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Crisis Communication and Furloughed Hotel Frontline Employees' Intention to Stay: The Role of Perceived Organizational Support, Job Insecurity, and Job Affect

Tabitha A. Chapital
University of New Orleans, tforet@uno.edu

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Abstract

This study investigated furloughed hotel employee's intention to stay (ITS), with their hotel and hotel industry, based upon the impact of crisis communication strategy, perceived organizational support (POS), job insecurity, and job affect following a crisis. A 2 (crisis communication strategy: apology vs. excuse) × 2 (POS: high vs. low) between subjects, factorial design was employed. The study found that apology strategy and high POS result in lower job insecurity among furloughed hotel employees. A negative correlation was also found between job insecurity and ITS with the hotel industry. These findings may support practical and theoretical implications for hoteliers, specifically on how to reduce turnover costs for hotels in a crisis and how to mitigate negative employee perceptions towards their employer during a crisis. Furthermore, recommendations on how to effectively communicate and express support to furloughed employees during a crisis could increase employees ITS with their hotel following a crisis.

Keywords: furloughed hotel employee; job insecurity; negative job affect; perceived organizational support; crisis communication; intention to stay

1. Introduction

1.1 Background and Rationale

One health crisis, to date, has notably impacted the hotel industry and its workers in unparalleled ways. On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the COVID-19 virus a pandemic (WHO, 2020a). The rapid spread of this coronavirus resulted in sudden and unprecedented changes to the operation of the industry. Many hotel workers were furloughed due to travel restrictions and lockdown mandates (Popely & Krause, 2021; Sönmez et al., 2020). According to the WHO (2020b) the coronavirus is primarily transmitted between people via respiratory droplets and person-to-person contact routes, which explains why the impact of the pandemic was so hard-hitting to the industry. As demand plummeted, hotels were forced to make significant sacrifices to survive the pandemic, specifically in the form of large-scale employee furloughs. As of April of 2020, approximately 1.6 million hotel workers were either laid off or furloughed as a result of the pandemic (American Hotel & Lodging Association [AH&LA], 2020). One year later, as of April 2021, the industry has been projected to remain at a deficit of nearly 480,000 hotel workers, compared to before the pandemic, despite bringing back 200,000 hotel jobs (AH&LA, 2021).

As this event was the first to utilize mass-furloughs in the hotel industry, the effects of furlough have not been thoroughly researched within the hotel context, and especially not from an employees' perspective. This perspective should not be shortsighted for as hotel industry performance gradually recovers (STR, 2021), hotels would want their furloughed employees to return. One study found that in contrast to other groups of working or non-working persons, furloughed employees affected by the COVID-19 pandemic tend to experience higher levels of distress (Mimoun et al., 2020), which may further translate into higher levels of turnover

intention (Labrague & de Los Santos, 2020). If hotels are unable to retain the employees they furloughed, it will lead to higher costs post-crisis as employee turnover was found to be directly linked to higher employee recruitment and training costs and lower service quality (Cho et al., 2009). Therefore, it is critical to investigate the factors that can potentially play a role on furloughed hotel employees' intention to stay (ITS).

Social Exchange Theory (SET) can be applied to study the factors that may have an impact on furloughed hotel employees' ITS. The basic notion of the SET suggests that those who perceive values from organizations tend to reciprocate more positive behaviors and less negative behaviors (Blau, 1964). Applying the SET may support rationale behind why employees engage in certain behaviors as a result of the exchange relationship they have with their employer. The Situational Crisis Communication Strategy (SCCS) hypothesizes that gauging the aspects of a crisis will better help organizations predict reputational perceptions which could further play a role on furloughed employees ITS depending upon the way in which the hotel communicated the crisis to those furloughed employees. However, a vast majority of research on crisis communication has focused on the consumer-based stakeholders perceptions on the organization's reputation (Cooley & Cooley, 2011; Coombs & Holladay, 2008; Crijns et al., 2014; Marsen, 2019; Schoofs et al., 2019). Few studies investigated how crisis communication influences the perceptions and behavior intentions of furloughed employees, especially in the hotel context. The current study focuses on two commonly practiced crisis communication strategies: excuse and apology. The excuse response strategy aims to minimize organizational responsibility through blame shifting and claiming inability to control the events that triggered the crisis; organizations taking the apology response strategy would indicate that they take full responsibility for the crisis and asks stakeholders for forgiveness (Coombs, 2007). Based on the

SET, hotels that adopted an apology response strategy during the pandemic may lead to their furloughed frontline employees to perceive a more positive relationship with their hotels and result in less negative work outcomes such as negative job affect and job insecurity, and more positive behaviors such as higher ITS than the excuse response strategy.

In addition, perceived organizational support (POS) was found to effectively alleviate employees' perception of change-related uncertainty (Cullen et al., 2014). POS refers to the extent to which employees perceive the employer values their contribution and holds concerns about their well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Previous studies indicated that POS could lead to hotel employees' positive job outcomes such as higher level of job embeddedness and organizational citizenship behaviors and lower level of turnover intentions (Akgunduz & Sanli, 2017; Chiang & Hsieh, 2012). According to the SET, higher level of POS during furlough could possibly help hotel employees maintain a positive relationship with their hotels and lead to positive work outcomes. However, it is not clear whether POS would interact with the crisis communication strategy used by hotels and influence furloughed employees' job insecurity, negative job affects, and ITS.

1.2 Problem statement

There is a significant gap in the literature addressing furloughed hotel employees. In contrast, current studies have focused on furloughed government employees, which may not be applicable to hotel employees. Primarily, furloughed government workers are notified of their unpaid leave in advance. They are often given a start date to their furlough if the days are expected to be concurrent days out of work as well as choices on the terms of their furlough, such as working four days a week instead of five (Green, 2010). How furloughed hotel workers perceive the factors surrounding their employment, or lack thereof, and what they intend to do in

response to their organizations situational crisis communication strategy (SCCS) and level of POS have been widely unexplored. The majority of studies on pandemics examine the psychological state and occupational turnover intention of current employees which, in contrast, leaves room for further study in the area of furloughed employees and their ITS with their organization or industry. Despite the vast number of employees furloughed by the COVID-19 pandemic, there is little knowledge available as to what may impact their job affect and resulting outcomes.

There is extensive research on how communication strategies during a crisis influences consumer perceptions of an organization (Coombs & Holladay, 1996; Coombs & Holladay, 2008; Mattila, 2009; Utz et al., 2013; Vassilikopoulou, 2009), but the research on this subject is more limited from the employee's perspective. The way an organization responds to a crisis may have a profound effect on not only external customers, but on internal customers as well (Guzzo, 2021). Furthermore, the lack of study on the excuse response strategy leaves a gap in consequence of its use as this strategy is commonly practiced in a crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic. It is necessary to examine which SCCS (excuse vs apology) would work more effectively on furloughed hotel employees- job insecurity, job affect, and ITS. Moreover, there are numerous POS studies in the hotel context with a focus on active employees. It is unclear whether POS would interact with SCCS and help furloughed employees maintain a positive relationship with their hotels and through a reduced level of negative impact brought on by the pandemic (e.g., negative job affects and job insecurity).

1.3 Purpose of the study

With a focus on the hotel industry, the current study seeks to investigate a gap in the literature pertaining to furloughed hotel employee's ITS with their organization and with the

industry based upon the factors of SCCS, POS, job insecurity, and negative job affect. More specifically, the study aims to examine (1) the impact of hotel crisis communication strategy on furloughed employees' ITS with the hotel and the hotel industry; (2) the impact of crisis communication strategy on furloughed hotel employees' job insecurity and negative job affects; (3) the impact of job insecurity and negative job affect on furloughed hotel employees' ITS with the hotel and the industry; and (4) the moderating role of POS on the relationships. Hence, the following research questions have been proposed:

Q1: Which hotel SCCS (apology vs excuse) works better on furloughed hotel employees' ITS with the hotel and the hotel industry?

Q2: Which hotel SCCS (apology vs excuse) works better on furloughed employees' job insecurity?

Q3: Which hotel SCCS (apology vs excuse) works better on furloughed employees' negative job affect?

Q4: To what extent are job insecurity and negative job affect associated with furloughed employees' ITS with the hotel and the hotel industry?

Q5: To what extent does furloughed employees' POS (high vs low) moderate the relationship between hotel's SCCS (apology vs excuse) and negative job affect?

Q6: To what extent does furloughed employees' POS (high vs low moderate the relationship between hotel's SCCS (apology vs excuse) and job insecurity?

Q7: To what extent does furloughed employees' POS (high vs low) moderate the relationship between hotel's SCCS (apology vs excuse) and ITS with the hotel and the hotel industry?

1.4 Significance of the study

This study is distinct from the body of research as it aims to explore areas that have several limitations in the literature. Overall, this study aims to fill the literature gap by providing empirical investigation on factors that influence furloughed hotel employees' ITS with the hotel industry following a crisis. There have been few studies that examined furloughed employees within hotels and this study is one of the first to investigate aspects that impact furloughed hotel employees' ITS within their organization as well as within the industry. In addition, the study also adds new insight to the SCCS by examining the outcomes from an employee-based stakeholders' perspective. It will also expand the current knowledge in the less studied excuse crisis communication strategy. Additionally, this study will add to the extensive body of research on both the SET and Affective Events Theory (AET) as they have limited studies pertaining to furloughed hotel employees as well. Furthermore, it will provide more understanding on how SCCS may interact with POS and impact furloughed hotel employees' job insecurity, negative job affect, and ITS with hotel and the hotel industry.

Potentially new insights on how the factors in this study relate to one another may be used to develop clear and specific crisis responses that would increase the likelihood that furloughed hotel employees ITS with their organization. Furthermore, this study may support practical implications such as how to reduce turnover costs for hotels in a crisis, maintaining reputation amongst employee stakeholders during a crisis, and an understanding of negative event perceptions from furloughed hotel employees. The study can provide recommendations to hoteliers on how to effectively communicate and show support to their furloughed employees during the crisis, and which communication strategy may yield the highest ITS amongst furloughed employees. These recommendations may help to minimize negative job affect, job

insecurity, and both organizational and occupational turnover intention in furloughed employees. Utilizing the information in this study could ultimately assist organizations on reestablishing their hotel by ensuring their furloughed employees' return which would support talent retention and cost savings for hotels post-crisis and for similar crisis in the future.

1.5 Definition of key terms

- *Affective events theory*- a theoretical framework stating that organizational events result in positive or negative emotional responses in employees which then affect their attitudes and work behavior (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996).
- *Employee furlough*- a mandatory leave of employment without compensation for an amount of time (Halbesleben et al., 2013).
- *Job affect*- the various positive and negative emotional states felt by the employee regarding their organization (Thomson, 2007).
- *Intention to stay with hotel*- an employees' plan and willingness to stay with their organization (Cho et al., 2009).
- *Intention to stay with industry*- an employees' plan and willingness to stay with their industry.
- *Situational crisis communication strategy*- the crisis response chosen by an organization depending upon the type of crisis, the organizations degree of responsibility in causing the crisis, and the potential threat to the organizations reputation as a result of the crisis (Coombs, 2007).
    - *Apology*- the crisis communication strategy within the Rebuild category that accepts complete responsibility for the crisis and seeks forgiveness from stakeholders (Coombs, 2007).

