



The Stress Responses of Unemployment in Tourism Industry of China

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ABSTRACT

Due to the impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak, problems brought about by the resultant widespread unemployment have drawn great attention. The tourism industry is one of the bitter victims of this situation as, besides hardware facilities, the biggest asset of the tourism industry is its Human Resource. The major calamity for those who encounter a job loss is an unhealthy psychological state. This study examines the influence of unemployment on the psychological health of employees in the Tourism Industry of China after the COVID-19 outbreak. The findings of this study suggest that the unemployed not only suffers from the lingering adverse effects in economic and livelihood terms but also in terms of devastating physical and mental impact on their family and society. We adopt the stress theory to make a comparison in the intensity of stress due to unemployment in the presence and absence of mediators, namely financial status and marital status by Path analysis, aiming to provide inspirations for practitioners and policymakers. This study shows that the negative psychological effects of unemployment can be diluted if the original family is maintained in a stable and harmonious way as the over occupying job responsibilities and no job at all fosters the same potency of work-family conflict.

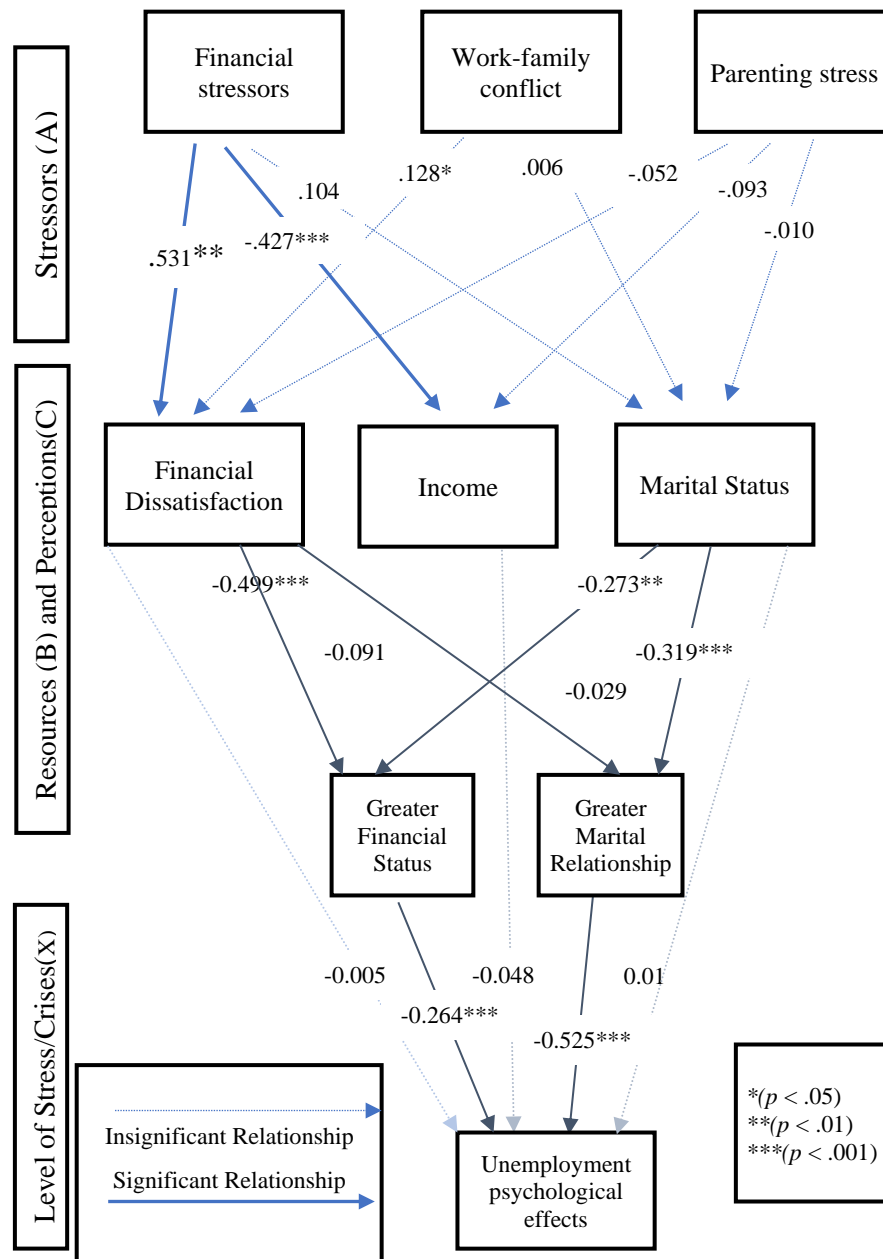
Keywords: *COVID-19; Stress Theory; Psychological Effects; Unemployment*

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

In the ABC-X model, “A” represents the perturbing event of the balance. “B” refers to the protective factors leveraged by social support through connection with community and church. “C” refers to a protective factor in terms of the optimistic perception of a common family towards stress factors which leverage better handling of the situation. Families who are pessimists and obsessed with the negative effects of stress events find it more difficult to be coped with. Other researchers have tried to present alternate models, but Hill's original model has remained as the rudimental part of the family stress theory while qualifying the test of time.

