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SEASONAL WORKFORCE MANAGEMENT: EXPLORING EMPLOYEES' INTENTION TO RETURN

ABSTRACT

The persistent shortage of seasonal workers in the hospitality industry has elevated the importance of seasonal employee retention. Consequently, this study, one of the few to do so, considers whether perceived supervisor support, affective organizational commitment, and work engagement are positively related to influencing seasonal workers' intention to return to their same place of employment the following season. Specifically, this research posits that affective organizational commitment and work engagement mediate the relationship between perceived supervisor support and intention to return. In order to study this issue, data was gathered from seasonal employees who worked in Croatian hotels located in tourist-oriented cities during the 2019 tourist season. Significant relationships were observed among all four of the study's four variables, yet only one of the model's paths was found to be significant. This preliminary research begins the process of gaining a better understanding behind the dynamics of seasonal employment, an area of increasingly high importance for hotels and the hospitality industry in general.

Keywords: Hospitality, seasonal workforce, perceived supervisor support, affective commitment, work engagement, intention to return

1. Introduction

Seasonal workers are playing an instrumental role in the service sector, particularly in the hotel industry. The level of said seasonal workforces supporting Mediterranean tourism is such that it is almost, dare we say, unimaginable for hotel and tourism operators to run their businesses without them. And statistics show that the size of the seasonal work-

force is growing. Note that in Croatia in 2017, seasonal workers made up 70% of total labor employed in the hotel industry, an increase of 11% compared to 2013 (Tutek, 2018)¹.

Seasonality is caused, primarily, by an imbalance of demand and supply in travel since most tourists tend to travel during the summer season (Butler, 1994). Seasonality characterizes the very nature

of the tourism industry and hotels are not exempt from this phenomenon. As such, hotels face numerous challenges, with retaining seasonal employees and increasing their return rates being vital (Andriotis, 2005).

The chronic shortage of a competent labor force is one of the main difficulties for Croatian hoteliers (Croatian Employment Service, 2020)². Because of this, their Human Resource departments are applying effort and resources to hire and retain skilled and valuable seasonal employees each season. The fact that the hotel industry is currently hit by the COVID-19 pandemic does not help the problem. On the contrary, once business volumes return, seasonal job candidates may be even more reluctant to accept seasonal jobs due to the hotel industry's potential exposure to some future, comparable crisis.

Discussions with Croatian hotel industry professionals provided the impetus for this research. Hoteliers repeatedly provided feedback as to how seasonal employee turnover negatively affected their operations. Echoing industry professionals, research by Suštar and Laškarin (2020) determined that only a few scientific-type analyses addressed seasonality problems in this region. After reviewing the literature, it is evident that there is a knowledge gap in terms of understanding essential characteristics of hotel human resources; namely, seasonal employees.

This paper's key objective, then, is to ascertain how perceived supervisor support (PSS), affective organizational commitment (AOC) and employee's work engagement (WE) are related in the context of hotel seasonal employees. Furthermore, these variables' potential relationship with seasonal workers' intention to return (ITR) to their current employer (hotel) in the following season is also examined. In spite of seasonal workforce scarcity, seasonal employees are often perceived as subpar compared to permanent employees since their function is temporary in nature. As a result of such perception, we have had less attention directed towards this labor segment.

2. Literature Review

The following literature review provides justification to explore the above-mentioned variables and test the rationality of the associated proposed model with a seasonal workforce sample in mind. The vast majority of reviewed studies sampled full-time

or non-disclosed employment status individuals, making this paper's research particularly relevant.

Seasonality has been described as the practice of engaging in shorter periods of business operations while trying to achieve full-year revenues (Baum, 1999) or as certain periods of the year when businesses face higher demand (Butler, 1994). Human-intensive industries, especially tourism and hospitality, are primarily relying on hiring additional seasonal employees in order to meet seasonality's higher demand as employing more permanent employees is not economically feasible in such a varying business environment.

The first part of the literature review is focused on distinguishing between the main terms and concepts associated with workforce characteristics, i.e. differences between permanent, temporary and seasonal workforce. Following this, descriptions of this research's model variables (*perceived supervisor support*, *work engagement*, *affective commitment* and *intention to return*) will be discussed separately along with the notable research findings.

