

The Impact of Psychological Capital (PsyCap) on Job Performance in Hospitality Workers in Dublin, Ireland.

Tomás Andrés Adasme Núñez

Master of Arts in Human Resources Management

National College of Ireland

Submitted to the National College of Ireland. August 2025.

Submission of Thesis and Dissertation

National College of Ireland
Research Students Declaration Form
(Thesis/Author Declaration Form)

Name: **Tomás Andrés Adasme Núñez**

Student Number: **23402814**

Degree for which thesis is submitted: **Master of Arts in Human Resources**

Management

Title of Thesis: **The Impact of Psychological Capital (PsyCap) on Job Performance in Hospitality Workers in Dublin, Ireland**

Date: **15 of August of 2025.**

Material submitted for award

- A. I declare that this work submitted has been composed by myself. o
- B. I declare that all verbatim extracts contained in the thesis have been distinguished by quotation marks and the sources of information specifically acknowledged. o
- C. I agree to my thesis being deposited in the NCI Library online open access repository NORMA. o
- D. *Either* *I declare that no material contained in the thesis has been used in any other submission for an academic award.
Or *I declare that the following material contained in the thesis formed part of a submission for the award of
- Master of Arts in Human Resources Management. o

Acknowledgement

I would like to express my gratitude, first, to my family all the way back in Chile, where 13,000 km separate physical endeavours, yet, emotional connection are still intact, whether the support and unconditional belief made me capable of finish one of the most difficult challenges of my life, creating a dissertation in another continent, country, language and culture.

To Viviana, Cristian, Joaquin and Cristobal.

To all my friends who always made me feel like home, this is for you.

To Michael, for all the hard work and time invested in my Dissertation.

Many thanks.

Table of Contents

The Impact of Psychological Capital (PsyCap) on Job Performance in Hospitality Workers in Dublin, Ireland.	1
Acknowledgement.....	3
Table of Contents	4
Abstract.....	6
Chapter 1.	7
Introduction	7
1.1 Background of the research study	7
1.2 Overview of the research problem	7
1.3 Research aims and objectives.....	10
1.4 Overview and content of the research study.....	10
Chapter 2	12
Literature Review	12
2.1 Defining Psychological Capital (PsyCap).....	12
2.2 Psychological Capital in the Hospitality Sector.....	12
2.3 Psychological Capital about Leadership and Management.....	14
2.4 The Four Dimensions of Psychological Capital in Details.....	15
2.5 Limitations in the Literature	17
Chapter 3.	18
Research question.....	18
3.1 Main Research Question.....	18
Chapter 4.	19
Methodology	19
4.1 Research Design	19
4.2 Research Instrument	20
4.3 Sample and Strategy.....	21
4.4 Limitations	24
Chapter Five.....	25
Data Analysis	25
5.1 Introduction.....	25
5.2 Overview of Participants	26

5.3 Identifying Themes	27
5.3.1 Management Support	27
5.3.2 Recognition, Fairness and Value.....	29
5.3.3 Strategies for Stress and Setbacks.....	30
5.3.4 Communication and Feedback	31
5.3.5 Perceptions of Future in Hospitality	31
5.4 Interconnections Between Themes and Influence in PsyCap	32
Chapter Six.....	34
Discussion	34
6.1 Practical Implications.....	34
6.2 Limitations of the Study	35
6.3 Recommendations for Future Research.....	35
Chapter Seven	37
Conclusion.....	37
References.....	38
Appendix.....	42
First Interview.....	42
Second Interview	44
Third Interview.....	47
Fourth Interview	50
Fifth Interview.....	52
Sixth Interview	55
Seventh Interview	58
Eighth Interview	61

Abstract

The primary aim of this dissertation is to explore the role of **Psychological Capital (PsyCap)**, comprising hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism, in influencing job performance within Dublin's hospitality sector. Given the demanding and often unpredictable nature of the industry, particularly in the wake of the COVID 19 pandemic, this research focuses on how positive psychological traits support hospitality employees in navigating everyday workplace challenges. To examine this, a **qualitative research design** was adopted using semi structured interviews with staff working in a range of roles across hotels, restaurants, and other hospitality settings in Dublin.

The findings reveal that PsyCap plays a significant role in enhancing performance by helping employees recover from setbacks, maintain belief in their own capabilities, and remain motivated under pressure. Among the four PsyCap components, **resilience** and **self-efficacy** were especially prominent, enabling individuals to manage stress, adapt to changing demands, and sustain their performance. In addition, **hope** and **optimism** were consistently linked to higher motivation, future focused thinking, and a more positive outlook on work, even in high pressure situations.

Overall, this study demonstrates the practical value of PsyCap in the hospitality industry, not only as a personal psychological asset for employees but also as a strategic tool that managers and HR practitioners could develop to strengthen workplace wellbeing and improve overall performance. The insights generated here provide a foundation for further research and suggest that investing in PsyCap could be a meaningful step towards addressing long standing human resource challenges in hospitality settings.

Chapter 1.

Introduction

1.1 Background of the research study

Hospitality industry is widely recognised as a fast paced, high pressure working environment, placing substantial psychological and emotional demands on those employed within it. As Yoo (2023) describes, “Front line employees in the hospitality industry operate in a work environment teeming with unique stressors. Characterised by its fast paced and demanding nature, the hospitality sector often places intense demands on employees, such as extensive working hours and high-performance expectations.” In such conditions, employees are expected to consistently meet high standards of service while navigating unpredictable workloads, emotionally charged interactions, and long or irregular shifts.

This reality is especially evident in urban centres such as Dublin, where hospitality and tourism are deeply immersed in the local economy and serve as major sources of employment. Research by Kim, Im and Hwang (2015) highlights how extended working hours, emotional labour, and constant interpersonal demands can contribute significantly to stress and burnout among hospitality workers.

In response to these challenges, increasing academic and professional attention has turned toward the psychological resources that help individuals cope and remain effective in such demanding roles. One concept gaining particular attention is **Psychological Capital (PsyCap)**—a framework comprising hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism. PsyCap has been found to be positively linked with key work outcomes such as job satisfaction, performance, and psychological well-being, while also showing negative associations with stress and intentions to leave the job (Avey, Reichard, Luthans and Mhatre, 2011). Within the service industry more broadly, PsyCap has also demonstrated the ability to buffer the negative effects of work life imbalance and contribute to improved individual performance and motivation (Karatepe and Karadas, 2015).

1.2 Overview of the research problem

In a society where the employee well-being and performance have become critical factors for organisational success, service industries are relying on human interactions, emotional labour, customer satisfaction, making psychological well-being and health the frontline of business outcomes (Bakker and Demerouti, 2017).

Hospitality industry, in this case, is exposed to this psychological strain due to its natural behaviour in the marketplace, employees are frequently required to manage

unpredictable workloads, long or irregular shifts, and emotionally charged situations while maintaining a professional and welcoming behaviour (Paek et al., 2015).

Emotional labour, the act of managing one's own and others emotions to meet service expectations, is particularly intense in hospitality roles, leading to emotional exhaustion and reduced job satisfaction (Amissah, Blankson-Stiles-Ocran & Mensah, 2022). Furthermore, there are studies for much more than stressful factors, such as interpersonal conflicts, amplifying psychological strain for this sector and all the employees. (Yoo, 2023).

People that are involved into hospitality industry, such as bars, hotels, restaurants, among others, are also vulnerable to burnout and intentions to quit, often linked to inadequate support and excessive job demands (Baquero et al., 2023; Wong et al., 2025).

Saito et al. (2025) conducted a systematic literature review and concluded that hospitality workers face elevated risks due to emotional labour, lack of managerial support, and chronic work overload. These studies aim to identified factors that rely into the everyday basis of workers for this industry, similarly, O'Neill (2010) found that excessive demands and minimal resources lead to disengagement, job dissatisfaction, and heightened absenteeism among both frontline workers and hospitality employees.

In parallel, Ali et al. (2022) observed that ethical leadership can reduce the emotional burden of such environments by enhancing subjective wellbeing, which reinforces the view that leadership plays a critical role into the well-being consideration for every worker aiming to lower down any type of negative psychological impacts by the demanding hospitality work conditions.

What makes PsyCap uniquely well-suited to this context is its focus on developable, internal psychological strengths, such as hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism, which are not only predictive of performance and wellbeing but also trainable and dynamic (Luthans and Youssef-Morgan, 2017). Unlike fixed traits such as personality, PsyCap can be enhanced through interventions, coaching, and supportive leadership practices, making it both practical and scalable for human resource management in hospitality settings (Youssef-Morgan and Luthans, 2013).

Furthermore, each component of PsyCap aligns closely with the challenges frontline hospitality workers face: hope fosters goal-setting amid operational chaos, self-efficacy helps employees handle difficult customer interactions, resilience enables recovery from stressful shifts, and optimism supports a positive attitude even in high-pressure environments (Paek et al., 2015; Gom et al., 2021). Given that emotional labour is a routine part of hospitality roles, the ability to self-regulate, reframe challenges, and maintain motivation is not just beneficial, it is something essential for the well-being of the employees.

PsyCap has likely being proved to have shown interest into the hospitality industry because it presents highly relevant and challenging environment, as was discussed, the study of employee resilience, motivation and well-being are key factors of hospitality performance and psychological capital. Hospitality work involves constant emotional labour, unpredictable customer interactions, physical fatigue and time pressure, putting psychological resources to test (Kim et al., 2015; Yan et al., 2021).

Moreover, the industry has persistent HR issues such as burnout, absenteeism, and turnover (Demir and Demir, 2019; Wen and Liu-Lastres, 2021), which PsyCap has been shown to mitigate in other sectors. As a result, scholars and practitioners are increasingly viewing PsyCap as a strategic tool not only for improving individual wellbeing but also for enhancing service quality, employee retention, and organisational sustainability in hospitality contexts (Gom et al., 2021; Paek et al., 2015).

Hospitality in Dublin specifically provides a compelling and under-research context for exploring PsyCap, given the well-documented psychological pressures associated with hospitality work (Kim et al., 2015; Paek et al., 2015). A recent master study conducted at the National College of Ireland found that psychological well-being had a strong positive correlation with both job satisfaction and work–life balance among hospitality employees in Dublin, highlighting the potential impact of internal psychological resources such as PsyCap (Aragon Baca, 2024).

However, there remains a lack of research into how Irish hospitality workers manage these pressures, particularly with respect to work–home balance. O’Gorman and O’Dwyer (2021) point out that even though managers in Irish hospitality are aware of the pressure staff face trying to balance work and personal life, there’s still a lack of formal support in place, meaning frontline workers are often left to handle the emotional strain and unpredictable schedules on their own.

National data also shows that while 76% of Irish employers recognise their role in supporting mental health at work, only a small number have actually put proper wellbeing initiatives in place or appointed someone to lead them. This lack of structured support highlights the importance of personal psychological resources like PsyCap, especially in sectors known for high stress, emotional demands, and staff turnover, like hospitality in Dublin. Altogether, these challenges make Dublin a relevant and timely setting for exploring how PsyCap could help strengthen employee resilience, motivation, and job satisfaction. (Healthy Workplace Ireland, 2022).

1.3 Research aims and objectives

The research aim is to explore how PsyCap, comprising hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism influences job performance among hospitality employees in Dublin, and to understand how these psychological resources support staff in navigating the demands of their work environments.

The objectives of the study are:

- a) To examine how hospitality employees in Dublin perceive the role of hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism in their daily work.
- b) To explore how PsyCap helps positively employees cope with emotional labour, long working hours, and other common stressors in the hospitality industry.
- c) To assess the potential of PsyCap as a strategic tool for improving employee support, retention, and performance in Dublin's hospitality sector.

1.4 Overview and content of the research study

Chapter One: Introduction

This chapter introduces the background and context of the study, outlining why the research is important within the hospitality sector. It presents the research aim, objectives, and justification for the study, particularly in the context of Dublin. The chapter also outlines the structure of the dissertation.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This chapter critically reviews existing academic literature related to Psychological Capital (PsyCap), employee wellbeing, and job performance in hospitality. It identifies key theories, relevant empirical studies, and gaps in the current research, forming the conceptual framework that underpins the study.

Chapter Three: Research Question

This chapter defines the main research question and related hypotheses guiding the inquiry. The question and hypotheses are shaped by the literature review and directly address the research aim and objectives. The chapter explains how the question aligns with the study's qualitative approach.

