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Recalibrating Frontline Service Capabilities for Five-Star Hospitality in a Post-Pandemic Era

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Abstract. This study examines evolving frontline service employee (FLE) competencies needed in five-star hotels during the post-pandemic period via a systematic review of over 300 peer-reviewed articles over 2010-2022. Findings reveal research foci transitioning from emotional skills to guest health safety, work stress to psychological wellbeing, service quality to digital enablement and internal social capital to external employability support across FLE capability dimensions of individual effectiveness, workplace practices, HR strategies and customer experience. By spotlighting crucial yet under addressed FLE capability shifts in a COVID-transformed landscape, implications offered for hotels to reinvent policies, processes and support infrastructure centered on service employee resilience and adaptive performance.

Keywords: frontline employees (FLE), five-star hospitality, post-pandemic era, competencies, frontline service capabilities.

1. Introduction

Due to the COVID-19 epidemic, the workplace has changed, especially in face-to-face businesses like hospitality. To succeed in the post-COVID workplace and improve performance, frontline service employee (FLE) talents and competences must be understood. Hospitality workers, who create and offer services face-to-face, have been affected. To protect employee health, WHO and government COVID-19 protocols encourage organisations to maintain social distance between people. Hospitality businesses often struggle to prevent COVID-19 from spreading to guests. To provide value-based services in five-star hotels, Bitner's (1995) service triangle requires "Providers (employees)" to leverage "company (hotel infrastructure)" to suit guest needs. Intangible hospitality services cannot be inventoried or exhibited, making it difficult to provide hotel guests with quality service (Sisson and Adams, 2013). Frontline service workers must demonstrate competencies such guest health safety standards, digital service delivery, and psychological well-being support. Post-pandemic employee performance depends on competencies. Suh et al. (2012) said that five-star hospitality cannot manage guest demand heterogeneity without specific competencies in service creation. Maintaining five-star customer service and OSHA compliance is the goal. The service dominating logic (SD logic) states that staff personalises each five-star service creation to the last detail, attracting hotel customers to employ 'world-class services' (Testa and Sipe, 2012).

The skills, expertise, and traits of hospitality frontline staff include their ability to provide high-quality service, adapt to changing situations, and satisfy client expectations. Hotel staff are taught in a variety of skills and required to perform, enable the five-star brand promise, and provide service exclusivity that builds the hotel's reputation. Due to limited occupancy laws (Boukis et al. 2021), COVID-19 (Forsythe et al. 2020), WHO protocols, and new competency training to direct guest contact at all hotel activities. Sari et al. (2023) noted that Organisational Culture and HR Competencies impact Employee Commitment and Organizational Performance.

The quantitative study found that corporate culture and employee competencies affect performance. Organisational performance is how well an organisation meets its strategic goals and benefits stakeholders. Frontline service staff performance affects visitor pleasure, employee retention, and financial success. Leadership or employers use internal marketing to inspire, train, and reallocate teams to automate part or all the hotel services process to create a hybrid working system (Yuan et al. 2017). Compared to five-star service challenges, contactless service in aviation and retail is not comparable. FLE (front-line workers) implement PMS (performance management system), enabling five-star hotel brand performance in India by adding service innovation and creativity to adaptability skills (Jauhari, 2006). Post-COVID-19 workplace problems and opportunities include improved health and safety, digital transformation, and employee well-being. Addressing these difficulties is essential for adapting to the new normal and maintaining operational excellence. Due to COVID-19, new work protocols in the hospitality service environment disturb the hotel service process yet provide flexibility, forcing hotel leadership and staff to adapt new methods to contactless delivery. Osei and Ackah (2015) examined the relationship between employee competencies and organisation performance and recommended continuous learning for employees to improve their skills and achieve high-performance potential in attitude and behaviour.

The hospitality sector has undergone significant changes in service delivery post-pandemic.

Healthcare Sector: Healthcare professionals have adapted to telemedicine, safety protocols, AI-based healthcare, contactless services, and increased patient volumes (Lee and lee (2021)). Both sectors implemented safety measures and adapted to digital service delivery. Healthcare focused on medical care delivery, while hospitality emphasized guest experience (Pillai et al (2021)).

Retail Sector: Ratchford, Brian, et al (2023) stated retail workers shifted to e-commerce, curb side pickup, and contactless transactions. Both sectors embraced contactless services and digital transformation. Retail focused on product sales, while hospitality prioritized guest satisfaction (Biju &

Kumar (2022)).

Education Sector: Educators adopted online teaching and hybrid learning models (Thahir et. al (2023). Both sectors implemented technology for remote service delivery. Education focused on curriculum delivery, while hospitality emphasized personalized service (Paulose and Shakeel (2022)).