2.1 Seasonal Workforce

According to Atkinson (1984), the labor force can be divided into two segments: the core and peripheral. In general, core employees are those permanently employed, working full-time and possessing relevant expertise which is in short supply. On the other hand, the peripheral workforce is comprised of those who do not have a standard or traditional type of employment; for example, contingent or temporary work (Burgess, Connell, 2006). Many industries (agriculture, construction, tourism, retail) use this kind of duality in order to cater to periods of higher demand so as to use labor efficiently. Lips (1998) relates the process of hiring a temporary workforce to the principles of the "just-in-time" manufacturing and staying competitive at a given period in time.

Due to seasonality, the mentioned Atkinson duality of core and peripheral workforces is visible and frequently used in hospitality, with the core group representing a smaller portion of the workforce (Riley, 1991).

When it comes to the essence of the definition of seasonal employment, different authors agree on the general notion of it being short-term and with a fixed period of employment (Lautsch, 2002; McLean Parks et al., 1998). As part of the discus-

sion of seasonal work, it should be acknowledged that a seasonal workforce is a temporary type of workforce but not all temporary employees are seasonal. Although temporary and seasonal types of employment can overlap by some definitions, i.e. being of fixed term and having a predetermined termination date (OECD, 2020)³, seasonal employment specifically emerges from periods of higher seasonal demand and is potentially cyclical in nature (Ainsworth, Purss, 2008).

2.2 Perceived Supervisor Support (PSS)

According to Kottke and Sharafinski (1988), perceived supervisor support can be defined as the employees' perception on the volume of support received from the supervisor, the degree to which the supervisor cares about the well-being of a subordinate and, in general, the sense of the employee that she/he is valued by the supervisor for her/his contributions at work. Researchers have found that in an environment in which a subordinate experiences support from her/his supervisor, the subordinate is realizing the need and obligation of helping the supervisor achieve the set goals (Eisenberger et al., 2002). The most important aspect of a relationship between a subordinate and supervisor is the quality of their relationship, which, in turn, is largely affected by the amount of supervisor's time dedicated to subordinates (Liden et al., 1997).

In the context of perceived support, Eisenberger et al. (1997) clearly differentiate between PSS and perceived organizational support (POS) as two separate constructs. It is important to note that PSS is more evident to an employee than POS as an employee has more contact with an immediate supervisor (vs. the organization at large) on a daily basis (Maertz et al., 2007). That is why exploring PSS in a hotel setting is critical since in this context supervisors and subordinates interact intensively. Furthermore, when it comes to hotel workers, PSS enables the development of job embeddedness and ultimately employee retention (Karatepe, 2014). As Karatepe (2014) observed, many studies have focused on PSS as one of the most dominant factors in human resources practice yet studies tend to concentrate on permanent employees' PSS while seasonal workforce analysis is largely overlooked.

2.3 Affective Organizational Commitment (AOC)

The next variable used in this paper's model is *affective organizational commitment*, a term developed

by Allen and Meyer (1990) as a part of a three-component model of commitment that includes: affective organizational commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment. The affective organizational component indicates employees' emotional connection, involvement and identification with the organization.

Research by de Cuyper et al. (2009) pertaining to AOC observed its relationship to job insecurity when considering permanent and temporary workers. The research suggests that, for permanent workers, the effect of job insecurity is negatively related to AOC and job satisfaction; however, a similar relationship was not found among temporary employees as was expected given that their contracts expire at a pre-agreed time. By creating meaningful relationships with employees, as explained by the reciprocity effect and social exchange theory, hotels create mutual trust with their employees and encourage improved employee performance. When considering non-standard employment, particularly contingent workers, Van Dyne and Ang (1998), back the general theory that workers with such non-standard types of employment have lower levels of AOC than standard employees.

2.4 Work Engagement (WE)

Kahn (1990) introduced the term work engagement and used it to describe individuals who are immersed and psychologically present while working. When examining other authors' definitions of work engagement, Schaufeli et al. (2002) note that WE is not a temporary state, but rather a steady one with variations characterized by dedication, enthusiasm and inspiration. The authors also accentuate energy while performing tasks and commitment towards finding solutions as part of WE. Suan and Nasurdin (2016) note that PSS positively correlates to WE, especially for the male workers. Furthermore, some studies have determined a positive relationship between receiving positive feedback from customers and work engagement for both high- and low-customer contact employee groups (Barnes et al., 2014). The above-mentioned studies were conducted without any reference to seasonal workforce in general, let alone seasonal employees in tourism. An exception to this is research by Arasli et al. (2020) which measured WE in a seasonal setting while examining seasonal employee leadership. Barron et al. (2014) also conducted research on WE within the tourism industry, however, it was

not directed at seasonal employees, and suggested that the connection between a supervisor and an employee is a crucial component of employees' work engagement.