Given that proximal and distal literature has affirmed the correlation of mental health with distressing events (Mills, Teesson, Ross, & Peters, 2006), this study further proposes the pandemic induced unemployment as a stressor and investigates its psychological impact on the employees along with the potential chain reaction based on the ABC-X model.

GRAPHICAL ABSTRACT



Research Objectives

- To investigate the impact of different stressors due to unemployment in the psychological health of employees.
- To investigate the mediating effect of Financial status and Marital status in the relationship between stressors and psychological health of employees.

Hypotheses:

H1. There is an inverse relationship between sources of stress (financial pressure, work-family conflict, and parental pressure) and resources (income and Marital Status).

H2. There is a direct relation between sources of stress (financial pressure, work-family conflict, and parental pressure) and perception (financial dissatisfaction).

H3. There is a lateral relationship between resources (Income and Marital Status) and perception (financial dissatisfaction).

H4. There is a negative relationship between resources and unemployment's psychological effects and a positive relationship between negative perceptions and unemployment's psychological effects.

H5. There is a positive relationship between resources and family status and a negative relationship between negative perceptions and family status.

H6. There is a negative relationship between family status and unemployment's psychological effects.

H7. Family status mediates the relationship between resources and unemployment's psychological effects and perceptions and unemployment's psychological effects.

Methodology

This research samples participants aged 20 to 60 years being employed in tourism-related industries. A questionnaire was distributed to investigate the hotels, travel agencies and airlines in the tourism industry of southeast coastal cities in China. By using the method of an online questionnaire, 602 subjects were investigated. The missing answers data and double tag data were screened out, due to which 521 valid questionnaires were obtained. The subsequent fluctuations followed the same questionnaire completion pattern (Day et al., 2016).

According to the relationship among the subscales in the Hill (1949) ABC-X family stress model, we can determine the arrangement of the subscales in path analysis. The model is arranged in terms of family stressors, resources and perceptions. The family stressors are sub-categorized in terms of financial stressors, parenting stressors and work-family conflict. Resources are sub-categorized in terms of greater financial status, greater marital relationships, income, and financial status while perception is operationalized in terms of financial dissatisfaction. According to our hypotheses, the levels of stress and crisis (unemployment psychological effects) predict one another. First, we run a non-mediation model and excluded greater financial status and greater marital relationships (mediators). A second model is added for greater financial status and greater marital relationships (mediators).

Results

For Model 1, the fitted model reports $\chi^2 (7) = 31.456, P < .001$; the root mean square error (RMSE) = .113; Tucker-Lewis index = .774; and comparative fit index = .913. For Model 2, the fitted model reports $\chi^2 (13) = 41.010, P < .001$; RMSE = .079; Tucker-Lewis index = .849; and comparative fit index = .951.

Inconsistent with the hypothesis, there is a strong and significant relationship between financial stress and financial dissatisfaction ($\beta = 0.531, P < .001$). Nevertheless, there is no significant relationship between financial stress and Marital Status. For work-family conflict, financial dissatisfaction is not significantly related to Marital Status. Work-family conflict is found to be significantly related ($\beta = 0.131, P < .05$) to higher income in contrast to the hypothesis. For parenting stress, financial dissatisfaction, income, and Marital Status are not significantly related.

There is a strong relationship of financial dissatisfaction ($\beta = .287, P < .001$) with greater psychological effects on unemployed. When greater financial status and greater marital relationships are put into Model 2, these relationships become insignificant to unemployment psychological effects (financial dissatisfaction: $\beta = .005, P = ns$; single $\beta = .013, P = ns$). There is thus evidence for full mediation (Baron & Kenny, 1986).

Findings

According to the findings herein, we believe that in the context of unemployment when it comes to psychological impact, the income itself is not necessarily the most important factor. Munsch (2015) revealed the influence of relative income differences between couples on cheating behaviours, as well as the gender differences between men and women in factors related to cheating behaviours. The implications of the social exchange theory in the psychological impacts on unemployed is as follows: the more resources you have in terms of finance and marital strength, the more power you have in coping the impediments of unemployment, and the lower your vulnerability is to the crisis leading impacts of unemployment.

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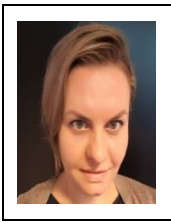
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