging because of the seasonal and volatile nature of tourism demand. However, managers can strive to create long-term working relationships for productive, talented key personnel who want to pursue a career in the industry (Karatepe & Uludag, 2007).

Key staff may be staffed by students, part-time workers or temporary staff during high season, provided that they are truly trained to do their jobs. Likewise, irregular and flexible working hours in industry, often create problems as they are not a pre-determined obligation of employees (Tse, 2012). Stress from this conflict can be mitigated by family-friendly policies such as on-site care, childcare and aged care, flexible working hours, compressed work weeks, job sharing, easy-to-use and flexible work scheduling and flexible work scheduling breaks (Leka et al., 2003).

Finally, career guidance and development opportunities can reduce employee stress and encourage retention. The idea of an evolutionary career is theoretically appealing, but the fact is that too many people would be chasing very few high-level positions (Jensen et al., 2013). While large organizations and groups may offer some job rotation and promotion for their talented employees, it may be impossible for small and medium-sized independent businesses to provide such career opportunities. For smaller

businesses, the best strategy is to be realistic in terms of recruitment and promotion (Tiyse et al., 2013).



## **Chapter 4. Methodology**

### ***4.1. Aim and research questions***

The purpose of this study was to investigate the work stress of employees in 4\* and 5\* hotel units around Greece and especially in the city of Thessaloniki. In addition, the aim was to highlight the dimensions of stress that are most important for tourism workers, in particular 4\* and 5\* hotel units. Finally, it was investigated whether work stress varies significantly in terms of demographic characteristics of workers. In more detail, the research questions of the present research are:

- What are the levels of work-related stress for employees in 4\* and 5\* hotel units in the city of Thessaloniki?
- What dimensions of work-related stress are most important for employees in 4\* and 5\* hotel units in Thessaloniki?
- Does work-related stress differ significantly in terms of gender of employees?
- Does work-related stress vary significantly with respect to the age of employees?
- Does work-related stress vary significantly in terms of years of work experience?

### ***4.2. Procedure***

For the purpose of the present study, the methodology of a non-experimental quantitative research was adopted using an appropriate questionnaire. Quantitative research has been preferred as it is usually a standardized process of recording existing situations, trying to evaluate social phenomena through numerical data while being more suitable for investigating hypotheses through variables. Due to their standardized measures, they are applied to samples and facilitate the finding of results that can be generalized (Creswell, 2004). In the present study, due to the nature of the research questions, it was considered more appropriate to select this methodology. The study adopted the six basic steps given by Gall et al. (1996) (1) clearly defined the research objectives, (2) clearly defined the population and sample of the study, (3) clearly defined the study variables, (4) the means of collecting the data, (5) the cover letter was compiled, (6) the questionnaire was distributed and collected in the survey sample.

### ***4.3. Quantitative research***

In order to verify the employees anxiety on the 4 \* and 5 \* hotels in Thessaloniki, a human resources survey was conducted. The main methods for gathering sufficient data in a survey are primary and secondary, with the first involving both qualitative and quantitative research and based on data collected to serve the purpose of the research, while the second involves data collected for purpose other than research being carried out, such as statistics from government agencies, past recent surveys, relevant to the subject being investigated, information on the internet for use etc. (Middleton, 2009). Primary research was selected for this task, and in particular the data collection was done using a questionnaire, a method very popular in the tourism market.

The population surveyed included executives and employees of all levels and segments of the hotel, and their stated goals lie in their crystallized view of human resource management at the individual hotel, which are the key contributing factors of anxiety. The questionnaire method was selected in the context of the primary research because it allows for a large number of respondents who will fill it in by maintaining their anonymity without feeling the pressure of time, ensuring as honest as possible by each participant, as the fear that the answers would become known could affect their reliability and validity.

Research is also distinguished in quantitative and qualitative terms. The first is based on the statistical analysis of the results of human behavior, in this case executives and employees, while the qualitative one is based on the study of the causes of such behavior, by collecting, analyzing and interpreting data that cannot be quantified. In this case, the quantitative research was selected, which was based on the statistical analysis of a particular segment of the sample, using quantitative mathematical methods to deduce.