Transportation Sector: Transportation providers adjusted schedules and implemented safety measures (Subbarao & Kadali (2022)). Both sectors faced the challenges of reduced demand and operational adjustments. Transportation focused on passenger safety, while hospitality prioritized guest satisfaction (Song (2023)).

Financial Services Sector: Financial institutions shifted to remote work and digital banking services (Vasile et al (2021)). Both sectors accelerated digital transformation (Ben et al. (2022)). Financial focused on financial transactions, while hospitality emphasized guest experience (Davari et al (2022).

These comparisons highlight the diverse challenges and adaptation strategies across sectors post-pandemic.

The present study examines five-star hotel frontline service staff's post-pandemic abilities. The study examines how the COVID-19 epidemic has changed frontline service professionals' roles and the new skills and talents they require to meet guest needs and provide excellent service. The study seeks to examine how five-star hotels may adapt their workforce strategies to improve client experiences and operational performance in the contemporary hospitality industry.

Here are two specific research questions related to the gaps to focus the study.

1. What specific competencies have become increasingly important for frontline service employees in five-star hotels in response to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, and how do these competencies differ from pre-pandemic requirements?
2. How do the evolving competencies of frontline service employees impact customer satisfaction, service quality, and overall organizational performance in five-star hotels in the post-pandemic era?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Employee competency

Achmad (2017) found that competences motivate people since they execute based on deliverables. It also involves training functions (Mahmood et al. 2018) that measure individual performance to serve visitors (Haynes and Fryer, 2000). White introduced competence in 1959, and employee competence showed individual skills. Katz (2013) defines competency as a strategy in the 'Competence-based Strategic Management theory' as how organizations link individual, team, and department workload segregation, job description, and job analysis to meet frontline job pressures. Service organizations meet their long-term objectives and produce and share value with consumers and stakeholders (Draft and Lengel, 2008). Institutional theory uses sociological perspective to direct organizational structure, process, and people competence (Dunn, 2010:4), employer perspective of management (Jaykumar et al. 2014), directive leadership roles (Lei et al. 2021), and human resource development perspective to boost organizational reputation and productivity. According to Ružić (2015), HRM design, recruiting, and training during internships may impact hotel performance directly and indirectly (Purnama et al. 2021). The concept of 'competency' is difficult and contradicts leadership advice on employee capabilities (Ekhsan et al. 2020). There is conceptual uncertainty in the definition of work competences (Shippmann et al., 2000), connecting result, process, and adjective. Norris (1991) suggests defining competence clearly and in respect to operationalized ideas. McClelland (1973) defined "competency" as employee performance that contributes to corporate success. Competency in firm-level professions combines knowledge, abilities, and attitudes, according to Mulder (2007). Bhardwaj (2013) defined competence as an employee's knowledge and abilities needed to execute well. Hellriegel and Slocum (2011) identified seven employee competencies: ethical, self-, diversity, cultures, communication, team, and

change. Studies indicated that abilities including team, ethical, change, communication, and employee psychological competence are interdependent, resulting in their interconnected ecosystems (Abd Patah et al. 2009). Current literature analysis focuses on hospitality, where self-competency in workers is crucial, particularly in hospitality jobs. Unappreciated supervisors, inadequate compensation, temporary job contracts, continual mockery, no facilities training, unfair employee evaluation, and favoritism lead to frontline staff disengagement, according to Bhebhe (2020). Over the years, negative and positive influences have affected hotel FLE production and performance. Academic literature examined the root cause of competency mapping at the individual level, linking HR dimensions, as the following competencies in hotel frontline employees are considered for job offers self-competency and team competency, change competency for adaptability, communication competency for interdepartmental/team communication, and ethical competency at transactional perspective in hotel sector.

2.2. Frontline employees as HRM function in the hospitality industry

Cho et al. (2006) found that hotel HRM emphasizes labor-management involvement, salary incentive schemes, and pre-employment testing. With leadership needing to cut staff turnover, implement variable compensation for performance, and create comparison rates, hotel careers are aspirational. Alleyne et al. (2006) found no external-internal fit in FLE when studying HRM and hotel performance in Barbados. The consequences demonstrate that HR management has improved operations, affecting corporate business strategy. Thus, tying activities to operations showed a process viewpoint, emphasizing HR's role in industrial practices and employee competency separation. Competencies were connected to KM and training, which gives the hotel a competitive edge by creating a more inclusive HR strategy that adapts to market situations. Training is crucial for employees with 360-degree perspective and competencies (Solnet et al. 2015), while HRM policies enhance hospitality management effectiveness (Kaya and Dağdeviren, 2018). The literature research also highlighted how leadership, general management, employee functions, and practices (Inoyatova, 2019) have adopted skills and competencies, mapping organizational competencies. Job analysis and training tactics led to job description skills that affect hotel productivity and production (Boatemah, 2020). Global and local HRM policies affect service creation and employee attitudes towards service delivery (Giousmpasoglou, 2012). As Bowen and Ostroff (2004) suggested, HRM approaches concentrate on implementation (process), which is crucial for employee development, linking training (input) and competences (output) to performance. Later service management and operations management literature has linked performance output to individual capabilities and training.

