

Stress Management and Emotional Labor in Indian Hospitality Education

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Abstract: This study examines the integration of stress management and emotional labor training into hospitality education curricula in India. It addresses key industry challenges such as irregular schedules, customer-oriented service requirements, emotional labor, stress, and burnout in a sector currently employing 39 million people and projected to employ 53 million by 2029 (Dsouza et al., 2023). The research evaluates pedagogical approaches designed to mitigate occupational stressors, including irregular shifts, physical demands, and emotional dissonance, which are particularly acute among hospitality workers in India (Bhattachayra & Dasgupta, 2021; Ma et al., 2021). It explores curricula that foster resilience and emotional regulation, thereby better preparing students for these demands, enhancing career longevity, and supporting mental health. The analysis contends that stress management education—targeting job insecurity, interpersonal conflicts, and emotional labor as primary stressors—improves frontline employees' well-being by reducing work-related stress (Yoo, 2023). Furthermore, it identifies prevalent stressors in Indian hospitality, reviews current educational practices (Mensah et al., 2024), and recommends advanced modules on emotional intelligence and resilience to counter emotional contagion and work-life imbalance (Elshaer et al., 2025; Rathi & Kumar, 2023). Specifically, this study critically analyzes existing frameworks for incorporating emotional labor—a core competency in guest-host interactions—into hospitality and tourism curricula (Nyanjom & Wilkins, 2021). Additionally, the study explores how digital transformation in hospitality services necessitates new stress management competencies, particularly regarding ethical AI use and human-centric service delivery (George, 2024). Using a mixed-methods approach of quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, it evaluates existing educational interventions, identifies gaps in preparing future hospitality professionals for the industry's psychological demands, and examines educators' perceptions of emotion skill development—which is often assumed implicitly rather than explicitly taught in curricula (Nyanjom & Wilkins, 2021).

Keywords: Hospitality education, stress management, emotional labor, India, psychological well-being, resilience, emotional intelligence.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid growth of India's hospitality sector and its substantial employment base underscore the need for advanced coping mechanisms (Dsouza et al., 2023). These include sustaining positive interactions with diverse customers—known as emotional labor—despite conflicting internal emotions (Bhattachayra & Dasgupta, 2021), as well as managing demanding schedules and work-family conflicts that exacerbate occupational stress (Roy, 2023). Without

intervention, such stressors can lead to physical and emotional impairments, anxiety, depression, and general malaise (Abdou et al., 2024; Chaudhry & Chhajer, 2023; Deka et al., 2024), highlighting the necessity for curriculum-integrated interventions. This study evaluates existing stress management and emotional labor programs in Indian hospitality education and proposes enhanced conceptual frameworks. It specifically assesses the effectiveness of mindfulness training in mitigating job insecurity, interpersonal conflicts, and emotional labor, thereby improving student readiness and professional longevity (Dsouza et al., 2023; Yoo, 2023). Emotional intelligence emerges as a critical factor influencing satisfaction and engagement (Elshaer et al., 2025; Stangl et al., 2024). In the post-pandemic context, such training promotes adaptive coping and well-being amid fluctuating work conditions (Chaudhry & Chhajer, 2023; Ma et al., 2021) through focused modules on emotional regulation and stress inoculation (Wang et al., 2024). Ultimately, the study analyzes current frameworks and identifies opportunities to strengthen resilience among future hospitality professionals.

Background of Hospitality Education in India

Hospitality education in India traces its origins to the early 1950s with institutions like the Institute of Hotel Management, Catering Technology and Applied Nutrition (Gavinolla et al., 2023), developing into a nationwide network offering diploma, undergraduate, and postgraduate programs (Ahlawat & Rawal, 2022). Curriculum evolution has shifted from technical skills to managerial principles, aligning with industry needs for leadership capabilities (Mohanty, 2018). This development mirrors global standards by incorporating theoretical elements, though gaps remain in areas such as sustainability and emerging topics (Gavinolla et al., 2023), prompting discussions on balancing practical training with academic rigor (Giousmpasoglou, 2025). Established in 1982, the National Council for Hotel Management now oversees and maintains educational standards across the country (Mohanty, 2018).

