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Covid-19 in the hospitality industry workforce: the resilience of hotel workers through human resource empowerment and motivation

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Abstract: The article aims to summarize the main arguments and counterarguments within the scientific discussion on human resource empowerment and its impact on motivation as the main factor to resilience hotel workers getting through the pandemic Covid-19. The research variables which include human resource empowerment and Motivation in this study are latent so to identify the influence of the independent latent variables on the dependent latent variable, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was used. From the respondent's views, the study found out that, on the empowerment construct all statements scored above 3 except credibility. Within a coefficient of determination, it shows that the variation of the motivation variable for hotel workers during the pandemic is 52 percent influenced by human resource empowerment carried out by the management. Therefore, it can be concluded that to strengthen the empowerment of workers through the pandemic, the hotel should strengthen its capacity for worker empowerment within opportunity, delegate, provide for recognition, and create an open communication system to create mutual understanding between employees and management

Keywords: human resource empowerment, motivation, hotel worker, Covid-19

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Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic that has hit the world for more than a year has not only had an impact on public health but also affected all sectors and industries. The existence of a policy of limiting and locking up both on a micro and macro scale on the mobility of people around the world has resulted in a weakening of the country's economy. One of the sectors most affected as a result of weakening economic activity is the hospitality sector or industry which is engaged in service to guests or hospitality.

With the large-scale social restriction policy and the closure of access in and out of Indonesia, the number of tourists visiting Indonesia has decreased where the number of tourists entering Indonesia in 2020 is only about 25% of the tourists who entered Indonesia in the previous year (Kemenparekraf, 2020). The Central Statistics Agency (BPS) noted that the number of foreign tourists who came to the country in early 2020 had decreased. In January 2020, foreign tourist visits reached 1.27 million visits. This figure dropped 7.62 percent when compared to the number of foreign tourist visits in December 2019 of 1.37 million visits. The decline in the number of foreign tourist visits was mainly due to the outbreak of Covid-19 that occurred in the last week of January 2020. The decline in foreign tourist visits to Indonesia was also evident from the data on foreign tourists arriving through the air entrance (airport). When compared to visits in December 2019, the number of foreign tourists visiting Indonesia through air entrances in January 2020 decreased by 5.01 percent (Sugihamretha, 2020). Furthermore, the decrease in the number of tourists resulted in a decrease in the occupancy of hotels in Indonesia, recorded in April 2021 the hotel occupancy rate was only 12.67%.

As one of the main Meeting, Incentive, Conference and Exhibition (MICE) tourism cities in Indonesia, hotels in the city of Palembang have developed quite rapidly. From 2015 to 2019 the increase in the number of hotel rooms in this city increased by more than 70%, where 2015 it only had 3,500 hotel rooms then in 2019 the number of hotel rooms became 12,000 rooms. The increase in the number of hotels and hotel rooms is also accompanied by an increase in the number of workers in this sector.

Due to the pandemic and the implementation of a mobility restriction policy, the hotel occupancy rate in Palembang City is only 10%. The drastic decline in hotel occupancy rates also had an impact on the workforce working in this sector. The Manpower and Transmigration Service (Disnakertrans) of South Sumatra recorded that 612 workers had been laid off. Most of the workforce is the hotel, travel, and restaurant employees. Some study describes HRM in the context of crises, in this circumstances HRM can provide organizations with two significant contributions: (i) operational capabilities to manage crises and (ii) interventions to facilitate collective and individual organizational performance that improve crisis responses (Hillyard, 2000; Wang et al., 2009). The previous studies also noted the prevalence of cost reduction measures in response to recession such as layoffs, payroll cuts, recruitment freezes, reductions in training, rigorous performance management, or downsizing, rather than maintaining the whole system (Israeli et al., 2011; Mohrman & Worley, 2009; Santana et al., 2017; Teague & Roche, 2014).

Other cases also formulated that multiple recessions have also drawn attention to a high-commitment model in HR practices, which reflects the importance of enhancing the morale and commitment of the workforce (Cascio, 2009; Roche et al., 2011). Other scholars also augment two categories of human resource practice employed amid crises encompass technical and behavioral practice (Teague & Roche, 2014). Technically refers to practices relevant to cost and headcount reduction, while behavioral consists of practices that facilitate employee empowerment to strengthen their motivation and commitment.