2.5 Intention to Return (ITR)

ITR can be defined as the "likelihood to return next season to a job position" (Alverén et al., 2012). Studies that have focused on solving employee retention difficulties have revealed that companies must first identify sources of retention problems (Bonn, Forbringer 1992; Sarabakhsh et al., 1989) and understand which attributes of the work environment lead to higher or lower retention. It is important to distinguish between the terms 'intention to return' and 'turnover intention,' as confusion arises in interpretation and the two terms tend to be falsely equalized. On the one hand, as previously noted, ITR refers to the likelihood of *returning*, and, on the other hand, turnover intention concerns one's plans for *leaving* (Saeed et al., 2014).

Studies have examined antecedents to an employee's ITR to a seasonal job. For example, Šošić et al. (2018) analyzed factors affecting the re-acceptance of a seasonal job in the Dubrovnik region (Croatia). This research suggested that seasonal employees with higher educational levels are more likely to refuse the position the following year. The authors explained this by postulating that college graduates are more likely to seek permanent and more professionally suitable employment. Additionally, Šošić et al. (2018) found significant support for the existence of a positive relationship between seasonal employees re-accepting employment and satisfaction with their supervisor.

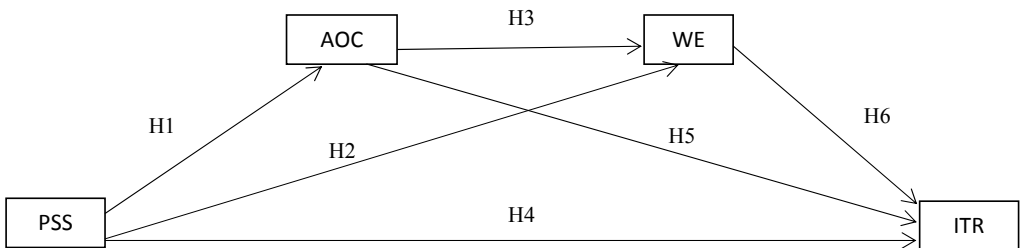
3. Proposed Model

To date, a limited number of studies have been dedicated to exploring seasonal work and the factors influencing an individual's intention to return to a specific job position in the following season. This research aims to do that by proposing a model (Figure 1) that builds on prior related research.

A review of the literature reveals support for PSS as an antecedent to AOC (Liden et al., 1997; Eisenberger et al., 2002) as well as to WE (Arasli, Arici, 2019; Suan, Nasuridin, 2016). Moreover, Karatepe (2014) found support for a relationship between PSS and ITR. Šošić et al.'s (2018) work indicates a linkage between AOC and ITR as seasonal employees' re-acceptance of seasonal work was related to their relationship with their supervisor and, by extension, the organization. Barron et al.'s (2014) research lends support to the notion that an employee's relationship with her/his supervisor and the associated AOC is linked with her/his WE. Applying Schaufeli et al.'s (2002) construct of WE as being a state characterized by dedication, enthusiasm and inspiration, it is plausible that WE and ITR are related in that the more one is dedicated, enthusiastic and inspired on the job, the more likely one is to re-accept the position.

The proposed model for this paper's research is presented graphically in Figure 1. As an initial examination of the proposed model, various relationships of the models' four variables were examined through six hypotheses. Furthermore, as depicted in Figure 1, this research proposes that AOC and WE act as serial multiple mediators on the relationship between PSS and ITR in the seasonal workforce context.

Figure 1 Proposed model



Source: Prepared by the authors

Associated hypotheses include:

H1: In the seasonal workforce context, Perceived Supervisor Support is positively related to Affective Organizational Commitment.

H2: In the seasonal workforce context, Perceived Supervisor Support is positively related to Work Engagement.

H3: In the seasonal workforce context, Affective Organizational Commitment is positively related to Work Engagement.

H4: In the seasonal workforce context, Perceived Supervisor Support is positively related to Intention to Return.