Chapter Four: Methodology

This chapter details the research design and methods used to collect and analyse data. It explains the choice of a qualitative approach, describes the use of semi structured

interviews, outlines participant selection, and addresses ethical considerations and limitations.

Chapter Five: Analysis

This chapter presents the findings from the interviews, organised into key themes that emerged from the data. Participant responses are analysed and interpreted to highlight how PsyCap influences job performance and coping strategies within the Dublin hospitality context.

Chapter Six: Discussion

This chapter discusses the findings in relation to existing theories and previous research. It evaluates the significance of the results, considers unexpected insights, and explores how the findings contribute to understanding PsyCap's role in hospitality work environments.

Chapter Seven: Conclusions and Recommendations

The final chapter summarises the key findings, restates how the research objectives were met, and reflects on the study's limitations. It offers recommendations for hospitality managers and HR professionals, as well as suggestions for future academic research in the field.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1 Defining Psychological Capital (PsyCap)

The concept of **PsyCap** becomes highly relevant. PsyCap refers to a set of positive mental resources, **hope, efficacy (or confidence), resilience, and optimism**, that support individuals in overcoming challenges, staying motivated, and maintaining a positive attitude toward work. Several studies have shown that higher levels of PsyCap are strongly associated with better **job performance, work engagement, job satisfaction, and psychological well-being** across various sectors, including hospitality and service industries (Luthans et al., 2007; Avey et al., 2011; Paek et al., 2015). These findings suggest that PsyCap does not only influence how individuals feel at work but also how effectively they perform and adapt in complex, high-pressure environments such as hospitality.

A growing body of research confirms that higher levels of PsyCap are associated with enhanced job performance, job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and psychological well-being (Avey et al., 2011; Luthans et al., 2015). In service-driven industries, including hospitality, where emotional demands are high and job roles are often customer-facing, these internal resources appear to serve as both performance enhancers and protective buffers against stress and burnout (Karatepe and Karadas, 2015).

First developed by Luthans et al. (2007), the PsyCap framework has been applied across different industries to better understand how psychological strengths influence job satisfaction, performance, and employee well-being. Research has consistently shown that individuals with higher levels of PsyCap tend to report greater job satisfaction, stronger organizational commitment, higher levels of work engagement, and better overall performance (Avey et al., 2011; Karatepe & Karadas, 2015; Paek et al., 2015). In addition, PsyCap has been linked to lower levels of job stress, emotional exhaustion, and turnover intentions, factors that are particularly relevant in the hospitality sector (Yan et al., 2021).

2.2 Psychological Capital in the Hospitality Sector

The hospitality sector is characterised by long working hours, irregular shifts, low job security, and frequent customer interaction, all of which contribute to elevated stress levels and high employee turnover (Kim, Im and Hwang, 2015). In such environments, PsyCap has been shown to promote adaptive behaviours and improve coping capacity among employees (Paek et al., 2015). For example, waiters, receptionists, kitchen staff, and supervisors often face unpredictable workloads and emotionally charged

encounters with guests. PsyCap, and particularly its components of resilience and optimism, helps employees remain composed and solution-focused in these demanding moments (Min and Kim, 2020).

In hospitality, such as **waiters, bartenders, kitchen staff, receptionists, supervisors, and guest service employees**, where employees are frequently exposed to stress, customer pressure, and irregular schedules, these psychological resources may serve as a buffer and even a performance booster. These conditions make them particularly vulnerable to stress, burnout, and performance fatigue, especially in competitive urban markets like Dublin. For this reason, hospitality presents a meaningful and high-impact context in which to examine the effects of PsyCap. The ability to stay hopeful, confident, resilient, and optimistic may not only improve employee well-being but also contribute to better service delivery and customer satisfaction in this demanding sector (Karatepe, 2011; Ozturk Ciftci & Erkanli, 2020).

In a Dublin-based context, these dynamics are especially relevant. The city's hospitality workforce is composed of a highly diverse, often transient population of workers, many of whom are international and face additional challenges such as cultural adjustment, job insecurity, and language barriers (Aragon Baca, 2024). PsyCap may be particularly effective in helping this population manage stress, maintain performance, and remain engaged at work despite difficult or unstable conditions.

Several researchers argue that PsyCap plays a critical role in shaping how employees respond to their work environment. For example, Paek et al. (2015) found that hotel staff with higher levels of PsyCap reported stronger engagement and greater morale, which directly influenced service quality. Similarly, Karatepe and Karadas (2015) identified a direct link between PsyCap and reduced emotional exhaustion, suggesting that these psychological strengths help workers handle job stress more effectively.

In the same area, Min and Kim (2020) demonstrated that employees with higher resilience and optimism were better equipped to manage job stress and maintain performance under pressure. These findings are particularly relevant in hospitality settings where performance is not only task-based but also emotional and interpersonal.

In a broader sense, Avey et al. (2011) conducted a meta-analysis across various industries and found that PsyCap was a significant predictor of both attitudinal (e.g., satisfaction, commitment) and behavioural (e.g., performance, work behaviour) outcomes. More recently, Gom et al. (2021) studied the relationship between transformational leadership and PsyCap in hotels and found that employees with higher PsyCap demonstrated lower turnover intentions and better performance.

Many of the earlier studies on PsyCap have relied on quantitative methods, such as surveys or standardised questionnaires like the Psychological Capital Questionnaire (PCQ) developed by Luthans et al. (2007). While effective for identifying trends across large populations, these approaches often fail to capture the personal experiences and contextual nuances of participants, particularly in emotionally demanding sectors such as hospitality. Additionally, much of the existing research is based on cross-sectional data, where variables are measured at a single point in time. This limits the ability to draw conclusions about causality or long-term outcomes, as it remains unclear whether PsyCap leads to improved performance and well-being, or whether those outcomes influence PsyCap, or if other variables may be involved. Furthermore, many of these studies have been conducted within specific organisational or national contexts, such as individual hotel chains or single-country samples. This raises questions about the generalisability of findings to more diverse, multicultural environments, such as Dublin's hospitality industry.

2.3 Psychological Capital about Leadership and Management

Research consistently shows that leadership plays a critical role in the development and maintenance of employees. Authentic, ethical, and transformational leadership styles are associated with higher levels of PsyCap among subordinates (Ali et al., 2022; Ozturk Ciftci and Erkanli, 2020). For example, when managers model transparency, empathy, and fairness, employees are more likely to feel hopeful about future outcomes, confident in their abilities, and resilient in the face of difficulties. This is particularly relevant in hospitality, where managerial support is often limited, and employees are frequently left to navigate challenges independently.

Moreover, studies by Ozturk Ciftci and Erkanli (2020) highlight how authentic leadership, marked by transparency, ethical behaviour, and support, can enhance employees' sense of hope and confidence. This aligns with broader findings that suggest that leadership is one of the most influential variables in PsyCap shape process.

Yan et al. (2021) also found that employees who perceived their workplace culture as supportive were more likely to report high levels of PsyCap. Conversely, toxic leadership and poor communication were linked to decreased optimism and increased emotional strain. This suggests that PsyCap is not solely an individual trait but is also shaped by the broader work environment.

These findings are consistent with broader literature suggesting that when supervisors exhibit fairness, empathy, and openness, employees are more likely to experience higher motivation and adopt a more positive outlook in the workplace.

Given the nature of hospitality jobs and the psychological demands such as emotional labour, irregular shifts, multitasking under time constraints, and constant interpersonal interactions with guests (Karatepe, 2013; Zhao et al., 2021). They place workers, exploring how PsyCap operates in this sector, and particularly how it is influenced by managerial practices, offers a practical and meaningful direction for research. This review aims to explore the theoretical background of PsyCap, its dimensions, and the evidence supporting its role in enhancing employee outcomes, especially within service-intensive environments like those found across Dublin's hospitality scene.

Focusing on Dublin offers a unique perspective, as the city's hospitality sector is marked by high levels of cultural diversity, labour mobility, and economic dependence on tourism and service industries. This makes it distinct from many of the single-country or corporate-specific contexts in previous studies. With a workforce composed largely of international employees working under varying conditions, Dublin presents a multicultural, high-turnover environment where understanding how psychological resources like PsyCap operate can offer both theoretical insights and practical value for local employers. For example, the role of cultural background in shaping how individuals express resilience, or optimism may be especially relevant in Dublin's hospitality sector, where communication styles, work expectations, and emotional labour strategies may differ across nationalities.

2.4 The Four Dimensions of Psychological Capital in Details

PsyCap is made up of four interrelated yet distinct components: **hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism**, often referred to collectively as the **“HERO” resources**. While each of these elements holds individual significance, together they form a unified higher-order construct, meaning the combined effect of PsyCap is greater than each part on its own (Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017).

In this framework, *hope* encourages individuals to generate multiple strategies for achieving their goals and to remain motivated when obstacles arise. For example, Paek et al. (2015) observed that hotel staff with high levels of hope were more likely to stay focused during busy shifts by developing backup plans to meet customer needs, even when the original plan failed. *Self-efficacy* refers to the confidence to face challenges and persist in difficult tasks. Min and Kim (2020) found that employees who believed in their abilities were better at resolving guest complaints and managing peak-hour stress without losing composure, skills essential in frontline hospitality roles. *Resilience* helps individuals bounce back from setbacks and continue to grow despite adversity. Yan et

al. (2021) reported that resilient staff members, particularly those working irregular hours or in physically demanding environments, were less likely to suffer burnout and more likely to adapt to workplace demands. Meanwhile, *optimism* shapes the way people interpret challenges, encouraging a view that focuses on opportunities rather than threats.

As shown by Ozturk Ciftci and Erkanli (2020), optimistic employees were more engaged during demanding service situations, often acting as stabilising forces within their teams. When combined, these four elements, hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism, create a “resource caravan” (Hobfoll, 2002), where psychological strengths reinforce one another over time, enhancing overall performance and emotional well-being in demanding work environments (Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017).

PsyCap can shape work outcomes by expanding the range of thoughts and behaviours employees are able to draw upon, which in turn promotes greater creativity and more adaptive problem-solving (Fredrickson, 2001; Luthans et al., 2011). This broadened cognitive capacity enables individuals to approach workplace challenges with greater flexibility and innovation. In addition, the positive emotional states associated with PsyCap have been shown to engage in activities that restore mental energy and well-being and even physical resources, an effect that is particularly valuable in emotionally demanding fields such as hospitality, where staff must maintain composure and a positive demeanour in fast-paced, high-pressure, customer-facing environments (Fredrickson, 2001; Paek et al., 2015).

Existing research consistently shows that higher levels of **PsyCap** are linked to stronger job performance, both from the perspective of employees themselves and their supervisors, as well as more positive workplace attitudes such as **job satisfaction**, **organizational commitment**, and **psychological well-being** (Avey et al., 2011; Paek et al., 2015). Employees who demonstrate higher levels of **hope** and **resilience**, for instance, are more likely to persist through challenges such as difficult customer interactions, unpredictable workloads, or operational setbacks, which in turn contributes to better service delivery and higher guest satisfaction (Paek et al., 2015).

Studies also indicate that hospitality workers with stronger PsyCap tend to experience **lower levels of work-related stress**, are **less likely to be absent**, and report a **reduced intention to leave** their jobs. These outcomes are particularly valuable in an industry that often struggles with high employee turnover, as they suggest that PsyCap can offer a **competitive advantage** in both staff retention and service quality (Yan et al., 2021; Karatepe & Karadas, 2015).

Notably, Paek et al. (2015) found that **work engagement** plays a **partial mediating role** in the relationship between PsyCap and several key outcomes, including employee

morale, job satisfaction, and affective commitment to the organization. This finding highlights that PsyCap not only influences direct performance metrics but also helps to shape the **underlying attitudes and motivation** that drive positive workplace behaviour.

2.5 Limitations in the Literature

Although the positive effects of PsyCap have been found across various countries and cultures, some studies suggest there are certain limits or conditions to how strong these effects might be. For example, meta-analyses have shown that the link between PsyCap and job performance tends to be a bit stronger in service-based industries and in particular national contexts, which highlights the importance of considering local work environments and cultural norms when looking at these relationships (Newman et al., 2014; Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017).

In terms of individual characteristics, factors like gender, job tenure, or working day versus night shifts don't seem to have a consistent impact on PsyCap. However, **organizational factors**, especially supportive work environments and positive leadership styles, have been shown to play a much more significant role in developing and maintaining PsyCap (Avey, 2014; Yan et al., 2021).