    - *Excuse*- the crisis communication strategy within the Diminish category that lessens crisis responsibility through rejecting intent to do harm or declaring inability to control the external events that caused the crisis (Coombs, 2007).
- *Perceived organizational support*- the extent to which an employee perceives that their organization values their work contribution and genuinely cares about their personal well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1986)
- *Job insecurity*- the extent to which an employee is concerned with potential and unplanned job loss (Witte, 1999)
- *Social exchange theory*- a theoretical framework based in social interactions which holds that a relationship between two parties may be affected, potentially terminated, when a cost-benefit analysis is performed by one or both parties to determine the risks and advantages of continuing the relationship (Emerson, 1976).

1.6 Organization of study

This thesis paper is organized into six chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the background and rationale followed by the problem statement, purpose, and significance of the study. Chapter 1 also includes research questions and definitions of key terms used in the study. Chapter 2 focuses on a thorough review of the literature on the variable in this study, which include furloughed employees, ITS, organizational crisis communication strategy, job insecurity, negative job affect, perceived organizational support, and the supporting theories of Social Exchange Theory and Affective Events Theory. Chapter 2 also develops hypotheses and presents the research framework. Chapter 3 explains the research methodology in detail including how the sample population was decided and how the data collection will be performed. This chapter will also discuss the measurement scales, the construct of the scenarios, and data analysis. Next, Chapter 4

will report the research results. The discussion, implications, and limitations of the study will be reviewed in Chapter 5.

2. Literature review

2.1 Furloughed Employee and Intention to Stay

When a hotel is impacted by a crisis that leads to a drop in demand, they may implement employee furloughs to lessen the financial challenges that arise. Furlough is defined as a mandatory leave of employment without compensation for any period of time (Halbesleben et al., 2013). This strategy has most notably been used by the U.S. federal government resulting in a majority of the research on furloughs to be limited to this group of workers (Baranik et al., 2018; Green, 2010; Halbesleben et al., 2013; Hohman et al., 2013). One study examined the furloughs endured by state workers as a result of the 2008 global recession and determined that organizations attempted to persuade workers to feel thankful for not being laid-off and found that although many workers were in fact thankful, they were not content with the loss of income and uncertainty surrounding their job status (Green, 2010). Hohman et al. (2013) investigated how furloughs affected the turnover intentions of social workers and uncovered that when organizations ignored the feelings of impacted employees, especially regarding financial strain, their intention to return decreased. To a slightly different focus, Baranik et al. (2019) explored the concept of personal resource loss as well as the negative affects furloughed employees felt weeks after they returned to work. They noted that furloughs may result in the employee experiencing stress, distrust, and an altered view in perception towards the organization over uncertainty from the loss of job status and income (Baranik et al., 2019). Although these findings are important for establishing the context of employee furloughs, it is important to note that the literature discussed may not be completely applicable to furloughed hotel employees.

The hotel industry was not largely affected by this method of temporary work reductions until the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020. According to the AH&LA (2021), 8.3 million Americans worked in the hotel industry before the COVID-19 pandemic led to a loss of approximately 4 million of those jobs. The extent of this job loss is likely to have significant impacts on furloughed hotel employees' ITS. However, much of the literature available on the impact of COVID-19 only emphasized on the turnover intention of hotel employees who remained employed throughout the pandemic (Abuelnasr, 2020; Bufquin et al., 2021). For instance, Abuelnasr (2020) found a strong positive relationship between hotel employees' perceived job insecurity and intention to quit that could be negatively influenced by high organizational commitment and trust. The effects furlough could have on hotel employees' ITS with their current hotel, or even within the hotel industry altogether were limited.

The use of ITS and intention to leave are often utilized interchangeably within the literature and have a focus on implications for employee retention (Cho et al., 2009). Although the subject of this current study involves employees who are not actively working, an employee's intention and ultimate decision to stay may affect industry turnover in the long run. The term turnover is defined as the rate at which workers leave an organization and are replaced (Rhodes & Doering, 1983), which has been linked to higher costs for organizations overtime (Akgunduz & Sanli, 2017). Previous studies demonstrated that turnover intention could be used to predict employees' actual turnover (Cho et al., 2009). Employees may develop higher level of turnover intentions due to various reasons, but most notably over a lack of leadership, understaffing, job insecurity, low job satisfaction, job embeddedness, stress, and unfavorable environmental conditions (Akgunduz & Sanli, 2017; Bufquin et al., 2021; Burrows et al., 2021; Homan et al., 2013; Lee et al., O'Neill & Davis, 2011; Rhodes & Doering, 1983; Robinson et al.,

2014). Additionally, factors such as perceived organizational support, organizational commitment, and management practices have been thoroughly researched and found to effectively reduce employees' turnover intention (Cho et al., 2009).

Similar to turnover intention, ITS was shown to be an effective predictor of actual employee turnover (Brown et al., 2012; Cho et al., 2009). While turnover intention has been heavily studied, factors surrounding ITS have not been explored as closely. Cho et al. (2009) has defined ITS as an employees' plan to stay with their organization or industry. This current study will focus on two aspects of ITS, ITS with furloughed employees' current hotel and ITS within the hotel industry overall. Studies have discovered that higher levels of perceived organizational support have been linked to a positive effect on employees' ITS with their organization (Brown et al., 2012; Cho et al., 2009; Li et al., 2020). Furthermore, previous studies have suggested that a person's ITS with an organization is the result of a multifaceted decision-making process (Brown et al., 2013; Mappamiring et al., 2020). A furloughed hotel employees decision-making is important for industry leaders to further understand how organizational decisions influence the potential intentions and behaviors of their employees, particularly during a crisis. Furloughed employees with low ITS with the hotel may seek out work in another hotel, which could result in organizations losing their talent to competitors as well as potentially losing some of their loyal client-base. In addition, the hotel industry may experience a slow recovery and could potentially leave employees furloughed for extended periods of time. This amount of uncertainty in the industry could result in furloughed employees' low ITS within the industry and looking for alternative work, which in turn may negatively impact the hotel industry's post-pandemic recovery. As employee retention is highly sought after by the hotel industry, ITS could be a powerful tool to help keep employee turnover rate low.

2.2 Situational Crisis Communication Strategy

When a crisis occurs, an organization will likely need to communicate the information surrounding the impact and its repercussions to their staff. SCCS is defined as the crisis response chosen by an organization depending upon the type of crisis, the organizations degree of responsibility in causing the crisis, and the potential threat to the organizations reputation as a result of the crisis (Coombs, 2007). The literature on SCCS is extensive and reflects upon the different crisis communication strategies utilized by organizations to best address specific impacts (Claeys et al., 2010; Cooley & Cooley, 2011; Coombs, 2007; Coombs & Holladay, 1996; Coombs & Holladay, 2008; Crijns et al., 2014; Marsen, 2019; Schoofs et al., 2019; Utz et al., 2013).

The SCCS hypothesizes that gauging the aspects of a crisis will better help organizations predict reputational perceptions and pressures (Coombs, 2007). According to Coombs (2007), the SCCS is made up of three primary response strategies: Deny, Diminish, and Rebuild. Each category is further broken down into specific strategies depending upon how an organization chooses to pursue their response to a crisis. The Deny category utilizes strategies which aim to disconnect the organization from the crisis and include *Attack the accuser*, *Denial*, and *Scapegoat*. The Diminish category implements strategies which attempt to downplay the seriousness of the crisis or, in other words, lessen the correlation between the organization and the crisis. The Diminish strategies include *Excuse* and *Justification*. The third category, Rebuild, employs strategies which take blame and positive action to seek forgiveness from stakeholders and attempt to increase stakeholder perceptions towards the organization. The Rebuild strategies are *Compensation* and *Apology* (Coombs, 2007). For the purpose of this current research, two subcategories were measured in the framework; the Excuse strategy from Diminish and the

Apology strategy from Rebuild. Coombs and Holladay (2019) put forth SCCT recommendations for organizations based on the crisis type and persons impacted. They suggested that detailed information should be given to victims along with sympathy for their situation (Coombs & Holladay, 2019). Furthermore, crisis history is an important variable when deciding upon which strategy will be most useful, as one can only ask for forgiveness so many times before shareholders catch on (Coombs, 2007; Coombs & Holladay, 2019).

When an organization uses the excuse response strategy, they deny the intent to inflict harm as they were unable to control the events surrounding the cause of the crisis. In contrast, the apology response is utilized when an organization takes full responsibility for the crisis and seeks forgiveness from the stakeholders (Coombs, 2007). The apology strategy has been a popular choice for many organizations facing crisis and with a pandemic, organizations had to but likely did not want to participate in mass furloughs. By far, the apology strategy is the most researched and implemented crisis communication strategy used to date. Coombs and Holladay (2008) examined apology's predominant role in crisis communication due to its ease of use in victim-centered crisis and noted that, comparisons between very different SCCS may raise issues when one strategy addresses the victims concerns while the other does not. A previous study on restoring reputation through the use of SCCS found that organizations who used rebuild strategies, such as apology, experienced more positive outcomes than those who used diminish strategies, such as excuse (Claeys et al., 2010).

Regarding a pandemic-type crisis, the excuse strategy may fit the hotels situation since the resulting impact of this event type is entirely outside of their control. However, research on the excuse strategy is more limited than the apology strategy and with a significant gap in the area of hotels. Cooley and Cooley (2011) looked at the SCCS through the bankruptcy of General

Motors and found that General Motors used a few SCCS in order to reconcile their financial crisis with public relations but avoided the use of apology. The study revealed that the organization utilized excuse strategies as an attempt to showcase the company "as part of a larger, suffering global economy" (p. 209-210). The company decided not to use apology as it did not want, in part to hold blame, to contradict the diminish strategies used. However, when the crisis involves victims, the literature suggests that they want an apology (Coombs & Holladay, 2008).

The current literature on SCCS reflects the use of crisis communication strategies towards consumer stakeholders and organizational reputation (Coombs & Holladay, 1996; Coombs & Holladay, 2008; Mattila, 2009; Utz et al., 2013; Vassilikopoulou, 2009). Although the current literature establishes SCCS from an external stakeholder's perspective, studies are limited from the internal stakeholder's perspective, especially with regard to furloughed hotel employees. Further research on SCCS from the perspective of employee hotel stakeholders following a crisis is needed. Additionally, many of the studies to date are still conceptual whereas this current study is one of the few to be empirical in nature with regard to the apology strategy.

2.3 Job Insecurity and Negative Job Affect

The term *job insecurity* has been well researched in the literature; however, it has not been thoroughly researched with regards to furloughed hotel employees. For the purpose of this current study, job insecurity will be defined as the concern an individual feels towards potential and unplanned loss of their job (Witte, 1999). The psychological state of job insecurity may be positive or negative depending on how secure a person feels with the future of their job.

General research on job insecurity has revealed that job insecurity leads to many negative impacts to both the workplace and the workers (Çinar et al., 2014). One example noted that job insecurity led to decreases in job performance and higher nonattendance behaviors amongst employees (Karatepe et al., 2020). Similarly, employee perceptions on job insecurity have been found to yield negative effects on hotel employees work engagement which then influences turnover intention (Jung et al., 2020). Another study documented the effects of job insecurity being positively related to intention to quit (Ismail, 2015) meaning that higher levels of job insecurity during a crisis could decrease ITS. In the literature, job insecurity has demonstrated numerous negative impacts to mental well-being for workers (Çinar et al., 2014; Wilson et al., 2020; Witte, 1999).