The previous studies that have been described previously concluded that HRM plays an important role in an organization getting through times of crisis by empowering its human resources. However, empowering HRM through the crisis, in this case, is only an implication for the research they are doing. In this case, there is not yet a specific HRM empowerment model available, both the variables that build the empowerment model and its application to a certain sector. In times of crisis as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, this is the right time to build an HRM empowerment model for the most affected sectors and test whether this model can sustain the organization through a crisis.

Therefore, this study aims to identify the factors that influence the empowerment of human resources in the hospitality sector workers affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and their motivation. With this identification, a particular model of HR empowerment can be designed specifically for the hospitality sector workforce during the covid-19 pandemic, especially in the hotel industry of Palembang City. Furthermore, this model is expected to alleviate the negative social impacts that occur in the community as a result of the large number of workers who are laid off in this industry. The result of this study will also provide knowledge and insight into how to manage human resource empowerment during crises.

Methodology

The research variables which include human resource empowerment and motivation in this study are latent variables, to identify the influence of the independent latent variables on the dependent latent variable, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was used. Furthermore, to achieve organizational success empowerment must be embedded in human resource empowerment. The theory of structural empowerment concerned with the dialogue of organizational performance and employee autonomy concludes that empowerment is best to suffice in work settings that give an individual access to information, resources, support, and the occasion to learn and develop (Kanter, 1993). Another theory also confirms that emotional empowerment embraces feelings of competence, autonomy, job meaningfulness, and an ability to influence the organization (Kluska, K. M., Laschinger, H. S., & Kerr, 2014). Specifically, the empowerment of human resources summarizes into six indicators as follows: (1) provide an opportunity for employees to participate in policy making and determine the success of the company, (2)

delegate important tasks to subordinates, (3) provide awards to staff /employees who excel, (4) provide for recognition of the existence of staff /employees, (5) creating an open communication system to create mutual understanding between employees and management, (6) maintain the credibility of the organization with the award and to develop a working (Batson, 2004; Porter-O'Grady, 2004).

The dependent variable in this study refers to Hung et.al (Hung et al., 2011) whose gather intrinsic motivation is animated by personal enjoyment, interest, or pleasure, whereas extrinsic motivation is governed by reinforcement contingencies. Subsequently, Turner explores an organization's performance culture is impacted by the motivation of an organization's employees (Turner, 2017). Determining whether an employee's motivation is intrinsic or extrinsic helps organizations see what more of a drive in their performance is. This research is opposed to intrinsic theories concerned with the psychological process behind motivation. Particularly, motivation in this study covers basic needs, security needs, social needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization.

Regarding the analysis of the variables, this research model referred to Hair et. al, in which the model uses structural equations (Structural Equation Modeling or SEM) (Hair Jr et al., 2014). SEM is a multivariate analysis technique that is a combination of factor analysis and regression analysis (correlation) which aims to examine the relationship between variables in a model, both between indicators and constructs, or relationships between constructs. Forming exogenous latent variables or independent variables in this study is the empowerment of human resources in the form of Opportunity (OPP), Delegation (DEL), Award (AWA), Recognition (REC), and Credibility (CRE). While the endogenous latent variable or dependent variable in this study is Motivation with its constituent variables namely Basic Needs (BAS), Security needs (SEC), Security needs (SEC), Social needs (SOC), Esteem needs (EST), and Self-actualization (SEL).

Structural model in this research is as follows:

Motivation=f(HRME) ..... (1.1)
Motivation=α_1 HRME+ε .... (1.2)
MOT=f(BAS,SEC,SOC,EST,SEL) ..... (2.1)
MOT=α_1 BAS+α_2 SEC+α_3 SOC+α_4 EST+α_5 SEL+ε ..... (2.2)
HRME=f(OPP,DEL,AWA,REC,CRE) ..... (3.1)
INC=α_1 OPP+α_2 DEL+α_3 AWA+α_3 REC+ α_3 CRE+ε ..... (3.2)

Data were collected through an offline and online self-report questionnaire within a project that involved a hotel worker who works at 44-star hotels in Palembang City. The questionnaire in this study was divided into three categories while the questions used were closed questions. The first category is the respondent's background (demography) which aims to obtain information on the characteristics of the hospitality sector workforce that has been affected by the pandemic. Questionnaire data is in the form of nominal and interval. The second and third categories in the questionnaire are used to identify respondents' perceptions of motivation and HRE. These two sections consist of statements regarding the level of motivation of workers and their perceptions of HRE in dealing with a pandemic. The statements in this questionnaire consist of structured statements using 5 Likert scale weightings and the data scale used is an interval scale as described in the primary data section.