The primary objective of quantitative research is to classify features, measure them, and create statistical models to explain what is observed, using tools such as questionnaires or computer software to collect research. At the same time, this study was based on international literature on human resource management and anxiety, where similar studies were found to follow form of quantitative research, such as questionnaires with mainly closed-ended questions (Lo & Lam, 2005; Tse, 2012).

#### ***4.4. Research tool***

The most frequently used tool in quantitative research is the questionnaire, which if properly structured can attract a significant number of participants and allow the researcher to directly gather the data needed for his / her research (Singh, 2007). In the present study a questionnaire was used, consisting of specific scales investigating job stress, role expectation conflict, coworker support and work-life balance. Specifically, Shukla & Srivastava1 (2016) Job Stress Scale was chosen to investigate the work-related stress of employees in hotel industry. The original questionnaire consists of 22 5-point Likert-type questions (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree) that assess Job stress scale (9 questions), role expectation conflict (5 questions), coworker support (4 questions) and work -life balance (4 questions). In the present study 15 out of 22 questions were used: Job stress scale (6 questions), role expectation conflict (3 questions), coworker support (4 questions) and work-life balance (2 questions). In addition, the sex, age and work of experience of employees in the tourism industry were recorded. The questionnaire was distributed electronically via the google form online platform.

#### ***4.5. Sample***

The population of this research consists of employees of 4 and 5 stars, mainly in Thessaloniki, which makes it clear that its sample consists of some of these employees. This demonstrates the suitability of the sample to participate in this research as representativeness is one of the most important selection criteria (Robson, 2002). Also, the number of participants in the survey was 101 employees, large enough to be sufficient to limit the likelihood of error in the generalization process.

#### ***4.6. Statistical analysis***

Descriptive statistics such as frequency (n) and relative frequency (%) were used to present the demographic and occupational characteristics of the sample. To investigate the reliability of the tools used, the value of Cronbach's coefficient  $\alpha$  was calculated. In addition, descriptive statistics such as mean (MT) and standard deviation (TA) were

used to describe the dimensions of job stress, role expectation conflict, coworker support and work-life balance. For all dimensions of the tool, data normality was checked and verified using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and therefore parametric inductive statistics tests were used. Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to investigate the association between the dimensions of work-related stress. Finally, t-test for 2 independent samples and analysis of variance (one-way ANOVA) were used to investigate whether there is a statistically significant difference in job stress, role expectation conflict, coworker support and work-life balance regarding gender, age, and work experience. The analysis was performed in SPSS version 25 software. The significance level was set at  $\alpha = 0.05$ .

#### ***4.7. Research ethics***

In this work all these steps were taken to ensure that the research process complies with the code of ethics. Specifically, in order for a research to be classified as ethical, the researcher should take specific actions such as fully informing the participants about the purpose of the research, ensuring anonymity, the participants as well as their voluntary participation in the research and lastly to ensure their physical and mental integrity. In this case, the researcher has informed both verbally and in writing through the introductory note the purpose for which the research is being carried out as well as that the data will not be used for any other reason, academic or commercial. It also ensured that participation was voluntary as none of the participants were in any way pressured to complete the questionnaire. In addition, all participants were informed that they could discontinue their research even if they had begun to complete the questionnaire. Finally, it should be noted that the researcher did not request any participants to record their personal data, which confirms that all participants were anonymous.

## Chapter 5. Results

### 5.1. Sample demographics

The demographic characteristics of the participants are given in Table 1. Of the 101 employees surveyed, 57 (56.4%) were female and 41 (40.6%) were male while 3 (3%) did not want to disclose their gender. In addition, the results on the age distribution of the sample showed that 41.6% (n = 42) of the participants were 20 to 25 years old and 34.7% (n = 35) were 26 to 35 years old. Finally, Table 1 shows that 64.4% (n = 65) had up to 5 years of work experience while 22.8% (n = 23) had 6 to 10 years of work experience. Less participation was observed by employees with more years of experience.