Frontline work literature became a minor concern in hotel operations management later, but it still drives internal-external connections for businesses and consumers. The research shows that HR department communications, directives, and norms received by frontline employees are more severe, persistent, and likely to constrain skills via SOP standard operating standards. Academic literature has also extended to include on-the-job training, leadership mentoring, and coaching to connect employee capability with operational preparedness (Ekhsan et al. 2020). Li et al. (2011) and Sanders et al. (2008) described the process view aspect as the transactional interaction with hotel organizations, where leadership gives solutions that frontline personnel implement, supporting leader-member exchange theory. The hotel management goal is to maximize business returns, and HRIS and real-time communication sharpen employee competencies (Melián-González and Bulchand-Gidumal, 2017). As FLE communication highlighted individual skills that delimited training contribution to internal talent, HRM literature began to treat employees as assets with talent management. Consistency mediates FLE and visitor repeat business in hotel brand names with unique competencies that improve personnel skills and organization success (Bast, 2019). Research on how competences evolve over time and across work/task settings (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004; Kassin and Pryor, 1985) supports HRD in the organization. In contrast, Bigdata and HR analytics have been utilized to map productivity for multi-

location service businesses (Martin-Rios et al. 2017), demonstrating how technology and expertise are defined and verified in an effectiveness framework. Supervisors and frontline workers must have a psychological contract (Santhanam et al. 2017).

2.3. Leadership role for frontline employee work engagement

Studies in five-star hotels reveal that driven leadership aligns resources, trains, coordinates, and communicates to transmit knowledge to support service deliverables (Salanova et al., 2005). Granting access to every activity has standardized quality and training, whereas mentoring responsibilities were limited to emotional and social assistance (Farh et al., 2006). The structural view of customer-facing positions has placed 'employee first', with workers bearing brand reputation and contributing to internal marketing material. Management development has linked HRM and operations, resulting in increased back-to-front participation in hotel service delivery, making multidisciplinary academic research applicable across industrial sectors (Bakker and Leiter, 2010). A broad literature study on employee and task engagement and work performance supports employee motivation, performance, and pay for performance, including hotels (Gottschalk and Zollo, 2007). 24/7 hotel operations and labor market prices affect worker makeup. A literature analysis indicates student training batches' onboarding methods: permanent and temporary hotel jobs, internships, and apprenticeships (Leiter, 2010). It highlights how hotels are utilizing HRM to change recruiting and selection procedures to meet front-line employee staffing requirements, connect skill gaps linked to training as an intervention, and create a better mix of employee skills for job positions.

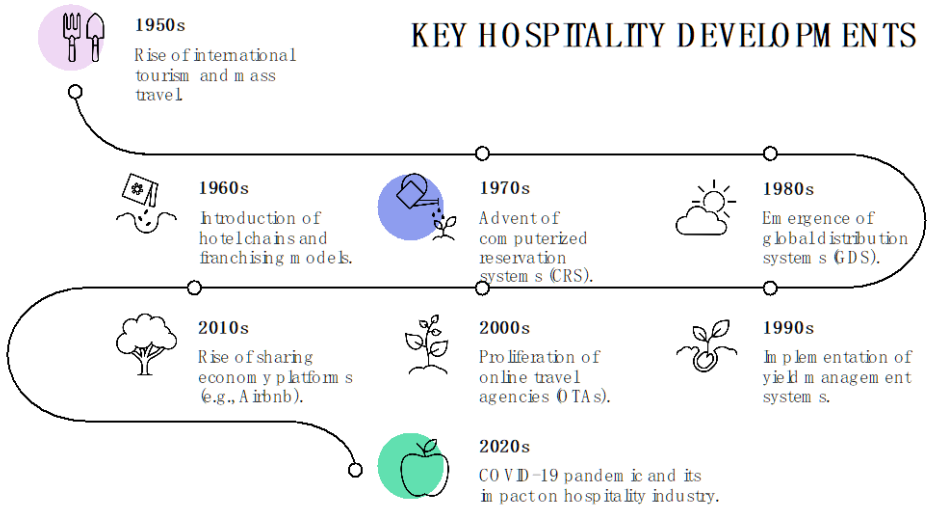


Fig.1 Historical timeline of Key hospitality sector developments

Table 1: Brief of key hospitality sector developments

Decade	Key Hospitality Sector Developments	Implications for Contemporary Capability Challenges
1950s	Rise of international tourism and mass travel.	Increased demand for standardized services and amenities.
1960s	Introduction of hotel chains and franchising models.	Emphasis on brand consistency and operational efficiency.
1970s	Advent of computerized reservation systems (CRS).	Automation of booking processes and data management.
1980s	Emergence of global distribution systems (GDS).	Expansion of distribution channels and market reach.

