



PRECARIZATION AMONG HOTEL EMPLOYEES: EXAMPLES FROM CITY AND COASTAL HOTELS

Abstract

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Purpose – Precarization is driven by inequality and insecurity, especially in the tourism sector, through atypical, non-standard, marginal, and unstable employment practices such as part-time positions, fixed-term contracts, short-term employment, and multiple jobs. This study aims to analyze the precarization level of hotel employees, comparing those in city hotels with those in coastal hotels.

Methodology/Design/Approach – For this purpose, this study used a qualitative research approach. Face-to-face interviews with hotel employees were conducted, accompanied by semi-structured questions. The data were subjected to content analysis, and the precarization level of hotel employees was compared in the context of city and coastal hotels.

Findings—Employee precarization levels are defined under two main themes, working conditions and effects of precarization, and nine sub-themes in total. The most frequently mentioned problems are union membership and fundamental employment rights. One of the key findings asserts that coastal hotel employees' precarization level is higher than that of city hotel employees.

Originality of the research – Although the literature has addressed precarious working conditions in the tourism sector, this study, as one of the earliest studies on the topic, differs in that it emphasizes the differences between coastal and city hotels. The study highlights the importance of legal regulations and audit and offers new theoretical, managerial, and policy implications regarding the structural problems in the sector.

Keywords Labor, precariat, hotel employees, city hotels, coastal hotels, Türkiye.

Original scientific paper

Received 23 September 2024

Revised 26 January 2025

13 March 2025

Accepted 15 April 2025

<https://doi.org/10.20867/thm.31.3.12>

INTRODUCTION

The traditional separation between work and home originated during the industrialization period. While this traditional separation still exists, changes have occurred (Standing, 2011). In this process, the concept of precarization began to gain attention. Flexible labor contracts, temporary jobs, casual labor, part-time work, and intermittent employment through labor brokers or agencies were widely recognized as the main factors contributing to precarization (Standing, 2014). The precarious class has emerged with such non-standard (atypical) and precarious forms of employment (Vosko, 2000; Standing, 2011; Kalleberg & Vallas, 2018).

Four key developments have impacted the growth of the global precariat. First, the increased participation of women in the labor market has led to a decrease in the value of male labor, thus forcing some men out of employment. Second, older individuals without sufficient financial resources have re-entered the labor market and prefer to join the workforce. Third, a significant number of adults have disabilities, and those who can work often find themselves employed in precarious jobs. Lastly, individuals involved in criminal activities are also pushed out of formal employment and are consequently drawn into the precariat (Standing, 2011). This situation has a ripple effect on many work areas, although at different times. One such industry is the tourism industry.

In the dynamic tourism industry, businesses have increasingly adopted part-time, temporary, and seasonal work arrangements to boost their short-term profits and minimize human resources costs, which are significant expenses for them (Seifert & Messing, 2006). This trend has caused a substantial segment of workers in tourism destinations who find themselves in precarious job situations. The shift toward neoliberal policies has become more obvious. Precarious employment is marked by irregular working schedules (Mooney & Ryan, 2009), the presence of unskilled personnel, low wages (Goh & Lee, 2018), reliance on seasonal work, flexible employment conditions, and generally uncertain work life (Janta et al., 2011). For instance, in the hospitality sector, flexible and precarious employment models place significant pressure on workers, leaving them vulnerable to dominance and exploitation, ultimately contributing to unemployment (Çivak & Besler, 2022).

Precarization in the tourism industry is a method that businesses use to survive in an intensely competitive environment. At this point, tourism businesses, especially hotels, have transformed into flexible structures by increasing profits in the short term and adjusting employment according to low and high seasons (Seifert & Messing, 2006). For example, in the 1970s, tourism businesses in England adopted the numerical flexibility strategy, devaluing qualified tourism employees by alienating them from their skills and forcing them into a precarious class (Slavnic, 2013). This class is also called precariat (Standing,

2011). The precarization situation varies by country and even destination. In Türkiye, the tourism structure largely depends on seasonal conditions, especially for summer and winter destinations. This situation forces tourism businesses to operate in the high season and take a break in the low season (Çıvak, 2023; 2024).

The issue of how to address the increasing challenges of precarization is a pressing concern that requires attention. Scholars specializing in labor, employment, and labor organizations have prioritized combating precarious work (Alberti et al., 2018). Urgent measures are necessary to address the problem of precarization in the tourism industry. We must establish strategic initiatives and enact laws to safeguard job security and eradicate precarious work in the hotel sector (Edralin, 2014). Unfortunately, many countries are currently overlooking this issue. While some studies in tourism academia have shed light on precarization, more specific solutions need to be proposed. This study aims to discuss the repercussions of precarization in the tourism industry and propose potential solutions. It is essential to carefully conceptualize and expand research on precarious work to develop policies that mitigate its impact (Campbell & Price, 2016).