**Table 1.** Demographics characteristics of the sample

	n	%
What is your gender?	Male	41 40.6%
	Female	57 56.4%
	Prefer not to mention	3 3.0%
What is your age?	Up to 20	2 2.0%
	20-25	42 41.6%
	26-35	35 34.7%
	36-44	12 11.9%
	45 and over	10 9.9%
Years in current job.	Up to 5	65 64.4%
	6-15	23 22.8%
	16-25	11 10.9%
	Over 25	2 2.0%

### 5.2. Reliability analysis

Table 2 gives the results of the reliability analysis of the tools used. Reliability was assessed by the Cronbach's reliability index  $\alpha$ . It was observed that the dimension of job stress showed good reliability ( $\alpha = 0.678$ ), the role expectation conflict dimension showed high reliability ( $\alpha = 0.751$ ), the dimension of co-worker showed good reliability ( $\alpha = 0.654$ ) and the work-life dimension showed good reliability ( $\alpha = 0.669$ ). Overall, we can say that all 4 dimensions of the work-related tool are quite reliable.

**Table 2.** Reliability analysis results

Scale	Items	$\alpha$ Cronbach
1. Job stress scale	6	0.678
2. Role expectation conflict	3	0.751
3. Coworker support	4	0.654
4. Work-life balance	2	0.669

### 5.3. Descriptive statistics about work-related stress

Table 3 presents the descriptive results for the 6 questions related to job stress scale. The results showed that 57.4% (n = 58) of the employees agreed or completely agreed that the effect of their job is too high on them. In addition, 52.5% (n = 53) of the employees agreed or strongly agreed that Many people at their workplace are tired of the company demands. Finally, 42.5% (n = 43) of the employees disagreed or strongly disagreed with the fact that sometimes when they think about their job they get a tight feeling in their chest and 41.6% (n = 42) of the employees disagreed or strongly disagreed that they feel bad when they take a leave. These results indicate that employees at 4\* and 5\* hotel units in the city of Thessaloniki are experiencing some work stress related situations.

**Table 3.** Descriptive statistics about job stress

	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Undecided		Agree		Strongly agree	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
1. I have a lot of work and fear that I have very little time to do it.	7	6.9%	11	10.9%	39	38.6%	29	28.7%	15	14.9%
2. I get really anxious when there are unexpected changes in the way I work.	12	11.9%	19	18.8%	24	23.8%	31	30.7%	15	14.9%
3. Many people at my workplace are tired of the company's demands.	9	8.9%	8	7.9%	31	30.7%	30	29.7%	23	22.8%
4. The effect of my job is too high on me.	4	4.0%	11	10.9%	28	27.7%	36	35.6%	22	21.8%

5. Sometimes when I think about my job I get a tight feeling in my chest.	26	25.7%	17	16.8%	26	25.7%	23	22.8%	9	8.9%
6. I feel bad when I take a leave.	28	27.7%	14	13.9%	25	24.8%	24	23.8%	10	9.9%

Table 4 presents the descriptive results for the 3 questions related to role expectation conflict scale. The results showed that 63.4% (n = 64) of the employees agreed or strongly agreed that they are able to satisfy the conflicting demands of their colleagues and seniors. On the contrary, 52.5% (n = 53) of the employees disagreed or strongly disagreed that they are not able to satisfy the demands of clients and colleagues, because they are conflicting. Finally, 38.6% (n = 43) of the employees disagreed or strongly disagreed with the fact that Sometimes when they think about their job they get a tight feeling in their chest and 41.6% (n = 39) of the employees agreed or strongly agreed that sometimes conflicting demands make them question their role in the company. These results indicate that a small percentage of employees at 4\* and 5\* hotel units in the Prefecture of Thessaloniki face significant problems regarding their role in the hotel they work for.

**Table 4.** Descriptive statistics about role expectation conflict

	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Undecided		Agree		Strongly agree	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
1. I am able to satisfy the conflicting demands of my colleagues and seniors.	1	1.0%	6	5.9%	30	29.7%	35	34.7%	29	28.7%
2. I'm not able to satisfy the demands of clients and colleagues, because they are conflicting.	25	24.8%	28	27.7%	22	21.8%	18	17.8%	8	7.9%
3. Sometimes conflicting demands make me question my role in the company.	14	13.9%	15	14.9%	33	32.7%	23	22.8%	16	15.8%

Table 5 presents the descriptive results for the 4 questions related to co-worker support scale. The results showed that 59.4% (n = 60) of the employees agreed or strongly agreed that their colleagues support their ideas and respect their opinion. Also, 63.3%

(n=64) of the employees agreed or strongly agreed that they can rely on their colleagues for help and advice and 51.5% (n=52) agreed or strongly agreed that they often get feedback from their colleagues about their performance. Moreover, 40.6% (n=41) of the employees agreed or strongly agreed that their employer supports them in balancing work and private life. These results indicate that a great percentage of employees at 4 and 5 star hotel units in the Prefecture of Thessaloniki have high levels of co-worker support.