H5: In the seasonal workforce context, Affective Organizational Commitment is positively related to Intention to Return

H6: In the seasonal workforce context, Work Engagement is positively related to Intention to Return. and

H7: In the seasonal workforce context, AOC and WE have a significant serial multiple mediating effect on the relationship between PSS and ITR.

4. Research Method

This research effort seeks to determine if AOC and WE mediate the relationship between PSS and ITR. Previously developed and validated instruments associated with these constructs were modified to meet this research's needs. Karatepe (2014) specifically modified Karasek et al.'s (1982) original survey for the hospitality industry and this five-item revised scale was used in this research. AOC data was captured with Allen and Meyer's (1993) six-item scale, a modification of their original work (Allen, Meyer, 1990). Schaufeli et al.'s (2019) three item UWES-3 measuring instrument was used to acquire WE information. Finally, Alverén et al.'s (2012) adapted version of Price and Mueller's (1981) work was used to determine ITR. All four instruments had a Likert five-point response set with responses ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree.

Potential mediation effects in this paper's proposed model were evaluated for statistical significance via IBM SPSS version 26.0 in combination with PROCESS Macro version 3.5's (Hayes, 2013) Serial Multiple Mediation Model 6 (Hayes, 2012)⁴. PROCESS version 3.5 uses the percentile method to calculate bootstrap confidence intervals when determining significance of mediating paths (Hayes, 2020)⁵. The significance level for this study was set at .05.

4.1 Sample

This research also gathered sociodemographic data of respondents, including: gender; age; department within the hotel in which they worked; education level; number of seasons employed at their current hotel (place of employment). Participants in the study were individuals seasonally employed in Croatian hotels during the summer of 2019. Participants in the survey were obtained via the present authors' formal and informal networks in the regional hotel workforce as well as the associated snowballing mechanism. Furthermore, all participants were seasonal employees hired for the April to October period, excluding employees with a student contract, i.e. student workers.

The survey, given the presence of the COVID-19 pandemic, was distributed in an online form via email and social media networks to hotel seasonal workers in three prominent Croatian tourist destinations: Split-Dalmatia county; Dubrovnik-Neretva county; and Zadar county. Note, however, that the Covid-19 environment restricted accessibility to the desired sample, limiting the number of participants. In order to obtain a more sizable sample, hotels' star ratings were not the focus of the study and were not a determinant when choosing the participants in this preliminary study of seasonal workforce management.

From a sample of 85 completed surveys, the majority of participants were female (70.6%). Most of the participants were under 30 years of age (85.9%) and the remainder ranged from 31 to 40 years of age (14.1%). Regarding the educational level attained by respondents, a high school diploma was the most frequent answer (49.4%), followed closely by a Bachelor's degree (41.2%). In terms of the hotel department in which respondents worked, most were employed in the Spa and Wellness department (28.2%), followed by the Front Office (27.1%) and the Food and Beverage department (20%).

The last two demographic questions addressed the number of seasons respondents worked at the same hotel. It was determined that the 2019 season was the first season with their respective employers for 31 (36.5%) of the respondents. The next largest cohort of respondents, 23 (27.1%), was those for whom the 2019 season was their second year at the same hotel. Detailed sociodemographic data is presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Participants' sociodemographic data

	n	%
Gender		
Male	25	29.40
Female	60	70.60
Age		
Up to 30	73	85.90
31 - 40	12	14.10
Education		
High school	42	49.40
Bachelor's degree	35	41.20
Master's degree	8	9.40
Department		
S&M	7	8.20
F&B	17	20.00
Housekeeping	8	9.40
Front office	23	27.10
Spa and wellness	24	28.20
Finance	2	2.40
HR and admin.	2	2.40
Other	2	2.40
Season(s) worked at the same hotel		
One	31	36.50
Two	23	27.10
Three	20	23.50
Four	4	4.70
Five or more	7	8.20
Total	85	100.00

Source: Prepared by the authors

5. Results

This research sought to determine if AOC and WE act as mediators on PSS' influence on ITR. As an initial step, the mean, standard deviation and Pearson correlation analyses were conducted and results can be found in Table 2. The values in Table 2 show that positive significant relationships were found among all variables. The PSS – WE pairwise relationship was significant at the $p < .05$ level and the

others at the $p < .001$ level. Simple linear regression analysis was applied to the variables as stated in hypotheses *H1* through *H6* and they were all found to be significant at the $p < .001$ level with the exception of the PSS → WE path which was significant at $p = .014$ (see Table 3). **Finding all paths within the model to correlate significantly (Table 2) and to have significant regression characteristics (Table 3), support was found for hypotheses *H1* through *H6*.**