1990s	Implementation of yield management systems.	Optimization of revenue and pricing strategies.
2000s	Proliferation of online travel agencies (OTAs).	Increased competition and price transparency.
2010s	Rise of sharing economy platforms (e.g., Airbnb).	Disruption of traditional accommodation providers and guest preferences.
2020s	COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on travel industry.	Shift towards contactless services, health & safety protocols, and digital transformation.

2.4. Organizational performance

'Organizational performance' is defined as a multi-dimensional concept as the employee effort and leadership direction lead to outcomes of positive institutional performance. From the organizational context, the outcomes that are successful are dependent on strategy formulation, knowledge, and the right workforce at the right place to execute these strategies. The institutional theory is relevant in this regard, as each organization is a social structure with diverse groups, teams, and departments following norms, policies, routines, tasks, and objectives (Randeree and Al Youha, 2009). Zhang et al. (2008) defined organizational performance as a metric and a driver for success, in which each stakeholder (staff and client) needs to cooperate with the organization to reach its aims. Dryer and Reeves (1995) used the perspective of the HR outcomes like the negatives (employee turnover, employee absenteeism, employee job satisfaction) against the aspirational goals of positive organizational outcomes (productivity, quality, service). Harris and Mongiello (2001) stated that HR links staff performance, while Atkinson and Brander-Brown's (2001) research showed that the factor of people at the centrality of performance management requires the use of both financial and non-financial to a dynamic approach to produce a tangible result.

2.5. Workplace post-COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted businesses and their processes of operations severely across industries. The sudden impact of lockdowns across countries to contain the spread of the virus has resulted in humans in an organizational context rethinking their behavior. While physical distancing among co-workers has been implemented to counter the spread of the COVID-19 virus, there are job descriptions in different industries and sectors, like face-to-face communication in services, that is a norm.

Thus, a business operation has a difficulty that cannot be disregarded. People are altruistic and provide superior support in a work service atmosphere (Flynn and Lake, 2008; Newark, Bohns, and Flynn, 2017), especially during a crisis. Large companies have helpdesks where customers, clients, and suppliers may get information or assistance due to service changes. Customers find it unpleasant, inconvenient, and humiliating (Bohns and Flynn, 2010), while companies align their "best practices" to overcome psychological hurdles to privacy (Cleavenger and Munyon, 2017). Online teams in IT and ITES use brainstorming to solve problems while creating services. Online engaging teams cannot interact face-to-face across time zones (DeRosa, Smith and Hantula, 2007), and focusing on individual employee performance in a remotely interacting work environment misses the creative benefits of face-to-face interactions. Even if WFH (work from home) is the standard across business sectors, frontline hotel workers still use virtuality for managerial responsibilities. According to Schroeder et al. (2019), workplace social engagement that endangers personnel and customers is an occupational health hazard. The service sector has implemented IT-IS to digitalize service operations and preserve social distance between service producers and receivers considering COVID-19. Adapting to new working circumstances during COVID-19 has been influenced by WHO's mission and resources. While hotels provide on-demand service, sectoral hazards of face-to-face engagement for frontline staff and job descriptions changing with IT help create a new practice-based hybrid work system. The foregoing

discussion highlights the vast range of concerns in the literature that help front-line employees in social, corporate, and managerial positions make service more object-oriented. The requirement for bibliometric analysis helps classify and understand literature reviews throughout time.

3. Research Methodology

The study mentions a systematic review of over 300 peer-reviewed articles from 2010-2022. However, the specific criteria used to select these articles, potential biases in the search strategy, and the exclusion of relevant sources could impact the comprehensiveness of the review. The focus on peer-reviewed articles may introduce publication bias, as valuable insights from non-peer-reviewed sources, industry reports, or grey literature could have been excluded. This limitation may affect the diversity and inclusivity of perspectives considered in the study.