**Table 5.** Descriptive statistics about co-worker support

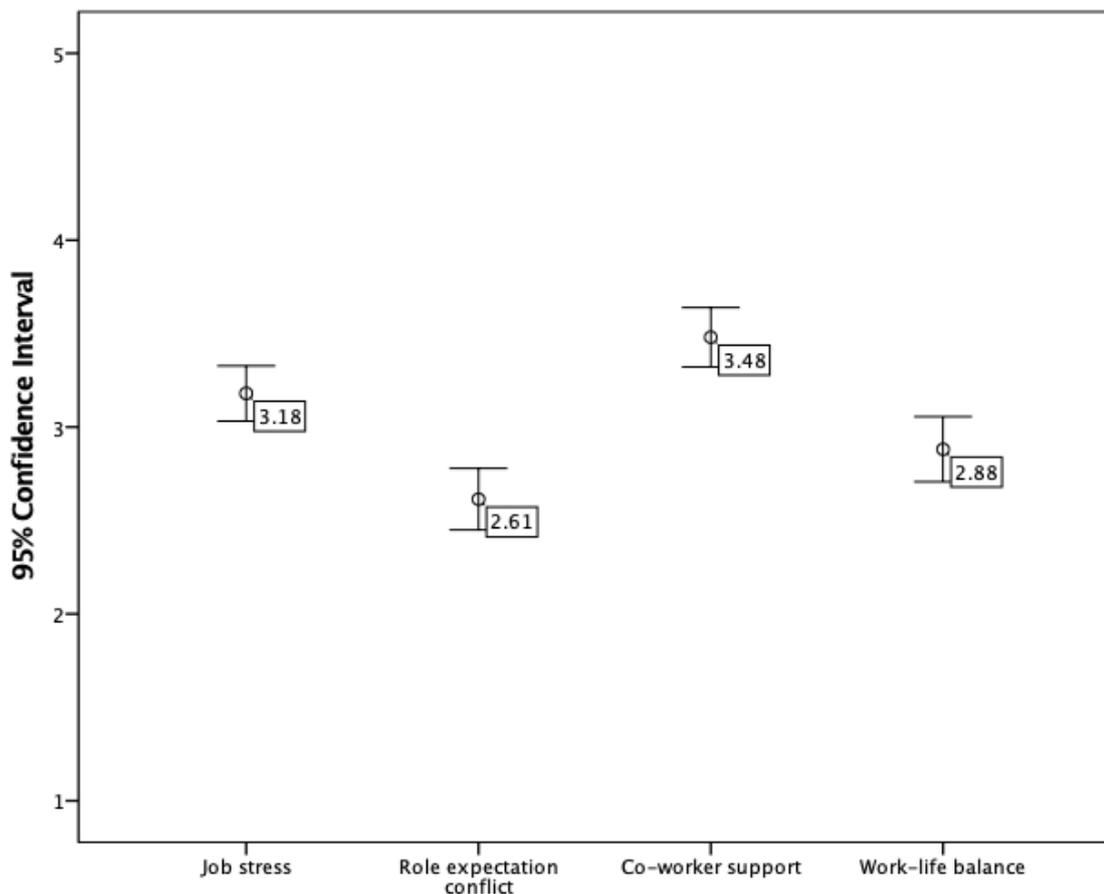
	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Undecided		Agree		Strongly agree	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
1. My colleagues support my ideas and respect my opinion.	5	5.0%	10	9.9%	26	25.7%	33	32.7%	27	26.7%
2. I can rely on my colleagues for help and advice.	2	2.0%	12	11.9%	23	22.8%	38	37.6%	26	25.7%
3. I often get feedback from my colleagues about my performance.	7	6.9%	10	9.9%	32	31.7%	32	31.7%	20	19.8%
4. My employer supports me in balancing work and private life.	14	13.9%	24	23.8%	22	21.8%	25	24.8%	16	15.8%

In Table 6 are presented the descriptive results for the 2 questions related work-life balance scale. The results showed that 40.6% (n = 41) of the employees agreed or strongly agreed that they feel that their job and private life are well-balanced. Also, 45.5% (n=46) of the employees agreed or strongly agreed that when they go home, they keep thinking of work. These results indicate that a great percentage of employees at 4\* and 5\* hotel units in the Prefecture of Thessaloniki have a moderate work-life balance.