Specifically, The total number of workers working in this sector is 2061 workers. The sampling technique used is the Slovin technique. By using the value of e = 0.1 (10%) for a large population, the number of samples for this study is 209. The stages of data processing in this study include three stages. The first is editing, coding and the third is tabulation. Based on the results of data screening, of the 209 questionnaires distributed in this study, 4 questionnaires were dropped and could not be processed. This is because the data collection process is carried out directly with the selected respondents and the respondents are homogeneous so that all questionnaires are valid and can be used for the next process.

After conducting a descriptive analysis using tabulating data to describe the characteristics and demographics of the workforce in the hospitality sector. Furthermore, SEM analysis was carried out which is a multivariate analysis which is a combination of factor analysis and regression analysis (correlation) which aims to examine the relationship between variables in a model, both between indicators and constructs, or relationships between constructs.

Results and Discussion

Results

Although it has similarities in terms of involving empowerment and motivation as other HR research, however, this study uses a quantitative approach to examine empowerment to motivation due to crises. Based on a literature review of this study, the hypotheses in this study are as follows:

H1a: Opportunity (OPP) will be associated with Human Research Empowerment (HRME)
H1b: Delegation (DEL) will be associated with Human Research Empowerment (HRME)
H1c: Award (AWA) will be associated with Human Research Empowerment (HRME)
H1d: Recognition (REC) will be associated with Human Research Empowerment (HRME)
H1e: Credibility (CRE) will be associated with Human Research Empowerment (HRME)
H2a: Basic need (BAS) will be associated with Motivation (MOT)
H2b: Security needs (SEC) will be associated with Motivation (MOT)
H2c: Social needs (SOC) will be associated with Motivation (MOT)
H2d: Esteem needs (EST) will be associated with Motivation (MOT)
H2e: Self-actualization (SEL) will be associated with Motivation (MOT)

The study was conducted in the hospitality industry in Palembang, specifically in the hotel industry. The data was gathered in partnership with a hotel association and also put in a call for participants on the online questionnaire. The sample is quite representative of the diversity of the hotel industry, as we have contacted personnel working in different hotel categories, independent or franchised, located everywhere in Palembang and there is a wide diversity of hotels in the respondents. There is an overrepresentation of small, medium, and big hotels as well as hotel chains. Our sample consists of 7 % *management personnel* (14 respondents), 8 % *front-line staff* (17 respondents) and 4 % *supervisors* or *intermediary jobs* (8 respondents), 36 % of *Housekeeping* (74 respondents), 21 % of *Food Production* (43 respondents), 18 % of *F&B Service* (36 respondent) and 6 % of *engineering* (13 respondent). Moreover, from these 205 participants, 14% of respondents work at hotel chains, and almost 86% of respondents work at small hotels, medium or autonomous hotels, and big hotels. Thus, there are 104 women and 101 men respondents participate in this survey and the age of workers dominated the range of 21-30 years old.

Table 1. Demographic Profile

Demographic Variables		**Frequency**	**%**
Gender	Male	101	49
	Female	104	51
Age	21-25	51	25
	26-30	43	21
	31-35	38	19
	36-40	32	16
	41-45	26	13
	46-50	11	5
	>50	4	2
Department	Management Personnel	14	7