Insecure work patterns, instability, and the effects of insecurity on individuals and societies are examined by the academy (Campbell & Price, 2016). In general, studies have been conducted on immigrants, women, and digital platform workers (Anderson, 2010; Standing, 2011; Holdcroft, 2013; Kahancová et al., 2020). In studies on precarization in the tourism industry, working conditions and precarious environments (Çelik & Erkuş Öztürk, 2016; Louie et al., 2006; Edralin, 2014; Axelsson et al., 2017; Cañada, 2018; Çıvak, 2024) are described. However, tourism academia generally overlooks precarization experiences. In particular, the differences in precarious working environments in coastal and city hotels have not been sufficiently discussed. This indicates a gap in the literature. This study's primary objective is to analyze the different working conditions experienced by hotel employees, comparing those in city hotels with those in coastal hotels. Additionally, this study examines the specific challenges that these individuals face. Furthermore, the research intends to offer comprehensive responses to these challenges by articulating the findings related to the identified themes and their associated sub-themes. Thus, it will contribute to the literature by comparing precariousness in different tourism areas. In addition, the study has managerial and political implications.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1. Precariat

The term precariat was coined by Standing (2011) to define a social class. It combines the words “precarious” and “proletariat.” The precariat consists of individuals who work insecure jobs with periods of unemployment or temporary withdrawal from the workforce (often labeled as “economic inactivity”). Kalleberg and Vallas (2018) defined precariousness as “uncertain, unstable, and insecure employment in which workers (rather than businesses or government) assume the risks of work and receive limited benefits and legal protections.” The concept is associated with the volatile conditions of the labor market and people's precarious and vulnerable situations (Della Porta et al., 2015). Precarization deeply affects individuals, clouding their future and preventing them from having clear expectations for a rational future (Bourdieu, 2017a). Therefore, the precariat comprises people employed in precarious working environments, and precarization is the mainspring of the expansion of this social class.

Temporary employment offers enterprises cost advantages. For this purpose, businesses adopt different tactics, such as outsourcing, offshoring production stages, subcontracting, violating working conditions, and working from home. These practices decline workers' rights and increase informal labor (Harvey, 2010). Therefore, precarious jobs have become a transnational form of employment based on highly fragmented and unstable production (Hürtgen, 2021). A frequently encountered form of domination in the workplace is temporary employment facilitated by legal rights granted by the state. Temporary employment reduces wages and thus business costs and risks (Standing, 2011: 61). The goal of cost reduction puts the employee at constant risk of losing their jobs (Bourdieu, 2017b: 110). Legal contracts allow temporary workers to be dismissed for any reason. This is a formal privilege granted to businesses. As a result, capital generates significant profits but also leads to labor exploitation. This makes it easier for temporary workers to be controlled through unemployment pressure (Çıvak, 2021). Workers may unwittingly accept exploitation, for fear of job loss, leading to fierce competition to obtain and retain employment. This situation creates continuous insecurity, forcing workers to accept exploitation. Unemployed individuals face additional job searches and training costs, lack professional loyalty, and unstable working conditions.

Temporary and insecure work leads to lower wages, erosion of social rights, loss of worker representation, and loss of workers' balance in life (Wilson & Ebert, 2013; Bobkov et al., 2013). Working-class ties are broken in temporary jobs, and collective resistance is prevented. Because solidarity bonds are not formed among workers. In addition, the time individuals spend working temporarily and insecurely becomes unstable, and work and working life become intertwined (Standing, 2011).

1.2. Precarization in the Tourism Industry

Specific industries are more prone to job insecurity than others. For example, the agriculture and hospitality industries are affected by seasonal fluctuations, leading to insecurity (McNamara et al., 2011). The tourism industry is generally characterized by precariousness (Louie et al., 2006), which neoliberal changes have intensified. Signs of this transformation include irregular

working hours (Mooney & Ryan, 2009), low wages for unskilled workers (Goh & Lee, 2018), seasonal employment, flexible working arrangements, and general job instability (Janta et al., 2011). The tourism industry often experiences fluctuating employment because of seasonal variations and destinations' environmental constraints. For instance, summer (sea, sand, sun, or 3S) and winter tourism heavily rely on seasonal conditions and holidays.