**Table 6.** Descriptive statistics about work-life balance

	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Undecided		Agree		Strongly agree	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
1. I feel that my job and private life are well-balanced.	17	16.8%	19	18.8%	24	23.8%	28	27.7%	13	12.9%
2. When I go home, I keep thinking of work	13	12.9%	12	11.9%	30	29.7%	29	28.7%	17	16.8%

The average score for each of the four dimensions of the tool was then calculated and the results are given in Chart 1. Each dimension can range from 1 (low level) to 5 (high level). The dimensions of job stress and role expectation conflict are negative as a higher score is indicative of a higher level of job stress and role conflict. In contrast, dimensions regarding co-worker support and work-life balance are positive as a higher score is indicative of a higher level of co-worker support and work-life balance. The results showed that employees at 4- and 5-star hotel units in the Prefecture of Thessaloniki experience moderate job stress ( $M = 3.18$ ,  $SD = 0.75$ ) while having a moderate to good level of support from co-workers ( $M = 3.48$ ,  $SD = 0.81$ ). In addition, they were found to have a moderate level of work-life balance ( $M = 2.88$ ,  $SD = 0.88$ ) and did not appear to have a problem with their role expectation in the hotel they work ( $M = 2.61$ ,  $SD = 0.83$ ).



**Figure 1.** Error bar with 95% confidence interval about work-related stress dimensions

#### ***5.4. Correlation between work-related dimensions***

Then, the possible correlations between the dimensions of the questionnaire were checked using the Pearson correlation coefficient. The results are given in Table 7 and it is found that job stress is positively related to Role expectation conflict ( $r = 0.489$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) while negatively related to co-worker support ( $r = -0.251$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and work - life balance ( $r = -0.448$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

**Table 7.** Pearson correlation result about work-related dimensions

		Job stress	Role expectati on conflict	Co- worker support	Work-life balance
Job stress	Pearson Correlation	1	.489**	-.251*	-.448**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.011	.000
	N	101	101	101	101
Role expectation conflict	Pearson Correlation	.489**	1	-.281**	-.313**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.004	.001
	N	101	101	101	101
Co-worker support	Pearson Correlation	-.251*	-.281**	1	.456**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.011	.004		.000
	N	101	101	101	101
Work-life balance	Pearson Correlation	-.448**	-.313**	.456**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.001	.000	
	N	101	101	101	101

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

### 5.5. Work-related stress regarding gender

The results of the t-test on the comparisons between male and female employees (Table 8) showed that there were no significant gender differences as  $p\text{-value} > 0.05$  was observed in all cases.

**Table 8.** Comparisons of work-related dimension regarding gender

		Gender		t	p
		Male	Female		
		Standard	Standard		
		Mean	Deviation	Mean	Deviation

Job stress	2.98	.77	3.33	.73	-2.272	0.025*
Role expectation conflict	2.72	.87	2.55	.81	1.018	0.311
Co-worker support	3.40	.76	3.54	.86	-0.844	0.401
Work-life balance	2.95	.91	2.86	.87	0.505	0.615

### 5.6. Work-related stress regarding age

The results of the ANOVA about the comparisons between age categories of employees (Table 9) showed that there were no significant differences regarding age as  $p\text{-value} > 0.05$  was observed in all cases

**Table 9.** Comparisons of work-related dimension regarding age

			Job stress	Role	Co-worker support	Work-life balance
Age	Up to 20	Mean	2.92	2.33	4.50	2.75
		SD	1.06	.47	.00	1.77
	20-25	Mean	3.27	2.74	3.36	2.81
		SD	.57	.73	.79	.73
	26-35	Mean	3.07	2.62	3.54	3.04
		SD	.84	.94	.92	.96
	36-44	Mean	3.25	2.58	3.33	2.46
		SD	.64	.92	.54	1.05
	45 and over	Mean	3.13	2.17	3.75	3.15
		SD	1.19	.77	.66	.75
		F	0.435	1.018	1.468	1.316
		p	0.783	0.402	0.218	0.269

### 5.7. Work-related stress regarding work experience

The results of the ANOVA about the comparisons regarding work experience of employees (Table 10) showed that there were no significant differences regarding work experience as  $p\text{-value} > 0.05$  was observed in all cases.