The research by Vo-Thanh et al. (2020) focuses on the COVID-19 crisis and how perceived health risks affect job insecurity. This study proposes that job insecurity is the result of the combined threats to ones' work including potential exposure to illness, reduced hours, loss of insurance, and a decline in the work environment (Vo-Thanh et al., 2020). Factors such as the potential to become sick combined with a loss of insurance and a reduction in work could heavily contribute to negative psychological states of an individual. Furthermore, with support of SET, Vo-Thanh et al. (2020) suggests that an organizations crisis response plays a role on employees' attitudes towards their employer as organizations demonstrating good-will during a crisis is more likely to result in the employees' reciprocation of positive behaviors. Another study on job insecurity and COVID-19, by Abuelnasr (2020), found that employee perceptions on job insecurity were positively related to their intention to leave and that those who would leave would look for work outside of the industry.

The literature reflects comprehensive research on job insecurity considering currently employed individuals, but there is limited research on the job insecurity from a furloughed employees' perspective (Abuelnasr, 2020; Çinar et al., 2014; Ismail, 2015; Karatepe et al., 2020; Vo-Thanh et al., 2020; Wilson et al., 2020; Witte, 1999). Little is known whether hotel's SCCS during a crisis would impact a furloughed employees' job insecurity, which may further influence their ITS with the hotel and within the hotel industry.

The literature considers the term *affect* to be relatively inclusive of emotional states such as excitement, happiness, fear, guilt, nervousness, and anger (Anderson et al., 2019; Thompson, 2007; Tinaztepe, 2012). The development of affect is based on psycho-physiological constructs that bridge the physical and cognitive processes (Watson et al., 1988). To narrow the scope further, *job affect* is defined as the various positive and negative emotional states felt by the employee regarding their organization (Thomson, 2007). In the literature, a central focus on affective states is for the implications they have on employee moods, behaviors, and attitudes (Ashton-James & Ashkanasy, 2008; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). However, the researchers also point out that emotional states fluctuate over time which make them difficult to study, therefore they suggest that affective driven decisions made by employees, such as ITS with their organization, are the result of a person's collective affective history with their workplace (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Previous research suggests that affective responses influence cognitive decision-making, specifically noting that most negative affective states may motivate an individual to change their personal situation (Ashton-James & Ashkanasy, 2008). Furthermore, studies have related negative work events directly to negative emotions (Basch & Fisher, 1998; Shi & Gordon, 2019). Basch and Fisher (1998) surveyed hotel employees on work events that triggered emotions. Their research found enough common themes to categorize thirteen

antecedents that generated negative affective responses at work: *acts of work colleges, acts of management, acts of customers, lack of goal achievement, lack of recognition, task problems, making mistakes, lack of influence or control, company policies, external environment, physical situations, workload,* and *personal problems* (Basch & Fisher, 1998). The researchers also linked the above categories to emotional responses. For example, lack of influence or control was associated with worry while positive acts of management were linked to optimism (Basch & Fisher, 1998).

In contrast to other studies which measure employee job affect in the workplace (Ashton-James & Ashkanasy, 2008; Basch & Fisher 1998; Halbesleben et al., 2013; Yu et al., 2021), the current study aims to measure the NJA of furloughed employees as research suggests that the NJA of furloughed hotel employees has been largely ignored in the literature. As negative affect can stand independent from positive affect (Watson et al., 1988) and the nature of being furloughed presents as negative emotions in furloughed workers (Halbesleben et al., 2013), the current study will only examine the negative affective states as it aims to fill the literature gap by using a furloughed hotel employee sample.

2.4 Perceived Organizational Support

The term of perceived organizational support (POS) is defined as the extent to which an organization leads an employee to feel that they are cared for and that their contributions to the organization are valued (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Organizations who express support to their employees typically create a reciprocity dynamic to which employees perform better in exchange for favorable treatment and rewards (Eisenberger et al., 1986). The literature on POS has been thoroughly reviewed and examined alongside several

different variables (Ahmad & Zafar, 2018; Akgunduz & Sanli, 2017; Cho et al., 2009; Cullen et al., 2014; Eisenberger et al., 1986; Eisenberger et al., 2001; Karatepe, 2011; Li et al., 2020; Rhoades et al., 2001; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Shi & Gordon, 2019). According to Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002), the antecedents which positively influence an employees' POS include *supervisor support, fairness, organizational rewards,* and *job conditions.* Generally, employees perceived higher levels of support when they felt they were treated fairly compared to colleges (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Additionally, a motivational environment with opportunity and work recognition increases POS (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Furthermore, employees look to their organization for answers when they are unable to make sense of the situation and more likely to hold the organization accountable when they are left unanswered (Aria et al., 2019; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Studies demonstrated that POS could result in positive *job-related affect, enhanced organizational commitment, job involvement, performance, and reduced level of strains, desire to stay,* and *withdrawal behavior* (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Additionally, research suggests that POS is subjective and constructed on the information available to the individual at any given time (Aria et al., 2019).

According to the literature, an organization's use of reciprocity influences an employees' POS which may then generate affective commitment in staff (Eisenberger et al., 2001). Moreover, Eisenberger et al. (2001) examined the association between POS and an employees' felt obligation towards the organization and discovered that each of the variables mentioned had a cascade effect; POS contributed to a workers felt obligation towards their employer and behaved accordingly, which then improved affective commitment towards the employer. Organizations who show high levels of support are also more likely to see reduced absenteeism (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Furthermore, research has determined that employees respond more

positively to organizational change, even believing that the change will benefit them, when higher levels of organizational support are perceived (Eisenberger et al., 1986).

Shi and Gordon (2019) examined how POS versus supervisor support impacted hospitality managers' psychological contract and work engagement. Supported by the literature behind POS, their research argues that employees who receive POS may feel more obliged in assisting the organization on reaching their goals (Shi and Gordon, 2019). Additionally, studies on employees' POS have found that organizational behavior may indicate how supported employees feel if the appropriate amount of support is delivered in response to adverse workplace incidents (Aria et al., 2019). Moreover, the literature suggests that the POS antecedents play a critical role on employee ITS (Cho et al., 2009; Ghazali et al., 2014; Li et al., 2020). Particularly, the research by Cho et al., (2009) used a sample of hospitality employees and found a positive relationship between POS and employees ITS. Although POS has been deeply explored, the literature is extremely limited on furloughed employees leaving the effects of POS on this population in need of further investigation. Furthermore, there are limitations in the literature pertaining to the relationship between POS and employees' ITS with the industry. The current study aims to fill in the gaps with a furloughed hotel employee sample and examines the moderating role of POS on the relationship between hotels' SCCS and furloughed employees' job insecurity, NJA, and ITS.

2.5 Theories and Hypotheses Development

2.5.1 Social Exchange Theory

The Social Exchange Theory (SET) framework can be applied to analyze and understand human behavior and relationships (Emerson, 1976). At its core, the SET holds that two or more

parties, who have something valuable to exchange, may establish a mutually beneficial relationship (Emerson, 1976). These exchanges exist be between individuals, organizations, or individuals and organizations. Furthermore, the exchange agreement may be presented in writing or assumed through recurring reinforcement (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Emerson, 1976). Moreover, trust is an important component in the exchange as each member of the party operates on a willingness to be vulnerable to any potential acts that may impact their party (Mayer et al., 1995).

One strategy that improves the successfulness of an arrangement is the norm of reciprocity, which has been established as an important factor for each party to consider (Settoon et al., 1996; Shi & Gordon, 2019). The norm of reciprocity warrants that one answers to a positive act with another positive act (Settoon et al., 1996). However, in some reciprocal exchanges, rules may be negotiated between parties prior to an agreement in hope of achieving a beneficial relationship. In an organizational setting, employees may negotiate pay and then accept a job with the understanding that they will perform duties within the scope of their role, for an organization, in exchange for compensation (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Additionally, the terms and conditions of these relationships are subject to analysis by party members at any point in time. For example, if one party member were to perform a cost-benefit analysis and determine that the cost of continuing the partnership is higher than the reward, they may choose to end the relationship (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). The exchange is able to maintain a mutually beneficial balance between the two parties so long as rules are followed. This requires each party to hold their own self-interest and interdependence are at the forefront of the exchange (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005), while remaining considerate of the other party (Settoon et al., 1996).

The SET is extensive, and its applicability has been a strong and useful support for many different types of exchange arguments (Baldwin, 1978; Cook, 1977; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Emerson, 1976; Shi & Gordon, 2019). Despite this theory's popularity and high applicability, there are limited studies on how this theory can be applied to furloughed hotel employees.

2.5.2 Affective Events Theory

The framework of AET by Weiss and Cropanzano (1996) presented a foundation for emotional reactions to a job in the workplace. The AET argues that employees experience affective responses, triggered by organizational events, that result in various changes in the moods, attitudes, and behavior intentions they hold towards their workplace (Ashton-James & Ashkanasy, 2008; Ashton-James & Ashkanasy, 2005; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). At the core of this theory, it often aims to predict job satisfaction (attitudes) and job performance (behaviors). The AET suggests that employees experience fluctuations in moods and emotions which result in a cumulative affective experience (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). The collective emotional experience results in the overall workplace attitudes and behavior intentions of employees. In understanding emotion, research has looked towards mood in the workplace. Some research on positive and negative moods in the workplace revealed that negative moods may signal an imbalance to the individuals cognitive state requiring more analytical thought on the matter compared to positive moods (Ashkanasy et al., 2002). Additionally, negative mood in the workplace has an influence on inconsistent behaviors, withdrawal behaviors, and negative perceptions (Ashkanasy et al., 2002). In line with the research by Ashkanasy et al. (2002), affective reactions at work influence an individual's cognition and decision-making process (Ashton-James & Ashkanasy, 2008). The research breaks the decision-making process down into

two types. The first is affect-driven behavior, which is predominantly a result of direct emotional responses to a workplace event, and the second is judgement-driven, which takes more thought and consideration of the situation after the affective response (Ashton-James & Ashkanasy, 2008; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). This research suggests that the cognitive states induced by affective responses are more likely to increase problem solving thoughts which may influence behavior intentions.

The work by Weiss and Cropanzano (1996) has been a major contribution to AET but has focused more of the attributes of the theory whilst ignoring what specific antecedents result in an affective response. They also believed workplace events to be more inter-organizational, while Ashton-James and Ashkanasy (2005) suggested affective responses to events can be extra-organizational as well. Some research has noted aversive job conditions as being the most common internal event to trigger an affective state amongst employees, while organizational change has been considered the most common affect inducing, external work event (Basch & Fisher, 1998; Ashton-James & Ashkanasy, 2005).

The AET has countless implications for understanding affective states in response to workplace events, but there are limitations in the literature with respect to the affective state of furloughed hotel employees. There are also limitations on how SCCS may potentially impact furloughed employees' affective states, which may further influence their ITS.

2.5.3 Hypotheses Development

Study projected that hotel industry pre-pandemic employment is not expected to fully recover until 2023 (AH&LA, 2021), which could leave many hotel employees on an ambiguous, extended furlough. Although hotel employees on furlough are not actively exchanging with their

organizations as originally negotiated, the employer may still engage in other types of social exchange (such as POS) with the employee. Furloughed employees are still employed by the employer, and it is up to the employer to maintain a good standing with the furloughed employees until the exchange relationship can be reinstated by the hotel. The SET supports that when hotels show that they value their employees, the employees are more inclined to reciprocate positive behaviors in-turn (Blau, 1964). Hotels who maintain a relationship with their furloughed employees will communicate they still value the employee which will decrease negative employee behaviors and increase employee ITS with the hotel compared to those who do not.