Seasonal work in the tourism industry harms employees' professional, social, and personal lives and well-being. Research conducted by Çıvak (2021), Seifert and Messing (2006), and Yıldırım (2021) highlighted the challenging circumstances faced by these workers. Despite its potential benefits, the tourism industry has exacerbated labor exploitation by relying on flexible and unpredictable employment structures. For many hotel workers, whose primary source of income is tied to seasonal tourism, managing earnings throughout the year can be a struggle because of limited off-season job opportunities in these destinations (Çıvak, 2021). The precarious nature of seasonal employment contributes to unstable conditions in the tourism industry (Çıvak & Bayraktaroğlu, 2019). Yıldırım (2021) stated that job insecurity is a characteristic feature of tourism employment. Because seasonality of employment in tourism creates a dependency on flexible employment. This increases the precarization of employees. McNamara et al. (2011) emphasized that excessive workload encountered in the hospitality sector leads to consequences such as burnout. Seifert and Messing (2006) argue that practices such as "flexible" employment and outsourcing increase employees' workload. Temporary workers or individuals working in precarious jobs have less control over their work, which leads to a disruption in work-life balance and health problems for employees (McNamara et al., 2011).

In another example, Cañada (2018) stated that the reforms implemented by the Spanish government after the 2008 financial crisis led to increased unemployment, precarious working conditions, and increased employee workload. Hotel workers encountered challenges such as salary reductions, loss of job categories, uncertain working hours, diminishing professionalism, increased competition among employees, heightened health concerns, and reduced representation capacity. The precarious nature of tourism industry employment manifests in various challenges, including the inability to make long-term plans, limited economic resources, decreased purchasing power, postponed retirement due to short-term employment, discrepancies in career aspirations, and weakened collective advocacy among employees. (Çelik & Erkuş Öztürk, 2016; Çıvak & Besler, 2022). Unregulated labor markets intensify commercial competition, and rapid technological advancements reshape work across various occupational fields, making it increasingly precarious. Precarious employment is characterized by a lack of autonomy in work processes, inadequate social protection, meager income, and instability (Menéndez et al., 2007). Nowhere is this more evident in the tourism industry, where individuals experiencing precarious employment conditions predominantly include women, migrants, and young workers (Seifert & Messing, 2006). The uncertainty surrounding the duration of employment and working hours for migrant workers further exacerbates these precarious conditions, as highlighted by Anderson (2010). Interestingly, Axelsson et al. (2017) discovered that Chinese chefs in Sweden are expected to demonstrate exceptional flexibility, work prolonged hours, and frequently engage in temporary employment arrangements at a higher intensity than their peers.

The impacts of insecurity, resulting from changes in labor markets, are a significant factor in shaping a new working class (Çelik & Erkuş Öztürk, 2016). IUF (2011) suggests that (1) outsourcing and subcontracting, (2) "temporary workers," created by casualization, contractualization, conditional or fixed-term contracts, (3) the use of employment agencies, (4) fake "self-employment" and independent contractors, (5) seasonal and probationary employment, and (6) internships, are examples of precarious work in tourism. Standing (2011) noted that such work arrangements can create a precarious working class, also called the precariat. The precariat refers to people who lack long-term, stable, and fixed-time jobs, union rights, and other benefits that proletariats typically enjoy. Due to the temporary and insecure nature of employment in the tourism industry, workers are often relegated to the lower class in terms of social and economic status. Inadequate social security rights and low wage levels further intensify the precariousness of employment in the tourism sector, making it difficult for workers to plan their future and pursue long-term career goals. Also, temporary tourism jobs can disrupt workers' lives (Seifert & Messing, 2006).

1.3. Working Conditions and Precarization Indicators for Turkish Tourism Industry

According to the Turkish Statistical Institute (2020), employment in the tourism industry increases in summer and decreases in winter. This indicates that tourism employment is affected by seasonal conditions. In seasonal destinations, hotel businesses seek short-term, cheap, and unskilled labor (Çıvak, 2021). They prefer a cheap labor policy, especially during the high season (Aykaç, 2010), and can easily lay off these employees at the end of the season (Çıvak et al., 2024). The short-term nature of the sector also significantly affects employment (Baum, 1993) and often causes seasonal employment, underemployment, and unemployment (Jolliffe & Farnsworth, 2003). In addition, high unemployment rates create competition in the labor market, and employees accept lower wages (Boz, 2016). Furthermore, employees face social pressure, such as the stigma of unemployment and economic anxiety (Lee et al., 2015).

Studies have shown that working hours in the tourism sector in Türkiye are long. Kaya and Atçı (2015) stated that weekly working hours are high in the tourism sector. Notably, despite long working hours, wages are at the minimum level (Çıvak, 2021). In addition, while most hotel employees can partially use their weekly leave, some cannot during the high season (Balcı İzgi & Olcay, 2008).