Significance of Stress Management in Hospitality

The emotional demands of the hospitality field make curriculum-embedded stress management essential for safeguarding well-being and service quality (Giousmpasoglou & Pantelidis, 2025). Skills in emotional regulation and resilience prepare graduates for high-pressure environments, supporting sustained careers and job fulfillment (Alexakis & Jiang, 2019; Nachmias et al., 2017). Amid ongoing debates on vocational-academic balance (Giousmpasoglou, 2025), programs increasingly emphasize psychological approaches,

including cognitive-behavioral techniques and mindfulness (El-Sherbeeney et al., 2024; Khatri et al., 2024; Nair et al., 2024). Complementary strategies—such as counseling integration, scenario-based learning, mentorship, and simulations—further enhance resilience (Renes, 2017; Worst & Thompson, 2024), linking professional success with holistic personal development. Integrating emotional intelligence into hospitality curricula is crucial, given its substantial influence on academic performance, relationships, and well-being (Park, 2024). Structured training in emotional management improves collaboration, customer-oriented behavior, and career advancement (Völker et al., 2023). These proactive instructional methods equip learners for the emotional challenges of leadership roles (Khatri et al., 2024). However, Indian hospitality education often fails to adequately prepare graduates, rendering many unemployable due to deficiencies in core and interpersonal skills, including self-regulation, quality commitment, and managerial competence (Basak & Khanna, 2017; Basaka, 2017). Despite a historical emphasis on vocational training, comprehensive incorporation of regenerative hospitality education—through experiential learning and interdisciplinary collaboration—remains vital to align academic foundations with industry requirements, fostering deep learner transformation (Jaywant, 2025).

Role of Emotional Labor in Service Industries

Emotional labor, defined as the regulation of one's emotions and expressions to meet occupational requirements, is particularly pertinent in the hospitality sector owing to its customer-centric orientation (Giousmpasoglou & Pantelidis, 2025). Frontline employees routinely exhibit emotions that conflict with their authentic feelings, thereby engendering emotional dissonance, burnout, and reduced job satisfaction (Ahlawat & Rawal, 2022; Kwon et al., 2019). To prepare students for these exigencies and to facilitate sustainable careers, hospitality curricula ought to incorporate modules on emotional intelligence, encompassing self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and social skills (Goh & Kim, 2020; Khuadthong et al., 2025; Mokhtar & Krishnan, 2023; Park, 2024; Völker et al., 2023). The cultivation of a "Hospitable Service Mindset" via a "pedagogy of hospitableness" facilitates authentic guest interactions through transformative education that emphasizes emotional competencies (Larsen, 2023; Manfreda et al., 2023, 2024). This paradigm prioritizes emotional resilience in conjunction with technical proficiency, particularly in luxury contexts where emotional dissonance intensifies psychological strain (Balyalı & Aktaş, 2023; Karatepe & Aleshinloye, 2009; Lam et al., 2021; Matina, 2025). Preference for deep acting—wherein required emotions are authentically internalized—over surface acting mitigates resource depletion associated with

inauthentic expressions (Kim & Park, 2023; Lam et al., 2021; Xu et al., 2020). Accordingly, curricula should integrate emotion regulation techniques, such as cognitive reappraisal, situational modification, and attentional deployment, augmented by mindfulness practices to reframe stressors, bolster resilience, and promote deep acting (Cheng & Zhao, 2025; Gabriel et al., 2015; Hsu et al., 2023; Schwind et al., 2024; Xu et al., 2020). Targeted training in emotional intelligence and self-awareness further enables navigation of demanding environments while sustaining positive dispositions (Kim & Park, 2023; Stangl et al., 2024; Völker et al., 2023).

Research Gap and Rationale

Notwithstanding the extensive acknowledgment of emotional labor and stress mitigation in vocational settings, a conspicuous lacuna exists in Indian hospitality education, particularly concerning the efficacy of emotion regulation strategies (Hu, 2023; Vogl et al., 2025). This shortfall encompasses inadequate investigation into the integration of deep acting training within pedagogy to offset the deleterious consequences of surface acting, which predominates in exacting service domains, thereby fostering authentic emotional congruence among learners (Sixpence et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2025). Furthermore, empirical scrutiny of embedding emotional resilience programs and mindfulness-based stress reduction into Indian hospitality curricula, along with their protracted effects on student well-being and career viability, remains insufficient (Pooja & Bhoomadevi, 2023). To date, no comprehensive theoretical model delineates the rationale and mechanisms of interpersonal emotion regulation within the Indian hospitality and tourism milieu (Hsu et al., 2023), thereby constraining culturally sensitive interventions for enduring emotional equilibrium and professional proficiency (Lee & Madera, 2019).