Specifically in hospitality, research shows that actively working to build PsyCap through things like training programs, supportive HR practices, or empowering leadership can help employees better cope with job stress and emotional demands. These benefits seem to apply regardless of someone's experience level or personal background, which makes PsyCap development a promising strategy for improving well-being and performance across different types of hospitality workers (Ozturk Ciftci & Erkanli, 2020; Yan et al., 2021).

Chapter 3.

Research question.

The hospitality sector is widely recognised for its demanding, emotionally intensive work environments. These conditions, coupled with limited organisational support for mental health and persistently high turnover rates, highlight the importance of understanding how internal psychological resources such as PsyCap contribute to sustaining employee performance and wellbeing. Although PsyCap has been explored across various international settings, there is a notable lack of qualitative research focused specifically on frontline hospitality workers within the Irish context.

The following research questions are designed to examine how hospitality employees experience and interpret the role of PsyCap in their professional lives. They are shaped by the study's qualitative approach and are intended to capture the lived realities, perceptions, and insights of individuals working in the sector.

3.1 Main Research Question

- **How does Psychological Capital (PsyCap) influence job performance among hospitality employees in Dublin?**

In order to explore this question, the following sub-questions were developed, grounded in existing literature and adapted to the qualitative nature of the study:

- How hospitality employees with higher levels of Psychological Capital can demonstrate greater ability to cope with emotional labour and workplace stress?
- Are resilience and self-efficacy perceived as the most critical components of PsyCap in managing high pressure situations in hospitality roles?
- How hope and optimism can contribute to sustained motivation and a positive outlook on job performance, particularly under challenging conditions?
- Is the presence of PsyCap associated with reduced turnovers and increase overall engagement among hospitality staff?

Chapter 4.

Methodology

4.1 Research Design

This chapter outlines the research approach used to explore the relationship between PsyCap - hope, confidence, resilience, and optimism- and how people perform in hospitality jobs in Dublin, with stressful positions and demanding scenarios.

This sector offers a unique professional environment, characterised by high customer interaction, irregular and often unsociable working hours, and frequent exposure to emotionally charged situations. In such a context, employee performance and well-being are influenced not only by technical skill and training but also by internal psychological resources. The study therefore required a research design capable of capturing rich, in-depth accounts of lived experience rather than relying solely on numerical measurements.

A **qualitative research design** was chosen for this reason. Qualitative inquiry is particularly well suited to uncovering the subtleties of subjective experience, providing the flexibility to explore themes that emerge naturally during data collection. As Creswell and Poth (2018) note, qualitative approaches allow for the generation of detailed insights into how individuals perceive, interpret, and navigate complex workplace realities. This choice is consistent with previous research on PsyCap in hospitality and service-based sectors, where scholars have found that personal narratives and reflective accounts reveal how psychological strengths manifest under real-world pressures (Paek et al., 2015; Ozturk Ciftci and Erkanli, 2020).

The adoption of this design was also driven by the limitations of purely quantitative approaches. While instruments such as the Psychological Capital Questionnaire (Luthans et al., 2007) can measure PsyCap traits, they do not easily capture the context-specific strategies employees use to apply these resources in their work. In contrast, qualitative interviews allow participants to share personal stories that reveal how hope, confidence, resilience, and optimism influence performance in shifting, high-pressure service environments. This deeper insight was essential for addressing the research aim and understanding the complex interplay between psychological resources and job performance in Dublin's hospitality sector.

The purpose of this research is to explore how Psychological Capital influences job performance across various frontline and supervisory roles within the hospitality sector, including bartenders, receptionists, kitchen staff, and shift managers. The study aims to capture the specific psychological and performance-related dynamics present in these high-demand service roles.

The focus is on identifying what drives these individuals to maintain performance under pressure, how they stay motivated in demanding environments, and the types of support systems they rely on, or where there is a lack of it. At the core of this investigation is an interest in how PsyCap, made of hope, confidence, resilience, and optimism, shapes their ability to navigate the everyday challenges of their roles and influences overall job performance.

Given the nature of the research question, which explores how individual psychological strengths influence job performance within a high-pressure service environment, a **qualitative research approach** was most appropriate. This approach enables an in-depth exploration of participants' perspectives, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of their lived experiences within the hospitality sector.

4.2 Research Instrument

Semi-structured interviews offer a balance between guided inquiry and open conversation. They provided the opportunity to explore specific themes, such as hope, confidence, resilience, and optimism, while also allowing participants the freedom to share personal stories, reflect on their daily experiences, and express their thoughts in their own terms. This method supports the exploration of complex psychological constructs that are difficult to quantify and often deeply intertwined with individual perception and workplace culture.

The decision to adopt a qualitative design was informed by existing literature, which has shown that PsyCap is best understood through reflective, experience-based narratives rather than solely through numerical measures. Previous studies have highlighted how personal insights can reveal subtle but significant ways in which PsyCap manifests in real-world settings, particularly in roles where emotional labor, interpersonal interactions, and adaptability are central to daily performance.

The development of the semi-structured interview guide was informed by previous studies that investigated how individual perspectives reveal the real-life expression of internal resources in demanding work environments. For example, Paek et al. (2015) examined how engagement mediates the relationship between psychological strengths and job satisfaction in hotel staff, while Ozturk Ciftci and Erkanli (2020) explored the role of leadership in shaping these internal states. These studies provided direction for question formulation, particularly in focusing on themes like motivation during adversity, confidence in task performance, responses to stress, and outlook on future progression. In addition, prompts around leadership support and emotional challenges were incorporated based on findings by Yan et al. (2021), who highlighted the importance of organisational context in shaping employee outcomes in service industries.

4.3 Sample and Strategy

In the context of the hospitality industry, especially in a diverse, urban environment like Dublin, staff often navigate through customer expectations, fluctuating workloads, and irregular schedules. These conditions create a dynamic and emotionally demanding workplace in which psychological resources play a critical role. A qualitative lens, therefore, offers the sensitivity and depth needed to explore how hospitality workers interpret and utilize these psychological resources in real time, and how this, in turn, affects their overall job performance and well-being.

The study focused on hospitality workers who were either currently employed or had recent employment experience in Dublin, Ireland. Exactly eight participants were recruited from a range of front-line and supervisory roles, including but not limited to **waiters, bartenders, receptionists, kitchen staff, and baristas**. These roles were selected intentionally due to their direct involvement with customers, frequent teamwork demands, and exposure to stressful scenarios and emotionally difficult environments, conditions under which PsyCap is likely to play a significant role in shaping job performance.

To ensure diversity and contextual relevance, a **purposive sampling strategy** was applied. Participants were recruited from a variety of hospitality venues, such as hotels, cafés, restaurants, and pubs, offering a cross-section of the industry in Dublin. The selection aimed to capture a wide range of perspectives based on factors such as job type, years of experience, nationality, and work patterns (e.g., full-time, part-time, shift-based). This approach allowed for a more comprehensive understanding of how PsyCap functions within the multicultural and dynamic hospitality landscape of Dublin.

A total of eight interviews were conducted during the data collection phase. The sample represented a diverse participant group in terms of age, background, and job tenure, which enriched the dataset and enabled more nuanced analysis of themes related to psychological well-being and job performance.

The primary instrument used for data collection was a **semi-structured interview guide**, which was carefully designed to align with the four key dimensions of PsyCap: **hope, confidence (self-efficacy), resilience, and optimism**. This framework allowed the study to examine how these personal psychological resources influenced participants' experiences, attitudes, and performance in their respective roles.

The interview guide included approximately ten core questions, complemented by follow-up prompts to encourage deeper reflection and contextual explanation. The question design allowed for thematic consistency across all interviews while also

granting participants the freedom to express their unique viewpoints and personal experiences in their own words.

Each component of Psychological Capital was explored as follows:

- **Hope:** This dimension examined how participants approach goal-setting, sustain focus during peak demand, and find ways to achieve desired outcomes despite obstacles. The intention was to understand whether individuals maintained motivation in the face of operational challenges and how they developed alternative strategies when plans changed unexpectedly.
 - Can you tell me what it's like to work in your current hospitality job and how do you set yourself up for goals and achievements?
 - How would you describe your relationship with your managers or supervisors?
 - When work gets tough, how management helps you to keep going or stay focused on your goals?
- **Confidence (Self-efficacy):** This section explored participants' belief in their own ability to carry out tasks effectively and handle challenges in a hospitality setting. It looked at how confidence influenced their decision-making, problem-solving, and willingness to take on responsibilities.
 - Do you feel confident in your ability to do your job well? Why or why not?
 - Do your managers give you feedback that helps you feel more confident or skilled?
 - Do you feel supported and valued at your workplace? Why or why not?
- **Resilience:** Focus was on participants' capacity to recover from difficult situations, such as challenging shifts, negative customer interactions, or operational setbacks, while maintaining emotional balance and performance.
 - How do you usually cope when something stressful happens during your shift?
 - Is there anything your workplace does (or could do) to help staff deal with stress or setbacks better?
- **Optimism:** The final dimension explored the participants' overall outlook toward their job, career prospects, and the future within the hospitality industry. The aim was to identify whether they maintained a positive perspective despite the sector's high-pressure nature.
 - Do you feel positive about your future working in hospitality? Why or why not?

→ If you could change one thing about how your job supports staff motivation or mental well-being, what would it be?

Data was collected through individual semi-structured interviews, each lasting approximately 30–45 minutes. All interviews were conducted online via Microsoft Teams, offering flexibility for participants to choose a time and location convenient for them. This approach also accommodated the irregular work schedules typical in hospitality, ensuring participation was accessible to those working evenings or weekends.

Prior to the interviews, participants were provided with an information sheet outlining the purpose of the research, the voluntary nature of participation, and the measures taken to protect confidentiality. Written informed consent was obtained electronically. At the start of each interview, verbal consent to record the session was also confirmed.

Interviews were audio-recorded using Microsoft Teams' in-built recording function and later transcribed verbatim. This ensured accuracy in capturing participants' words, enabling a richer and more precise thematic analysis. Non-verbal cues, although more limited in an online format, were noted where possible in the researcher's field notes to provide additional context for interpretation.

4.4 Limitations

While this methodological approach generated rich and meaningful insights into the lived experiences of hospitality workers, certain limitations must be acknowledged. The relatively small sample size, although consistent with the depth-oriented nature of qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2018), limits the extent to which the findings can be generalised to the broader hospitality workforce. This constraint is common in qualitative studies, where the emphasis is on depth rather than breadth (Smith & Osborn, 2015). Furthermore, the reliance on self-reported accounts introduces the potential for recall bias or socially desirable responding, where participants may unintentionally tailor their answers to align with perceived expectations (Fisher, 1993).

The geographic focus on Dublin also presents contextual boundaries. As hospitality work environments are shaped by local cultural, economic, and organisational norms, findings may not be directly transferable to regions with different labour market dynamics or service cultures (Yin, 2018). Finally, although conducting interviews online via Microsoft Teams increased accessibility and accommodated participants' variable work schedules, it may have constrained the ability to capture non-verbal communication fully, a factor known to enrich qualitative interpretation (Opdenakker, 2006). Nonetheless, participants generally appeared comfortable with the format, and rapport was maintained, suggesting that the digital medium did not significantly compromise the quality of responses.

Chapter Five

Data Analysis

5.1 Introduction

This study employed **thematic analysis** as the core method for analysing the qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis was chosen due to its flexibility and suitability for research focused on understanding personal experiences, perceptions, and meanings (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Given that this investigation centred on PsyCap a construct deeply rooted in how individuals perceive and respond to challenges, thematic analysis offered an effective means of identifying recurring patterns and insights within participants narratives.

Rather than providing a question-by-question summary of responses, the analysis is organised into thematic categories derived from both the interview data and the conceptual framework outlined in the literature review. This thematic approach enables the integration of rich, participant-driven narratives with relevant theoretical insights, allowing for a more nuanced understanding of how PsyCap operates within the high-pressure and dynamic hospitality sector in Dublin.

After all interviews were transcribed, the transcripts were reviewed multiple times to ensure close familiarity with the data. This phase of immersion was essential not only for accuracy but also for developing a deeper understanding of tone, context, and meanings within the responses. Initial thoughts, impressions, and potential areas of interest were noted during this process to support early-stage analytical thinking. The step-by-step process used in this study is summarised in Figure 1, which visually represents Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis framework. This diagram was included to provide a clear overview of the progression from raw interview transcripts to final thematic insights.