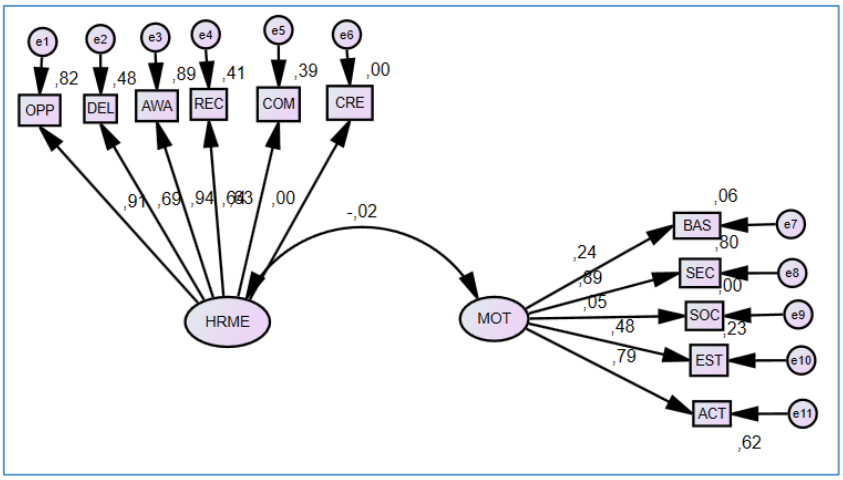
	frontline staff	17	8
	supervisors or intermediary jobs	8	4
	Housekeeping	74	36
	Food Production	43	21
	F&B Service	36	18
	Engineering	13	6
Hotel Criteria	Small	62	30
	Medium	76	37
	Big	38	18
	Chain-hotel	29	14

Source: Authors

Before conducting data analysis, a validity test was conducted to measure whether the data that had been obtained after the study was valid data or not, using the measuring instrument. In these circumstances, the validity aimed to investigate the accuracy of the questionnaire question which was indicated by the small percentage of respondents who answered differently from other respondents. Validity testing in this study was conducted by correlating the score of each item statement addressed to the respondent with the total score for all items. In this study, it is known that all questions for HRME and Motivation have valid status because the calculated r-value (Corrected Item-Total Correlation) exceeds the r table by 0.361. Afterward, reliability testing is carried out on the statement items that are included in the valid category. This test is to examine the extent to which the measurement results using the same object will produce the same output. Reliability testing is done by testing the instrument only once. then analyzed using the alpha Cronbach method. The questionnaire is said to be reliable if the reliability coefficient is positive and greater than 0.7. The results of reliability analysis show that Cronbach"s alpha for all the scales was greater than 0.7 which is enough for the acceptable level, as the recommended value is 0.7 or better by some scholars and 0.60 by some other scholars (Hair, J. F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., Anderson, R. E., & Tatham, 2006; Ringle, C. M., Sarstedt, M., & Straub, 2012).

In this study, the first phase of the model feasibility test consists of two testing stages, namely testing the measurement model and the structure model. To test the validity of the measurement model, the Goodness of Fit (GoF) test is carried out to determine how to fit the model with the research data obtained. The figure shows a path diagram that has been generated after carrying out the stages of fulfilling the SEM assumption test.

The results of the model feasibility test the entire model feasibility were performed by using SEM which was also used to analyze the proposed hypotheses. The result shows that the loading factor of all indicators has a value above 0.5. The loading factor value obtained indicates that all indicators of the latent variable can be used. Furthermore, based on the output path diagram, as well as the model fit summary on the AMOS output, they are summarized into the following GoF test results:



(Source: The Authors)

Figure 1. The Structural Equation Model of The Impact of HRME on Motivation

Through the presentation of the results of the goodness-of-fit index of the research, the results of the confirmatory factor analysis of exogenous constructs show that the chi-square, probability, CMIN/DF, RMSEA, GFI, and TLI indexes meet the requirements where each has a value that is more than the goodness criteria. -of-fit index. After the fit model, the next process is to identify whether the indicators contained in a construct are indeed part of or can explain the construct. This process is a construct validity test through convergent validity and discriminant validity tests. Convergent validity states that if an indicator can explain a construct, then the indicator has a high loading factor. While discriminant validity aims to identify how much the two variables differ. The theory suggested convergent validity and discriminant validity test construct validity (Straub et al., 2004).

After the fit model, the next process is to identify whether the indicators contained in a construct are indeed part of or can explain the construct. This process is a construct validity test through convergent validity and discriminant validity tests. Convergent validity states that if an indicator can explain a construct, then the indicator has a high loading factor. While discriminant validity aims to identify how much the two variables differ. Straub suggested convergent validity and discriminant validity test construct validity (Straub,, 2004). From the data processing, it is indicated that all the constructs used in making the research model already fulfilled the requirements of the goodness of fit. Therefore, it can be concluded that the model fits the sample data.