Table 2 Mean, Standard Deviation and Pearson Correlation Values for Study Variables

Model Variables	Mean	SD	PSS	AOC	WE	ITR
Perceived Supervisor Support	4.061	.823	1			
Affective Org. Commitment	3.489	.926	.539***	1		
Work Engagement	3.902	.810	.267*	.548***	1	
Intention to Return	3.859	1.092	.412***	.667***	.469***	1

Note: N = 85, *p < .05 (2-tailed), ***p < .001 (2-tailed)

Source: Prepared by the authors

Table 3 Model's Associated Linear Regression Statistics

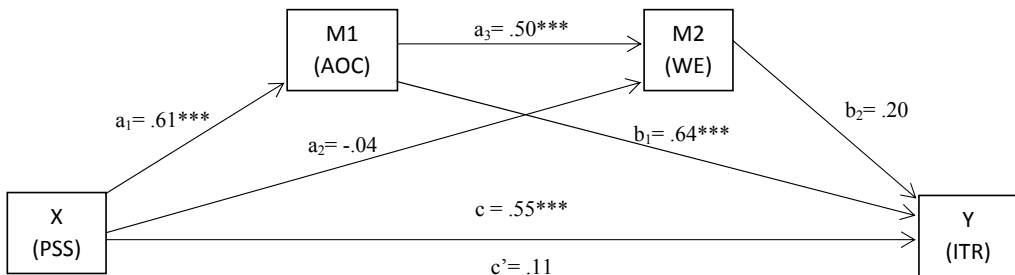
Hypo	IV	DV	F(1,83) Value	p-value	R ²	Beta (B)	95% CI
H1	PSS	AOC	34.021	<.001	.291	.606	[.400,.813]
H2	PSS	WE	6.357	.014	.071	.262	[.055,.469]
H3	AOC	WE	35.629	<.001	.300	.479	[.320,.639]
H4	PSS	ITR	16.958	<.001	.170	.547	[.283,.811]
H5	AOC	ITR	66.499	<.001	.445	.787	[.595,.979]
H6	WE	ITR	23.400	<.001	.220	.633	[.372,.893]

Source: Prepared by the authors

In order to show that AOC and WE serially mediate the relationship of PSS and ITR, a four-step regression approach combined with a bootstrap method

as suggested by Hayes (2012⁶, 2013) was employed. Values associated with the four steps of this approach are seen in Figure 2.

Figure 2 Serial-double mediation of AOC and WE on the relationship between PSS and ITR with non-standardized beta values



Note: ***p < .001

Source: Prepared by the authors

Overall, the proposed model exhibits signs of mediation but not completely. It can be seen in Figure 2 that, as required in Step 1 of Hayes' four step analysis for mediation, the total effect ($c = .55$, $SE = .13$, $t = 4.12$, $p < .001$) of PSS (without mediating variables) on ITR was significant. When the two mediating variables were introduced, the relation-

ship of PSS with ITR ($c' = .11$, $SE = .13$, $t = .83$, $p = .41$) was no longer significant, as required by Step 4 of the Hayes' approach. Moreover, the direct effect of the first mediating variable, AOC, on the second mediating variable, WE, was significant ($a_3 = .50$, $SE = .10$, $t = 5.200$, $p < .001$). However, while the direct effect of PSS on AOC was significant ($a_1 = .61$, SE

= .10, $t = 5.983$, $p < .001$), the direct effect of PSS on WE was not ($a_2 = -.04$, $SE = .11$, $t = -.370$, $p = .712$). Consequently, Step 2 of Hayes' analysis was not met. When examining the mediating variables' direct effects on ITR, it was seen that AOC's was significant ($b_1 = .64$, $SE = .13$, $t = 4.860$, $p < .001$) while WE's was not ($b_2 = .20$, $SE = .13$, $t = 1.554$, $p = .124$), violating Step 3 of Hayes' analysis. **Considering these results, AOC and WE did not serially mediate the relationship between PSS and ITR. Therefore, support for H7 was not found in this study.** Finally, the overall model was at a significant level ($F(3.81)$, $p < .001$) and had an r-squared value of 46.46%.