Phases of thematic analysis

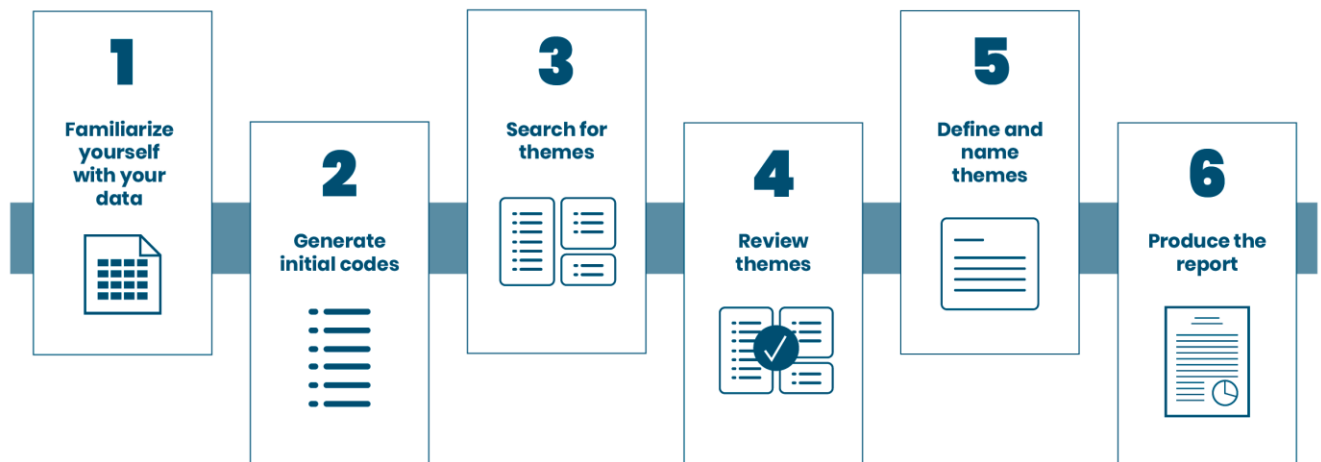


Fig. 1 Braun and Clarke Thematic Analysis Diagram

5.2 Overview of Participants

The participants in this study were drawn from a cross-section of hospitality roles, including waiting staff, receptionists, baristas, and managers. This diversity offers a broad perspective on operational realities in the sector, capturing the voices of both frontline employees and those in supervisory or managerial positions. All participants were currently employed in Dublin at the time of the interviews, with work experience in hospitality ranging from less than two years to over nine years.

A notable characteristic of the sample was its international composition, reflecting the broader demographics of Dublin's hospitality workforce. Several participants were balancing hospitality work with academic studies, while others viewed the sector as a stepping stone toward different career paths. Although the roles, tenure, and career aspirations varied, common experiences of operational pressure, customer interaction, and team dynamics emerged consistently across the interviews.

The table below summarises the key background details of the participants while maintaining anonymity through assigned participant codes:

Participant Code.	Role / Position.	Experience.	Nationality.
Participant 1	Floor	2 years	Eastern European
Participant 2	Receptionist	3+ years	Latin American
Participant 3	Supervisor	4+ years	Latin American
Participant 4	Floor	5 years	Irish
Participant 5	Floor	3+ years	Eastern European
Participant 6	Supervisor	6 months	Latin American
Participant 7	Bartender	5 years	Latin American
Participant 8	Floor	2 years	Irish

Fig. 2 Table of participants

5.3 Identifying Themes

Based on the thematic analysis, several interconnected themes emerged from the data. These themes reflect how hospitality workers in Dublin perceive, experience, and apply PsyCap in the context of demanding and high-pressure work environments.

1. Management Support: How leadership style and behave influencing hope, resilience, optimism and self-efficacy.
2. Recognition, Fairness and Value: Impact the feeling of being value or overlooked on employee motivation and professional development
3. Strategies for Stress and Setbacks: Personal organisation and Collective organisation approaches to handle pressures.
4. Communication and Feedback: Clarity, feedback frequency, communication and transparency to shape PsyCap
5. Perceptions of Future in Hospitality: Career aspirations, retention concerns and sustentability of hospitality work.

5.3.1 Management Support

A recurring finding across participant narratives was the pivotal role that managerial support played in shaping the development and expression of PsyCap elements, particularly hope, resilience, and self-efficacy. Participants consistently distinguished between managers who actively engaged with their teams, offering practical help and emotional reassurance, and those who adopted a more detached, supervisory role.

When managers were described as approachable, hands-on, and empathetic, employees reported feeling more capable of managing challenges and more optimistic about their ability to perform effectively. For instance, one participant recalled:

“We have one manager who is just there and sees what you need at the moment and just helps you without asking. Without coming back later and saying, ‘Oh look, I helped you.’” (Interviewee 1)

This type of behaviour reflects the transformational and ethical leadership styles highlighted by Ali et al. (2022) as being instrumental in enhancing employee wellbeing and fostering PsyCap. In such contexts, workers not only feel supported in the moment but also develop a stronger belief in their own problem-solving abilities, a key component of self-efficacy (Luthans et al., 2015).

By contrast, participants who experienced distant or purely directive management expressed feelings of detachment, reduced motivation, and limited opportunities to grow their psychological resources. One respondent described:

“Sometimes my current manager gives me the opportunity to handle things, but if he sees I can’t, he steps in. That gives me motivation.” (Interviewee 3)

This balance between autonomy and intervention illustrates the “resource caravan” described by Hobfoll (2002), where personal and organisational resources reinforce each other over time. In contrast, transactional leadership styles, focused solely on tasks and compliance, were associated with a more fragile form of resilience, where employees relied primarily on individual coping strategies rather than a shared support network.

Several participants also noted that support was often situational and dependent on the personality of the individual manager. This aligns with findings by Ozturk Ciftci and Erkanli (2020), who observed that authentic leadership, rooted in consistency, fairness, and genuine care, was positively correlated with employees’ PsyCap levels. In environments where such leadership was absent, workers were more likely to disengage emotionally, focusing on task completion rather than personal or professional growth.

Another participant highlighted how management openness and responsiveness to staff development requests directly boosted their motivation and confidence:

“I told one of my managers during a meeting that I wanted to learn more about wine, pricing, and the financial side of the business. And this week, we’re actually starting training on that. So it’s not just talk, they really do follow through.” (Interviewee 6)

This example illustrates how authentic leadership (Ozturk Ciftci and Erkanli, 2020) where organisational support feeds directly into personal psychological resources. The act of following through on development promises not only enhances self-efficacy but also signals trust, fairness, and value, critical factors for building resilience in high-pressure service environments.

Conversely, where managerial engagement was inconsistent or driven solely by operational needs, employees often described feeling like “just another number,”

which limited their willingness to invest emotional energy in the role. This aligns with the view that transactional leadership, focused on compliance and task completion, produces a weaker and less sustainable form of PsyCap, heavily reliant on individual coping mechanisms rather than shared organisational support.

Overall, the findings indicate that managerial behaviour functions not merely as a background condition but as an active driver of PsyCap in hospitality. Leaders who model problem-solving, display empathy, and deliver on development commitments empower employees to sustain optimism, recover from setbacks, and maintain high levels of self-efficacy, even in the face of persistent workload pressures.

5.3.2 Recognition, Fairness and Value

While immediate operational support helped staff manage day-to-day challenges, participants emphasised that feeling genuinely recognised and treated fairly had a deeper impact on their motivation and overall PsyCap. Recognition was often described as the missing piece in workplace relationships, with several participants noting that appreciation tended to appear only when mistakes were made, rather than when good work was consistently delivered.

One participant explained:

“No one says anything when you’re doing well... silence means you’re just doing your job. I’d prefer a bit more communication, even just like, ‘Hey, thanks for today.’ It makes a difference.” (Interviewee 7)

Such experiences align with Bakker and Demerouti’s (2017) assertion that recognition serves as a job resource capable of buffering the strain caused by high job demands. Without it, employees risk feeling undervalued, undermining their optimism and self-efficacy over time.

A recurring concern was **perceived unfairness** in how recognition was distributed. Some participants described situations where certain employees received praise for minor contributions, while others who went above and beyond remained unnoticed. As one participant noted:

“Some people get recognised for the smallest thing and some people do so much and they’re not recognised at all... it’s unfair. I think it’d be great if they treated everyone fairly and recognised small and big efforts from everyone.” (Interviewee 1)

This sense of inequity eroded trust and, for some, reduced willingness to exert discretionary effort, a behaviour vital in customer-facing roles. In contrast, participants

who experienced fair recognition described increased trust in management and stronger optimism about their work.

Importantly, recognition did not need to be formal or monetary to be effective. Simple, sincere gestures from managers, such as verbal praise during a shift or acknowledgement of a job well done, were described as highly motivating. One participant from a managerial role shared how ongoing conversations about strengths, and providing opportunities to develop new skills, helped employees feel valued and invested in.

The evidence suggests that recognition and fairness are not “extras” in hospitality management but essential drivers of PsyCap. Recognition validates skills (self-efficacy), links effort to positive outcomes (hope), and reassures employees that their work matters (optimism), while fairness creates a foundation of trust that supports resilience in challenging conditions.

5.3.3 Strategies for Stress and Setbacks

A central aspect of PsyCap in hospitality is the capacity to handle high-pressure situations while still delivering consistent service quality. Participant accounts indicated that resilience, staying composed, adapting quickly, and performing effectively under stress, was most often developed through hands-on experience rather than formal training.

One participant explained how they approach difficult moments with a calm and solution-focused mindset:

“I laugh. Honestly, it’s just a job. If someone yells or screams, I lower my voice, stay calm, smile, and try to find a solution.” (Interviewee 2)

They also noted the importance of holding firm boundaries in challenging situations while maintaining professionalism:

“Even when someone is being discriminatory, I stick to my decision whether it’s a ‘no’ or something else but I do it respectfully and consistently.” (Interviewee 2)

These strategies reflect Fredrickson’s (2001) broaden-and-build theory, which proposes that positive emotional regulation expands cognitive capacity, enabling more flexible and creative problem-solving. The ability to keep composure under pressure not only protects employee well-being but also supports organisational objectives by ensuring consistent service quality.

The participant further linked their resilience to **managerial trust and autonomy**, describing how having the authority to manage guest situations independently, and

knowing management would support their decisions, reinforced confidence and reduced stress. This is consistent with findings that autonomy and organisational backing strengthen PsyCap by enhancing employees' sense of control and self-efficacy (Luthans et al., 2015).

In summary, resilience in hospitality emerges both from personal coping strategies and from organisational environments that empower staff. When managers trust employees to make decisions and stand behind those decisions, it creates conditions where optimism, adaptability, and persistence, the hallmarks of PsyCap, can flourish.

5.3.4 Communication and Feedback

Frequency of feedback, and communication style emerged as central factors influencing how participants experienced and sustained PsyCap in their roles. Consistent, constructive communication was often linked to increased confidence, motivation, and a sense of belonging, whereas inconsistent or absent feedback left employees uncertain about their performance and undervalued.

One participant described the positive impact of regular and supportive communication:

"I reported everything that happened during my shift... They always supported my decisions and told me I did what they would have done." (Interviewee 2)

In contrast, others highlighted how the lack of structured feedback hindered their sense of growth and self-assurance:

"Sometimes we only have one-to-one meetings because they're required... Dedicated meetings help you understand things more deeply and provide space for real development." (Interviewee 3)

The findings indicate that clarity in expectations, timely recognition of good performance, and opportunities to discuss challenges openly are essential for reinforcing PsyCap. When communication is frequent, respectful, and solution-oriented, it enhances employees' self-efficacy and resilience. Conversely, sporadic or purely critical feedback can erode optimism and reduce engagement, even among otherwise confident workers.

5.3.5 Perceptions of Future in Hospitality

Optimism emerged as a varied yet significant element of PsyCap across participants, with many expressing that their outlook on hospitality was shaped by both personal aspirations and workplace culture. While some viewed the industry as a stepping stone

toward other career paths, others saw opportunities for growth and skill development within the sector.

One participant, for instance, expressed a strong sense of opportunity and growth fostered by a supportive work environment:

“I can see myself working in hospitality for at least another two to five years. I’m learning a lot, and I feel like there’s still room for growth. So yes, I feel optimistic.” (Interviewee 6)

In these cases, management’s encouragement, access to new learning experiences, and recognition of effort appeared to nurture a positive outlook. When employees felt invested in, through training, trust, and constructive feedback, their optimism was reinforced, making them more resilient during challenging periods.