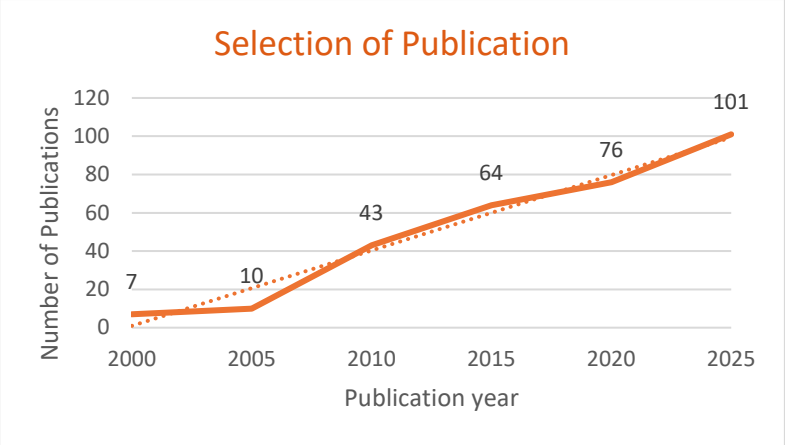


Fig.2 Selection of publications and years

Data extraction involved capturing key information from selected papers, including author names, publication year, research methodology, key findings, and implications for the research objectives. This information was organized systematically to facilitate analysis and synthesis of the literature.

Table 2: Design guidelines identified from methodological guidelines

Steps	Guidelines
Databases Used	Reputable academic databases such as PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar were utilized to ensure a comprehensive coverage of relevant literature in the field of hospitality management.
Search Query Design	The search query was designed using a combination of keywords related to frontline service employees (FLE), hospitality work environment, post-COVID service management, and organizational performance. Boolean operators such as AND, OR, and NOT were employed to refine the search results.
Screening Criteria	Papers were included based on their relevance to the research objectives focusing on FLE capabilities, competencies, post-COVID work issues, and organizational performance in five-star hotels. Studies published within the last decade, written in English, and presenting empirical research or theoretical frameworks were considered for inclusion. The screening process involved an initial

review of titles and abstracts to identify potentially relevant papers, followed by a full-text assessment based on alignment with the research objectives, methodology, and contribution to the understanding of FLE competencies and organizational performance in the hospitality industry.

A quality assessment was conducted to evaluate the reliability and validity of the selected literature. Criteria such as research design, sample size, data analysis methods, and theoretical framework were considered to ensure the inclusion of high-quality studies in the review. The qualitative analytical process used to identify trends, directions, and themes involved tools like secondary journals from authentic sources, Google Scholar, EBSOHOST, Elsevier journal, and Taylor Francis journals. Keywords such as front-line employees, hospitality work environment, and competencies were analyzed. This approach helped narrow the focus and form the basis for a bibliometric mapping exercise. The study primarily focuses on competencies needed for frontline service employees in five-star hotels post-pandemic. The research highlights the shift in employee capabilities in the hospitality industry. Future studies could consider a broader range of hospitality sectors to address generalizability concerns for a more comprehensive analysis.

4. Results & Discussion

The FLE emphasizes hotel service and productivity studies. The examination of over 300 FLE HRM publications identified job happiness, supervisory mentorship, employee turnover and retention, and high-performance work environments across countries and hotel categories. The general trend in this industry showed that front-desk work analysis as part of service requirements needs organizational innovation to create value in the hospitality experience (De Carvalho et al. 2016), which implied research to link operational management links HR functions to support service quality management difficulties. According to Abdul Patah et al. (2009) and Jha and Nair (2008), psychological influence empowerment for front office receptionist satisfaction is a new direction. It suggested that employee psychological empowerment affects FLE meaningfulness, competency, and impact. The nature of roles and tasks in cross-cultural theory has created a new FLE demand in multi-national hotels for workers' cross-cultural competence and team performance. As HRM focused on high attrition in the hotel industry (Mohsin et al. 2013), Bast (2019), Santhanam et al. (2017), Duarte et al. 2015), evaluating the individual competencies that mediate HRM policies impacting employee performance for FLEs, individual skills like soft skills. Front-line employee job descriptions now focus on services and IT management, efficiency, and customer co-creation, opening the employee competencies needed to co-create memorable hotel stays. This implies a hospitality-intelligence (HI) development perspective that includes interpersonal relationships. Competency and training are complementary, and academic research shows a trend towards shaping factors, challenges, career opportunities, and career satisfaction related to hotel employee performance, and education where hotel career management and its impact on career satisfaction are critical for FLEs in hotel jobs.