The harsh working conditions of the tourism sector in Türkiye indicate the existence of labor exploitation. Behaviors such as harassment, violence, discrimination, and mobbing that employees experience indicate the presence of domination (Çıvak et al.,

2024). Due to the sector's negative working conditions, labor turnover is high (Yorgun, 2013). Therefore, it is typical for sector employees to have concerns about the future. In 2025, the union registration rate of accommodation and entertainment workers in Türkiye are 4.60% (Ministry of Labor and Social Security, 2025). This shows that the unionization is weak in the industry.

2. METHOD

2.1. Participants

Participants were selected from hotel employees who faced insecurity in the tourism sector. This study maximized diversity by selecting employees from different departments. In addition, snowball sampling (Parker et al., 2019) was conducted. The first participants were asked about other employees who experienced insecurity in their work lives. Thus, Table 1 presents further details about the participants, including their code names.

Table 1: **Profile of the participants**

Code name	Birthyear	Age	Gender	Education	Marital Status	Monthly Income (dollars)	Position	Working Experience (years)	Working Period	Type of Hotel
P1	1992	26	Female	Master's Degree	Single	375	Receptionist	2	Year-round	City Hotel
P2	1993	25	Male	Bachelor's Degree	Single	375	Receptionist	3	Year-round	City Hotel
P3	1992	26	Male	Bachelor's Degree	Single	335	Page	1	Year-round	City Hotel
P4	1993	25	Male	Associate Degree	Single	335	Bellboy	2	Year-round	City Hotel
P5	1994	24	Male	Associate Degree	Single	335	Bellboy	1	Year-round	City Hotel
P6	1988	30	Female	Secondary Education	Married	335	Housekeeping	5	Seasonal	Coastal Hotel
P7	1984	34	Female	Secondary Education	Married	335	Housekeeping	8	Seasonal	Coastal Hotel
P8	1986	32	Male	High School	Married	335	Waiter	14	Seasonal	Coastal Hotel
P9	1993	25	Female	High School	Single	350	Security	1	Seasonal	Coastal Hotel
P10	1986	32	Male	Associate Degree	Single	335	Waiter	2	Seasonal	Coastal Hotel

Five participants work in city hotels in Eskişehir, while five work in coastal hotels in Antalya. The participants' education levels varied according to the department in which they worked. The education level of employees in departments requiring intellectual capital is high. Despite this, the wages are at the minimum level. The participants' ages varied between 25 and 34 years at the time of data collection.

2.2. Data Collection

This study adopted a qualitative methodology to comprehensively understand the subject matter. The researchers specifically chose face-to-face interviews as the primary method for data collection, a widely acknowledged and used technique in qualitative research (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). This approach was favored due to its ability to elicit nuanced and in-depth responses, mainly by directing the focus toward "how?" rather than "what?" or "how much?" (Büyüköztürk et al., 2014: 240). The data were meticulously gathered through face-to-face interviews with employees in Eskişehir and Antalya. The research team meticulously crafted a set of 7 semi-structured questions to ensure a comprehensive and insightful examination. These questions were designed to provide a balanced framework, encompassing the advantages of direct responses and in-depth exploration while affording participants the flexibility to express their viewpoints with ease (Büyüköztürk et al., 2014: 152). Furthermore, the experts garnered feedback from two seasoned researchers regarding the content validity of these questions, incorporating their insights and recommendations through careful refinement. From July 26, 2018 to September 10, 2019, the researchers interviewed 10 participants. Before the interviews, participants were duly informed about the audio recording, and it is worth noting that all participants responded affirmatively to this practice. Throughout the interviews, the researchers diligently noted any statements by the participants that could influence the course of the interview.

2.3. Data Analysis

Following the completion of the interviews, the recorded data were subjected to an intricate transcription process, paving the way for an in-depth and meticulous analysis. Leveraging content analysis, the researchers delved into the depths of the accumulated data, seeking to unravel the underlying meanings and intricate relationships (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013: 259). During this stage, the researchers carefully identified and categorized relevant codes and thematic elements, concluding a comprehensive and detailed analysis of the collected information.

2.4. Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of research is accepted as one of the most essential criteria of scientific research (Creswell, 2014). In this context, the following steps were taken to increase the credibility of the research:

- Long-term interaction: At the beginning, the warm-up talks were conducted with participants for at least half an hour, and the interview was started as such. The aim is to create an atmosphere of trust by enabling participants to approach the researcher with confidence. Thus, it is thought that the participants will give sincerer answers.
- Depth-oriented data collection: The researcher compared the findings with the literature results and tested their validity.
- Purposive sampling: In qualitative research, purposeful sampling methods ensure transferability. In this context, snowball sampling, a purposeful sampling technique, was selected to reach participants.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study delves into the intricate landscape of employment dynamics within hotels, aiming to comprehend the diverse employment structures and to depict the prevailing conditions experienced by the employees. The analysis of employment modalities within these enterprises delineates a tripartite classification encompassing daily, seasonal, and long-term employment categories. Against the backdrop of soaring unemployment rates in Türkiye, pressure ensues upon employees, encouraging enterprises to readily procure labor at substantially diminished costs. This scenario engenders an environment in which employees are forced to arduously struggle to retain their positions, often at the expense of accepting remuneration that strays considerably below the desirable threshold.