However, optimism was far from universal. Several participants articulated a more cautious or even resigned perspective, acknowledging the personal benefits of working in hospitality, such as improved patience, empathy, and quick decision-making, while simultaneously viewing the sector as unsustainable in the long term. Long hours, erratic schedules, emotional demands, and the physical toll of the work were cited as key factors limiting their enthusiasm:

“I’m grateful for what I’ve learned, hospitality teaches you patience, empathy, quick thinking. But long-term? I don’t think it’s sustainable for me.” (Interviewee 5)

The analysis suggests that optimism in hospitality is highly conditional, often hinging on whether the work environment balances operational demands with employee well-being. Leadership style, fairness, opportunities for career progression, and organisational culture all play pivotal roles in shaping employees’ outlook. Where these elements align positively, optimism thrives; where they are absent or inconsistent, even highly skilled and engaged staff may view hospitality as a short-term stage rather than a sustainable career path.

5.4 Interconnections Between Themes and Influence in PsyCap

The analysis revealed that the five thematic areas, **Management Support**, **Recognition, Fairness & Value**, **Strategies for Stress & Setbacks**, **Communication & Feedback**, and **Perceptions of Future in Hospitality**, are not isolated constructs, but interconnected elements that collectively shape and sustain *optimism, resilience, hope, and self-efficacy* in hospitality employees.

Management Support serves as a foundational driver, providing both practical resources and emotional reassurance. This form of leadership not only strengthens resilience by offering solutions during high-pressure situations but also enhance

optimism by modelling a problem-solving mindset. The presence, or absence, of such support influences the extent to which employees feel capable of handling challenges, thereby directly impacting self-efficacy.

Recognition, Fairness & Value reinforces optimism when acknowledgment is consistent and genuine. Employees who feel fairly treated and valued are more likely to approach challenges with a hopeful and engaged mindset, while perceived favouritism or neglect can erode resilience, making them less inclined to sustain effort under stress.

Strategies for Stress & Setbacks operate as both personal and collective mechanisms to maintain performance in difficult circumstances. While individual coping approaches (e.g., humour, short breaks, mental reframing) build personal resilience and confidence, organisational strategies, such as adequate staffing or manager intervention, amplify these effects by signalling that employees are not facing difficulties alone.

Communication & Feedback acts as a linking mechanism across all themes, providing clarity during high-pressure situations, ensuring recognition is perceived as fair, and reducing uncertainty that can undermine both confidence and hope. Frequent, transparent, and constructive communication fosters trust in leadership and encourages proactive problem-solving behaviours.

Finally, **Perceptions of Future in Hospitality** represent the cumulative influence of all other themes. Long-term optimism and hope for career progression are contingent on the degree to which employees experience supportive management, fair recognition, effective coping strategies, and transparent communication. Positive perceptions of the industry's sustainability and personal growth potential were strongly associated with higher PsyCap levels, while negative or uncertain views reflected breakdowns in one or more of the other thematic areas.

Overall, the interconnections between these themes highlight that PsyCap is not shaped by single interventions, but by the ongoing, dynamic interaction between workplace culture, managerial practices, and individual coping capacities. Strengthening one area often reinforces others, creating a compounding effect that supports both employee well-being and sustained performance in the hospitality sector.

Chapter Six

Discussion

The findings reveal that PsyCap in hospitality is shaped not only by individual traits but by the interplay of structural, cultural, and interpersonal factors. The integration of themes such as management support, recognition, communication, and stress strategies highlights that PsyCap is rarely developed in isolation; rather, it evolves through a system of interdependent influences. This systems-based perspective offers a novel contribution to the literature, moving beyond the traditional focus on individual-level interventions towards an understanding of the organisational ecology that sustains PsyCap.

Methodologically, the qualitative, interview-based approach provided rich narrative data that uncovered factors often missed in quantitative survey research. For example, the concept of *optimism*, where hope for the future is directly contingent on consistent managerial behaviour and fair treatment, emerged as a critical insight. This adds to the theoretical discourse by highlighting that PsyCap's benefits may be fragile in unstable or unsupportive work environments, a factor not always acknowledged in existing models.

6.1 Practical Implications

The practical implications of this study are relevant for hospitality managers, Human Resources practitioners, and management seeking to enhance staff well-being, performance, and retention.

For managers, the findings underscore the importance of consistent and proactive support. Providing timely resources, transparent communication, and genuine recognition can significantly boost employees' optimism, resilience, and self-efficacy. Simple measures such as structured check-ins, peer mentoring, and visible acknowledgement of achievements can act as low-cost, high-impact interventions.

For HR practitioners and management, there is a clear case for integrating PsyCap development into professional training and onboarding. This could involve resilience workshops, goal-setting sessions, and structured feedback mechanisms designed to strengthen hope and self-efficacy. Importantly, such interventions should be coupled with organisational practices that address workload balance and reduce operational stressors, as PsyCap alone cannot compensate for persistently unsustainable work conditions.

6.2 Limitations of the Study

While the methodological approach was effective in capturing in-depth experiences, certain limitations must be acknowledged. First, the scope was limited to hospitality workers in Dublin, which restricts the generalisability of findings to other geographical or cultural contexts. Different labour market dynamics, cultural attitudes towards service work, and organisational norms in other regions could produce varied results.

Second, the sample size of eight participants, although appropriate for qualitative research (Creswell and Poth, 2018), means the study cannot claim statistical representativeness. The reliance on voluntary participation also introduces potential self-selection bias, as individuals with particularly positive or negative experiences may have been more inclined to participate.

Third, the use of semi-structured interviews captures perceptions and interpretations rather than direct observation of workplace behaviour. While this aligns with the study's focus on lived experience, it limits the ability to triangulate findings with behavioural or performance data.

Finally, the use of online interviews via Microsoft Teams, while logistically practical, may have reduced the richness of non-verbal cues, an important dimension in qualitative interpretation (Opdenakker, 2006). However, most participants reported feeling comfortable with the format, and rapport appeared to be maintained throughout.

6.3 Recommendations for Future Research

Future studies could build on these findings by adopting longitudinal designs to explore how PsyCap develops over time in hospitality roles, particularly in response to targeted interventions. Such research could examine whether changes in leadership style, recognition practices, or communication frequency produce measurable improvements in PsyCap dimensions and related performance outcomes.

Another valuable venue would be comparative research across different segments of the hospitality industry, such as luxury hotels, casual dining, and event catering. This would allow for the identification of sector-specific factors that either strengthen or undermine PsyCap.

Additionally, given the multicultural nature of Dublin's hospitality workforce, further research could investigate the influence of cultural background on PsyCap development and utilisation. Exploring how cultural values shape perceptions of fairness, communication styles, and leadership could provide important insights for managing diverse teams.

Finally, incorporating mixed methods designs that combine qualitative interviews with quantitative measures of PsyCap and job performance could enhance the robustness of future research. Such an approach would allow for both the statistical validation of patterns and the preservation of rich, contextual insights into the lived experiences of hospitality workers.

Chapter Seven

Conclusion

This research set out how the exploration of PsyCap shapes job performance in a Dublin context hospitality industry. Through a qualitative, interview-based approach, it captured the opinions of participants that work in a high-demanding, fast-paced and emotionally sector.

The findings demonstrate that PsyCap is not an isolated personal trait, but a dynamic resource influenced by leadership behaviours, recognition practices, communication quality, stress management strategies, and perceptions of career sustainability. When these organisational and interpersonal factors align positively, PsyCap flourishes, enabling employees to remain motivated, adaptable, and high-performing even under significant pressure.

Critically, this research advances the literature by providing an in-depth, context-specific understanding of PsyCap in an urban hospitality setting, a context that has often been overlooked in academic studies. The emergence of “optimism” as a conditional subject for a management perspective, adds a new perspective, showing that employee outlook on the future is contingent on workplace culture, leadership consistency, and fair treatment. This insight challenges the assumption that PsyCap is purely intrinsic and highlights its organisational dependency.

From a practical standpoint, the study underscores the need for hospitality organisations to invest not only in skill-based training but also in leadership development, recognition systems, and supportive communication frameworks. PsyCap can be nurtured, but it requires intentional effort and sustained organisational commitment.

In conclusion, the research reaffirms that in sectors like hospitality—where human interaction, emotional labour, and adaptability are core to success—developing and sustaining PsyCap is both a strategic advantage and a moral imperative. By fostering environments that consistently support hope, resilience, optimism, and self-efficacy, Dublin’s hospitality industry has the potential not only to improve staff well-being and retention but also to enhance the overall quality and sustainability of its service delivery.

References

- Ali, A., Hamid, T.A., Naveed, R.T., Siddique, I., Ryu, H.B. and Han, H. (2022) 'Preparing for the "black swan": Reducing employee burnout in the hospitality sector through ethical leadership', *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, Article 1009785. Available at: <https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/psychology/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.1009785/full>
- Amissah, E.F., Blankson-Stiles-Ocran, S. and Mensah, I. (2022) 'Emotional labour, emotional exhaustion and job satisfaction in the hospitality industry', *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Insights*, 5(5), pp. 805–821. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/354032544_Emotional_labour_emotional_exhaustion_and_job_satisfaction_in_the_hospitality_industry
- Al-Ghazali, B.M. and Afsar, B., 2021. Impact of psychological capital on mental health, readiness for organizational change, and job insecurity: hotel employees' perspective in COVID-19. *Journal of Tourism Futures* [online]. Available at: <https://www.emerald.com/jtf/article/doi/10.1108/JTF-07-2020-0116/1254379/Impact-of-psychological-capital-on-mental-health>
- Aragon Baca, K.P. (2024) *What is the relationship between psychological wellbeing, job satisfaction, and work-life balance among hospitality workers in Dublin?* MSc in Management thesis. National College of Ireland. Available at: <https://norma.ncirl.ie/7809/1/karlaaragonbaca.pdf>
- Avey, J.B., Reichard, R.J., Luthans, F. and Mhatre, K.H., 2011. Meta-analysis of the impact of positive psychological capital on employee attitudes, behaviors, and performance. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 22(2), pp.127–152.
- Bakker, A.B. and Demerouti, E. (2017) 'Job demands–resources theory: Taking stock and looking forward', *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 22(3), pp. 273–285. Available at: https://psycnet.apa.org/fulltext/2016-48454-001.pdf?auth_token=d71c80055856d0fa999163827d8647404481c69e&returnUrl=https%3A%2F%2Fpsycnet.apa.org%2FdoiLanding%3Fdoi%3D10.1037%252Focp0000056
- Baquero, A. et al. (2023) 'Hotel employees' burnout and intention to quit: The role of psychological distress and financial well-being in a moderation mediation model', *Behavioral Sciences*, 13(2), 84. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/367288356_Hotel_Employees'_Burnout_and_Intention_to_Quit_The_Role_of_Psychological_Distress_and_Financial_Well-Being_in_a_Moderation_Mediation_Model

Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006) 'Using thematic analysis in psychology', *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), pp. 77–101. Available at: <https://uwe-repository.worktribe.com/output/1043060/using-thematic-analysis-in-psychology>

Creswell, J.W. and Poth, C.N. (2018) *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. 4th edn. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications. Available at: <https://revistapsicologia.org/public/formato/cuali2.pdf>

Demir, M. and Demir, Ş.Ş. (2019) 'The effects of psychological capital on employees' organizational identification in hotels', *Journal of Tourism Theory and Research*, 5(3), pp. 355–369. Available at: <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/pub/jttr/issue/47377/573851>

Fisher, R.J. (1993) 'Social desirability bias and the validity of indirect questioning', *Journal of Consumer Research*, 20(2), pp. 303–315. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2489277>

Fredrickson, B.L. (2001) 'The role of positive emotions in positive psychology: The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions', *American Psychologist*, 56(3), pp. 218–226. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/11946304_The_role_of_positive_emotions_in_positive_psychology_The_broaden-and-build_theory_of_positive_emotions

Gom, D., Lew, T.Y., Jiony, M.M., Tanakinjal, G.H. and Sondoh, S.J. (2021) 'The role of transformational leadership and psychological capital in the hotel industry: A sustainable approach to reducing turnover intention', *Sustainability*, 13(19), 10799. Available at: <https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/13/19/10799>

Healthy Workplace Ireland (2022) *Healthy workplace baseline report*. Dublin: Safefood/Health and Safety Authority. Available at: <https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/projectsandcentres/srerc/HealthyWorkplaceIreland.pdf>

Hobfoll, S.E. (2002) 'Social and psychological resources and adaptation', *Review of General Psychology*, 6(4), pp. 307–324. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/232556057_Social_and_Psychological_Resources_and_Adaptation