The experience of being furloughed may lead some employees to feel disposable to their hotel and the use of crisis communication may play a major role in their ITS with the hotel and the hotel industry. Apology strategy may increase furloughed hotel employees' ITS as the hotel attempts to seek forgiveness from the employee. In comparison, the excuse strategy would instead argue that all hotels have furloughed their employees and that they have no fault in the decision. Based on the basic notions of the SET, employees who perceive values from organizations tend to reciprocate more positive behaviors and less negative behaviors (Blau, 1964). Furloughed hotel employees tend to form a less negative exchange relationship with the hotel when the apology communication strategy is used than the excuse strategy. Furloughed employees may perceive staying with the hotel and the industry generates more gains than loss and thus lead to a higher level of ITS with both the hotel and the industry post pandemic.

The crisis communication aims to repair reputational damages towards an organization and should therefore attempt to lessen negative attributes surrounding the event, such as job insecurity. The SET contends that challenging one's perceptions, in this case how the employee

viewed their hotel prior to being furloughed, could lead one into an uncertain state as they work to reconcile their situation. Furthermore, organizational downsizing has been linked to higher job insecurity (Ugboro, 2006) suggesting that furloughed employees will feel very uncertain about their job and future with their hotel. Based on the SET, the relationship between furloughed hotel employee and the hotel requires the employees to place human traits, such as trust, on the organization (Emerson, 1976). The placement of these human characteristics upon a hotel would suggest that the apology communication strategy may be viewed as more empathetic by the furloughed employees. In assigning attributes to the hotel, relationship dynamics support that furloughed employees' will also reciprocate their sympathies towards their hotel. As a result, furloughed hotel employees will be less likely to view their employer as indifferent to their furlough when an apology is issued compared to the use of excuse. Hence, this study proposes that the apology strategy, compared to excuse, may be perceived as more genuine and transparent by the furloughed employee, which may lead to lower level of job insecurity.

Moreover, high levels of job insecurity leave employees feeling less valued by their employer (Ugboro, 2006), which may negatively influence ITS with the hotel as they may perceive more loss over gain if they decide to stay with the hotel. Additionally, psychological strain as a result of uncertainty has been found to be positively related to employee turnover intentions (Bordia et al., 2004), which could negatively impact furloughed hotel employees' ITS. Therefore, as a result of the high levels of job insecurity surrounding the pandemic, it is very likely that furloughed hotel employees may determine that the cost of remaining in the hotel industry is too high, thus leading to a lower level of ITS within the industry and seek out employment in a different industry sector.

Hence, the following hypotheses were developed based on the above discussion:

H1: Hotel apology (vs excuse) crisis communication strategy has more positive effect on furloughed frontline employees' ITS with a) the hotel and b) the industry.

H2: Hotel apology (vs excuse) have a more negative effect on furloughed frontline employees' job insecurity.

H3: Job insecurity has a negative effect on furloughed frontline employees' ITS with a) the hotel and b) the industry.

The AET asserts that an event triggers an affective reaction which results in corresponding attitudes and behaviors. Holding true to AET, some research suggests that a crisis leads stakeholders to generate negative emotion-driven perceptions towards an organization's reputation (Utz et al., 2013). Furthermore, stakeholders were found to hold more negative attitudes, such as anger, towards organizations perceived to be more responsible for the crisis (Coombs, 2007; Utz et al., 2013). The apology strategy requires that the hotel take full responsibility for their decision to furlough whereas the excuse strategy attempts to diminish fault in their decision by stating that the situation is outside of their control. Previous studies suggested that victims of a crisis want an apology (Coombs & Holladay, 2008) and that furloughed employees may be thankful for having been furloughed instead of laid-off (Green, 2010). Hence, the study proposes that furloughed hotel employees, as victims of the event, would perceive the apology SCCS less negatively than the excuse strategy, which will result in lower level of NJA.

Based on the principle of AET, the current research proposes that hotel furloughs due to a pandemic (negative event) will trigger NJA in furloughed employees (negative affective reaction) which will result in negative perceptions (attitudes) towards their hotel and lower ITS

(behavior) with hotel and the hotel industry. Furthermore, stress and negative emotions have been found to influence an employees' perceptions towards, not only their employer but, the industry as a whole (Yu et al., 2021). These finding suggests that furloughed employees who experience NJA will be likely to have a lower ITS with the hotel and hotel industry overall.

The following theories were developed based on the previous discussion:

H4: Hotel apology (vs excuse) have a more negative effect on furloughed frontline employees' negative job affect.

H5: Negative job affect has a negative effect on furloughed frontline employees' ITS with a) the hotel and b) the industry.

Researched has determined that POS as a positive job event may have a vital role in perceived NJA (Aria et al., 2019). Furthermore, when employees perceive a higher level of POS, they typically experience a less negative affective response to organizational change (Eisenberger et al., 1986). It is important to note here that, although the decision to downsize may lead employees to initially experience negative feelings towards their employer, AET holds that affective states fluctuate, and emotions are less prominent overtime (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Moreover, Basch and Fisher (1998) found that lack of recognition had a positive effect on NJA. This finding may support the apology strategy's effect on NJA with high POS, as the hotel would first acknowledge the harm done (furlough) with an apology, followed by recognition of the employee's status through continued communication and support during their furlough. In contrast, the excuse strategy paired with low POS may lead furloughed employees to worry about their job (and industry) and feel that their hotel does not care about them which may result in higher NJA. Hence, the impact of SCCS on furloughed hotel employees' NJA may be

moderated by the level of POS received during the furlough. When the POS is high, the negative relationship between SCCS and furloughed employees' NJA will be strengthened than when the POS is low. Hence, the following hypothesis was developed:

H6: Furloughed frontline employees' POS (high vs low) has an interaction effect on the relationship between hotel's crisis communication strategy (apology vs excuse) and negative job affect, such that apology strategy has more negative effect on negative job affect when POS is high than low.

Although not actively working, furloughed employees may hold high levels of job insecurity towards the hotel or industry they may return to. The pandemic has resulted in many changes to the industry alongside the worry of health risk and job security. With this in mind, pandemics create unfavorable environmental conditions which influence job insecurity. SET supports that furloughed employees may engage in a cost-benefit analysis to determine what the advantages and disadvantages of returning to work are. Higher levels of POS was found to negatively affect employees' job insecurity (RU & H, 2018). Therefore, SCCS (apology and excuse) may have a strengthened negative effect on job insecurity when POS is high than when is low. The apology strategy is more accommodating to the victims (Coombs & Holladay, 2019), which may lead furloughed employees to feel lower job insecurity and higher levels of trust in their hotel. The following hypothesis is posited:

H7: Furloughed frontline employees' POS (high vs low) has an interaction effect on the relationship between hotel's crisis communication strategy (apology vs excuse) and job insecurity, such that apology strategy has more negative effect on job insecurity when POS is high than low.

To elaborate further, as organizations address furloughed employees, it is critical that they avoid creating a situation in which the employee feels that being furloughed puts them at a greater disadvantage. POS during a time of crisis may have serious implications on furloughed employees ITS with the hotel. For example, positive emotions felt by employees who were addressed and recognized by their organization felt higher levels of POS which led to lower turnover intentions (Akgunduz & Sanli, 2017). Furthermore, high POS often results in affective commitment amongst employees which has resulted in higher rates of retention (Eisenberger et al., 2001; Rhoades et al., 2001; Shi & Gordon, 2019), which suggests that an employees' ITS is higher when POS is high than low.

From an event impact perspective, hotels who show high levels of support during a crisis may have also done so prior to the pandemic through their organizational values and company culture thus establishing affective commitment that influence employee perceptions. From this notion, it is apparent that high POS is more likely to result in furloughed employees ITS with their hotel. Furthermore, an organizations choice to recognize and express support to their furloughed employees' situation and status may help improve relations between the employee and organization which could positively influence their ITS. If the support received is substantial, the employee may cognitively consider these factors in their decision to stay and ultimately come to an understanding that their furlough is necessary to the overall survival and success of their hotel. Furthermore, if a furloughed hotel employee has a higher ITS with the hotel, they may have a higher ITS with the hotel industry indirectly, as they plan to remain at their current hotel. Hence, POS may interact with hotel's SCCS and play a role in furloughed hotel employees' ITS with the hotel and within the industry that the relationship is strengthened when POS is high than low, particularly when apology strategy is used. Therefore, the following hypotheses were posited:

H8: Furloughed frontline employees' POS (high vs low) has an interaction effect on the relationship between hotel's crisis communication strategy (apology vs excuse) and ITS with the hotel, such that apology strategy has more positive effect on ITS with the hotel when POS is high than low.

H9: Furloughed frontline employees' POS (high vs low) has an interaction effect on the relationship between hotel's crisis communication strategy (apology vs excuse) and ITS within the industry, such that apology strategy has more negative effect on ITS within the industry when POS is high than low.

Figure 1 depicts the proposed research model.

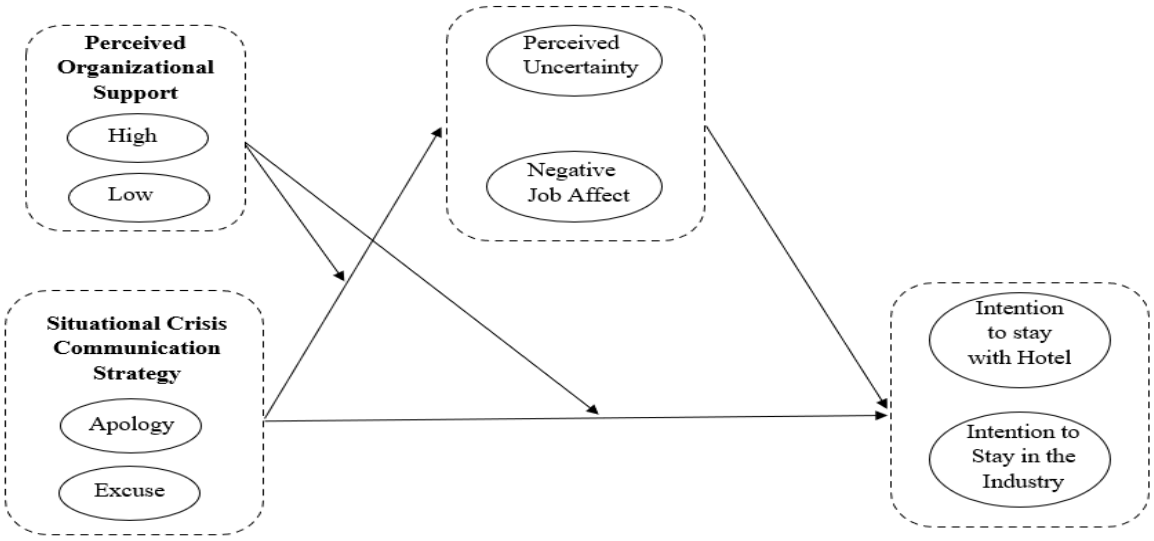

Figure 1 Research Model

3. Methodology

3.1 Sampling

The target population of the current study are line-level hotel employees (non-managerial workers) that are age 18 years or older who were furloughed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Due

to the current limitations in the literature on this population, the survey should help collect data on how SCCS, POS, job insecurity, and NJA relate to their ITS with their hotel and industry.