General management and HRM have been linked to hotel employee competencies, linking KM knowledge management in the structure, systems process of HR to impact KM, and quality for defining performance metrics like employee competencies vs. service performance in frontline hotel employees (CheRusuli et al. 2018). HRD's process view on organizational performance affects hotel service quality, knowledge exchange, and 360-degree operational efficiency. Career research indicated that four factors—management circumstances, personal fulfilment, utilizing ability in the work, and job conditions—impact hotel employee productivity. The JDR theory Job-Demand Resources theory was used to evaluate the employee-organization relationship leader-member exchange tenets, and employee learning goal orientation and knowledge were stronger than the relationship between them (Kim and

Lee, 2013). COVID19 has caused employment uncertainty, emotional tiredness, occupational stresses, and organizational shifts towards employee wellness in hospitality. COVID19 has led to flexible workforce in employment but not FLE in hospitality sector, causing customer interface transaction shift (Yan et al. 2021) involving IT (Lau, 2020), insecurity in health safety provisions in task (Aguiar-Quintana et al. 2021), psychological depression, and job satisfaction and performance. FLE career transition owing to COVID19 worry (Park and Hai, 2021) revealed socially responsible HRM functions to mix mindfulness treatments (Chen and Eyoun, 2021) to minimize FLE dread (He et al. 2021), particularly when hotels became quarantine centers. The subject of employee hotel union supporting FLE employment instability (Vo-Thanh et al. 2021), hotel employee productivity, and hotel leadership reacting to FLE hardship during COVID19 failing to enforce rules.

The trend of research evident from the LR review implies that the hospitality research focuses on individuals- are employee-centric, individual issues in the FLE job description, and tends to predict the effects and predictors. This is the first segmentation of the research thrust area, which takes self-motivation of FLEs to be applied to understand customers better and develop fruitful service interaction and outcomes leading to a personalized service style for the hotel brand. This is the 'personal effectiveness of a set of competencies' that is innate to individual employee personality consisting of attributes like initiative, integrity, skills (transference, interpersonal), adaptability and flexibility, dependability, and reliability (Razak et al, 2016, Shariff et al, 2015). This dimension in research tests the training strategies, factors and challenges, careers impact decision making, customer skills, soft skills, and IT skills for meeting five-star business fundamentals.

Table 3: Research dimensions and focus area along with themes.

Research Dimension	Focus Areas/Themes	References
Personal Effectiveness of Competencies	- Initiative - Integrity - Skills (transference, interpersonal) - Adaptability and Flexibility - Dependability and Reliability - Training strategies, factors, and challenges - Career impact on decision making - Customer skills - soft skills - IT skills for meeting five-star business fundamentals	Razak et al, 2016, Shariff et al, 2015.
Workplace Competencies	- Emotional response - IQ and intelligence - Hospitality intelligence - Impact on customer empathy and experience - Multi-disciplinary approach addressing psychology and human behavior - Cross-cultural HR practices for dealing with cross-cultural guests in hotels	Yuan et al. 2017, Testa and Sipe 2012, Wang 2013
HR Strategy and Business Performance	- Structural impact on employee capability and productivity - Burnout and high turnover in FLE staff in hotels	Teo et al, 2021
Service Encounter Activity	- Interaction with guests - Impression management - Branding and service scape - IT as an enabler of 'phygital' (digital-physical) service management - Impact on HRIS and FLE engagement - Individual/team productivity and project management effort	Huang et al. 2020, Santos-Vijande et al. 2021
Customer Orientation	- FLE attitude and understanding of service-profit linkages - Focus on behaviors to create and establish customer relationships at a higher level	Kay 2020
	- Application of self-motivation to understand	

	customers better and develop fruitful service interactions	
High-Pressure and High-Efficiency Requirements	- Impact on health and mental wellbeing - Stress burnout, long working hours, short-term employment, working within uncertainty and constraints - Absenteeism and disengagement of FLEs affecting productivity - Internal motivation to cope with external task challenges	Forsythe et al. 2020

Source: Authors' creation of Research dimension

The second group of journals classifies FLE as workplace abilities that affect customer empathy and experience via emotional reaction, IQ, and hospitality intelligence. It links individual abilities to acquired skills (training), allowing information to be used promptly to tackle problems (Yuan et al. 2017). It suggests a new multi-disciplinary approach to study 'Psychology and human beings' in the workplace and cross-cultural HR practices for hotel visitors. The literature grows as FLE in a work setting demonstrates the employee's initial attitude towards employer-employee connection (Testa and Sipe, 2012), which affects customer satisfaction feedback in the 360-loop process of grading employee performance (Wang, 2013). HR strategy affects employee capacity, productivity, fatigue, and high turnover in hotel FLE personnel, exposing the workforce. Guest service interaction, impression management, branding, and service scape are the third significant trend in hotel literature reviews by FLEs (Teo et al, 2021). Most academic study emphasizes that IT enabled the 'phygital' (digital-physical) service management method. IS (information systems) creation impacts the HRIS, and FLE participation impacts the visitor experience, individual or team productivity as a project management effort (Santos-Vijande et al. 2021), obvious from multitasking skills. The delivery features, individual/team capabilities, and efficiency (culture and work norms) of FLE literature have influenced service interactions and service scape (Huang et al. 2020). Customer orientation, a process-centric approach to consumer behavior, is the fourth area in the FLE literature study.