Remarkably, businesses exhibit an unhesitant propensity to capitalize upon this ambience, thereby riving substantial benefits from the prevailing paradigm. Moreover, the state's indirect involvement inadvertently perpetuates the exploitation of workers, thereby casting a shadow over the adequate protection of workers' rights, ultimately impeding the overarching mission of alleviating the prevalence of precarity. Table 2 shows the severity of precariousness through two main themes and nine sub-themes by comparing city and coastal hotels.

Table 2: Comparison of precarization indicators between the city and coastal hotels

Main Themes	Sub-themes	City Hotels	Coastal Hotels
Working conditions	Seasonality	Slight	Obvious
	Working hours	Standard	Above standards
	Income	Minimum wage	Minimum wage
	Insurance premiums and severance payments	Standard	Below standards
	Social rights	Less poor	Poor
	Unionization rate	Very low	Very low
Effects of precarization	Anxiety about dismissal	Obvious	More obvious
	Anxiety about the future	Obvious	More obvious
	Seeing the job as temporary	Obvious	More obvious

3.1. Working Conditions in the Tourism Industry

Seasonality

One of the most important features of the tourism industry is its seasonal nature. Seasonality causes demand to fluctuate, which in turn causes employment to fluctuate (Baum, 1993; McNamara et al., 2011). This is particularly evident in summer and winter tourism. The most important reason for temporary and insecure work in coastal hotels is their seasonal nature (Yıldırım, 2021). On the other hand, city hotels can employ their staff permanently because they are open all year round. There is, of course, a seasonality, but it is very slight and does not cause discontinuity in business as usual in an ordinary calendar year. Therefore, this is the cutting edge for those working in city and coastal hotels. However, the perception of insecurity is still high among

employees of both hotel types. The difficult conditions in the sector, the lack of social rights, and the inability to see a future feed the perception of insecurity. The statements of participants from both destinations support this.

P4: "Obligatory... Unemployment dragged me here. We did not know this aspect of the tourism sector, so we entered with peace of mind. But... I never stop. I'm looking for alternative jobs now. I am dragging my feet on workdays. I and 80% of all hotel staff think so."

P6: "There are not many job options here. The only thing I can do here is tourism because I don't have a profession, I don't have a diploma."

In Eskişehir, a disturbing trend emerged in the hotel sector. Workers in this sector face precarious working conditions, high turnover rates, and a lack of job security. It is disappointing that managers have seemingly acclimated to this unsettling state of affairs. Consequently, many hotel staff members expressed skepticism about their future in the hospitality industry. The absence of job security guarantees apprehension. The following detailed statements from the participants shed light on their concerns and experiences:

P4: "After a week, they will find someone new, tie it to a routine. They got used to it. They think they'll train anyone, and he will work in that hotel with pleasure for six months. After six months, he will start grumbling, work another 3-4 months, and then leave. There is no assurance in the profession because this profession, actually, is not a profession at all. I think being a bellboy is a job for the swaggies, frankly. I don't work in a place like Eskişehir, relying on the tip. I have no job security, and also I see no future."

The situation in Antalya is even worse. The city hotels in Eskişehir are open all year round. However, most hotels in Antalya operate seasonally. They hire employees for 6-7 months and then fire them. These people are unemployed during the off-season. While women continue their lives as usual by returning to housework, the situation is not encouraging for men. Even those who speak several languages struggle to earn their pocket money by going to daily jobs in the winter.

P6: "I would like to have a permanent job because you work in the summer, it's hard in the winter. If you have a child and live in a rental house, it's hard with just one salary. In the winter, you have to go back to housework."

P10: "I work here for 6-7 days and then return to my hometown. Employees living here go to daily jobs. People with economic responsibilities have to work whatever job they can. Even the receptionist who speaks two or three languages states that she goes to pick oranges in the winter."

Working Hours

Irregular working hours are seen in many areas of the tourism sector (Axelsson et al., 2017; Mooney & Ryan, 2009). Working hours in coastal hotels are longer than in city hotels. While working hours are fixed in some departments, service and bar employees work much longer than regular. It is observed that the fixed eight-hour working schedule is rarely exceeded in city hotels. Participants indicate that this is due to low staff employment and high turnover. They state that when an employee is laid off, others work overtime to fill the gap. The service department is more likely to work overtime than other departments. However, there are significant problems regarding paying overtime wages in both destinations.