This investigation redresses these deficiencies by identifying and validating emotional indicators and efficacious pedagogical strategies in Indian higher education (Grover et al., 2020). Specifically, it examines the ramifications of emotional intelligence for mental health, academic attainment, and psychological integrity among hospitality undergraduates—domains underexplored in India notwithstanding their international salience (Rana et al., 2023; Sable & Bhatt, 2023; Traymbak et al., 2022; Xuan, 2025). The inquiry also appraises synergies between cultural intelligence and emotional intelligence amid India's sociocultural diversity, exacerbated by pandemic-induced stressors such as COVID-19 (Jeyavel et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2024). Extending to postgraduate contexts, it evaluates the ramifications of social-

emotional learning protocols on institutional emotional climates, alleviating acculturation stress and biases in multicultural environments while associating emotional perception and regulation with academic and well-being outcomes (Gómez et al., 2025; Hashim et al., 2025; IIMS Journal of Management Science, 2022; Jeyavel et al., 2023; Manjare, 2024; Shengyao et al., 2024). In summation, the resultant insights will inform curriculum reconfiguration and interventions to augment psychological resilience and emotional intelligence, thereby equipping students for the rigors of India's hospitality sector (Erdem et al., 2025; Nag et al., 2023; P, 2024; Prasad, 2023; Xuan, 2025).

Conceptual Framework

This investigation synthesizes pivotal psychological theories and pedagogical paradigms to formulate an integrative conceptual framework that elucidates the interrelations among emotional labor, stress management, and academic outcomes in Indian hospitality education. It operationalizes the Job Demands-Resources model to scrutinize the interplay between occupational stressors and personal/institutional resources, which impinge upon student well-being and pedagogical efficacy (Berbekova & Lin, 2024). This is complemented by Conservation of Resources theory, which posits that resource depletion precipitates strain and emotional perturbation (El-Sherbeeney et al., 2024), whereas Broaden-and-Build Theory contends that positive emotions—nurtured via stress alleviation and emotional intelligence cultivation—engender resilience (“Frontiers in Educational Research,” 2018).

The framework accommodates socio-cultural lenses to address emotional display rules and context-specific idiosyncrasies in Indian hospitality (Pham, 2024). Anchored in the transactional stress-and-coping model, it underscores bidirectional person-environment transactions in stressor appraisal and coping enactment (Kulkarni et al., 2025). This methodology facilitates nuanced analysis of academic strain and career ambiguity's repercussions on well-being and vocational commitment among Indian hospitality students (Mensah et al., 2024).

Psychological resources, including hope and adaptive coping, moderate academic stressors, thereby promoting homeostasis and resilience (Jing & Xu, 2025). Students possessing elevated psychological capital—encompassing hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism—adeptly navigate adversities, forestalling burnout (Batta et al., 2025; Elshaer et al., 2024; Huang et al., 2025; Moreno-Montero et al., 2024). By amalgamating the Stressor-Strain-Outcome Model, Conservation of Resources Theory, and Cognitive Appraisal Theory, the study redresses

lacunae in psychological disengagement within high-stakes academic milieus in collectivist cultures (Chen et al., 2025), elucidating how cultural norms configure stressor interpretation and coping responses (Prasad et al., 2022).