A self-report online survey created using Qualtrics will be used for data collection. Furloughed employees may be a challenge to reach, so in order to survey the target population, participants will be recruited through Amazon Mechanicl Turk (MTurk) for a small compensation. Amazon Mturk is a crowd-sourcing platform in which tasks are allocated to a population of unidentified workers for completion in exchange for compensation (Downs, 2018). Studies showed that data collected via MTurk were at least as reliable as those gathered via conventional techniques and the participants are more demographically varied than are usual internet samples (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011). The study aims to reach 250 participants with at least 60 participants for each of the 4 scenario types. This strategy will allow for a more representative sample of the furloughed employee and the SCCS measured.

3.2 Research design

The survey starts with screening questions to verify whether the participant fits the sample requirement (e.g. Are you 18 years of age or older? Were you a hotel worker at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic? Were you furloughed from your hotel job due to the pandemic?). Only participants whose answers are "Yes" to all three questions can proceed with the study. Qualified participants will be asked to answer questions of perceived organizational support based on their own experience with the hotel.

Participants will then be randomly assigned to one of the experimental scenarios. The study utilizes a 2 (communication strategy: apology vs. excuse) × 2 (POS: high vs. low) between

subjects, factorial design. The four experimental scenarios are: 1) apology strategy and high POS, 2) apology strategy and low POS, 3) excuse strategy and high POS, 4) excuse strategy and low POS. Prior to reading each scenario, participants will be asked to imagine themselves as a line-level hotel employee who has been furloughed due to a drastic drop in demand and increased health risk as a result of the pandemic. The four scenarios will be created to manipulate high- and low-level POS during their furlough. For each POS level, one scenario will attempt to apologize for the employee furlough while the other adopts the excuse strategy to diminish organizational fault.

Bearing the scenario in mind, participants will then be directed to complete the survey questions related to job insecurity, NJA, ITS with the hotel and ITS within the industry. Attention check questions (e.g. Please select number two to indicate that you are reading thoroughly) will also be used throughout the survey to check for response reliability. Those who failed the attention check questions will be removed from data analysis.

3.3 *Measurement scales*

will be measured with a four-item scale developed by De Witte (2000) and Rigotti et al. (2003). An example item includes “The pandemic makes me feel that my work in unstable”. NJA will be measured using a five-item Short Form Negative Affect scale adopted from Thompson (2007). A sample item is “To what extent do you feel Afraid after reading the scenario”. ITS with hotel and ITS within the industry will be measured with a four-item scale developed by Mitchel (1981) with identical statements. An example item for ITS with hotel will be “I would turn down a job offer from another hotel is it came tomorrow” and an item of the

ITS in the hotel industry is “As far as I can see, I intend to stay with the hotel industry”. A detailed list of measurement scales is included in the Appendix.

The Short Form Negative Affect scale will be measured with a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (slightly or not at all) to 5 (extremely). All remaining survey instruments will be measured using 7-point Likert scales (1-strongly disagree to 7- strongly agree). In addition, the study will collect demographic information such as age, gender, hotel tenure, and industry tenure.

3.4 Data Analysis

The study will use Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 23.0 to analyze the collected data. Descriptive analysis will be utilized to provide a brief summary of participants’ demographic information. Reliability analysis will be performed to examine the internal consistency of the measurement scales. The mean score of each construct will be calculated for further analysis. MANOVA will be used to test both the main effect (H1, H2, and H4) and interaction hypotheses (H6 to H9). Regression analysis will be carried out to examine H3 and H5.

4. Results

4.1 Demographic Information

The demographic information from the data set analysis is summarized in Table 1. The survey gathered 237 responses. A total of 130 responses were useful to this study after screening for the filter and attention check questions and rushed answers. Table 1 displays the frequency and percent of total responses for the demographic information. The gender of the participants,

as reflected in Table 1, shows 58.5% male, 40.8% female, and 0.8% non-binary or third gender. Over sixty percent of the participants were between 25 to 44 years old (n=83, 63.9%). The ethnicity of the participants reports 101 (77.7%) white, 16 (12.3%) black or African American, 4 (3.1%) Hispanic or Latino, 6 (4.6%) Asia, 2 (1.5%) American Indian or Alaska, and 1 (0.8%) participant who indicated other. The education level of the participants is 9 (6.9%) with a high school diploma or equivalent, 2 (1.5%) with an associates degree, 96 (73.8%) having a bachelor degree, and 23 (17.7%) having earned a graduate degree. The household income of the participants consists of 14 (10.8%) under $20,000, 14 (10.8%) between $20,000 - $39,999, 47 (36.2%) between $40,000 -$59,999, 32 (24.6%) between $60,000 - $79,999, 16 (12.3%) between $80,000 - $99,999, and 7 (5.4%) at $100,000 and above. Lastly, the marital status of the participants has been reported at 112 (86.2) married, 1 (.8%) widowed or divorced, and 17 (13.1%) single.

Table 1: Demographic of Sample (N=130)

	Demographics	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Gender	Male	76	58.5
	Female	53	40.8
	Non-binary/third gender	1	.8
Age	18-24	7	5.4
	25-34	49	37.7
	35-44	34	26.2
	45-54	19	14.6
	55-64	21	16.1
Ethnicity	White	101	77.7
	Black or African American	16	12.3
	Hispanic or Latino	4	3.1
	Asian	6	4.6
	American Indian or Alaska	2	1.5
	Native	0	0
	Other	1	.8
Education Level	High school diploma or equivalent	9	6.9
	Associates degree	2	1.5
	Bachelor degree	96	73.8

	Graduate degree	23	17.7
Employment Status	Employed full-time	116	88.2
	Employed part-time	7	5.4
	Furloughed	4	3.1
	Laid-off/ Unemployed	3	2.3
Household Income	Under $20,000	14	10.8
	$20,000 - $39,000	14	10.8
	$40,000 - $59,000	47	36.2
	$60,000 - $79,000	32	24.6
	$80,000 - $99,000	16	12.3
	$100,000 and above	7	5.4
Marital Status	Married or domestic partnership	112	86.2
	Widowed/ Divorced	1	.8
	Single	17	13.1

Table 2 displays the demographic information more focused on hotels. The frequency and percent has also been reported for these statistics. The number of participants who reported they were furloughed once in the last two years shows 59 (45.4%), twice 61 (46.9%), and more than three times were 10 (7.7%). Of those who were furloughed more than once, 67 (51.5%) of those participants were from the same hotel while 4 (3.1%) of them were from a different hotel. Lastly, 35 (26.9%) of the participants found work in another sector while 95 (73.1%) participants did not find alternative employment during their furlough. Out of the 130 participants, 41 (31.5%) worked in food and beverage, 4 (3.1%) in housekeeping, 44 (33.8%) in front office, 14 (10.8%) in sales and marketing, 22 (16.9%) in accounting, finance, and revenue management, 2 (1.5%) in human resources, and 3 (2.3%) reported other departments. The mean hotel industry tenure of the participants was 77.88 months (SD=50.69) and tenure with the current hotel was 44.80 months (SD=40.46).

Table 2: Hotel Industry Demographics (N=130)

		Frequency	**Percent**
Furlough Frequency	Once	59	45.4
	Twice	61	46.9

	3+	10	7.7
Furloughed from the same hotel	Yes	67	51.5
	No	4	3.1
Found employment in another industry sector during furlough	Yes	35	26.9
	No	95	73.1
Department	Food and Beverage	41	31.5
	Housekeeping	4	3.1
	Front Office	44	33.8
	Sales and Marketing	14	10.8
	Accounting, Finance, Revenue Management	22	16.9
	Human Resources	2	1.5
	Other	3	2.3

Figure 2 displays the breakdown of different sectors that participants reported for alternative employment while furloughed. The chart shows that 47.1% of participants worked in restaurants, 32.4% in marketing, 5.9% in health care, and 2.9% for each of the remaining categories including information technology, tourism, bar, management, and warehousing.

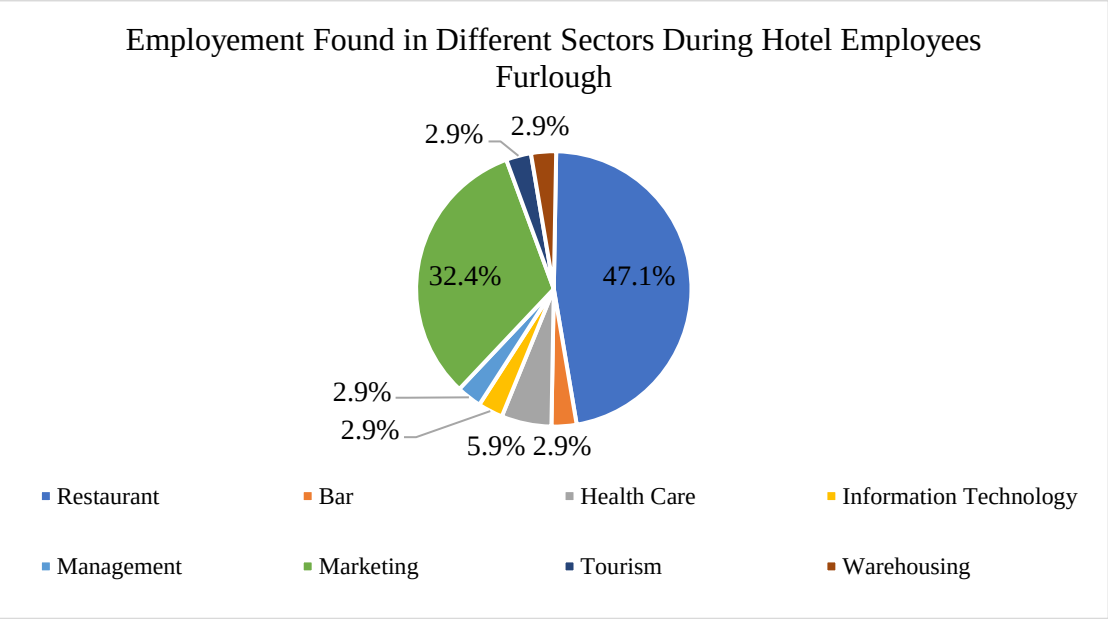

Figure 2: Employment Found in Different Sectors During Hotel Employees Furlough (n=35)

Lastly, Table 3 displays the participants in each experimental group.

Table 3: Scenarios (N=130)

Scenarios	Frequency	Percent
Excuse with Low POS	35	26.9
Excuse with High POS	38	29.2
Apology with Low POS	27	20.8
Apology with High POS	30	23.1
Total	130	100

4.2 Manipulation Check

Manipulation check was performed to examine how impactful the scenarios were in capturing a crisis affecting hotel employees with regard to the SCCS and POS.

Table 4 displays the manipulation check results for the SCCS. Results indicated that participants perceived significantly higher level use of apology in the apology scenario than the excuse scenario (t=-3.40, M (excuse)=5.16, M (apology)=5.89). Similarly, participants perceived significantly higher level use of excuses in the excuse scenario than the apology scenario (t=2.27, M (excuse)=5.62, M (apology)= 5.12). Therefore, the manipulation of SCCS was effective.

Table 4: Apology and Excuse Manipulation Check

To what extent do you agree with the following statement about the scenario:	SCCS	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
The hotel apologized for the furlough.	Excuse	73	5.16	1.48
	Apology	57	5.89	.96
The hotel used excuses for the furlough.	Excuse	73	5.62	1.14
	Apology	57	5.12	1.34

Table 5 displays the manipulation check for high and low level of POS during the furlough. Based on the results, participants perceived significantly higher level of POS in the

high POS scenario than the low POS scenario (t=-4.13, M (low POS) =4.92, M (high POS) =5.90). The manipulation of POS was also effective.