P8: "They do not pay even if we work overtime. You resist but nothing changes. The service department in particular works overtime. They employ fewer employees. When someone leaves work, you have to fill their gap. That is why working hours are long."

Income

Many studies have demonstrated that wages in the tourism industry are low. This is one of the industry's most serious problems (Çivak, 2021; Goh & Lee, 2018; Janta et al., 2011; Baum, 1993). Using temporary and flexible working arrangements enables enterprises to achieve cost advantages by tailoring their workforce to specific demands. Although this approach benefits businesses by reducing labor costs, it can create a situation of potential labor exploitation for employees. This is because temporary workers, who typically receive lower wages, are often not entitled to social benefits such as severance pay due to the temporary nature of their employment. Furthermore, they are more susceptible to being laid off if they make errors or resist unfair treatment, placing them under significant pressure. This lack of job security and career advancement opportunities forces temporary workers to accept whatever work is available, often for minimal compensation, perpetuating their vulnerability to exploitation. The state's involvement is also crucial because the absence of comprehensive legal regulations and proper oversight increases the prevalence of exploitation within business operations.

P6: "Wages are very low. Generally, minimum wage is paid. How can I say it? Could minimum wage cover rent, bills, children's education... We are having a hard time making ends meet."

Insurance Premiums and Severance Payment

Unlike hotels that operate all year round, exploitation is more profound and widespread in seasonal hotels. Although insurance is paid relatively regularly in city hotels, out-of-season insurance payments are not made in coastal hotels. The retirement rights of coastal hotel employees are being disrupted. This situation is one of the most precise indicators of the precariat. This situation has also been stated in previous studies (Yıldırım, 2021; Çıvak, 2021; Çelik & Erkuş Öztürk, 2016). However, the distinction between city and coastal hotels has not been established.

P7: “No, when we are suspended, it is cut off. My insurance has not been working for 6 months now. You don’t think of a future there because of that.”

Unfortunately, employees are being denied their rightful severance payments, creating a troubling situation. Hotels are using various tactics to pressure employees to resign, thus avoiding the obligation to provide severance pay. This situation places the hotel staff in a precarious and unjust position, and the impact of these actions is quite concerning.

P1: “I think they say goodbye, sir. They will not give compensation anyway because he voluntarily leaves the job. They’re in this mentality... For example, they saddle the employee more tasks to barf him out. Thus, it is hoped that this employee spontaneously quits.”

P4: “Namely, sir... An employee who is working in his fourth year for this hotel has just been forced to resign today and has not received any compensation. So far, they have not fired anyone, always brought to the degree of resignation. They do not give (the compensation).”

Unionization

One of the important reasons for precarization in the sector is the lack of unionization (Edralin, 2014). The hotel employees, who are not affiliated with a labor union, are unaware of labor unions in the tourism industry, particularly the hospitality and travel sectors. Furthermore, when questioned about potential issues arising from labor union membership, some employees revealed that individuals who had attempted to join a labor union were laid off. The weakness of unions in the tourism industry undermines the organizational struggle. Only two participants were members of a union. The others are not even aware of unions. They do not know how to defend their legal rights. High turnover in particular prevents trust and organization among employees. Participants who were union members also claimed that they did not see any benefit from the union. According to their claims, the union exhibits the characteristics of yellow unionism. The statements provided by the participants shed light on this matter:

P5: “There’s never been anyone canalizing us. We didn’t think much about it either. Or rather, we didn’t think of it at all.”

P2: “When I look at the current situation, it is more advantageous to be a civil servant than the private sector. One of them has job security unless you commit a disgraceful crime. However, in the private sector, there is no job security. There is no unionization in the hospitality industry, and the public sector seems more advantageous because of it. There is no trade union, so it - the private sector- remains precarious. So, he can’t apply; if he does, he will go to court. Also, there is a shortage of livelihoods.”

P7: “It doesn’t protect us. I don’t see it protecting our rights at all. We go there, when necessary. But we haven’t seen any benefits.”

3.2. Effects of Precarization

Anxiety About Dismissal

The fear of dismissal is high in both destinations. It can be seen that employees are warned when they make mistakes or their performance decreases. Businesses use the trump card with a dismissal warning. The expression “The door is there” clearly shows this (Çıvak et al., 2024). The pressure of unemployment and the stigma of unemployment (Yıldırım, 2021) put hotel employees under pressure and caused them to work in a tense atmosphere. Emotional labor is also expected from unhappy employees. This situation, which resembles theatrical performance, causes employees to feel exhausted.

P5: “If you raise your voice, they say, ‘The door is there.’ They can fire you at any moment. You’re scared. What will I do if they fire you? If I leave, they’ll find someone else right away. That’s what they’re counting on. There are a lot of people out there waiting for work.”

