

Violence Practices Faced by Foreign Female Employees in Hotel Businesses¹

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Abstract

This study explores the forms and dynamics of violence experienced by foreign women employed in hotel businesses in Türkiye. The primary aim is to identify and examine the types of violence encountered by foreign women employees in the workplace. Data were collected between July 30 and August 10, 2024, through semi-structured, in-depth face-to-face interviews with foreign women working in hotels located in Antalya and Bodrum. The sample consisted of 20 participants employed in various departments such as housekeeping, front office, animation, guest relations, and SPA services. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, focusing on those who had completed at least one tourism season in Türkiye. The data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis. The findings reveal that many participants were subjected to verbal abuse, exclusion based on nationality or physical appearance, mobbing by supervisors, and in some cases, sexual harassment by guests or colleagues. It was also found that most do not report these incidents due to fear of job loss, language barriers, and lack of institutional support. The study recommends developing workplace policies to protect foreign women, establishing accessible reporting mechanisms, and implementing intercultural sensitivity training for hotel staff.

Keywords: Domination, Violence Practices, Discrimination, Women Employees, Hotel Businesses.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The increase in human mobility due to globalization, the diversity of tourists, industrial trends, the growing demand for multilingual staff, and other factors have led employers in recent years to favor foreign employees from various national backgrounds in the labor market (Benli et al., 2019). Foreign people are employed in the tourism sector for reasons such as jobs not preferred by locals (Baum et al., 2007), cost advantage (Erdem et al., 2021), filling the workforce gap (Lozanski & Baumgartner, 2022), and specialized workforce gap (Joppe, 2012). It is seen that both specialized and native speakers are employed in areas such as front office, guest relations, and hotel animation. Employees who specialize in massage are employed in the SPA department. It is also noteworthy that immigrant women are employed in the sector due to the cost advantage (Anthias & Lazaridis, 2000).

While the tourism sector does provide job opportunities for women, they face challenges such as gender inequality, violence, societal values, and judgments, demanding work conditions, intense workloads, limited assignment to certain departments, and frequent placement in lower roles than their qualifications merit (Alkan, 2014). Due to their gender, women can experience various forms of exploitation, such as low wages, hazardous working conditions, sexual harassment, prostitution,

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forced labor, and human trafficking (Jucan & Jucan, 2013). Sexual harassment is among the most pressing issues, and it is widely recognized in the service industry (Aytaç et al., 2011). Employees can also face disrespectful treatment from both managers and guests (Poulston, 2008). The low status of hotel workers makes them vulnerable to guest dominance (Guerrier & Adib, 2000; Poulston, 2008). Additionally, forms of dominance like constant criticism, humiliation, threats, or exclusion are reported (Bulut & Göktürk, 2012). Housekeeping departments in hotels, where exploitation and violence practices are most prevalent, highlight how women in these roles are especially susceptible to violence (International Labour Organization, 2019).

Research has examined the work challenges faced by migrant women in the tourism industry. For example, Turguter & Ağılı (2024) explored the working conditions and experiences of migrant women employed in the tourism sector in Marmaris, addressing the advantages and disadvantages these women encounter in their careers. Beyaz (2020) found that migrants in informal labor markets are more exposed to unfavorable working conditions, job insecurity, mistreatment, and racial discrimination. Additionally, tourism jobs often reflect traditional gender roles attributed to women, which can deepen gender-based inequalities. Given that foreigners generally work in temporary, seasonal, and informal roles in the tourism sector, the intersection of being a migrant and a woman places foreign women at the lowest rung of the sector's employment ladder (Gökmen, 2018).

The difficulties faced by foreign women are discussed in the literature, but studies focusing on the violent practices they face have been overlooked. While there are studies on violence against women in the workplace (Coffey et al., 2023; Díaz-Meneses & Vilkaitė-Vaitonė, 2020; Hutchings et al., 2020), and others on challenges faced by migrant workers (Anthias & Lazaridis, 2000; Beyaz, 2020; Gökmen, 2018; Parreñas et al., 2018), few if any directly explore how these two dimensions interact within the tourism sector in Türkiye, especially in key destinations like Antalya and Bodrum (Gökmen, 2011; Turguter & Ağılı, 2024). Studies revealing the difficulties faced by migrant workers in the tourism sector, including language barriers, discrimination, emotional stress, low economic status, and social isolation (Kita et al., 2015) are included in the literature. Although it is known that Asian countries have different working conditions, regulations, and legal regimes than those in the West, there has been little focus on migrant workers in the tourism sector in the Eastern context (Adam et al., 2023). The limited research on the violent practices faced by foreign women in the tourism sector in Türkiye reveals a significant gap in the literature. In light of this gap, this study aims to explore the forms of violence experienced by foreign women employees in hotels. This research highlights the difficulties faced by foreign women in the tourism sector and the role of violence. The study has the potential to contribute to the literature by providing insights into the working conditions, discrimination, and violence experiences of foreign women in the tourism sector.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Labor Migration and Women's Employment in the Tourism Industry