Furthermore, the assessment of Goodness of Fit from table 3 reveals that all the constructs used to make the research model in the analysis process of confirmatory factor, Chi-Square, Probability, RMSEA, GFI, CMIN/DF, TLI, CFI had fulfilled the goodness of fit requirement. The value of GFI was known under the cut-off value, but still in the tolerance limit, which was usually called marginal, thus the model could be considered fit.

Table 2. SEM test Result of Goodness of Fit Model

The goodness of Fit Measure	Cut-off value	Analysis Result	Model Evaluation
Significant probability	≥ 0.05	0,052	Good
Chi-squares	Expected to be small	277,133	Good
RMSEA	≤0.08	0,031	Good
GFI	≥ 0.90	0,773	Marginal
CMIN/DF	≤ 2.0	1,90	Good
TLI	≥ 0.90	0,939	Good

In the exogenous construct model, it can be seen in the table that it is known that the loading factor value (lambda) for each variable is greater than 0.50 or categorized as high. This

explains that these variables together present unidimensionality for each latent variable and have convergent validity.

Table 3 shows the effect of human resource empowerment (HRME) on motivation (MOT). As shown in previous studies, the cut-off value for hypothesis testing is in the range between the Critical Ratio t-value > 1.96 or <-1.96 at the 0.05 significant level (Arbuckle, 2010; Hair Jr & Sarstedt, 2019). The result of the hypotheses testing in the Table below shows that almost all dimensions of HRME and Motivation indicate a significant effect except for credibility and social needs. However, the greatest influence is shown by the opportunity on HRME, delegation on HRME, award on HRME, Recognition on HRME, Communication on HRME, and basic needs on motivation.

Table 3. Estimation of Regression Weights of HRME and Motivation of Hotel Worker

Hypotheses				Estimate	S.E.	P
H_{1a}	OPP	<---	HRME	0.410	0.085	***
H_{1b}	DEL	<---	HRME	0.693	0.058	***
H_{1c}	AWA	<---	HRME	1.070	0.052	***
H_{1d}	REC	<---	HRME	0.730	0.068	***
H_{1e}	COM	<---	HRME	0.666	0.065	***
H_{1f}	CRE	<---	HRME	0.000	0.066	0.998
H_{2a}	BAS	<---	MOT	-0.355	0.131	***
H_{2b}	SEC	<---	MOT	5.062	1.624	0.002
H_{2c}	SOC	<---	MOT	0.258	0.375	0.491
H_{2d}	EST	<---	MOT	2.689	0.912	0.003
H_{2e}	ACT	<---	MOT	4.540	1.439	0.002

Source: Authors

Discussions

The hypotheses of the relationship between HRME and the motivation of the hotel worker during the pandemic in the city of Palembang were performed by observing the p-value of 0,05 probability of estimation results of the regression weights of the structural equation model using the multigroup analysis method.

Thus, from the output of the estimation of Regression Weights in Table 3 this study could perform the hypotheses tests of this study, as follows:

1) Hypothesis 1a which stated that Opportunity (OPP) will be associated with Human Research Empowerment (HRME) could be accepted with a probability of 0.000 (< 0.05) and a coefficient value of 0.410
2) Hypothesis 1b which stated that Delegation (DEL) will be associated with Human Research Empowerment (HRME) could be accepted with a probability of 0.000 (< 0.05) and a coefficient value of 0.693
3) Hypothesis 1c which stated that Award (AWA) will be associated with Human Research Empowerment (HRME) could be accepted with a probability of 0.000 (< 0.05) and a coefficient value of 1.070
4) Hypothesis 1d which stated that Recognition (REC) will be associated with Human Research Empowerment (HRME) could be accepted with a probability of 0.000 (< 0.05) and a coefficient value of 0.730
5) Hypothesis 1e which stated that Credibility (CRE) will be associated with Human Research Empowerment (HRME) could not be accepted with a probability of 0.998 (> 0.05) and a coefficient value of 0.000
6) Hypothesis 2a which stated that Basic need (BAS) will be associated with Motivation (MOT) could be accepted with a probability of 0.000 (< 0.05) and a coefficient value of -0.355