Table 5: High and Low POS Manipulation Check

To what extent do you agree with the following statement about the scenario:	POS	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
The hotel fully supported its furloughed employees.	Low	62	4.92	1.62
	High	68	5.90	.96

Table 6 reflects how realistic and understandable the scenarios were for the participants. The items were scaled on a seven-point Likert scale from (1) being not at all to (7) very. The results show that the scenarios were both realistic (5.72, SD=1.26) and easy to understand (5.59, SD=1.06) for the participants.

Table 6: Realistic and Understandable Manipulation Check

Scale: Not at all (1) to Very (7)	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
How realistic was the scenario?	130	5.72	1.26
How easy was it for you to understand what happened in the scenario?	130	5.95	1.06

4.3 Reliability of Measurements

Cronbach's Alpha was used to measure each construct's internal consistency (Table 7). Results showed that all measurement scales' Cronbach's Alpha value exceeded the suggested .70 cutoff point (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). The Cronbach's Alpha value for NJA was .83. The value for job insecurity was .85. ITS with the hotel and within the industry was .78 and .86, respectively. The value for optimism was the lowest, but still acceptable, at .72. Lastly, the actual

POS was the highest at .89. These values suggested good internal consistency for all studied variables.

Table 7: Measurement Reliability

	Cronbach's Alpha	N of items
NJA	.83	5
Job Insecurity	.85	4
ITS with the Hotel	.78	4
ITS within the Industry	.86	4
Optimism	.72	6
Actual POS	.89	6

4.4 Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics are displayed in Tables 8 through 11 below. The means and standard deviations are classified by SCCS and are then subclassified by high or low POS which reflect the different scenarios participants were given.

Table 8 reports the descriptive statistics for NJA. The results reflect largely neutral feelings towards the scenario as the 5 items were measured on a five-point Likert scale with 3 indicating moderate. Small differences were found between the factors. The mean score of NJA for apology (3.05) was lower than the mean scores for excuse (3.16). The participants felt slightly less NJA for the apology strategy scenario with high POS (2.89) compared to the excuse strategy with high POS (3.18). However, participants felt slightly higher NJA when they received the apology scenario with low POS (3.24) compared to the excuse scenario with low POS (3.13).

Table 8: Descriptive Statistics for Mean Score for Negative Job Affect

SCCS	POS	Mean	Standard Deviation

NJA	Excuse	Low	3.13	.97
		High	3.18	.90
		Total	3.16	.93
	Apology	Low	3.24	.82
		High	2.89	1.02
		Total	3.05	.94
	Total	Low	3.18	.90
		High	3.05	.96
		Total	3.11	.93

Table 9 displays the descriptive statistics for Job Insecurity. The 4 items were measured using a seven-point Likert scale. On average, the scenarios made participants feel somewhat insecure with their jobs. The mean score of job insecurity for apology strategy (5.11) was slightly higher than the mean score for excuse strategy (5.08). The apology SCCS paired with high POS resulted in participants feeling the least insecure about the job (4.68) compared to apology paired with low POS which made participants feel the most job insecurity (5.58).

Table 9: Descriptive Statistics for Mean Score for Job Insecurity

	SCCS	**POS**	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**
Job insecurity	Excuse	Low	5.03	1.3
		High	5.13	1.2
		Total	5.08	1.2
	Apology	Low	5.58	.65
		High	4.68	1.3
		Total	5.11	1.1
	Total	Low	5.27	1.1
		High	4.93	1.2
		Total	5.09	1.2

Table 10 displays the descriptive statistics for ITS with hotel. The 4 items were measured using a seven-point Likert scale and reflect small differences. It appears that regardless of the SCCS used and level of POS shown in the scenarios, participants still intended to stay with their hotel. The mean score of ITS with hotel for apology strategy was relatively higher (5.16) than the mean score for the excuse strategy (5.10). For excuse, high

POS resulted in slightly higher ITS with hotel (5.12) than low POS (5.07). With the apology strategy, the lower POS revealed a higher ITS with hotel (5.22) compared to high POS (5.11).

Table 10: Descriptive Statistics for Mean Score for Intention to Stay with Hotel

	SCCS	POS	Mean	Standard Deviation
Intention to stay with the hotel	Excuse	Low	5.07	1.28
		High	5.12	1.11
		Total	5.10	1.18
	Apology	Low	5.22	1.03
		High	5.11	.865
		Total	5.16	.940
	Total	Low	5.14	1.17
		High	5.11	1.00
		Total	5.13	1.08

Table 11 shows the descriptive statistics for ITS within the hotel industry. These 4 items were measured on a seven-point Likert scale and the results reflect very slight in differences. Overall, participants ITS within the Industry is lower compared to their ITS with the hotel in Table 9 but the results are mirrored. The mean score of ITS within hotel industry for apology strategy was slightly lower (4.98) than the mean score for the excuse strategy (5.00). The participants who received excuse and high POS had a slightly high ITS within the industry, 5.04 compared to 4.96. Once again, the apology strategy with low POS received higher ITS within the industry (5.18) compared to high POS (4.81).

Table 11: Descriptive Statistics for Mean Score for Intention to Stay within the Industry

	SCCS	POS	Mean	Standard Deviation
Intention to stay within the industry	Excuse	Low	4.96	1.44
		High	5.04	1.19
		Total	5.00	1.31
	Apology	Low	5.18	1.15
		High	4.81	1.25
		Total	4.98	1.21
	Total	Low	5.05	1.32

	High	4.94	1.22
	Total	4.99	1.26

4.5 Main Effects

Multivariate Analysis of Covariance (MANCOVA) was conducted to compare dependent variables among SCCS and POS. The independent variables in the MANCOVA were the two SCCS (apology vs excuse) and (high vs low) POS. The dependent variables include NJA, Job Insecurity, ITS with hotel, and ITS within hotel industry. There were also two covariates, which are furloughed employees' optimism and POS from their own hotel. The main effects of SCCS were found with Pillai's Trace (F= 0.333, p=.856). Hence there was no significant main effect of SCCS on the dependent variables.

Table 12: Main Effects of SCCS on NJA, Job Insecurity, and ITS

Variables	Apology Mean	Excuse Mean	F	Sig.
NJA	3.099[a]	3.125[a]	.032	.859
Job Insecurity	5.176[a]	5.041[a]	.579	.448
ITS with Hotel	5.152[a]	5.101[a]	.148	.701
ITS within Industry	4.969[a]	5.015[a]	.112	.738

Note. Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated at the following values: Actual POS= 5.3410, Optimism= 5.2397, Industry Tenure= 77.8769, Hotel Tenure= 44.80, Gender= 1.42, Education= 4.02, Income= 3.33, Marital Status= 1.27, Department= 2.92, Other Employment During Furlough= 1.73.

Table 12 displays the mean averages and p-values for the main effects. The SCCS did not result in a more positive effect on furloughed hotel employees ITS with hotel or with the industry, therefore H_1 is not supported. The SCCS did not result in a more negative effect on furloughed employees job insecurity, therefore H_2 is not supported. Lastly, SCCS did not yield a more negative effect on NJA, therefore, H_4 is also not supported.

4.6 Interaction Effects

Only one out of the four dependent variables were found to have significance. The remaining three resulted in non-significant values. The interaction results are displayed in Table 13 and Table 14. The interaction effect between SCCS and POS were found to be significant with a Pillai's Trace value of .086 (F=2.645, p <.05). There was no significant interaction between SCCS and POS on furloughed hotel employees' NJA (F=1.795, p>.05), ITS with the hotel (F=.053, p>.05), and ITS within the hotel industry (F=.837, p>.05). Therefore, H_6, H_8, and H_9 were not supported.

SCCS and POS has a significant interaction effect on furloughed hotel employees' job insecurity (F=8.119, p<.05). Figure 3 displays the interaction between SCCS and POS. The figure shows that when excuses are used, low level of POS (4.92) could result in lower job insecurity for furloughed hotel employees than high level of POS (5.17). But when apology strategy is used, a higher level of POS (4.80) can significantly reduce furloughed employees' job insecurity than low level of POS (5.56). Hypothesis 7 was supported.

Table 13: Interaction Between SCCS and POS

Variables	SCCS	POS	Mean
NJA	Excuse	Low	3.062[a]
		High	3.189[a]
	Apology	Low	3.234[a]
		High	2.964[a]
Job Insecurity	Excuse	Low	4.915[a]
		High	5.167[a]
	Apology	Low	5.556[a]
		High	4.796[a]
ITS with Hotel	Excuse	Low	5.057[a]
		High	5.145[a]
	Apology	Low	5.139[a]
		High	5.166[a]
ITS within Industry	Excuse	Low	5.004[a]
		High	5.026[a]
	Apology	Low	5.085[a]
		High	4.852[a]

Note. Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated at the following values: Actual POS= 5.3410, Optimism= 5.2397, Industry Tenure= 77.8769, Hotel Tenure= 44.80, Gender= 1.42, Education= 4.02, Income= 3.33, Marital Status= 1.27, Department= 2.92, Other Employment During Furlough= 1.73.

Table 14: Interaction Between SCCS and POS on Dependent Variables

	F	Significance
NJA	1.795	.183
Job Insecurity	8.119	.005[a]
ITS with Hotel	.053	.819
ITS within Industry	.837	.362

Note. a. p < .05

Figure 3: Job Insecurity, Level of POS, and SCCS

4.7 Partial Correlation Analysis

Partial correlation analysis was performed to examine hypotheses 3 and 5. Furloughed hotel employees' optimism and POS from their own hotel were used as control variables. Results are displayed in Table 15. Furloughed employees' job insecurity was negative correlated with the furloughed employees ITS with the hotel industry (r=-.20, p<.05), controlling for the effect of optimism and POS from their hotels. However, job insecurity was not significantly correlated with furloughed hotel employees' ITS with the hotel (r=-.14, p>.05). Therefore, H_3 was partially

supported. NJA was not significantly correlated with furloughed hotel employees ITS with hotel (r=.075, p>.05) or within the hotel industry (r=.057, p>.05). Hence, H_5 was not supported.

Table 15: Correlation

Control Variables			NJA	Job Insecurity	ITS with hotel	ITS with industry
Optimism and Actual POS	NJA	Correlation	1.00	.390	.795	.057
		Significance (2-tailed)	-	.000	.415	.533
	Job Insecurity	Correlation	.390	1.00	-.142	-.202
		Significance (2-tailed)	.000	-	.302	.036
	ITS with hotel	Correlation	.075	-.142	1.00	.526
		Significance (2-tailed)	.415	.121	-	.000
	ITS with industry	Correlation	.057	-.202	.526	1.00
		Significance (2-tailed)	.533	.027	.000	-

5. Discussion

5.1 Discussion

This study examined two crisis communication strategies and their effects on job insecurity, NJA, and ITS with the hotel and industry. It also investigated how POS interacted with SCCS and had an effect on the studied variables. Table 16 displays a summary of the hypotheses testing results. Results indicated that when the effect of optimism and POS from participants hotel were controlled, furloughed employees' job insecurity was negatively correlated with their ITS with the hotel industry. Furthermore, there was a significant interaction between SCCS and POS on furloughed hotel employees' job insecurity. More specifically, apology paired with high POS was found to be more effective in decreasing job insecurity in furloughed hotel employees. This is consistent with past literature which suggested that POS has

a negative effect on job insecurity (RU & H, 2018). However, results showed that SCCS did not have a significant main effect on NJA, job insecurity, ITS with hotel, and ITS within the industry, which contradicted previous findings.