The rapid expansion of the global tourism sector has increased the demand for labor and thus the need for migrant workers, and the number of migrants has increased significantly (Joppe, 2012). Migrant workers are a source of innovation and cultural diversity in jobs not preferred by locals (Baum et al., 2007). Migrant workers are preferred in the tourism sector to fill the local labor gap (Lozanski & Baumgartner, 2022). It is also stated that foreign workers add value to the sector in terms of cost advantage, flexible working, and productivity (Erdem et al., 2021). Like other sectors worldwide, the tourism industry requires migrant labor in two main categories. The first is unskilled migrant labor willing to take on difficult, dirty, and dangerous jobs that local citizens typically avoid; the second is

highly specialized skilled labor, which is in limited supply (Joppe, 2012). Migrant workers from poorer countries often work at lower wages and in positions that require less skill compared to local workers with similar qualifications (International Labour Organization, 2012).

In Türkiye, migrants often work without permits, particularly in tourism sub-sectors like hospitality and restaurant-bar services (Lordoğlu, 2007). Due to their unauthorized status, migrant workers in tourism tend to be exploited more than local workers and are forced to endure insecure working conditions to avoid deportation. This makes migrant labor more attractive due to its lower costs (Yılmaz, 2008). Although cost reduction (Gökmen, 2018) is the primary reason behind the demand for migrant labor in tourism, migrants are also favored for their ability to communicate effectively with foreign tourists. While migrants may find work during peak tourism seasons, they often face unemployment when demand decreases (Lordoğlu, 2009).

Globally, one in two migrant workers is recorded as female (UN, 2004). Women without stable job opportunities frequently work in the service sector, which has significant growth potential. Migrant women are employed in various sectors, from domestic work, elder and child care, sex work to entertainment and tourism (Kofman, 2000; Kofman et al., 2000). Women hold an important place among migrants in the tourism industry and are generally employed in unskilled roles (Lever, 1987). Given the prevalence of seasonal, temporary, and informal employment in tourism, it is stated that migrants, particularly women, are at the lowest level of the employment pyramid in the sector, often combining the disadvantages of migrant and female status (Gökmen, 2018). Migrants entering labor markets through informal channels are more exposed to adverse working conditions, insecure jobs, mistreatment, and racist attitudes (Beyaz, 2019).

Factors influencing the high concentration of migrant women in tourism include their often-undocumented status and the sector's demand for cheap labor. Furthermore, it is claimed that the racist and sexist structure of the job market offers limited job opportunities to migrant women outside of "feminine" roles (Anthias & Lazaridis, 2000). The exclusion of migrant workers from high-skilled jobs is a result of the job market's discrimination against them. Consequently, migrant women in the tourism sector often work in unskilled positions such as croupiers, nightclub dancers, and waitresses. Tourism jobs are also often shaped by gender and nationality. For instance, Polish migrant women typically work in cleaning positions in London hotels (Janta, 2011), while Albanian workers are employed in kitchens in Greece (Lazaridis & Wickens, 1999). The majority of those working as masseuses in the SPA department in Türkiye are foreign immigrants (Çıvık, 2021).

According to 2023 data, 239835 people have received work permits in Türkiye. 27% (66299) of these are foreign women. The highest number of women with work permits was identified as women from Kyrgyzstan (5268), Uzbekistan (4821) and Kazakhstan (3629) (Ministry of Labor and Social Security of the Republic of Türkiye, 2023). It is seen that Russian speakers are mostly preferred due to the need for Russian-speaking personnel and cheap employment on the southern coasts of Türkiye. In addition, women from Southeast Asian countries have increasingly been employed as masseuses in SPA centers within the tourism sector (Çifci, 2014). Migrants working in the restaurant sector are often women from Eastern European countries. Similarly, it is quite common for migrants to work as guides in transportation and travel agencies (Lordoğlu, 2009). The growing interest of Russian tourists in the region has increased the demand for migrant workers fluent in Russian, usually met by migrants from former Soviet countries (Deniz & Özgür, 2010; 2013; Gökmen, 2011). Women migrating to Türkiye from former Soviet states have contributed to the tourism sector after their

arrival. Kiril's (2020) field study indicated that all women employed in hotel entertainment departments were foreign nationals working for lower wages.