7) Hypothesis 2b which stated that Security needs (SEC) will be associated with Motivation (MOT) could be accepted with a probability of 0.002 (< 0.05) and a coefficient value of 5.062
8) Hypothesis 2c which stated that Social needs (SOC) will be associated with Motivation (MOT) could not be accepted with a probability of 0.491 (> 0.05) and a coefficient value of 0.258
9) Hypothesis 2d which stated that Esteem needs (EST) will be associated with Motivation (MOT) could be accepted with a probability of 0.003 (< 0.05) and a coefficient value of 2.689
10) Hypothesis 2e which stated that Self-actualization (SEL) will be associated with Motivation (MOT) could be accepted with a probability of 0.002 (< 0.05) and a coefficient value of 4.540

The results of the hypothesis test above indicate that going through times of crisis during the Covid-19 pandemic, the provision of opportunities, delegation, awards, recognition, and communication is the main focus for stakeholders to increase the capacity of empowering each employee in the hospitality industry. Providing the opportunity to complete work with a high workload and an unfavorable health situation is important for workers, especially in the hotel sector. The large number of hotel workers who were laid off as a result of the pandemic caused the remaining workers to be forced to do double work and double shifts. The change in the work system causes workers to feel the need to be given the opportunity and flexibility to adapt to the new work system.

The awarding of delegation and authority is also a major concern for the remaining workers in the hotel sector. In this case, workers feel that there is an unequal division of labor with very limited working hours and authority due to various health protocols that must be followed. During the pandemic, workers also expect the same rewards and recognition as before the pandemic. With high working hours and social restriction policies, workers feel there are limitations to showing the quality of work so the level of appreciation from the management is felt to be very important to increase the employee's confidence.

The existence of various health protocol rules set by management causes limited communication between workers and communication between workers and management. A theoretical study suggests that there is a need for an internal communication strategy to increase the capacity for empowerment and inclusiveness of the work environment. Formal interpersonal communication, will build an inclusive work environment and increase employee empowerment compared to interpersonal communication (Wolfgruber, Stürmer, & Einwiller, 2021).

In the HRME construct, there are six indicators, so there are six loading factors then motivation has five indicators so the motivation variable has five loading factors. Almost all indicators show a strong relationship between the indicators of the availability of opportunities, delegation, appreciation, recognition, open communication, and the creation of credibility on the construct of human resource empowerment. From these results, it can be concluded that these indicators are part of the empowerment of human resources. Then from the results of loading the construct, it is also known that the opportunity availability indicator has a high factor loading number (0.908) above 0.7 which indicates that the indicator of the availability of opportunities can greatly explain the existence of constructs for empowering human resources in the hospitality sector during the Covid-19 pandemic.

In the motivational construct, only Self Action and Security Needs have a loading factor above 0.7. These results indicate that the Self Action and Security Need indicators are very crucial and explain the existence of the motivational construct of the workforce in the hotel sector during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Motivation = 0,02 HRME+δ ..... (1.2)

With a coefficient of determination of 0.525, it shows that the variation of the motivation variable for hotel workers during the pandemic is 52 percent influenced by human resource empowerment carried out by the management, while the remaining 48 percent is influenced by

other factors not included in the model. Furthermore, hypothesis testing is done by comparing the probability value of or -value for economic advantage 0.801 > 0.05 so that the null hypothesis (Ho) is accepted or rejected the alternative hypothesis (Ha). This means that HRME affects the level of motivation of hotel workers.

Conclusions

As one of the main Meeting Incentive, Conference and Exhibition (MICE) tourism cities in Indonesia, hotels in the city of Palembang should strengthen their worker empowerment through human resource empowerment to increase the motivation of workers. Within this research, it is known that hotel management should strengthen the empowerment of workers through the pandemic through variables opportunity, delegation, award, and recognition. Within the high workload and work environment filled with uncertainty, allowing completing the job with flexibility thus a fair job delegation would reinforce their empowerment.

To intensify Hotel worker motivation in getting through the pandemic, management and stakeholder should focus on strengthening Basic needs, security needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization of the worker. Furthermore, the hotel policies to protect their worker by implementing occupational safety and health measures will ensure work continuity and the worker's economical survival. In other words, making sure the lives of worker, their families, and larger communities will stimulate worker motivation and it becomes one solution to the resilience of workers get through the pandemic.

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