Karatepe, O.M. and Karadas, G. (2015) 'Do psychological capital and work engagement foster frontline employees' satisfaction? A study in the hotel industry', *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 27(6), pp. 1254–1278. Available at: <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/IJCHM-09-2013-0413/full/html>

Kim, H.J., Im, J. and Hwang, J. (2015) 'The effects of job stress and burnout on negative behaviours and customer orientation in the hotel industry', *International Journal of*

Contemporary Hospitality Management, 27(3), pp. 487–504. Available at:
<https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/IJCHM-03-2013-0145/full/html>

Luthans, F. and Youssef-Morgan, C.M. (2017) 'Psychological capital: An evidence-based positive approach', *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 4, pp. 339–366. Available at:
<https://www.annualreviews.org/content/doi/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-032516-113324/full>

Luo, C.-Y., Tsai, C.-H., Chen, M.-H. and Gao, J.-L. (2021) 'The effects of psychological capital and internal social capital on frontline hotel employees' adaptive performance', *Sustainability*, 13(10), 5430. Available at: <https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/13/10/5430>

Newman, A., Ucbasaran, D., Zhu, F. and Hirst, G. (2014) 'Psychological capital: A review and synthesis', *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 35(S1), pp. S120–S138. Available at:
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/264872272_Psychological_capital_A_review_and_synthesis

O'Gorman, K. and O'Dwyer, M. (2021) 'Work–home balance: A management perspective on Irish hospitality', *Dublin Institute of Technology Research Archive*. Available at: <https://researchprofiles.tudublin.ie/en/publications/work-home-balance-a-management-perspective-3>

O'Neill, J.W. and Davis, K. (2010) 'Work stress and well-being in the hotel industry', *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 30(2), pp. 385–390. Available at:
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S027843191000115X>

Opdenakker, R. (2006) 'Advantages and disadvantages of four interview techniques in qualitative research', *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 7(4). Available at:
<https://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/175>

Ozturk Ciftci, G. and Erkanli, H. (2020) 'The effect of authentic leadership on psychological capital: The mediating role of job satisfaction', *Journal of Economics and Administrative Sciences*, 22(1), pp. 159–174. Available at:
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/344733683_The_effect_of_authentic_leadership_and_psychological_capital_on_work_engagement_the_mediating_role_of_job_satisfaction

Paek, S., Schuckert, M., Kim, T.T. and Lee, G. (2015) 'Why is hospitality employees' psychological capital important? The effects of psychological capital on work engagement and employee morale', *International Journal of Hospitality Management*,

50, pp. 9–26. Available at:

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0278431915001065>

Saito, H., Kim, Y., Fong, L.H.N. and Law, R. (2025) 'Well-being of hospitality employees: A systematic literature review', *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 119, 103634. Available at:

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0278431924002676>

Smith, J.A. and Osborn, M. (2015) 'Interpretative phenomenological analysis as a useful methodology for research on the lived experience of pain', *British Journal of Pain*, 9(1), pp. 41–42. Available at: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/2049463714541642>

Wen, H. and Liu-Lastres, B. (2021) 'Examining the impact of psychological capital on workplace outcomes of ethnic minority foodservice employees', *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 94, 102881. Available at:

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S027843192100074X>

Yan, Z., Mansor, Z.D., Choo, W.C. and Abdullah, A.R. (2021) 'Mitigating effect of psychological capital on employees' withdrawal behavior in the presence of job attitudes: evidence from five-star hotels in Malaysia', *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, 617023. Available at:

<https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.617023/full>

Yin, R.K. (2018) *Case study research and applications: Design and methods*. 6th edn. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications. Available at: <https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/case-study-research-and-applications/book250150>

Yoo, D.Y. (2023) 'The Hospitality Stress Matrix: Exploring job stressors and their effects on psychological well-being', *Sustainability*, 15(17), 13116. Available at:

<https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/15/17/13116>

Youssef-Morgan, C.M. and Luthans, F. (2013) 'Psychological capital theory: Toward a positive holistic model', in *Advances in Positive Organizational Psychology*, Vol. 1. Bingley: Emerald Group Publishing Limited, pp. 145–166. Available at:

[https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/S2046-410X\(2013\)0000001012/full/html](https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/S2046-410X(2013)0000001012/full/html)

Appendix

First Interview

Interviewer: Hey, how are you? All good How are you? Good thank you for taking your time to do these questions. So as you work in hospitality, can you please tell me what it is like to work in your current hospitality job?

Interviewee: It's actually quite good, very busy all the time. But I have really good coworkers, so I enjoyed because of them. Yeah. Okay.

Interviewer: How would you describe your relationship with your managers or supervisors?

Interviewee: In general, it's quite good. I always, not always, but most of the time I get whatever I need, all the support from them, but at the same time, if they ask for something, I feel like I have to do it because otherwise, when I ask for something, I'm not going to get it if I say no to them. But overall, it's good. Okay.

Interviewer: Do you feel supported and value it at your workplace and why or why not?.

Interviewee: It depends on the manager. I would say mostly I do. because as I said earlier, they support me. with things that are not connected to work, just as a person. But at the same time, I feel like I'm just a number there. Because the place is very big and. I think it's quite hard to be value every single employee on a deeper level. But yeah, in just formal settings, I feel respected.

Interviewer: Thank you. When work is off, what helps you to keep going or stay focussed on your goals? How the management helps you to stay focussed on your goals.

Interviewee: I don't really. I think get support from management during busy times. actually depends on the manager. We have one manager who is just there and sees what you need at the moment and just helps you without asking. And without coming back to you later and saying, oh, look, I helped you. Look, I did this for you. And of course, there were times when I cried at work because it was, I don't know, different situations. That would always give me some time to come down and feel better.

Interviewer: Okay. Do you feel confident in your ability to do your job? Why or why not?

Interviewee: Yeah, I do, but to be honest, I don't I'm not planning to build a career in hospitality. That's why I don't put 100% of effort. So I just, I do my job, but I'm not trying to do the best what I can do.

Interviewer: Do your managers, give you feedback that helps you to feel more confident or more skilled.

Interviewee: Hard question. Sometimes they give feedback. which I don't want to accept because it was just a moment and they picked up in that moment when I was busy and I know these things. You don't need to tell me these things. You know what I mean? But sometimes they could give a really good advice.

Interviewer: How do you usually get over with when something gets really stressful during your shift?

Interviewee: I usually just go to vape. Or I complain to someone emotionally, and then I forget about it. Or if it's if the situation is really bad, I'm just going to cry in the toilet. Yeah. That's basically my way of dealing with that.

Interviewer: Is there anything that your workplace does or could do to help stuff deal with stress or setbacks better?

Interviewee: There definitely is, but I need a second to think about it. It's take your time.

I would say first of all, never pressure you if they see that you're stressed enough. And instead of saying that you have to do this, you have to do that, come to you and say, okay, I see you're stressed, breathe in, breathe out, and come back to the reality, you know, or tell you, okay, go have some water for a minute. Just to give you really a minute to come down and realise that's all good. I have support from managers. I'm not alone in that. I think that would be the biggest support that they can give during stressful times.

Interviewer: Do you feel positive about your future in hospitality? Well, you already answer that one, but still, do you feel positive your future?

Interviewee: I think hospitality is a great place to work, but I have my other ambitions and aims in life. I would like to do something different, so that's why sometimes I feel frustrated about working in hospitality because of hours and stress.

Interviewer: Thank you. And last question, if you can change just one thing about how your managers, supervisors, supports you, not just you, but your staff as well, your coworkers. Motivation and mental well being. What would it be?

Interviewee: I would say recognition of the efforts and no favouritism because some people get recognised for smallest thing and some people do so much. and they're not recognised at all and it honestly makes me so sad to see that. And I feel that it's unfair. So I think it'd be great if they would treat everyone fairly and recognise small and big efforts from everyone and say, oh, well done, that was great. But sincerely.

Interviewer: Thank you.

Interviewee: You're very welcome. Bye.

Interviewer: Bye.

Second Interview

Interviewer: OK, we'll start recording. I'm going to begin with the questions. So the first one is: Can you tell me what it's like to work in your current or past hospitality job?

Interviewee: Well, in my case, I was a receptionist and team leader. I really enjoyed the job, being face to face with guests, trying to make them feel welcome. I really liked it. It wasn't that hard. People used to think that working face to face with people is complicated or stressful. And yes, there are some situations that can be stressful, but overall, it was more about meeting happy, nice, and thankful people. I really loved working in reception.

Interviewer: Was it the reception of a restaurant, a hotel, or...?

Interviewee: A hotel. Yes, it was a hotel.

Interviewer: Thank you. How would you describe your relationship with your managers or supervisors?

Interviewee: At the beginning, my relationship with the general manager and other department managers like housekeeping and maintenance was amazing. After about a year, the general manager was fired, and a new general manager, operational manager, and housekeeping manager were hired. I had a good relationship with them, but the first manager was truly special. He didn't care about hierarchy; he was part of the team—cleaning tables, rooms, even cooking if needed. With the new manager, it was the opposite. She didn't know how to do the job and just gave orders. She was more of a boss, not a leader. The previous one was an amazing leader.

Interviewer: Thank you. Regarding that response, did you feel supported and valued at your workplace? Why or why not?

Interviewee: I always felt supported, but during the last period with the new manager, it felt like they supported me because it was convenient for them. They didn't want to lose me because whenever I was working, the reviews and feedback from guests improved. When I wasn't there, the numbers went down. In hospitality, it's all about numbers and reviews. So I was definitely supported and given opportunities, but it felt like it was because they needed me. With the first manager, I was supported and acknowledged because of my work, not because they needed something from me.

Interviewer: Thank you. When work gets tough—busy days, a lot of guests—how did management help you stay focused on your goals?

Interviewee: They gave me the authority to manage situations. The main goal was to keep the guest happy, and I had the power to do whatever was needed to achieve that.

They supported all my decisions and trusted that I'd act fairly—for both the guest and the company.

Interviewer: Did they give you feedback on the things you were doing well or things to improve?

Interviewee: Yes, always. I reported everything that happened during my shift, especially any issues. I would tell them, "This happened, this is what I did—if you think I could've done it differently, let me know." They always supported my decisions and told me I did what they would have done.

Interviewer: How do you usually cope with something stressful during your shift?

Interviewee: I laugh. Honestly, it's just a job. I think that's how I view life in general. I manage stress really well. If someone yells or screams, I lower my voice, stay calm, smile, and try to find a solution. Even when someone is being discriminatory, I stick to my decision—whether it's a "no" or something else—but I do it respectfully and consistently. With time in hospitality, you can tell when someone is just looking for a reason to complain or get something for free. I try to manage those cases with kindness but firmness.

Interviewer: Thank you. Thinking about yourself and your team, is there anything that your workplace does—or could do—to help staff deal with stress?

Interviewee: Yes, of course. Support from management is key. I was the team leader, so the team felt supported when I was there. But when I wasn't, I got many calls saying they missed me because they didn't feel the same support from other managers. Not every manager has a leadership mindset—some just want to boss people around. I believe management should listen and prioritize their staff. Guests come and go, but a happy and motivated team is what keeps everything running well. If the staff is happy, calm, and has energy, the shift goes well.

Interviewer: Thank you very much. Talking about management and how they see your future: Do you feel positive about your future in hospitality? Do you feel supported and valued?

Interviewee: In my previous company, they always gave us opportunities. They supported staff who wanted to grow or apply for different positions. Not all teams work that way, though. In a past role, I wasn't allowed to apply for a new position. But now, in my current position, I can apply for other roles, and they're very supportive. As long as you're growing within the company, they're happy for you. There's always room to grow.

Interviewer: Thank you. And just one last question. If you could change just one thing about how management supports and motivates staff, what would it be and why?

Interviewee: I think managers often focus only on numbers or only on people. I would train them to balance both—support their staff *and* focus on results. When staff feel looked after, performance and numbers naturally improve. There's a big misconception about management—some believe that being friendly or understanding makes you weak or ineffective. But in my experience, when staff are happy and respected, they go above and beyond, even in tough times. People have lives outside of work—immigration issues, financial stress, family illnesses—and these affect how they perform. Managers who treat staff like human beings, not just numbers, will always get the best from their teams.

Interviewer: Thank you very much. That will be the end of the interview. Do you have anything else you'd like to add?

Interviewee: No, that's OK.

Interviewer: We'll stop the recording now. Thank you again.