2.2. The Phenomenon of Violence

The phenomenon of violence is as old as human history and is encountered at both individual and societal levels across various areas of life. Violence is widespread, ancient, infinitely diverse, and a central fact of human life, and although interpretations of its examples are possible, they do not seem to be comprehensive (Whitehead, 2004). Violence is the illegitimate or unauthorized use of force to make decisions against the will or desires of others (Wolff, 1969). Based on this definition, it follows that the use of violence outside of official authority is not legal. In other words, while murder involves an act of violence, the death penalty imposed by the state's legal system is not considered violence. Other examples can be given, such as extortion and tax collection. However, the actions of the authority used in cases of mismanagement or arbitrariness are open to question. The World Health Organization (2002) defines violence as the intentional use of physical force or coercion by an individual against themselves, another person, a group, or society, leading to outcomes like injury, death, psychological harm, developmental disorder, or deprivation, or creating a high risk of such outcomes.

Violence practices are witnessed in daily life in the social sphere. Domestic violence, criminal cases experienced in public spaces, individual or social events experienced in institutions, etc. are obvious areas where violence takes place. One area where violence is frequently experienced is the workplace. Workplace violence and aggression are considered some of the most critical issues for occupational health and safety today. Various behaviors in the workplace - intimidation, threats, mockery, and degrading comments in public are considered forms of workplace violence (Çöl, 2008). Workplace violence is associated with a range of terms, such as bullying, abuse, mistreatment, emotional abuse, victimization, intimidation, verbal abuse, psychological terror, psychological violence (mobbing), and physical violence. However, no universally accepted term encompasses all forms of violence in the workplace (Akyön, 2008). While the term "workplace violence" often brings to mind actions involving physical force, it also includes non-physical forms of violence (Özen, 2008). According to Schat & Kelloway (2000), workplace violence can be categorized into physical and non-physical violence.

Physical violence in the workplace refers to attacks by others, including consumers or unrelated individuals, intended to harm employees. These attacks can range from simple pushing to injuries or fatal assaults (Schat & Kelloway, 2000). Tremblay and Nagin (2005) define physical violence as the use of physical force such as punching, slapping, pushing or kicking by a person with or without objects such as sticks, stones or guns in order to harm another person. Physical violence methods applied in the workplace are divided into two main categories as critical and non-critical. Non-critical physical violence methods include hitting, kicking, pushing, covering the mouth, wounding and other harmful physical contacts, sexual assault, physical harm through threats and harassment, spitting, squeezing and pinching (Gerberich, 2004). Critical behaviors such as stabbing, using cutting tools and weapons and attempted murder are among the physical violence methods that can lead to death and these are also considered within the scope of physical violence (Ferrinho et al., 2003). In other words, physical violence includes any type of violence that harms the physical integrity of the victim. In particular, sexual violence cases that involve physical contact are also included in this group.

Non-physical violence in the workplace includes psychological, verbal, and sexual violence (Akyön, 2008). Psychological violence aims to undermine the victim's self-worth, self-esteem, and sense of

power, making them feel weak and helpless. Often referred to as mobbing, it involves systematic, prolonged negative behavior by one or more individuals toward others in the workplace, ultimately undermining the victim's professional or personal standing. Verbal violence is more common than other forms, with employees often facing disrespectful, threatening, or insulting remarks from clients, particularly in case of service delays, insufficient service, or reservation issues (Çiçeklioğlu, 2022). Verbal abuse can target attributes like age, disability, gender, sexual orientation, race, language, and beliefs, attacking the dignity of employees. The main distinction between psychological and verbal abuse lies in the continuity and intent behind psychological abuse. When verbal abuse becomes persistent and aims to push the employee out of the workplace, it is classified as psychological abuse (Rowe & Sherlock, 2005). Sexual violence can be inflicted by a supervisor, manager, colleague, customer, or someone outside the workplace and can originate from individuals of the same or opposite gender (Rowe & Sherlock, 2005). Sexual violence is divided into verbal and non-verbal categories. Verbal sexual violence includes sexual jokes, innuendos, and propositions, while non-verbal sexual violence covers behaviors like displaying sexual organs or making suggestive gestures (Solmuş, 2005). Examples of workplace sexual violence include unwanted sexual communication, inappropriate physical contact, and sexually suggestive remarks, as well as electronic communications containing explicit content (Phan & Kleiner, 1999).