A summary of total indirect effects and specific indirect effects associated with the mediating variables is found in Table 4. The statistical significance of the model's indirect effects was examined over 5,000 bootstrap samples, with the estimates taken at the 95% confidence level. As seen in Table 3, given that zero is not included in the confidence interval, the PSS → AOC → ITR path's indirect effect was significant while the PSS → WE → ITR and PSS → AOC → WE → ITR paths' indirect effects were not. Furthermore, combining the above information, it is determined that the proposed model's total effect equals .55 and the total direct and indirect effects are .11 and .44, respectively.

Table 4 Summary of Total Indirect Effect of AOC and WE on the Relationship between PSS and ITR and Specific Effects

	Effect	Bootstrapping 95% Conf. Int.		
		SE	Lower	Upper
Total Indirect	.4406	.0946	.2622	.6381
PSS → AOC → ITR	.3871	.1017	.1987	.5993
PSS → WE → ITR	-.0081	.0340	-.0919	.0543
PSS → AOC → WE → ITR	.0564	.0527	-.0391	.1710

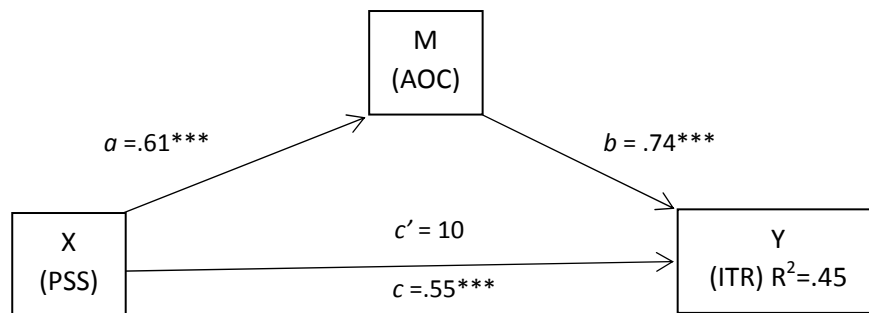
Note: N = 85, k = 5,000

Source: Prepared by the authors

Given that this paper's model was not fully supported, additional analyses were performed to gain more insight into the impact of the proposed mediating variables, AOC and WE, on the relationship between PSS and ITR. Specifically, two simple

mediator models (Hayes, 2012)⁷, one that has AOC mediating PSS and ITR and the other that has WE mediating PSS and ITR were examined; the diagrams are found in Figures 3 and 4, respectively.

Figure 3 AOC acting as a mediator on the relationship between PSS and ITR with non-standardized beta values



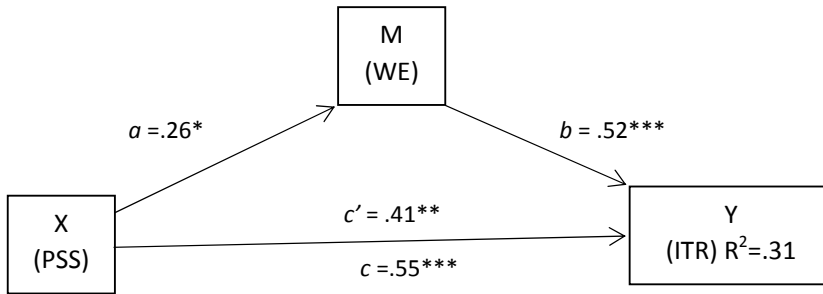
Note: ***p < .001

Source: Prepared by the authors

Applying the Baron and Kelly (1986) four-step approach for establishing mediation, it can be seen in Figure 3 that AOC fully mediates the relationship between PSS and ITR. PSS significantly predicts ITR ($c = .55, SE = .13, t = 4.12, p < .001$), satisfying Step 1.

PSS also significantly predicts AOC ($a = .61, SE = .10, t = 5.983, p < .001$), Step 2, and AOC significantly predicts ITR ($b = .74, SE = .11, t = 6.442, p < .001$), Step 3. Lastly, PSS did not significantly predict ITR ($c' = .10, SE = .13, t = .76, p = .45$) in the presence of AOC.