Third Interview

Interviewer: Well, the first question is: Can you describe what it's like to work in a hospitality job?

Interviewee: OK. I think I'd start by saying that you have to get used to working under pressure, because in hospitality the main goal is to provide good service to guests. You're always dealing with people, and that can become difficult when it's constant or when you're handling multiple things at the same time. So I'd say hospitality is a hard industry to work in.

Interviewer: Thank you. How would you describe your relationship with your managers or supervisors?

Interviewee: I believe my relationship with them is really good. Like any professional relationship, there are ups and downs, but overall, I feel supported. If I want to suggest a new idea or try something I think could help, I'm usually supported in doing that. I often ask them for tips or advice to improve, and I also like discussing the negative things that happen. It helps to know that sometimes they feel the same, even though as managers they have to show a more composed front.

Interviewer: Do you feel supported and valued at your workplace? Why?

Interviewee: I do feel supported, especially when I want to try new ideas. But to be honest, I don't always feel valued. That's mainly in terms of salary or being granted permissions. I feel like that could definitely be improved.

Interviewer: When work gets tough, what helps you keep going and stay focused on your goals? How does management support you during those times?

Interviewee: That's a really good question. Honestly, for me, staying focused during hard times is more personal than management-driven. Management does provide support, but at the end of the day, it's about how you react and what you've learned from experience. I remember a tough day with a previous manager who just left for about an hour because she felt overwhelmed. In contrast, my current manager gives me the opportunity to handle things, but if he sees I can't, he steps in. That gives me motivation.

Interviewer: Do you feel confident in your ability to do your work?

Interviewee: Yes, I think so. In the beginning, it was hard because my professional and academic background wasn't in hospitality. I started when I moved to Dublin three and a half years ago. The skills I had before were quite different. But over these years, I've learned a lot about customer service, how to work under pressure, and how to manage different situations. So now I do feel confident in what I do.

Interviewer: Do your managers give you feedback that helps build your confidence and improve your skills?

Interviewee: Yes, they do. I wish we had more one-to-one meetings though. Sometimes we only have them because they're required, but I think they're really important. It's hard to give or receive proper feedback during daily operations. Dedicated meetings help you understand things more deeply and provide space for real development.

Interviewer: How do you usually cope when something stressful happens during your shifts?

Interviewee: At first, I freak out—just a bit! But seriously, it's normal to react emotionally at first. Over time, I've learned to stay calm and deal with stress more effectively. In hospitality, it's always about the guest. Sometimes you have to give them the benefit of the doubt or make them feel right, even when they're not. That can be very challenging, but it's part of the job.

Interviewer: Is there anything your workplace does—or could do—to help staff deal with stress?

Interviewee: I think the best way to help staff is to give them the space to handle situations their own way, especially when they're new. Let them try things out while being there to support them if something goes wrong. Then afterwards, give them feedback—talk about what went well and what could be done differently. That approach helps people grow and build confidence.

Interviewer: Do you feel positive about your future in hospitality? Does the support from management affect that?

Interviewee: That's a tricky one for me because I'm not really planning to stay in hospitality long term. But I do feel positive about the future because the skills I've gained in hospitality—and from working under good management—will definitely help me in a different career. I'll be taking these lessons with me.

Interviewer: If you could change just one thing about how your management supports you, what would it be?

Interviewee: Let me think... I'd probably say communication. I'd like more frequent and clearer communication—especially through regular one-to-one meetings. Sometimes things go wrong simply because of a lack of information. Clear expectations and ongoing communication could solve a lot of problems.

Interviewer: And how would that change in communication affect your coworkers and the rest of the team?

Interviewee: Hospitality is a tough environment. If staff don't have enough information about what's going on—like allergy notes or special requests—it can result in bad service or unhappy guests. If there's good communication between management and staff, everyone can do their job more confidently. It reduces stress and gives a sense of peace, knowing you're prepared and doing what's expected.

Interviewer: Thank you very much. That was the last question.

Interviewee: No worries. Thank you.

Fourth Interview

Interviewer: OK. Question number one: Can you please tell me what it's like to work in hospitality in Dublin?

Interviewee: Working in hospitality in Dublin is not easy. You're under a lot of pressure, it's really busy, and it's one of the most active industries in the city. Shifts are usually long and constantly changing, you almost never have the same schedule each week. Often, you end up doing the work of two people and still getting paid less than you should. You really have to enjoy this kind of work to stick with it.

Interviewer: How would you describe your relationship with your managers?

Interviewee: Most managers I've had over the past nine years in hospitality have been challenging. They're often not helpful and tend to leave you to deal with things on your own. My previous manager was alright, but the one I have now isn't great. I'd say the relationships haven't been good. I think managers could do a lot more to support us, and there could be better communication and understanding.

Interviewer: Do you feel supported and valued at your workplace?

Interviewee: Honestly, no. I feel like I'm just another number. It feels like they're just using us to get the job done, and I don't feel genuinely valued.

Interviewer: When work gets tough, how do you expect your manager to help you stay focused on your goals?

Interviewee: I know that in hospitality everyone has their own responsibilities, but I still expect support from my manager. I show up, do my job well, and when I need help, I hope my manager will be there. But that's not always the case. Sometimes I'm left closing on my own and have to handle everything. So overall, I don't feel appreciated or supported in those moments.

Interviewer: Despite that, do you feel confident in your abilities at work?

Interviewee: Yes, I do. I've been doing this job for a long time, and I'm good at what I do. But even when you know you're capable, it can still be overwhelming—especially when management doesn't seem to care and just piles more work on you.

Interviewer: Do your managers give you feedback to help build your confidence?

Interviewee: My manager gives me feedback maybe every three or four months, which isn't often. He usually tells me that I'm doing a good job, but also complains that it's hard working with people who have less experience. He doesn't want to pay more for skilled staff, so I end up working with people who don't know the job well. That makes things harder for me.

Interviewer: How do you usually deal with stressful shifts?

Interviewee: I just focus on doing my job and try to let things go. Holding onto the stress just makes things worse. I used to take that stress home, and it really affected me. Now I just try to leave work at work. When my shift ends, I disconnect and try to enjoy my time off with friends and family. It's important to remember that your job isn't your whole life.

Interviewer: Is there anything your managers could do to help you feel less stressed at work?

Interviewee: Yes, definitely. One thing that would help a lot is having more consistent shifts—same start times, same days off. That way we could plan our lives better, sleep better, and have a proper routine. In hospitality, shifts are always changing, and that really affects your quality of life.

Interviewer: Do you feel positive about your future in hospitality?

Interviewee: Not really. Even though I love working in hospitality, I feel like I've gotten everything I could from it. After almost nine years, it's still tough—both physically and mentally. I don't see a long-term future in this field. Right now, it's just a job to support me while I'm in college.

Interviewer: If you could change just one thing about how your job supports staff motivation and mental well-being, what would it be?

Interviewee: One thing that really frustrates me is when they promise you 35 hours a week but only give you 25. I think it's important for them to follow through on what they agree to. Also, like I mentioned before, having a consistent roster would help a lot. It would give us a sense of stability and help us plan our weeks better. Having regular days off and a predictable schedule makes a big difference.

Interviewer: Thank you very much.

Interviewee: No worries.

Fifth Interview

Interviewer: Can you please tell me what it's like to work in hospitality in Dublin?

Interviewee: Working in hospitality in Dublin... wow, that's a mixed bag, honestly. On one hand, there's a nice buzz to it, it's social, fast-paced, you meet people from everywhere, and that part can be exciting. But on the other hand, it's *really* demanding. The shifts are long, the pressure can get intense, especially on weekends or holidays. Sometimes you're so busy you don't even have time to eat or sit down for a minute. And then there's the unpredictability, your schedule changes constantly, so it's hard to plan your personal life or even get proper rest.

Also, a lot of the workforce is international, like myself, so you have people balancing work with study, visa issues, or even just trying to adapt to a new culture. That adds another layer of stress. Overall, I'd say working in hospitality here is something you have to mentally prepare for. If you're not passionate about service or working with people, it can wear you down fast.

Interviewer: How would you describe your relationship with your managers?

Interviewee: That depends a lot on the manager, honestly. I've had some who were incredible—supportive, hands-on, fair, and they actually listened to staff. You could tell they'd done the job themselves before and respected what we go through. Those managers make all the difference. Even when it's crazy busy, you feel like you're part of a team and that someone's got your back. Mmm... But unfortunately, I've also had managers who were very disconnected. They'd spend most of their time in the office and only come out when something went wrong. With those kinds of managers, you feel more like you're being monitored than supported. Right now, my relationship with management is... decent, I'd say. I do my job, they do theirs, but there isn't much personal connection. It's all very transactional. I'd love to see more communication and a bit more appreciation from their side.

Interviewer: Do you feel supported and valued at your workplace?

Interviewee: Hmm... supported? Sometimes. Valued? Not really. I feel like when everything's going smoothly, no one says anything. But the moment there's a mistake, even a small one, you'll hear about it right away. It's like the only feedback you get is negative. That gets exhausting after a while because you start feeling invisible unless something goes wrong. I don't think that's how it should be. People need to be acknowledged for doing well too, not just called out for mistakes. Even a simple "thanks for handling that situation earlier" can boost your whole day. But those

moments are rare. Most of the time, it feels like we're just expected to function, no matter how we feel or what we're going through.

Interviewer: When work gets tough, how do you expect your manager to help you stay focused on your goals?

Interviewee: Ideally, I'd love to see managers step in and ask, "What do you need right now?" or even just offer some kind words when the shift is intense. A bit of encouragement or reassurance goes a long way. But in reality, when it gets tough, we're often left to figure it out ourselves. Everyone's too busy, and it feels like the priority is just keeping the service going at any cost.

Interviewer: Do you feel confident in your ability to do your job?

Interviewee: Yes, I do now, but it wasn't always like that. When I first started, I was so nervous. English isn't my first language, and I had never worked in this kind of high-pressure environment before. I made a lot of mistakes early on, but I was lucky to have a few coworkers who helped me learn the ropes.

Interviewer: Do your managers give you feedback that helps with that confidence?

Interviewee: Not as much as they could. I'd say we have the occasional feedback moment, like during a performance review or if something specific happens. But regular feedback? Not really. I'd appreciate more check-ins—nothing formal, even just a quick "Hey, you handled that really well" during a shift. Or if I did something wrong, I'd rather know then and there so I can fix it, not two weeks later when it's brought up randomly.

Interviewer: How do you usually deal with stressful shifts?

Interviewee: It depends on the day. Some days I'm calm and just go with the flow. I take a deep breath, remind myself that it'll be over in a few hours, and just focus on one task at a time. Other days, it gets to me—I feel overwhelmed, short-tempered, even anxious. When that happens, I try to take a minute to step away, even just to refill water or go to the stock room to breathe.

Interviewer: Is there anything your workplace could do to help reduce that stress?

Interviewee: Definitely. First, just having enough people on shift would make a huge difference. When we're short-staffed, everything becomes harder and more stressful for everyone. Also, consistency in schedules would help a lot. When your shifts change every week, your body never fully adjusts—you're tired, irritable, and it shows in your work. I also think mental health should be taken more seriously in hospitality. Maybe offering a private way to check in with someone or suggesting resources if people are

feeling overwhelmed. A workplace that actually cares about well-being doesn't just push you to keep going—it finds ways to support you.

Interviewer: Do you feel positive about your future in hospitality?

Interviewee: That's a hard one. I'm grateful for what I've learned—hospitality teaches you patience, empathy, quick thinking. But long-term? I don't think it's sustainable for me. The hours, the physical strain, the emotional labor, it all adds up. Right now, I'm doing it because it pays the bills and fits around my studies, but I don't see myself doing this forever. I do think the industry *could* be more appealing long-term if things like pay, stability, and treatment of staff improved. There are people who truly love hospitality, and I admire them. I just wish the system supported us better.

Interviewer: If you could change one thing about how your job supports staff motivation and mental well-being, what would it be?

Interviewee: I'd say... treat people like humans, not just workers. Listen to us, trust us, involve us in decisions that affect our jobs. When staff feel heard and respected, motivation comes naturally. Also, stop making everything about numbers and targets. Of course, business matters, but so does morale. A simple gesture like thanking the team after a hard shift or celebrating small wins would mean a lot. We're not asking for the world—just recognition that we matter.

Interviewer: Thank you so much. That was the last question.

Sixth Interview

Interviewer: Can you please tell me what it's like to work in hospitality in Dublin?