Table 16: Summary of Hypotheses

	Hypotheses	Accepted? (Yes/No)
H1a	Hotel apology (vs excuse) crisis communication strategy has more positive effect on furloughed frontline employees' ITS with a) the hotel.	No
H1b	Hotel apology (vs excuse) crisis communication strategy has more positive effect on furloughed frontline employees' ITS with b) the industry.	No
H2	Hotel apology (vs excuse) have a more negative effect on furloughed frontline employees' job insecurity.	No
H3a	Job insecurity has a negative effect on furloughed frontline employees' ITS with a) the hotel.	No
H3b	Job insecurity has a negative effect on furloughed frontline employees' ITS with b) the industry.	Yes
H4	Hotel apology (vs excuse) have a more negative effect on furloughed frontline employees' negative job affect.	No
H5a	Negative job affect has a negative effect on furloughed frontline employees' ITS with a) the hotel.	No
H5b	Negative job affect has a negative effect on furloughed frontline employees' ITS with b) the industry.	No
H6	Furloughed frontline employees' POS (high vs low) has an interaction effect on the relationship between hotel's crisis communication strategy (apology vs excuse) and negative job affect, such that apology strategy has more negative effect on negative job affect when POS is high than low.	No
H7	Furloughed frontline employees' POS (high vs low) has an interaction effect on the relationship between hotel's crisis communication strategy (apology vs excuse) and job insecurity, such that apology strategy has more negative effect on job insecurity when POS is high than low.	Yes
H8	Furloughed frontline employees' POS (high vs low) has an interaction effect on the relationship between hotel's crisis communication strategy (apology vs excuse) and ITS with the hotel, such that apology strategy has more positive effect on ITS with the hotel when POS is high than low.	No
H9	Furloughed frontline employees' POS (high vs low) has an interaction effect on the relationship between hotel's crisis communication strategy (apology vs excuse) and ITS within the industry, such that apology strategy has more negative effect on ITS within the industry when POS is high than low.	No

Although the main effect of SCCS on participants' ITS with the hotel was very close to being statistically significant ($p = 0.053$), SCCS did not have a significant main effect on furloughed hotel employees' ITS with the hotel or within the industry. The previous literature suggested that victims of a crisis would want an apology (Coombs & Holladay, 2008) and that the apology strategy resulted in more positive outcomes than excuse strategies (Claeys et al., 2010). However, it is possible that the apology communication strategy did not change the crisis situation when compared to the excuse strategy and therefore did not result in significant main effect on a furlough employee's ITS with their hotel or within the hotel industry. Based on the notion of SET, it may be due to the apology strategy not sending a significant enough signal to furloughed employees that the hotel values them when compared to the excuse strategy. In this case, the furloughed employees may not be perceiving desirable behaviors by the hotel to reciprocate, therefore the ITS with their hotel and within the industry would not vary significantly. It is worth noting that

Results showed that SCCS did not have a significant effect on furloughed hotel employees' job insecurity. On average, the participants felt somewhat insecure about their job after reading the scenario, but it was not enough to be statistically significant. This could possibly be due to the participants aligning themselves more with the fact that they were being furloughed than with the context of the communication strategy used. Following the notion of SET, although the employer and employee cease an active exchange relationship during the furlough, the furloughed employee may not perceive the communication strategy as a means of communicating value towards the employee (Blau, 1964). In this case, it could explain why the SCCS did not result in a significantly different effect on job insecurity.

Furloughed hotel employees' job insecurity was found to be negatively correlated with their ITS within the hotel industry but not with the same hotel, which partially lending support to Abuelnasr (2020) finding that employee perceptions of job insecurity following the COVID-19 crisis had a strong positive relationship with intention to quit and those who intended to quit were planning to change their career. As a result of the crisis and mass furlough, furloughed workers may feel insecure about returning to the hotel industry, however they may still want to return to their hotel. This may be due to furloughed employees' feeling more comfortable returning to the hotel they are familiar with. These employees could also have some level of attachment to their hotel, but not with the hotel industry. This finding suggests that if furloughed hotel employees were to be laid-off from furlough or need to seek employment, then they would prefer to seek opportunities in a more secure job market. Additionally, if they were to receive a job offer from another hotel, they would be more likely to stay with their own hotel. This idea is partially supported by Yu et al. (2021) which states that stress and negative emotions influence an employees' perceptions towards the organization as well as the industry as a whole. It is possible that the stress of being furloughed changes the furloughed employees' perceptions towards the hotel industry.

Moreover, SCCS did not show a significant main effect on furloughed employees' NJA, which was not consistent with previous research findings that negative work events could trigger negative emotions which then lead to NJA (Basch & Fisher, 1998; Shi & Gordon, 2019). In fact, the two SCCS examined resulted in a similar level of NJA, which was moderate. Based on the AET, employees experience affective responses which are triggered by organizational events and this results in changes to the moods, attitudes, and behavior intentions employees hold towards their employer. In this study, the use of apology did not make the employees perceive the crisis

situation as less negative than using excuses. As the participants have been furloughed before, it is possible that the event of being furloughed is familiar and the hotel's use of apology or excuse strategies does not influence the experience of their event resulting in a moderate level of NJA between the two strategies.

Furloughed employees' NJA was not statistically significantly correlated with either ITS with the hotel or hotel industry. As with the previous hypothesis, NJA did not influence furloughed hotel employees ITS which could be explained by the participants average NJA being closer to neutral than what was hypothesized. It is possible that both the apology and excuse strategy are perceived as acceptable forms of communication from their hotel as the results support that both strategies were not too negative based on the participants responses.

POS did not have a significant interaction with SCCS on furloughed hotel employees' NJA. Although apology strategy with high level of POS did result in lower NJA than when POS was low, the difference in NJA was not statistically significant. Previous findings have demonstrated that high POS has a negative effect on NJA (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002) which was not displayed in this study. This may be a result of the participants accepting their communication strategy and level of support within their scenario without perceiving the situation as too negative.

SCCS and POS had a significant interaction effect on furloughed employees' job insecurity and the results indicated that furloughed employees job insecurity was significantly lower when the apology strategy was paired with high POS than when POS was low. This is concurrent with the literature which states that the apology strategy is more likely to yield more positive outcomes than excuse (Claeys et al., 2010) and that POS plays a role on the amount of

job insecurity felt by an employee (RU & H, 2018). This finding is also supported by the SET which holds that parties within the exchange relationship may engage in a cost-benefit analysis to identify the advantages and disadvantages of returning to work. The apology strategy admits blame and seeks forgiveness which may improve the relationship between employee and employer. Therefore, the use of the apology strategy and high POS may result in furloughed employees who feel more trust towards their employer and experience lower levels of job insecurity.

POS did not have a significant interaction with SCCS on furloughed hotel employees' ITS with the hotel. The averages for each communication strategy and ITS with hotel were similar and moderate despite the level of POS. This contradicts the finding that POS results in a positive effect on desire to stay (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). As noted in the literature, POS is subjective and constructed on information available to the individual (Aria et al., 2019) which may suggest that the level of POS shown in the low POS scenarios were acceptable to the furloughed employee. Additionally, the furlough event could have made the furloughed employees feel that the support from their hotel is not sufficient which would lessen the impact POS has on ITS. The event and hotels response to furlough may also lead furloughed employees to lose trust in their hotel resulting in the use of POS to not really work on ITS anymore. These reasons could explain why POS and SCCS did not result in any significant interaction effects on ITS with the hotel. In addition, POS also did not have a significant interaction with SCCS on furloughed hotel employees' ITS within the hotel industry. For the excuse strategy, the high POS scenario resulted in higher ITS than low POS, however the difference was not statistically significant. The overall averages for each communication strategy and ITS within the industry were moderate. As with the previous hypothesis, this result may be due to the furloughed

employees accepting both communication strategies and level of support without perceiving the situation as too negative.

5.2 Theoretical Implications

This study sought to expand the literature on crisis communication strategies from the perspective of furloughed hotel employees by applying the AET and SET. Different from what suggested by the AET that events trigger affective states which result in changes in attitudes, perceptions, and behavior intentions (Ashton-James & Ashkanasy, 2008; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996), the findings of the current study did not show significant main effect of SCCS on furloughed employees NJAs. Similarly, the use of apology and excuse crisis communication strategy did not result in significant differences on furloughed employees' job insecurity, ITS with hotel or ITS within the industry, which added to the current understanding of the less investigated apology and excuse strategy on furloughed hotel employees. On the other hand, this study partially supported the SET that high POS and apologies lead the furloughed hotel employee to feel less insecure in their job. This indicates that the use of support and genuine regret influence the level of trust furloughed employees place on their employer and their exchange agreement. Furthermore, the study contributed to the current knowledge of furloughed employees' ITS with the hotel and within the industry by discovering that higher levels of job insecurity was negatively correlated to ITS with the hotel industry but not with the hotel. The finding lends partial support to the SET, which holds that a cost-benefit analysis may be conducted by a member of the exchange to determine if it is worth remaining in the exchange. High levels of job insecurity may leave furloughed employees to feel less valued (Ugboro, 2006), which negatively influences ITS within the hotel industry as they may perceive more loss

over gain by deciding to stay but this may not necessarily impact their ITS with the current hotel when compared to a job opportunity from another hotel.

5.3 Practical Implications

The apology strategy in crisis communication is an approach used in response to a crisis to rebuild reputational perceptions towards an organization (Coombs, 2007). This strategy accepts organizational fault for the crisis situation and aims to seek forgiveness from those impacted. Hotels may use this strategy to communicate the decision, circumstances surrounding it, and their regret in having to temporarily downsize to their employees. To implement this strategy, hotels may issue an apology letter to employees informing them about the furlough and include the resources and people available to them during their furlough. Hotels should include an anticipated return date and follow up personally with each employee furloughed to express honest concern and answer any questions they may have.

Hotels who use the apology strategy should do so genuinely, for a lack of follow through could lead furloughed employees to feel more insecure as well as damage the reputational perceptions they have on the hotel. The apology should express regret using language that is both clear and sensitive towards those impacted. It should also provide employees with enough information to invoke security and trust in the hotel. Additionally, hotels should pair apology with high POS. Hotels can provide higher POS by expressing how much they value their employees, specifically during a crisis that calls for the decision to downsize by furloughing staff. This can be achieved by providing updates regularly on the status of recovery with a firm return date, creating an open line of communication to answer questions and concerns that furloughed employees may have, providing avenues of financial support in the form of health

insurance and food assistance, and by offering meaningful career advancement training during the employees' furlough.

During a crisis, hotels could use the apology crisis response alongside higher levels of organizational support to lessen the job insecurity felt by furloughed employees. As job insecurity has been related to furloughed hotel employees' ITS within the hotel industry, which could potentially intensify the labor shortage faced by the industry. Finding ways to decrease furloughed employees job insecurity during a crisis could retain furloughed hotel employees when they are called back. In order to increase job security, employees need to feel confident that they will have a job in the foreseeable future. Being transparent with furloughed employees on the status of the crisis and spending the time to discuss the situation with the employees could provide the employees with security and confidence as they can see that the hotel cares and has not forgotten about them. Hotels can support employee confidence in their future employment through effective communication and a continued investment in their employees while they are on furlough. Providing furloughed employees with the tools, resources, and potential opportunities they need in order to feel valued during their furlough can help alleviate feelings of job insecurity and increase employees ITS so that they return when called back.