Defining Stress in the Hospitality Education Context

Stress is defined as a psychological response to a perceived mismatch between environmental demands and coping resources, especially pronounced in hospitality's demanding milieu (Kao, 2024). It differentiates eustress, which spurs development, from distress, which yields adverse consequences (Rioli et al., 2012). Elevated academic psychological capital buffers stress impacts by enabling positive stressor reappraisal, amplifying eustress, and attenuating distress (Chua et al., 2018; Varadwaj & Mahapatra, 2022). These resources are essential for handling intensive curricula and emotional labor requirements, such as regulation and compliance with display rules (Huang et al., 2023). Psychological detachment functions as a primary coping strategy, yet it is hindered in collectivist cultures by societal norms that blur academic-personal boundaries (Chen et al., 2025). This research explores how cultural influences, psychological capital, and familial support convert stressors into eustress, thereby boosting engagement and performance (Chua et al., 2018; Elshaer et al., 2024; Saleem et al., 2022; Varadwaj & Mahapatra, 2022).

Understanding Emotional Labor in Indian Hospitality Education

Emotional labor involves regulating expressions to align with cultural norms and professional display rules (Bhattachayra & Dasgupta, 2021), often requiring suppression of true feelings and feigning desired emotions, leading to dissonance and strain (Bhattachayra & Dasgupta, 2021). Sustained positive displays drain resources, reduce engagement—particularly under stressors like favoritism—and increase burnout (Budeanu et al., 2024). Culturally appropriate interventions, including emotional intelligence training, stress management, and deep acting, are vital (Hwang et al., 2021; Larena, 2024; Liu, 2017; Pérez-Jorge et al., 2025). Institutions should emphasize emotion regulation training, supportive leadership, and experiential simulations of real-world scenarios (Dhanpat, 2016; Elshaer et al., 2025; Hings et al., 2019; Kwon et al., 2019; Liu et al., 2025; Nath & Pandey, 2025; Rafiq et al., 2020; Ruíz-Ortega & Martos, 2025; Üngüren et al., 2025).

Interplay Between Stress and Emotional Labor

In hospitality education, surface acting (feigning emotions) heightens stress and exhaustion (Dhanpat, 2016), while deep acting (genuinely feeling required emotions) reduces dissonance and enhances authenticity (Choi et al., 2019; Zhao et al., 2020). Chronic surface acting causes strain and burnout, necessitating institutional support like stress management and emotional intelligence training to improve performance and well-being (Ibrahim et al., 2024; Jeung et al., 2018; Pooja & Bhoomadevi, 2023; Ullah et al., 2023). These measures prepare students for emotional demands and build resilience (Mokhtar & Krishnan, 2023).

Recognizing educators' emotional labor is key to supportive environments (Renes, 2017). However, neoliberal managerialism and techno-rational pedagogy harm staff health, pastoral care, and emotional curriculum integration (Renes, 2017; Zhang, 2021). Hospitality education must integrate emotional competence holistically, promoting empathetic practices (Zheng et al., 2024). Faculty training should balance self- and other-focused emotional labor, modeling regulation to prevent burnout (Rickett & Morris, 2020; Xiao et al., 2024). Neoliberal metrics prioritizing outputs over values undermine academic freedom and relational teaching (Berry & Cassidy, 2013; Giousmpasoglou & Pantelidis, 2025; Jones, 2017; Mandalaki et al., 2021; Subban et al., 2022; Toroghi et al., 2024).

Impact on Student Well-being and Performance

Emotional demands in hospitality education elevate stress, anxiety, and burnout, impairing performance and readiness (Xu et al., 2026). Institutions must integrate mental health support and emotional intelligence training to develop coping and emotional regulation skills (Abery & Shipman, 2016). Longitudinal studies can assess how these skills translate to workplace success (Völker et al., 2023). Emotional intelligence enhances performance, relationships, and efficacy through emotional development (Völker et al., 2023), though barriers like academic snobbery and managerialism hinder vocational integration (Giousmpasoglou, 2025). Faculty pressures from workloads and external demands widen the industry-academia gap (Cheng, 2017; Giousmpasoglou & Pantelidis, 2025; Lugosi & Jameson, 2017; Zhang, 2021). Rewarding emotional competency aligns pedagogy with needs, yielding resilient graduates (Dhanpat, 2016; Goh & Kim, 2020; Renes, 2017). These steps foster well-being, growth, and challenge resilience (Giousmpasoglou, 2025; Hashim et al., 2025; Park, 2024; Tremonte-Freydefont et al., 2024; Völker et al., 2023).