According to a research study, FLE attitude, service profit linkage comprehension, and focus behaviors improve customer connections (Kay, 2020). This trend uses FLEs' self-motivation to study consumers and establish productive service interactions, proving competency application results in a customized hotel brand service style. The last and fifth literature study component addresses hotel FLEs' high-pressure, high-efficiency requirements, which affect physical and mental well-being. Stress burnout, long hours in hotels, short-term employment (temporary), working within uncertainty and constraints (Forsythe et al. 2020) affect absenteeism, disengagement of FL to frontline tasks, and productivity, testing internal motivation to drive new competencies to cope with external task challenges.

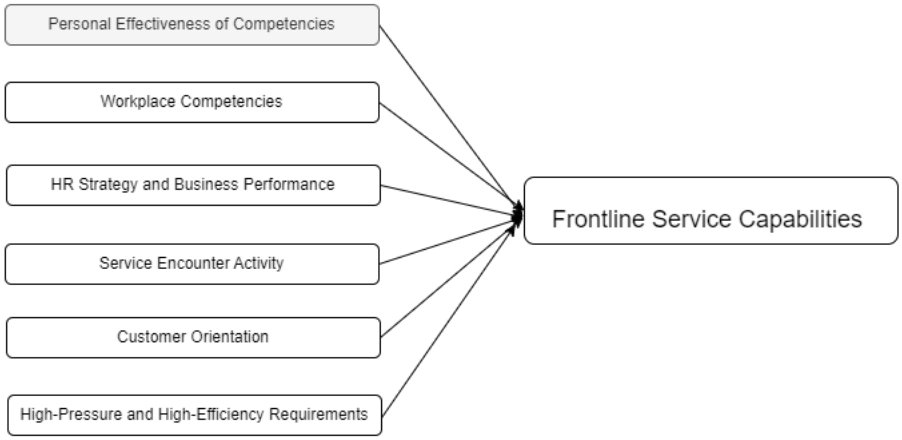


Fig.3: Study Conceptual Mapping

Competencies, such as emotional intelligence, adaptability, customer skills, IT skills, and cross-cultural competency, are crucial for frontline service employees in five-star hotels, particularly in the post-COVID era. These competencies have become increasingly important due to the challenges posed by the pandemic, including the need for contactless operations, enhanced guest safety protocols, and digitalization of services. In the post-pandemic landscape, the evolving competencies of frontline service employees directly impact customer satisfaction, service quality, and overall organizational performance in five-star hotels. By focusing on competencies that align with principles of employee well-being and adaptive performance, hotels can enhance the guest experience and navigate uncertainties in the industry. Furthermore, the integration of technology, such as AI and robotics, plays a significant role in optimizing guest experiences and streamlining service delivery in five-star hotels post-COVID. Balancing digitalization with personalized guest interactions is essential for maintaining service excellence and meeting evolving guest expectations in the new normal.

By aligning the competencies of frontline service employees with evidence-based practices and industry principles, hotels can adapt to the changing landscape post-pandemic, enhance employee capabilities, and elevate the overall guest experience. This strategic approach not only addresses the immediate challenges faced by the industry but also contributes to advancing knowledge in hospitality management. In conclusion, by reinforcing the connections between competencies, research questions, and evidence-based practices, hotels can effectively navigate the post-COVID era, drive organizational performance, and deliver exceptional guest experiences in the evolving hospitality landscape.

4.1. Discussion

Diverse academic publication analyses provide important FLE literature and practice-based research segmentation findings. The hospitality productivity study during the previous decade (2010–2023) has focused on people, teams, supervisory control, environment, and culture. Due to COVID-19, EQ and service interactions were prioritized last year, however customer orientation was not recently researched. The study briefly touches upon recommendations for hotels to reinvent policies and processes centered on service employee resilience and adaptive performance.