Violence against employees has become visible in the forms of psychological and sexual violence as well as physical violence. While Schat & Kelloway (2000) and Gerberich (2004) detailed the definition and scope of physical violence; Rowe & Sherlock (2005) and Akyön (2008) systematically analyzed the types of psychological and sexual violence. The common point of these studies is that violence is not limited to overt attacks, but also exists at verbal, emotional and symbolic levels. In particular, the distinction made by Rowe & Sherlock (2005) emphasizes that repeated verbal attacks become psychological violence over time, and this situation also includes behaviors that are ignored in the name of "customer satisfaction" in the tourism sector. Therefore, this literature shows us that the forms of violence experienced by tourism employees are multidimensional and operate in invisible forms as well as physical contact.

2.3. Violence Practices against Women in the Tourism Industry

The tourism sector is characterized by asymmetric power relations between employers and employees. In such environments, the existence of power imbalances often leads to the emergence of violence, as power dynamics inherently carry the potential for coercion and control. Empirical studies have demonstrated that various forms of violence and domination are prevalent within tourism industry (Çıvık et al., 2024; Guerrier & Adib, 2000; Poulston, 2008; Eger, 2021; Ram, 2018; Opoku, Wimalasena & Sitko, 2024). In addition to general labor issues, migrant workers in the tourism industry face a range of challenges, including language barriers, social exclusion, discrimination, emotional stress, and economic vulnerability (Kita et al., 2015). These factors not only increase their exposure to workplace violence but also limit their ability to respond effectively.

Physical assaults are predominantly seen in the security and healthcare sectors, while sexual harassment is more widespread in the service industries (Aytaç et al., 2011). The tourism sector, in particular, is a field where incidents of sexual harassment are frequently reported (Ram, 2018). Employees, especially those working night shifts, face significant risks of sexual harassment from both customers and colleagues (Yıldız & Özkan, 2022). Tourism and hospitality employees are vulnerable to disrespectful treatment by managers and guests (Poulston, 2008). The relatively low status of hotel employees makes them susceptible to mistreatment and dominance by guests (Guerrier & Adib, 2000; Poulston, 2008). Front desk employees, in particular, are usually expected to tolerate

inappropriate guest behavior, rarely permitted to respond directly. When they do, they are often instructed to explain the situation to their superiors rather than address the guest directly (Aslan & Kozak, 2012). Forms of dominance in the workplace commonly include ongoing criticism, humiliation, threats, or exclusion (Bulut & Göktürk, 2012).

Limited workplace rights make women more vulnerable to violence and harassment, and economic independence and job security are crucial for reporting such incidents. Migrant workers, in particular, often have insecure contracts, tied visas, or lack valid work permits, making them susceptible to exploitation (International Labour Organization, 2016). Housekeeping departments are among the areas with the highest instances of exploitation and violence (International Labour Organization, 2019). Women working in hotels, restaurants, bars, and casinos frequently encounter risks of violence and harassment. In non-standard employment models, employees may refrain from filing complaints due to fear of job loss. Although women contribute significantly to tourism businesses and community development initiatives, gender inequality remains a pervasive issue. Women are more likely to experience poor working conditions, unequal opportunities, violence, exploitation, stress, and sexual harassment (Tegland, 2008). This environment underscores the need for policies and practices that enhance workplace security, equality, and respect for women, particularly in vulnerable sectors such as tourism.

Women working in the tourism sector are exposed to various forms of violence due to both power relations in institutional hierarchies and customer behavior. While Guerrier and Adib (2000) state that hotel employees are forced into a submissive position, especially in customer relations, Poulston (2008) associates this situation with the unsupportive attitudes of managers. Supporting these two studies, Yıldız and Özkan (2022) show that women working night shifts are more exposed to sexual harassment from customers, revealing that customer behavior is not only symbolic but also has an impact area that extends to physical violence. These findings reveal that women employees are quite vulnerable to pressures coming from both inside (managers and colleagues) and outside (customers).

3. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative research method. Qualitative techniques such as observation, interviews, document analysis, and discourse analysis enable researchers to explore phenomena in their natural settings with depth and meaning (Hatch, 2002; Merriam, 2018). In this context, data were collected through semi-structured interviews to understand the violence experienced by foreign women working in different departments of hotel businesses. This technique allows for pre-prepared questions while also offering flexibility during the interview process (Akman Dömbekçi & Erişen, 2022). The research design is based on a phenomenological approach, which aims to explore lived experiences and familiar phenomena that are not yet fully understood (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013, 69).

3.1. Data Collection

The research sample was selected from Antalya and Bodrum, Muğla. Data were collected through face-to-face interviews. *The data collection tool was deemed ethically appropriate by the Anadolu University Rectorate Social and Human Sciences Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee with the decision dated 04.07.2024 and numbered 752334.*

A semi-structured interview guide consisting of 15 questions was developed based on the literature, specifically from studies by Güçlü (2019), and Çıvák (2021). The draft interview guide was reviewed by two tourism scholars, and adjustments were made based on their feedback. These steps are crucial for enhancing the credibility of the research.

Participants included foreign women employed in hotel businesses in Antalya and Bodrum. Thirteen foreign women working in five-star hotels were selected as participants, using a snowball sampling technique (Patton, 2002). Snowball sampling is commonly used to reach marginalized groups, individuals involved in illegal activities, or groups deviating from societal norms (Neuman & Robson, 2014). This technique begins with a few initial participants who refer to other potential participants known to them, creating a referral chain. A similar process was followed in this study.

The interviews were conducted face-to-face in hotel break rooms, dormitories, and cafes. Before the study, participants were thoroughly informed about the research content, confidentiality principles, and ethical considerations. They were assured that the data collected would be handled in accordance with confidentiality and research ethics, and their identities would remain anonymous. Participants signed an "Informed Consent Form" and agreed to audio recording. The interviews were conducted between July 30, 2024, and August 10, 2024, with an average duration of 50 minutes per interview.

Data saturation is a primary criterion for determining sample size (Mak et al., 2010). It was observed that the data obtained from the 13 foreign women were sufficient to identify violence practices in the field. To maintain anonymity, participants were assigned pseudonyms such as P1, P2, P3, etc.

3.2. Participant Characteristics

Participant information is given in detail in Table 1. Participants' ages ranged from 19 to 50, hailing from countries such as Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, Uzbekistan, and Ukraine. Eleven participants were single, while two were married. Six participants held university degrees, and seven were vocational school graduates. Eleven participants were working in fields unrelated to their education, with only two being graduates of tourism management programs.

Table 1. Participant information

Interviewee	Nationality	Age	Marital Status	Educational Status	Occupation	Job
P1	Azerbaijan	30	Single	Bachelor's Degree	Business graduate	Receptionist
P2	Iran	35	Married	Master's Degree	Computer Engineering	Waiter
P3	Kazakhstan	19	Single	Vocational High School Graduate	Fashion and Design	Waiter
P4	Kazakhstan	22	Single	Vocational High School Graduate	Physical Education	Waiter
P5	Kyrgyzstan	25	Single	Bachelor's Degree	Computer Engineering	Receptionist
P6	Kyrgyzstan	28	Single	Vocational High School Graduate	Nursing	Housekeeping
P7	Kyrgyzstan	50	Married	Vocational High School Graduate	Accounting	Housekeeping
P8	Kyrgyzstan	21	Single	Bachelor's Degree	English Language and Literature	Waiter
P9	Nepal	24	Single	Vocational High School Graduate	Tourism Management	Waiter
P10	Uzbekistan	26	Single	Trainee	Tourism Management	Guest Relations
P11	Turkmenistan	27	Single	Vocational High School Graduate	Accounting	Receptionist
P12	Ukrainian	35	Single	Bachelor's Degree	Translator (German)	Guest Relations Manager
P13	Ukrainian	30	Single	Bachelor's Degree	Tourism Management	Receptionist

3.3. Data Analysis

Yıldırım & Şimşek (2016) identify two main types of qualitative data analysis: descriptive analysis and content analysis. In this study, the interview transcripts were examined using the content analysis method. Content analysis is an inductive analytical approach that focuses on uncovering the underlying structure and root causes of the phenomenon or event being studied. Through systematic coding, the underlying themes, concepts, and relationships among these concepts are revealed (Baltacı, 2017; Şimşek & Yıldırım, 2016).