Prevalence of Stressors in Hospitality Education

Educators face stress from teaching, research, and administration, making emotional labor an unrewarded burden leading to burnout (Cotter et al., 2024; Hart & Rodgers, 2023; Laundon & Grant-Smith, 2023; Low, 2020) and reduced instructional quality (Berry & Cassidy, 2013; Giousmpasoglou & Pantelidis, 2025; Lugosi & Jameson, 2017). Faculty programs in emotional intelligence and social-emotional learning improve interactions, management, resilience, satisfaction, retention, and cross-cultural skills—crucial in India (Mukhemar et al., 2025; Nguyen-Thi et al., 2024; Ramírez & Álvarez, 2023; Ramírez-Asís et al., 2020). Students encounter rigorous curricula, assignments, limited support, finances, and career worries (Santhumayor & Goveas, 2023). Social-emotional learning builds emotional intelligence, resilience, adaptability, soft skills, awareness, empathy, engagement, and readiness (Barnes et al., 2023; Kumar et al., 2022; Manjare, 2024; Raza & Parween, 2025; Stangl et al., 2024; Wang & Ishak, 2025).

Manifestations of Emotional Labor Among Students

Hospitality demands emotional labor, displaying required emotions regardless of true feelings (Abrian et al., 2024). Surface acting (suppressing authenticity for positivity) causes strain, exhaustion, dissonance, burnout, and low satisfaction (Deale & Lee, 2024; Zaluski & Makara-Studzińska, 2023). Internships reinforce this, increasing stress without relief (Sable & Bhatt, 2023)(Sable & Bhatt, 2023)(Völker et al., 2023)(Misra, 2023)(Aithal & Aithal, 2020)(- et al., 2024)(Swargiary, 2023)(Kaurav et al., 2021)(BHAKAT, 2025)(Shukla et al., 2022)(Gupta & Verma, 2025)(Ashokkumar et al., 2024)(Sharma, 2025)(Mangamma, 2025)(Kulal et al., 2024)(Shrivastava & Shrivastava, 2024)egulation training (Gómez et al., 2025). Pedagogies must prioritize emotional intelligence and resilience via modules on regulation, empathy, stress management, and deep acting (Baluyut, 2025; Khuadthong et al., 2025; Larsen, 2023). Neglect fosters inauthenticity, low motivation, attrition, cynicism, and distress (Holman et al., 2008; Matina, 2025). Frameworks incorporating deep acting align feelings with expressions, enhancing resilience, identity, agency, and competencies (Abrian et al., 2024; Borchardt & Banker, 2024; El-Sherbeeney et al., 2024; Hao & Tam, 2025; Hu, 2023; Wang et al., 2025; Xu et al., 2020).

Relationship Between Stress and Emotional Labor

Emotional labor via surface acting and suppression intensifies stress, causing dissonance, anxiety, exhaustion, burnout, and imbalance among students and professionals (Bok & Yeo, 2022; Burić et al., 2021; Hofmann & Stokburger-Sauer, 2017; Lynch & Klima, 2023; Ma et al., 2021; Xiong et al., 2022, 2025; Yoo, 2023). Deep acting yields fewer negatives (Çetin et al., 2018; Cheng et al., 2023; Dsouza et al., 2023; Kim & Park, 2023; Lynch & Klima, 2023; Xu et al., 2020). Interventions like regulation training, stress management, mindfulness, reappraisal, resilience, wellness, reflection, and experiential activities promote well-being, self-efficacy, and deep acting (Cheng & Tung, 2019; Du & Liu, 2024; El-Sherbeeney et al., 2024; Khatri et al., 2024; Landon et al., 2025; Li, 2025; Mensah et al., 2024; Nath & Pandey, 2025; Patee et al., 2025; Pérez-Jorge et al., 2025; Rahmasari et al., 2025; Salimzadeh et al., 2021; Zhang, 2024). Emotional intelligence and error cultures add benefits (Cheng et al., 2023; Hu, 2023; Kim & Park, 2023).