Figure 4 WE acting as a mediator on the relationship between PSS and ITR with non-standardized beta values



Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$
 Source: Prepared by the authors

A similar Baron and Kelly (1986) examination was applied to a model having WE mediate the relationship between PSS and ITR (Figure 4). As already established above, PSS significantly predicts ITR. Additionally, PSS significantly predicts WE ($a = .26, SE = .10, t = 2.521, p = .014$) and, likewise, WE significantly predicts ITR ($b = .52, SE = .13, t = 4.057, p < .001$). But note that PSS still significantly predicts ITR in the presence of WE ($c' = .41, SE = .13, t = 3.241, p = .002$); although PSS' effect on ITR has been partially reduced, having been redirected through WE. Therefore, WE is

considered to partially mediate the relationship of PSS on ITR.

The total effect in the above two single mediator models, the path from PSS to ITE, was .55. The statistical significance of the model's indirect effects was examined over 5,000 bootstrap samples, with the estimates taken at the 95% confidence level. A summary of the indirect and direct effects of the models are found in Table 5. Note that all direct and indirect paths are significant, with the exception of c' in the AOC mediated model, establishing a full mediation of the relationship between PSS and ITR.

Table 5 Summary of Indirect Effects of AOC and WE as single mediators on the relationship between PSS and ITR

	Effect	Bootstrapping 95% Conf. Int.		
		SE	Lower	Upper
Total Effect PSS → ITR	.5466	.1327	.2826	.8106
Indirect Effect PSS → AOC → ITR	.4488	.0985	.2708	.6556
Direct Effect PSS → AOC → ITR	.0978	.1292	-.1592	.3548
Indirect Effect PSS → WE → ITR	.1368	.0610	.0291	.2672
Direct Effect PSS → WE → ITR	.4097	.1264	.1582	.6613

Note: N = 85, k = 5,000.
 Source: Prepared by the authors

In summary, AOC and WE were found to separately (two simple mediation models) fully and partially, respectively, mediate the relationship of PSS and ITR in the seasonal employment context. When considering a serial multiple mediation model, as suggested by theory, it was seen that not all of the indirect paths were significant. Indirect paths containing WE were not found to significantly mediate the relationship between PSS and ITR.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

This research contributes to literature in two regards as, for the first time, the study's considered variables have been configured in such a way that AOC and WE act as serial multiple mediation of PSS and ITR, and regarding the fact that the analysis was applied to a seasonal context. The significance of the results can be used in order to better understand the issue of intention to return rates of hotels' seasonal employees and overall, provide understanding about the factors that lead to higher return rates.

As part of the research design, it was proposed that AOC and WE serve as serial multiple mediators to the relationship between PSS and ITR. As an initial step, it was found that all four variables within the model correlate significantly and have significant regression characteristics (Tables 2 and 3). Part of this finding was in alignment with the results previously established in the full-time employment context; namely, the relationship between PSS and AOC (Liden et al., 1997; Eisenberger et al., 2002).

This research suggests that the same PSS and AOC relationship holds in the seasonal work context. Notably, this finding suggests that certain HR relationships, regardless of employment status, are universal, implying that management may utilize similar approaches in managing these relationships since they are applicable for both full-time and seasonal employees. Furthermore, the PSS and WE relationship previously observed in both the seasonal employment context (Arasli, Arici, 2019) as well as in non-disclosed employment context (Suan, Nasurdin, 2016) was also observed in this study. While the PSS and WE relationship in this study was not as pronounced as other pairwise relationships in this study, it was still significant at $p < .05$ (Tables 2 and 3).

The existence of PSS, AOC and WE proved to be critical elements for seasonal employees. Moreover, this study indicates that AOC affects the level of seasonal employees' work engagement (Tables 2 and 3). Such results may further encourage companies to attempt to design favorable work conditions, which would boost work engagement of seasonal employees. For future research, we would encourage colleagues to investigate whether or not an employer's pledge (a non-binding promise as opposed to a formal contract) concerning employing seasonal employees the following season would positively impact WE via the mechanism of perceived job security.

The results have also shown that WE is positively related to ITR (Tables 2 and 3). Note that the relationship between work engagement and returning could be potentially impacted by other considerations or variables. It could be the case, for example, that an individual's preferred career path and industry of choice (for employment) might moderate one's level of work engagement. Given the structure of Croatia's economy and its heavy dependence on travel and tourism (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2020)⁸, non-travel-and-tourism jobs are not relatively plentiful, potentially creating a pool of seasonal workers that are in the hotel industry out of necessity (need for employment) rather than choice. Consequently, this potential pool could adversely impact seasonal hotel work engagement levels.