Table 4: Key findings and Implications of research questions

Key Findings	Implications for Hotels
Shift from Emotional Skills to Guest Health Safety: Frontline service employees now require competencies in ensuring guest health safety, including knowledge of health protocols, hygiene practices, and crisis management	Policy Reforms: Revise HR policies to prioritize employee wellness, address occupational stress, and strengthen the psychological contract between management and employees
Transition from Work Stress to Psychological Wellbeing: There is a growing emphasis on supporting employees' psychological wellbeing, resilience, and mental health to cope with the stressors of the post-pandemic hospitality environment	Training and Development: Invest in training programs to equip frontline employees with the necessary competencies for delivering safe, high-quality, and digitally enabled services
Focus on Service Quality to Digital Enablement: Competencies related to digital skills, technology adoption, and virtual service delivery have become essential for frontline employees to	Communication Strategies: Enhance communication channels between management and employees to ensure clarity, support, and alignment with organizational goals in the post-

enhance customer experience and operational efficiency	pandemic context.

Hospitality literature reviews in FLE are increasingly addressing high-pressure, high-efficiency criteria. Every hotel team seeks IT-IS enabled service environments that use flexibility, cost-effort, bridging competence gaps, and meeting customer touchpoints. Hotel HR rules require more examination at the policy level, and collaboration and communication have changed to encourage social concerns to protect FLE wellbeing at work. Despite significant attrition in this sector, collectivism and equity-based ideas are evolving quickly, and FLEs customer-facing contact was challenged by COVID-19. Hospitality leadership amidst service delivery constraints values organizational commitment to work, empathy, and work ethics, while fear and anxiety due to COVID-19 have kept people away, HR policies have changed to cover employee hospitalization costs. Technology has negligible impact on hotel service interaction FLE. HR initiatives to reduce occupational stress and anxiety for face-to-face duties in FLE during COVID-19 have supported HR policies that emphasize employee wellbeing at work. Comparing various industrial sectors has indicated convergence in human conduct during COVID-19 and wellbeing for FLE in the medical sector (doctors, nurses, hospital workers) treating COVID-19 patients. Addressing COVID-19, social distancing to protect worker health, and guest health that affects five-star hotel reputation is restricted. FLE during COVID-19 shows a feeling of urgency in service management and widespread sanitization, handwashing, and safe distancing. Across interdisciplinary studies, FLE competencies in hotel service delivery are needed to narrow down the task's difficulty, hotels' five-star service reputation, employee capabilities, and guest satisfaction during the COVID-19 crisis, which affects work area and methods.

5. Conclusion

The Study highlights the dramatic flux in frontline service employee competencies as five-star hotels navigate a new normal requiring contactless operations, emotional agility, and career uncertainty alongside superior guest experiences. As leadership attention remains fixated on profit strategies and digitization to the potential neglect of employee welfare, proactively co-creating people-centric capabilities that balance business fundamentals with individual wellness and growth will remain imperative. Specifically, boosting organizational citizenship behaviors and harnessing institutional knowledge offer pathways to sustain service excellence amidst turbulence.

The study lacks detailed information on the search strategy, inclusion/exclusion criteria, and data extraction process. The lack of transparency in the methodology hinders the reproducibility of the study and raises questions about the rigor of the review process. Addressing these limitations by enhancing transparency in the literature search process, conducting quality assessments of included studies, acknowledging the contextual boundaries of the findings, and ensuring sample representativeness can strengthen the validity and applicability of the research outcomes. By acknowledging and mitigating these limitations, future studies can improve the robustness and generalizability of their findings in the field of hospitality management.

When it comes to the recommendations, Five-star hotels should invest in tailored training and development programs to enhance the competencies of frontline service employees, focusing on areas such as guest health safety, digital enablement, and psychological wellbeing. Implement flexible HR strategies that support employee resilience and adaptive performance, considering the evolving demands of the post-pandemic hospitality landscape. Prioritize employee wellness initiatives that address occupational stress, promote psychological well-being, and ensure a supportive work environment for frontline service employees. Develop strategies to personalize guest interactions, uphold service quality standards, and leverage digital tools to meet the changing expectations of five-

star hotel guests.

By exploring these future research directions, five-star hotels can adapt to the changing landscape of frontline service capabilities post-pandemic, enhance employee competencies, and elevate the overall guest experience. Additionally, continued research in these areas can contribute to the advancement of knowledge in hospitality management and inform evidence-based practices in the industry.

Conduct longitudinal studies to track the ongoing evolution of frontline service capabilities in five-star hotels post-pandemic, providing insights into long-term trends and changes in competency requirements. Explore the role of cross-cultural competence in frontline service delivery, considering the diverse guest demographics in five-star hotels and the importance of cultural sensitivity in service interactions.

Investigate the integration of technology, such as AI and robotics, in enhancing frontline service capabilities and optimizing guest experiences in five-star hotel settings.

The Impact of employee wellness initiatives on job satisfaction, performance, and retention rates among frontline service employees in the hospitality industry.

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