Anxiety About the Future

Exploitation and domination practices are widespread in the hotel industry (Çıvak et al., 2024). Findings show that employees do not see a future in the sector and leave their jobs because of long working hours, insufficient legal rights, and pressure. It also explains why the turnover rate in the field is high.

P8: “Young children are left in tourism at the age of 17 or 18. Managers, employees, and customers pressure them. We cannot stand this pressure either. These young children cannot stand the exploitation and pressure and leave. They do not see a future in this profession.”

Seeing the Job as Temporary

Working conditions in the hotel industry have caused the field to be seen as a temporary job opportunity. As mentioned before, precarization practices, unfavorable working conditions, and pressures are seen as short-term among younger employees in the tourism sector. Individuals who are married and have economic responsibilities state that they must handle this situation. However, it is noteworthy that younger employees with fewer financial obligations do not tolerate pressure, so they quit and view their job as temporary. This problem is less common in city hotels. The seasonal working period in coastal hotels makes this idea more obvious. This seems to increase the qualified personnel shortage in the field and cause an even more critical problem in the future.

P8: “Like us, married fathers with two children cannot leave their jobs because of the fear of unemployment and money loss. Singles see this field as temporary. When they are under pressure and the job is difficult, they leave.”

P9: “I don’t see a future in this job. They make you work in the summer and then they fire you. They force and fire you or you quit yourself. They can dismiss almost anyone in the hotel industry at a moment’s notice. They can fire you even if you make the slightest mistake or don’t make any mistake. It doesn’t work to complain.”

CONCLUSION

The socioeconomic status and psychological well-being of hotel workers are affected by precarization. Due to the fear of unemployment and the lack of alternative employment opportunities, adverse working conditions are only option for employees. In contemporary times, employees stand out in terms of higher education and technological competence while prioritizing job security and a healthy work-life balance. However, despite their competence and ambition, many hotel employees find themselves in low-paying, unstable jobs with limited career advancement opportunities. Their unmet expectations also increase the likelihood of experiencing job dissatisfaction. As GURSOY et al. (2008) stated, the lack of union representation in the hotel industry further increases employee vulnerability and limits their options for addressing problems. Based on this context, the study offers theoretical, managerial, and policy implications.

Theoretical Implications

Job insecurity is more prevalent in the tourism industry, especially in coastal areas that offer highly seasonal services. This study examined the insecurity of hotel employees by comparing city and coastal establishments. In the interviews, insecure employment practices were identified, but they were less common in city hotels than in coastal destinations with seasonal characteristics. The main reason is that city hotels operate throughout the year, have less fluctuation in demand, and have less seasonal employment. However, high turnover rates, primarily due to the abundance of students in cities like Eskişehir, have emerged as a major complaint. The imbalance between the student population and job supply strengthens the hands of businesses, often leading to the dismissal of employees who defend their rights or resist unfair practices. In addition, in both hotel types, employees are seen to work for minimum wages, but it is emphasized that working hours are above standards, and working conditions are worse in coastal hotels. While insurance premiums are paid as standard in city hotels, it is stated that these premiums are below standards in coastal hotels. When labor laws are considered, these results may also indicate that some irregular practices are taking place, especially in coastal hotels. While concerns about dismissal and the future are evident in both types of hotels, these concerns seem more dominant in coastal hotels. In addition, employees in coastal hotels tend to see work as temporary, which is observed at the highest level. Finally, while the presence of oppressive practices is striking in both types of hotels, it is understood that these practices are more intense in coastal hotels. These findings show that coastal hotels’ employees work under more precarious and challenging conditions.

Managerial Implications

The study’s findings highlight the problem of insecure employment experienced by hotel employees. This study shows that precarious working conditions are common in the tourism industry. This suggests that precarization is accelerated by businesses

exploiting workers without facing legal consequences, especially due to deficiencies in regulations or audits. However, hotel managements should not forget that they may face practical consequences that may arise due to precarization.

For example, labor turnover triggered by precarization can negatively affect business activities. In addition, finding, hiring, and training new personnel means new cost items for businesses. This situation increases the costs of businesses and can also reduce their productivity (Seifert & Messing, 2006). Reducing labor turnover by increasing work standards can be used to prevent such additional costs. In addition, job insecurity, long working hours, and unplanned shifts can cause employees to become stressed. This can lead to various health problems. High-stress levels in the workplace can lead to results such as anxiety and burnout syndrome. This can lead to loss of labor and decreased productivity (McNamara et al., 2011). In order to overcome the problems that will arise in this context, hotel management can improve the job security of their employees. The hotel industry should consider that dissatisfaction with precarious working conditions could have long-term effects on the industry. To retain and motivate employees, employers should offer more stable employment opportunities and a working environment compatible with employees' values and expectations (Davidson et al., 2010).