Interviewee: I'm working in a busy restaurant, and to be honest, it's pretty intense. Right now, I'm in a managerial role, so I'm always checking what's happening around me. The restaurant runs back-to-back bookings—we'll have a full house for two hours, and then right away the next round comes in. It's nonstop. It can be tough, but I actually enjoy hospitality. I like working with Irish customers—they're usually really kind, warm, and easy to deal with. Of course, you get the occasional difficult customer, but that's just part of the job. Overall, it's been a great experience. I've learned a lot, and even though it's stressful sometimes, I still find it rewarding.

Interviewer: Thank you. And how would you describe your relationship with your managers?

Interviewee: Very positive, I'd say. I've been working closely with my director for almost three years now. He's basically the main manager I report to, and we have a strong relationship. There's a lot of trust between us. If I need something, I feel comfortable going to him directly, and he does the same with me. We're always open to giving and receiving feedback, which I think is essential. That kind of openness really helps the work environment. I genuinely feel like we respect each other, and that creates a good foundation for working as a team.

Interviewer: And do you feel supported and valued at your workplace?

Interviewee: Yes, definitely. Since the first day I started here—about eight months ago—I felt really welcomed. Whenever I need something, the management is always there for me. They'll say things like, "Gabriel, if you need anything, I'm here." There's this openness that makes you feel like they actually care. For example, last Sunday, I was having a tough day, and my manager came over and just gave me a hug. It was simple, but it meant a lot. It made me feel like I'm part of something, not just another employee.

Interviewer: When work gets tough—because it sounds like it does sometimes—how does management help you stay focused?

Interviewee: I'm someone who's not afraid to ask for help. If things are getting intense, I'll say, "Guys, can you help me clean table 10?" or "I need a hand with this order." My team is really supportive, and they never make me feel bad for asking. Sometimes it's hard for managers to notice when things are too much for one person, but when I speak up, they always help. I think it's just part of the game—you learn to communicate and support each other in the moment.

Interviewer: Do you feel confident in your ability to do your job?

Interviewee: Yes, absolutely. I feel very confident. One example is how I manage our TripAdvisor presence—I'm quite good at it, and my managers always recognize that. They'll say, "Gabriel, you're great at this," or encourage me to keep going. That kind of recognition really boosts your confidence and makes you want to do even better.

Interviewer: Do your managers give you feedback that helps you improve and feel more confident?

Interviewee: Yes, we have ongoing conversations about areas I can grow in. For example, I told one of my managers during a meeting that I wanted to learn more about wine, pricing, and the financial side of the business. And this week, we're actually starting training on that. So it's not just talk—they really do follow through. That makes me feel like they're invested in my development.

Interviewer: How do you usually cope with stressful shifts?

Interviewee: After a stressful shift, the best way for me to relax is to go home and watch YouTube videos or look up new phones or travel destinations—things that help me disconnect completely. That helps me decompress. But during the shift, it's harder. I have trouble switching off. Even if I'm on break, I'm still thinking about work. My brain doesn't stop. I'm very present physically, but mentally I'm always scanning what needs to be done next. It can be tough, but that's just how I am.

Interviewer: Have you ever seen your manager get stressed or overwhelmed during a shift? How do you respond in those moments?

Interviewee: Yes, it happened once, and it was difficult to manage. My manager was visibly overwhelmed—it was a really sudden rush, and we were under a lot of pressure. Honestly, I didn't really know how to help in that moment. It's not something that happens often, but when it does, it throws you off. I'm still learning how to navigate situations like that.

Interviewer: Is there anything your workplace does—or could do—to help staff deal with stress or setbacks better?

Interviewee: Not really as a formal process. But there was one day when my manager noticed I looked really stressed, and he brought me to the private dining room, which was quiet and cool with the air conditioner on. He told me to just breathe and take five minutes. That moment meant a lot. It showed he saw me as a person, not just a worker. But it's not something that's available to everyone. It's not like, "Hey, if you're stressed, take a break here." It was more of a one-off moment of kindness.

Interviewer: Do you feel positive about your future in hospitality?

Interviewee: Yes, I do. I enjoy talking to people, and I like that every interaction is different. Even if the job itself—the tasks—stay the same, the people change all the time. That keeps things interesting. I can see myself working in hospitality for at least another two to five years. I'm learning a lot, and I feel like there's still room for growth. So yes, I feel optimistic.

Interviewer: Thank you. And now for the last question—if you could change just one thing about your job to better support staff motivation or mental well-being, what would it be?

Interviewee: As a manager, I use a radio during service, and I think that's one of the most stressful parts of my job. You have to constantly listen and respond to what's happening, all while managing your section. It's draining, but I understand it's part of the job. Still, if I could make one change, I'd find a way to reduce the overload of that constant multitasking. Also, I think more open communication would help—more conversations where people feel listened to. Sometimes, all someone needs is to be heard or to feel like their opinion matters. Managing people is complicated. Everyone's different. But if we could build a culture where people felt safe to speak openly and felt genuinely respected, I think it would make a big difference.

Interviewer: That's a really thoughtful answer. Thank you so much for your time.

Interviewee: No problem. It was a pleasure—thanks for asking these questions.

Seventh Interview

Interviewer: Can you tell me what it's like to work in hospitality in Dublin?

Interviewee: Eh... it's... how can I say... it's a bit of everything. It's rewarding, yeah, but also very demanding. Like, some days you leave work feeling great, like you really did something good. Other days, you just feel drained, mentally and physically. I work as a barista now, but I've done waiting too, and honestly, they're both tough in their own ways. In Dublin, especially, it's busy, busy all the time, and sometimes you feel like you don't even have time to think. But the people—your coworkers—make it better. I think that's what keeps me going.

Interviewer: And how is your relationship with your managers?

Interviewee: Hmm... that's a tricky one. Depends on the manager, to be honest. My current one is alright, like, he tries, you know? But sometimes it feels like they forget we're humans, not machines. If everything goes fine, great, but if you mess up once, they jump on you straight away. No one says anything when you're doing well. It's like silence means you're doing your job. I'd prefer a bit more communication, even just like, "Hey, thanks for today," or something small.

Interviewer: Do you feel supported and valued at work?

Interviewee: Supported... yeah, sometimes. Like, if I ask for a day off in advance, I usually get it. But valued? Not really. You feel replaceable. Like if you quit tomorrow, they'd just post a job ad and that's it. I think a lot of people in hospitality feel like that. There's not much investment in keeping people around. You just clock in, clock out, do the job.

Interviewer: When things get stressful, how does management support you or help you stay focused?

Interviewee: Honestly? They don't. It's kind of like, "You know the job, so just do it." Maybe they're stressed too, I get it. But when it's packed and we're down one person, no one really checks in to ask how we're managing. I usually just focus on the next thing, and the next, and try not to lose it. Sometimes we help each other out—like, we know when someone's about to break, and we step in. But management? Not really involved when it's rough.

Interviewer: Do you feel confident in your work?

Interviewee: Yeah, now I do. At the start, not at all. I remember shaking while taking orders because I was so afraid of messing up. But now, yeah, I know what I'm doing.

Customers like me, I get compliments. I think experience just makes you tougher. But I had to build that confidence myself. No one trained me properly—I had to learn by watching and making mistakes.

Interviewer: Do you get feedback that helps you grow?

Interviewee: Not really, no. Unless it's something bad, then yeah, they'll say it. But like, structured feedback? No. I'd actually love that. Even a five-minute chat every month to say "Hey, you're doing this well, maybe work on this." But it doesn't happen. We just kind of... go with it.

Interviewer: How do you usually deal with stress during a shift?

Interviewee: I go silent, actually. Some people talk more, I just shut down. Head down, do the work, try not to think too much. I breathe a lot, like big deep breaths. And then when the shift ends, I try to forget everything. Go for a walk, call my sister, whatever helps. I used to take it all home with me, but it was too much. I'd cry sometimes, just out of frustration. Now I try not to let it follow me home.

Interviewer: Is there anything your workplace could do to help staff deal with stress better?

Interviewee: I mean, yeah. Even just check in with us more. Like, ask how we're doing. Not just about tasks, but like "Are you alright?" And maybe stop changing the schedule every week. It's impossible to have a routine. One week I start at 7 AM, next at 4 PM. It messes with your sleep, your mood, everything. If they fixed that alone, I think people would be a lot more balanced.

Interviewer: Do you feel positive about your future in hospitality?

Interviewee: Not long-term, no. I'm doing it now because I need to pay rent and finish my studies, but I don't want to stay forever. I've seen people stuck in the same job for years, getting burnt out. I don't want that for myself. I like the job sometimes, don't get me wrong. I've learned a lot. But I don't see a future here—not unless something changes.

Interviewer: If you could change just one thing to improve motivation or mental well-being at work, what would it be?

Interviewee: Just... treat people like people. That's all. I know we're replaceable in a business sense, but don't make us *feel* like that. Say thank you. Give breaks when it's crazy busy. Give people proper training. Just small things. It makes a huge difference. You can tell when someone feels seen at work. They show up differently.

Interviewer: Thank you so much for sharing all of that.

Interviewee: Thanks for listening. It actually feels good to talk about it.

Eighth Interview

Interviewer: Can you tell me what it's like to work in hospitality in Dublin?

Interviewee: Oh... where do I start? It's... busy. Always busy. I work in a café, so it's not like fine dining or anything, but the pace is still crazy, especially in the mornings when everyone wants their coffee at once. You're juggling orders, making drinks, taking payments, chatting with regulars—it's a lot to do at the same time. Some days it feels really rewarding, like when you get a thank you or someone says you made their day. Other days, you're just exhausted and counting down the hours.

Interviewer: How's your relationship with your managers?

Interviewee: I'd say... mixed. My direct manager is actually nice, she checks in, asks how I'm doing, and if I'm struggling, she'll jump in to help. But higher up? You don't really see them unless something's wrong. It's like, if the numbers are fine, they leave you alone, but if sales dip or there's a complaint, suddenly they're everywhere. I think they could be more present in the day-to-day, not just when they need to fix something.

Interviewer: Do you feel supported and valued at work?

Interviewee: Supported, sometimes. Valued... not so much. Like, if I need a shift swap because of an appointment, my manager will usually sort it, which is great. But I can go weeks without hearing any kind of feedback, positive or negative. You start to wonder if anyone actually notices the effort you put in.

Interviewer: When things get stressful, how does management help you stay focused?

Interviewee: Honestly? Most of the time, they don't. If I'm visibly stressed, my manager might tell me to take a quick break, but that's rare. Usually, you just push through until it's over. We rely more on each other as coworkers to survive the busy times, like, you see someone drowning, you jump in. That's how we get through it.

Interviewer: Do you feel confident in your work?

Interviewee: Yeah, now I do. I've been here a year, so I know the menu, the regular customers, how to handle the rush. At the start, I was a mess, mixing up orders, moving too slow, but with time you just get sharper. I'd say my confidence came more from practice than from any formal training.

Interviewer: Do your managers give you feedback to help you improve?

Interviewee: Not really. Unless there's a problem, then you'll hear about it. But proper feedback sessions? No. I think it would actually help a lot, just to know where I stand, what I'm doing well, and what to work on.

Interviewer: How do you usually deal with stress during a shift?

Interviewee: I try to keep moving. If I stop to think about how stressed I am, I'll just get more stressed. So I focus on the next coffee, the next order. If I can, I take a quick bathroom break just to breathe for a minute. And after work, I always walk home, it's my way of shaking the day off before I get home.

Interviewer: Is there anything your workplace could do to help staff manage stress better?

Interviewee: For sure. More staff on busy shifts would help straight away. And maybe a bit more understanding, like, if you see someone getting overwhelmed, step in without making it a big deal. Just quietly help. Sometimes it feels like managers don't notice until it's too late and someone's already burnt out.

Interviewer: Do you see a future for yourself in hospitality?

Interviewee: Not long-term, no. I'm studying, so this is more of a part-time thing for me. I do like it sometimes, and it's good experience, but I can't imagine doing this for the next ten years. The hours and the stress just aren't sustainable for me.

Interviewer: Last question, if you could change one thing to improve motivation and mental well-being at work, what would it be?

Interviewee: I'd make recognition a normal thing. Not just for big achievements, but for the everyday effort. A quick "Good job today" or "Thanks for handling that customer" can totally change your mood. It costs nothing, but it's rare. I think if people felt noticed, they'd be a lot more motivated.

Interviewer: Thank you so much for sharing your thoughts.

Interviewee: No problem, thanks for listening.