Impact on Academic Performance and Mental Health

Emotional labor, chronic stress, and demands harm mental health, causing anxiety, depression, and poor performance (Mašková, 2023; Younas et al., 2025). Self-awareness, regulation, and social awareness improve stress management, focus, networks, and collaboration (Gonçalves et al., 2025). Support like mentorship buffers surface acting's toll (Hu et al., 2023; Lam et al., 2021). Deep acting fosters positive integration (Zhao et al., 2025). In Indian hospitality education, deep acting, stress management, and resilience mitigate burdens (Zhao et al., 2025). Workshops on awareness, empathy, and regulation enhance outcomes (Alhur, 2025; Ullah et al., 2023). Mental health resources—counseling, peers, mentorship, flexibility—build support (Aithal & Aithal, 2023; Chaudhry et al., 2024; Huang et al., 2023). Authentic expression boosts resilience and management (Ansari et al., 2020; Bhattachayra & Dasgupta, 2021; Elshaer et al., 2025; Nag et al., 2023; Odame & Pandey, 2023; Rana et al., 2023; Ruíz-Ortega & Martos, 2025; Xuan, 2025).

NEP 2020 Reforms and Comparative Analysis with Global Trends

India's National Education Policy 2020 promotes a holistic, multidisciplinary approach, integrating emotional intelligence and stress management into hospitality education while aligning with global trends emphasizing socio-emotional competencies (Ibrahim et al., 2024; Ullah et al., 2023). It shifts to student-centric learning with flexible course selection,

foundational emotional skills development, interdisciplinary studies, vocational training, experiential learning, and critical thinking.

Implications and Recommendations

Given these policy advancements, hospitality education in India must integrate NEP 2020 tenets into pedagogical frameworks to prepare students for service delivery's psychological demands (Sharma, 2025). This entails embedding socio-emotional learning, psychological resilience, and adaptive coping modules into core programs (Sharma, 2025). Faculty training is also essential to deliver emotional intelligence and stress management content effectively, aligning with NEP 2020's vision while addressing industry needs for emotional intelligence and adaptability in a tech-driven landscape (Anand, 2024; Misra, 2023). Incorporating experiential and inquiry-based learning will enable students to apply emotional regulation in simulated scenarios, ensuring practical proficiency in high-pressure situations and enhancing service quality and well-being (-, 2023; Sachdeva & Latesh, 2023). NEP 2020's holistic, multidisciplinary focus supports integrating soft skills like communication and critical thinking for effective emotional labor (Kumar, 2021; Singh, 2023). Beyond curricula, support systems such as mentorship and mindfulness-based interventions foster self-awareness and emotional regulation, building resilience for demanding service environments (Kassie, 2023; Lasekan et al., 2025).

Strategies for Stress Management Training

Stress management training in hospitality education needs a multi-faceted approach. It should include education on emotions, practical coping skills, and reflection, tailored to service stress and personal authenticity (Hings et al., 2019). Programs must prepare students for industry needs, including emotional labor and cross-cultural skills (Vogl et al., 2025). Student-centered methods, such as active learning, hands-on activities, and simulations, build emotional intelligence for complex interactions (Carlisle et al., 2023; Park, 2024). Creativity and self-management training develops future leaders (Joneidi et al., 2025). Universities should offer faculty emotional awareness and coping training to counter managerial pressures (Berry & Cassidy, 2013; Renes, 2017). Hotels can use emotional labor metrics in HR evaluations for early monitoring (Liu, 2017). Structured systems with clear goals, content, support, and assessments—using simulations—help manage stress and emotional labor, encouraging innovation and prosocial behavior (Balyalı & Aktaş, 2023; Bao & Yang, 2023; Cha et al., 2025; Giousmpasoglou, 2025; Green & Erdem, 2016; Liang, 2021; Völker et al., 2023). Yet,

university rewards often undervalue experiential teaching needed for emotional demands (Giousmpasoglou & Pantelidis, 2025; Lugosi & Jameson, 2017).