5.4 Limitations

There are a number of limitations with this current study. First and foremost, the furloughed hotel employee sample is difficult to access that the small sample size could have influenced the results. The use of MTurk is convenient, but the researchers struggled to get quality responses from this sample. Multiple strategies were employed (e.g., attention check questions, deleting rushed and inattentive answers) to ensure the quality of the data. The timeframe in which the study was conducted could be another limitation as many of the

participants had returned to work and the initial shock of the COVID-19 pandemic furlough in the industry had mostly passed after two years. As the AET states, overtime, negative events are seen as less negative (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996), which may have influenced the participants answers despite the scenarios attempt to bring up the emotions the researchers were looking for. The structure of the survey also has limitations as it was developed to measure how participants feel about being furloughed due to a crisis and the results showed that the participants were neutral, despite the scenarios passing the manipulation check.

5.5 Future Study Directions

The future direction of this study could be used to further understand how a hotels response to a crisis may influence their employees. More responses could be collected through partnering with various hotels to obtain survey responses in person from hotel employees. This study may also be conducted at a different employee level, such as with managers instead of line-level employees. Future studies could analyze different SCCS, such as scapegoat, denial, or justification against the same or similar variables. Another future direction could be to examine how employed hotel workers feel about seeing their colleagues being furloughed. It would also be worth while to investigate the impact furlough has on hotel employees that returned to work by measuring job performance, job satisfaction, work effort, job affect (positive and negative), etc. Furthermore, affective commitment and withdrawal cognition (intention to search for another job) could be investigated to examine the potential impacts on ITS. Future studies may also want to examine the effects of job satisfaction and burnout on ITS post-furlough. As many hotels have had to downsize, the furloughed employees who were called back sooner may have struggled with the extra hours and increased work responsibility upon their return. These factors may also play a role in how furloughed employees view their job and hotel moving forward.

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Appendix. Measures used in the study

1. **Instructions:**

Thank you for your participation in our survey. This research study measures the effects of furlough on hotel employees. To complete the survey, you must be a hotel frontline employee who is 18 or older and are currently furloughed or have been furloughed from your hotel job during the past 15 months. Please read each question thoroughly and complete all sections. The survey should take approximately 15 minutes to complete. Your responses will be anonymous and confidential and will only be used for research purposes.

2. **Please answer the following questions:**

1. **Are you 18 years of age or older?**
   A. Yes
   B. No (end of the survey)
2. **Have you ever worked in the hotel industry?**
   A. Yes
   B. No (end of the survey)
3. **Which of the following best describe your managerial level?**
   A. Manager
   B. Supervisor
   C. Frontline employee (continue to the next question)
   D. Other, please specify _____

Furlough is defined as a temporary lay-off from work without compensation.

4. **Have you ever been furloughed from your hotel job during the past 15 months?**
   A. Yes
   B. No (end of the survey)
5. **How many times have you been furloughed from your hotel job during the past 15 months?**
   A. 1 (Skip to #7)
   B. 2
   C. 3 or more
6. **Were they all with the same hotel?**
   A. Yes
   B. No
7. **When was your most recent furlough from your hotel?**
   Year _____ Month _____
8. **How long did your most recent hotel furlough last?**
   A. _____ months _____ days
   B. Still currently furlough

Think about your work experience at the hotel before your most recent furlough and answer the following questions.

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

Perceived Organizational Support (Eisenberger et al., 2001)

Scale: Strongly disagree (1)- Strongly agree (7)

(1) The hotel takes pride in my accomplishments at work.

(2) The hotel really cares about my well-being.

(3) The hotel values my contribution to its well-being.

(4) The hotel strongly considers my goals and values.

(5) The hotel shows concern for me.

(6) The hotel is willing to help me when I need a special favor.

Please read through the scenario carefully and answer the questions that follow.

3. Scenarios and Likert Scales

One scenario was assigned to each participant at random.

***Scenario** (1): Apology and High POS*

Imagine yourself being temporarily laid off (furloughed) from your hotel because of an industry-wide crisis. Your hotel issues this statement to you:

We regret to inform you that our hotel is implementing a temporary furlough on several nonessential positions, which includes your position, but we assure you that this is not a reflection of your performance. This decision has been a difficult one for our company and we are deeply sorry for having to make this decision. We sincerely apologize for the burden that this temporary layoff places on you and your family. We will notify you with a return date as soon as possible.

During this period, your hotel gave you clear information on a return date and offered to pay out accrued vacation and sick days. Your hotel also paid 100% of your health insurance for 6 months, communicated with you on a weekly basis to keep you informed on any developments aimed at bringing furloughed employees back, gave you a monthly food credit for groceries, and offered a variety of virtual training seminars and telehealth services to you such as The Fundamentals of Upselling, Managing Marketing, and mental telehealth therapy services. If you had any questions or concerns about your furlough, your hotel made it easy for you to reach your Human Resources department or direct manager.

***Scenario** (2): Apology and Low POS*

Imagine yourself being temporarily laid off (furloughed) from your hotel because of an industry-wide crisis. Your hotel issues this statement to you:

We regret to inform you that our hotel is implementing a temporary furlough on several nonessential positions, which includes your position, but we assure you that this is not a reflection of your performance. This decision has been a difficult one for our company and we are deeply sorry for having to make this decision. We sincerely apologize for the burden that this temporary layoff places on you and your family. We will notify you with a return date as soon as possible.

During this period, your hotel gave you ambiguous information on a return date, didn't provide clear information on paying out vacation and sick days, required you to pay for your health insurance or cancelled it, communicated with you sparsely, and offered very few virtual training seminars. Your hotel also made it difficult for you to reach your Human Resources department or direct manager for any questions and concerns during your furlough.

***Scenario** (3): Excuse and High POS*

Imagine yourself being temporarily laid off (furloughed) from your hotel because of an industry-wide crisis. Your hotel issues this statement to you:

As you may be aware, the crisis has caused an unprecedentedly low demand in our industry and many hotels have chosen to furlough their employees. We are facing challenges to get financial support and the hotel cannot afford to run on full staffing. The crisis has created a challenge that is outside of our hotels control therefore, we are sending you this notice to inform you that our hotel is implementing a temporary furlough on several nonessential positions, which includes your position in order to survive the crisis. We will contact you with a return date when we are able to resume operations.

During this period, your hotel gave you clear information on a return date and offered to pay out accrued vacation and sick days. Your hotel also paid 100% of your health insurance for 6 months, communicated with you on a weekly basis to keep you informed on any developments aimed at bringing furloughed employees back, gave you a monthly food credit for groceries, and offered a variety of virtual training seminars and telehealth services to you such as The Fundamentals of Upselling, Managing Marketing, and mental telehealth therapy services. If you had any questions or concerns about your furlough, your hotel made it easy for you to reach your Human Resources department or direct manager.

***Scenario** (4): Excuse and Low POS*

Imagine yourself being temporarily laid off (furloughed) from your hotel because of an industry-wide crisis. Your hotel issues this statement to you:

As you may be aware, the crisis has caused an unprecedentedly low demand in our industry and many hotels have chosen to furlough their employees. We are facing challenges to get financial

support and the hotel cannot afford to run on full staffing. The crisis has created a challenge that is outside of our hotels control therefore, we are sending you this notice to inform you that our hotel is implementing a temporary furlough on several nonessential positions, which includes your position in order to survive the crisis. We will contact you with a return date when we are able to resume operations.

During this period, your hotel gave you ambiguous information on a return date, didn't provide clear information on paying out vacation and sick days, required you to pay for your health insurance or cancelled it, communicated with you sparsely, and offered very few virtual training seminars. Your hotel also made it difficult for you to reach your Human Resources department or direct manager for any questions and concerns during your furlough.

Keeping the scenario in mind, please answer the following questions…

Affect Short Form PANAS (Thompson, 2007)

Scale: Slightly or not at all (1)- Extremely (5)

Please indicate how you feel **right now** after reading this scenario.

Items in order:

(1) Upset

(2) Hostile

(3) Alert

(4) Ashamed

(5) Inspired

(6) Nervous

(7) Determined

(8) Attentive

(9) Afraid

(10) Active

Job Insecurity (De Witte, 2000; Rigotti et al., 2003)

Scale: Strongly disagree (1)- Strongly agree (7)

1. Chances are, I will soon lose my job.
2. I am afraid that I may not be able to keep my job.

3. I feel insecure about the future of my job.
4. I think I might lose my job in the near future.

Intention to stay at the current hotel (Mitchel, 1981)

Scale: Strongly disagree (1)- Strongly agree (7)

If your current hotel asks you to return post crisis:

(1) I would turn down a job offer from another hotel if it came tomorrow.

(2) As far as I can see, I intend to stay with my current hotel.

(3) It is very important for me to spend the rest of my career in this hotel.

(4) I will stay at this hotel even if other hotels offer me higher pay and position.

Intention to stay in the hotel industry (Mitchel, 1981)

Scale: Strongly disagree (1)- Strongly agree (7)

If another industry sector offers you a job post crisis:

(1) I would turn down a job offer from another industry sector if it came tomorrow.

(2) As far as I can see, I intend to stay with the hotel industry.

(3) It is very important for me to spend the rest of my career in the hotel industry.

(4) I will stay in the hotel industry even if other industry sectors offer me higher pay and position.

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements in general.

Optimism (Scheier et al., 1994)

1. In uncertain times, I usually expect the best.
2. If something can go wrong for me, it will. (R)
3. I'm always optimistic about my future.
4. I hardly ever expect things to go my way. (R)
5. I rarely count on good things happening to me. (R)
6. Overall, I expect more good things to happen to me than bad.

4. Demographics

20. What is your gender?

A. Male

B. Female

C. Non-binary/third gender

D. Prefer not to say

21. What is your age?

A. 18 - 24 years

B. 25 - 34 years

C. 35 - 44 years

D. 45 - 54 years

E. 55 - 64 years

22. What is your ethnicity?

A. Asian/ Pacific Islander

B. Black or African American

C. Hispanic or Latino

D. Native American or American Indian

E. White

F. Other

23. What is the highest degree or level or school you have completed?

A. Less than a high school diploma

B. High school diploma or equivalent

C. Associates degree

D. Bachelor's degree

E. Master's degree

F. Doctorate

G. Prefer not to say

24. What is your current employment status?

A. Employed full-time (40+ hours a week)

B. Employed part-time (less than 40 hours a week)

C. Furloughed

D. Laid-off/ Unemployed

Other, please indicate_____

25. What is your household income?

A. Under $20,000

B. $20,000 - $39,999

C. $40,000 - $59,999

D. $60,000 - $79,999

E. $80,000 - $99,999

F. $100,000 and above

26. What is your marital status?

A. Married or domestic partnership

B. Widowed / Divorced

C. Single

D. Other

27. What department do you work in?

A. Food and Beverage

B. Housekeeping

C. Front office (e.g. front desk, reservations, valet, bell person)

D. Sales and Marketing

E. Accounting, Finance, and Revenue Management

F. Human Resources

G. Other (e.g. security, engineering), please specify _____

28. During your furlough, did you find employment in another industry sector (e.g. restaurant, marketing, tourism)?

A. Yes, please specify _____

B. No

29. How long have you worked in the hotel industry? _____ years _____ months

30. How long have you worked in the hotel that you were most recently furloughed from? _____ years __months

VITA

The author was born in New Orleans, Louisiana. She obtained her bachelor's in science from the University of New Orleans in 2017. The author returned to the University of New Orleans to join a graduate program to pursue a master's in science in Hotel, Restaurant, and Tourism Business Administration. The author currently holds a position as a Food and Beverage Manager at the Mauna Lani Resort in Hawaii.