**Table 10.** Comparisons of work-related dimension work experience

			Job stress	Role	Co-worker support	Work-life balance	
Work experience	Up to 5	Mean	3.27	2.67	3.48	2.86	
		SD	.66	.77	.82	.89	
	6-15	Mean	3.16	2.55	3.48	2.85	
		SD	.84	.92	.88	.83	
	16-25	Mean	2.80	2.58	3.48	3.00	
		SD	.98	1.02	.62	1.02	
	25 and over	Mean	2.42	1.67	3.63	3.25	
		SD	.35	.00	1.24	.35	
	F			3.024	1.021	0.021	0.200
	p			0.116	0.387	0.996	0.896

## **Chapter 6. Conclusion**

Work-related stress has been a major subject of study in recent years because it has realized its role in the mental and physical health of employees and in the overall effectiveness of the organization. Indeed, psychosocial risks and occupational stress are among the major challenges in occupational safety and health, as they appear to have a significant impact on the health of individuals, businesses and national economies.

Stress is considered by about half of European ordinary working people to be a workplace phenomenon and is responsible for about half of all lost work-days. People with stress usually feel that they have to manage more than they can handle, and in general they are unable to manage the demands of the tasks assigned to them. Of course, the opposite can happen. That is, when an employee is more qualified than is required for the job he or she is assigned, he or she is likely to lose motivation for work progress, experiencing stress and frustration. The symptoms of experiencing prolonged stress are divided into three categories: physical, psychological and behavioral symptoms.

Work-related stress, like all types of stress, can be the cause of illnesses that are associated with high levels of absenteeism, reduced performance, more mistakes and poor interpersonal relationships in the workplace. Occupational stress can affect anyone, at any level of the hierarchy, regardless of industry or size of the company. This is a major risk for most companies and therefore addressing this challenge is a top priority for employers and, of course, human resources professionals. Especially nowadays, when markets are characterized by globalization and increasing competitiveness, businesses and organizations are seeking more competitive advantage over the human factor in order to survive. In particular, it appears that firms that emphasize the search for human talent and that enhance employee involvement in business decision making achieve a competitive advantage over time. Work-related stress has been recognized internationally, at European and national level as a crucial issue for both employees and employers. While the past decades have been characterized by stress as an individual problem and all interventions aimed at developing individual mechanisms to deal with it, in recent years a different approach has emerged, in which the causes of stress must be eliminated through interventions at the level of the individual. of all organization. Businesses are called upon to cope with the stress of work to ensure their proper functioning and to minimize the risks to their

profitability. At the same time, businesses and organizations bear not only moral but also legal responsibility for their human resources. The tourism industry in particular can be regarded as a particularly stressful working environment both because of the constant contact of the employee with the public and the need to handle multiple issues at the same time. In addition, difficult times and time pressures can often occur, which can lead the person to experience work stress. The purpose of this study was to investigate the work stress of employees in 4\* and 5\* hotel units in the Prefecture of Thessaloniki. In addition, the aim was to highlight the dimensions of stress that are most important for tourism workers, in particular 4\* and 5\* hotel units. Finally, it was investigated whether work stress varies significantly in terms of demographic characteristics of workers.

The results of the present study showed that employees at 4\* and 5\* hotel units in the Prefecture of Thessaloniki experience moderate job stress while having a moderate to good level of support from co-workers, a moderate level of work-life balance. Also, employees at 4\* and 5\* hotel units in Thessaloniki do not appear to have a problem with their expected role in the hotel they work for. Moreover, the results showed that employees at 4\* and 5\* hotel who experience problems with their roles in the hotel units they work at, have an increased risk of job stress. In contrast, high levels of co-worker support and work-life balance correlated with lower levels of job stress. Finally, it was observed that work-related stress and its dimensions do not significantly differ with respect to the gender, age, and working life of the employees at the 4\* and 5\* hotel units Thessaloniki.

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