While the overall model exhibited mediation, not all paths within the model were significant; thus, hypothesis H7 was not confirmed. There were, however, encouraging signs concerning the model's validity. Note that all of the model's variables exhibited significant correlations. Additionally, AOC and WE individually mediated the relationship between PSS and ITR, suggesting that these two variables in some form or combination act as mediators. In the end, however, only one of the model's three indirect paths was significant. Specifically, AOC significantly acted as a mediator but WE and the path through AOC and WE did not (Table 4).

Some plausible explanations as to why not all of the model's indirect paths were significant have been identified. First, as mentioned before, this study's sample did not differentiate as to whether or not the hotel industry was the respondents' first choice. Second, this study did not distinguish between vol-

untary seasonal workers (employees who only want to work seasonally; i.e., they don't want to work full-time) and involuntary seasonal workers (those who would prefer full-time employment but had to settle for seasonal employment). This line of thinking proposes that the desired employment status might act as a moderator on the relationship between PSS and WE. If future researchers were to incorporate Ball's (1988) voluntary vs. involuntary construct, they might find that this explains why this paper's model has two insignificant paths. As the third and final possible explanation, the method by which WE was operationalized is offered as a reason to explain the model's insignificant paths. Note that in an effort to produce a more time-friendly survey instrument, the original UWES-17 instrument was abbreviated to this study's UWES-3 instrument (Schaufeli et al., 2019), resulting potentially with an incomplete operationalization of WE and a measurement error.

An additional proposal for future research is to investigate whether results would be different if participants were tested before, during, and after the season. More specifically, it could be investigated whether this approach would produce discrepancies in results simply by having different measurement time periods. We also recommend exploring

seasonal workers' ITR related to star rating of the hotel or economic conditions of the country where they come from. As mentioned earlier, Mediterranean tourism is highly seasonal and developing a cross-country seasonal workforce comparison in this respect would be quite interesting. Also, further research could be aimed towards chain brand association being a determinant for one's ITR to the job position.

When it comes to limitations of the study, there are several which need to be noted and are mostly connected to the sample and its participants. Sample size, as is always the case in social sciences, may represent a limitation and affect the outcome of research. The initial plan of the study was to use a paper-and-pen questionnaire in order to increase control and maintain truthfulness in results, specifically reaching the most fitting participants. Our initial objective was to test seasonal workers at the beginning of the season, i.e. in March or April in hotels throughout the three regions mentioned in our research method. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the method for primary research shifted towards an online form of questionnaire. Although the online survey eliminated the barrier of the geographically spread sample, this method decreased our capacity to administer surveys in person.

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UPRAVLJANJE SEZONSKOM RADNOM SNAGOM: ISTRAŽIVANJE NAMJERE POVRATKA ZAPOSLENIH

SAŽETAK

Kronični nedostatak sezonskih radnika u ugostiteljstvu i turizmu povećao je važnost zadržavanja sezonskih zaposlenika. Stoga ova studija, jedna od rijetkih koja to čini, razmatra jesu li uočena podrška nadređenih, afektivna organizacijska predanost i radna angažiranost, pozitivno povezana s namjerom sezonskih radnika da se sljedeće sezone vrate na svoje isto mjesto zaposlenja. Konkretno, ovo istraživanje pokazuje da afektivna organizacijska predanost i radna angažiranost posreduju u odnosu između uočene podrške rukovoditelja i namjere zaposlenih da se vrate. U svrhu proučavanja ove problematike prikupljeni su podatci sezonskih zaposlenika koji su tijekom turističke sezone 2019. godine radili u hrvatskim hotelima koji su smješteni u gradovima orijentiranim na turizam. Uočene su jake veze između sve četiri varijable ove studije, ali otkriveno je da je samo jedna od relacija modela višestruke regresije značajna. Ovo istraživanje započinje proces stjecanja boljeg razumijevanja dinamike sezonskog zapošljavanja, područja od sve veće važnosti za hotele i ugostiteljsku industriju uopće.

Ključne riječi: turizam i ugostiteljstvo, sezonska radna snaga, percipirana podrška rukovoditelja, afektivna posvećenost, radna angažiranost, namjera povratka