In addition, hotels that align their business as usual with ethical and responsible practices can become more competitive in the market. Positive practices such as creating a good working environment, offering fair wages, and reducing job insecurity will help businesses create a better image (Brien et al., 2017). In this way, in addition to attracting talented employees to the business, it will also be easier for them to reach their targeted market share with a positive image in the public. In this context, by examining the intersection of business ethics and professional ethics (Bayraktaroglu & Wee, 2025), it is possible to develop practices that generate mutual benefits for both businesses and employees.

Policy Implications

In the tourism industry and all lines of business, one of the most important steps toward combating precarization is establishing the necessary legal infrastructure. In Türkiye, which is examined within the scope of this study, the relevant legal framework has already been implemented within the scope of the EU harmonization process. These include Labor Law No. 4857, Law No. 6356 on Trade Unions and Collective Agreements, and Occupational Health and Safety Law No. 6331, all prepared by EU standards. In addition, as a founding member of the ILO and a party to international agreements on labor, Türkiye has established its legal infrastructure, albeit with some criticism. Although legal regulations have been enacted, the main criticisms are about the effectiveness of implementation and audition (Kapar, 2021; Davarcı, 2023; Jumaah, 2024).

In this context, the study suggests that impartial parties may pave the way for auditing working life in the tourism industry, which may offer some opportunities to resolve such deficiencies. For example, the Association of Tourism Academicians, a professional NGO operating in Türkiye, proposed including association-representative academics in hotel inspections conducted by the Ministry of Tourism. Based on this, it can be adopted as a policy that representatives of NGOs related to working life participate in the auditing activities of institutions and organizations, whether private or public, that have the authority and responsibility to audit.

Another issue that needs to be considered is that the stress employees experience due to precariousness may also negatively affect destinations. Because human resources are also an important part of destination value (Bayraktaroglu & Kozak, 2022). In this context, it is primarily the responsibility of local governments to perform remedial activities regarding the rights of hotel labor within their scope of authority.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Although the study provides valuable contributions with its findings, it has several limitations. The most important is that all participants are employees of hotels operating in Türkiye. This may create concerns about bias regarding the findings being of a national nature. However, there are studies in the literature indicating that similar problems are experienced in countries such as Spain (Vázquez & López, 2023), Portugal (Carvalho et al., 2014), Brazil (Millar, 2014), and so on. Thus, it would be more accurate to approach this not as a research bias but as a limitation on the context of findings regarding similar problems in the Turkish example. Another limitation is that the findings of this study are limited to the experiences of the participating hotel employees. This situation can be seen as an obstacle to generalizing the results. However, this study, which uses qualitative research methods, aims to gain deep insights into a phenomenon experienced in the hotel sector rather than generalizing the results by nature. The snowball sampling used to reach participants can also be considered a limitation. Because there are evaluations, snowball sampling creates research bias by including similar participants in the research. However, on the other hand, snowball sampling is one of the effective techniques for reaching susceptible populations (Naderifar et al., 2017).

As a direction for future research, researchers from various fields must prioritize multidisciplinary research on this subject. This will help uncover the long-term psychological, sociological, economic, and legal effects of practices leading to precarization in the hotel sector. On the other hand, conducting comparative research among Mediterranean destinations may enhance the understanding of precarization in the tourism industry and contribute to the development of effective solutions to related problems.

Identifying gaps in labor regulations and investigating areas where a lack of enforcement and audit leads to precarization despite sufficient laws is also important. In addition, precarious working conditions contradict the UN Sustainable Development Goals' decent work (part of number 8) goal (UN, 2015). In addition, although no instances were identified among the participants of this study, labor smuggling—considered a crime in most countries— (Baş & Bayraktaroglu, 2024) can be regarded as an illegal activity that contributes to precarization and warrants further investigation. Therefore, studying this topic in terms of social and economic sustainability is also important. This study also suggests that sustainability researchers, especially those studying social and economic sustainability, prioritize precarious working conditions as a threat. Frameworks such as the net positive approach or social lifecycle analysis (Bayraktaroglu, 2025) can help researchers address precariousness in quantitative means.

DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI AND AI-ASSISTED TECHNOLOGIES IN THE WRITING PROCESS

In preparing this paper, the authors used Grammarly and ChatGPT to improve the language use and readability. Following the use of these tools, the authors have reviewed and edited the content as necessary and take full responsibility for the content of the published article.

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Please cite this article as:

Bayraktaroglu, E. & Civak, B. (2025). Precarization Among Hotel Employees: Examples from City and Coastal Hotels. *Tourism and Hospitality Management*, 31(3), 471-481, <https://doi.org/10.20867/thm.31.3.12>



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