Addressing Emotional Labor Challenges

To mitigate the challenges associated with emotional labor, it is imperative to identify service-related stressors and implement comprehensive emotional regulation training alongside robust support mechanisms. A critical component entails delineating the distinctions between surface acting and deep acting, as well as their respective implications for employee well-being and service quality (Kwon et al., 2019). Deep acting has been demonstrated to diminish exhaustion and augment job satisfaction to a greater extent than surface acting (Liu et al., 2025). Curricula ought to incorporate instruction on managing difficult guest interactions through empathy, problem-solving, ethical considerations, and recognition of burnout indicators. Simulations and role-playing exercises facilitate the rehearsal of appropriate responses and alleviate uncertainties following internships (Abrian et al., 2024; Larsen, 2023). The integration of stress management techniques, such as mindfulness and deep acting, contributes to enhanced well-being and service delivery (Cheng & Zhao, 2025; Gabriel et al., 2015; Pooja & Bhoomadevi, 2023; Xu et al., 2020). Experiential learning establishes realistic expectations and mitigates early-career stress (Zhu et al., 2024). Corporate mentorship and strengthened school-industry partnerships provide essential support for interns, thereby reducing burnout (Yin et al., 2022).

Recommendations for Educators and Institutions

Educators and institutions must revise curricula to encompass not only technical competencies but also emotional intelligence and resilience training, thereby attenuating the adverse effects of emotional labor (Stangl et al., 2024). Scenario-based training is recommended to cultivate real-world emotional regulation skills (Cheng et al., 2020; Simillidou et al., 2020). Mentorship programs enable seasoned professionals to offer guidance on navigating emotional challenges (Wallace & Coughlan, 2022). Recruitment processes should prioritize candidates exhibiting deep-acting tendencies and extroversion, supplemented by training in emotional expression and problem-solving (Cheng & Tung, 2019; Üngüren et al., 2025). Fostering supportive environments, in collaboration with human resources, is essential for safeguarding intern well-being (Lee et al., 2015). Realistic industry perspectives, problem-solving abilities, proactivity, and adaptability should be promoted through alumni networks and industry collaborations (Lusby, 2017; Pala et al., 2025). Curricula should incorporate entrepreneurship, resilience courses, peer coaching, and mentoring initiatives (Khatri et al., 2024; Marinakou &

Giousmpasoglou, 2020; Rivera et al., 2021; Tews et al., 2025; Xu & Lee, 2025). Partnerships with industry stakeholders on curriculum development, career pathways, and mentorship are advisable to curb attrition rates (Binyanya & Wandolo, 2022; Lee et al., 2022; Sihombing et al., 2025). Future research should empirically evaluate the long-term efficacy of these interventions among Indian hospitality graduates employing mixed-methods approaches.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study is predicated on a literature review rather than primary empirical data, with a qualitative emphasis on Indian contexts. Future research should encompass broader geographical scopes, quantitative or mixed-methods designs, industry surveys, case studies, and longitudinal tracking of graduates (Magboo-Campo et al., 2025). Additional investigative domains include guest lectures (Gavinolla et al., 2023), regenerative tourism (Yedla & AJOON, 2022), global comparative analyses (Temizkan & Yabancı, 2020), technology-emotional labor intersections (Martins et al., 2025; Vatan et al., 2025), physiological regulation (Hsu et al., 2023), and the career ramifications of integrated education (Yende, 2025). Moreover, empirical examination of specific pedagogical interventions—such as internships and experiential modules—in fostering requisite skills is warranted, particularly amid evolving student perceptions toward diverse hospitality services beyond production-oriented tasks (State & Popescu, 2022).

CONCLUSION

Globalization, technological advancements, and escalating guest expectations have profoundly transformed the Indian hospitality sector, necessitating enhanced stress management and emotional regulation strategies within educational frameworks. Curricula must integrate resilience, coping mechanisms, and emotional intelligence to align with industry requirements (Alexakis & Jiang, 2019; Şanlıöz-Özgen et al., 2022). Essential soft skills—encompassing self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, and interpersonal competencies—are often deficient among graduates, impeding their job readiness (Basak & Khanna, 2017; Ossai et al., 2025). Local challenges, such as public-private sector disparities, warrant culturally attuned interventions (Bhattachayra & Dasgupta, 2021). Interdisciplinary approaches, experiential learning, digital technologies, and collaborative initiatives are recommended to elevate employability in the post-COVID era, alongside bolstering problem-solving and awareness (Baluyut, 2025; Basaka, 2017; Deri et al., 2023; George, 2024; Ghouri et al., 2024; Guillet et al., 2019; Jaywant, 2025; Kamarudin et al., 2023; Khuadthong et al., 2025).

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