In content analysis, data obtained through interviews, observations or documents are analyzed in four main stages: (1) coding of the data, (2) identification of codes, categories, and themes, (3) organization of codes, categories, and themes, and (4) description and interpretation of the findings (Eysenbach & Köhler, 2002; Miles & Huberman, 1994). The data analysis process is illustrated in Figure 1.

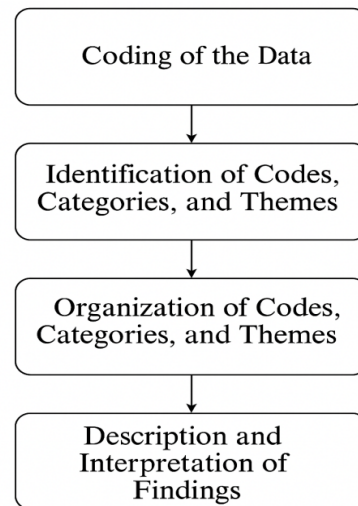


Figure 1. Data analysis process

Adapted from Eysenbach & Köhler (2002); Miles & Huberman (1994)

3.4. Trustworthiness

This study follows the trustworthiness steps outlined by Lincoln & Guba (1985). Interaction between participants and the researcher was established, with participants being prepared for each interview in advance. Legal permissions were shown to ensure participant trust and informal conversations outside the main research topics were held. To enhance data diversity, individuals from different ages, countries, and departments were included in the study. Expert opinions were consulted in formulating the interview questions, a strategy commonly used to ensure reliability in qualitative research (Mhyre, 2010). Additionally, pilot interviews were conducted. During data analysis, the authors analyzed the data separately, comparing codes to enhance accuracy and agreement.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study identifies the violence practices experienced by foreign women working in hotel businesses in Antalya and Bodrum. When asked about their reasons for coming to Türkiye and starting work in the hotel sector, three out of the thirteen participants mentioned coming to Türkiye for university education or internships. Eight participants stated that they came to Türkiye through recruitment agencies in their home countries and plan to return when the season ends or their employment contracts expire.

"I work here because it's easy to get a visa. I found this job with the help of an agency. I'm here just to save money and then return home." (P7)

"I came here with the help of a company. We earn good money here compared to our own country... I'm working as a waiter." (P9)

"I come here every year as a seasonal worker through an agency." (P11)

Long working hours and weekend shifts make it challenging for women to balance their work and personal lives (Ünlüönen & Şahin, 2011). This finding is consistent with prior research, emphasizing that the tourism sector is labor-intensive with long and exhausting hours (Coşkun, 2014; Demirdizen, 2013). However, one participant noted that she preferred working in tourism because the work duration was shorter than in her previous jobs. Although lengthy work hours have been criticized in multiple studies (Boz, 2006; Baum, 1999; Yorgun, 2013; International Labour Organization, 2010; Kaya & Atçı, 2015), participants' backgrounds in more challenging conditions may have led them to perceive the work hours in Türkiye as relatively normal. Participants' statements on this matter include:

"I chose tourism because of the shorter working hours. I used to work in a factory in Russia, where we worked very long hours—13 hours. I love tourism. I came here through an agency in Kyrgyzstan." (P6)

Based on literature classifications, findings are presented under two main categories. Under the theme of *Physical Violence*, codes include sexual violence and assault. Under *Non-Physical Violence*, codes include psychological violence, verbal violence, and verbal sexual violence. Sexual violence is included under both main themes, as physical and verbal sexual violence are evaluated in separate categories here. Table 2 displays the themes, sub-themes, and example participant statements.

Table 2. Code table and participant statements

Categories	Codes	Exemplary quote
Physical Violence	Sexual Violence	"One day, he even caught her in the dormitory where all the staff stayed and sexually assaulted her" (P1).
	Assault	"I accidentally filled out the form incompletely and he threw the form and the pen right in my face" (P9).
Non-Physical Violence	Psychological Violence	"Foreigners clean better and that's why they are given more rooms." (P13).
	Verbal Violence	"100 dollars went missing from the guest's safe in the room and the woman came to the reception and started yelling at me, saying 'you are like this, you are like that', and started swearing." (P5).
	Verbal Sexual Violence	"I called the driver once to ask about the shuttle service hours. Then he started sending me messages and inviting me to go out in the evening and walk around. I was very scared. He practically approached me from the first day" (P10).

4.1 Physical Violence Practices

Participants mentioned that physical violence incidents are less frequent but do occasionally occur, and some have witnessed or experienced such events. Acts of physical assault include physical contact, throwing objects, and aggressive confrontations. Participants indicated that sexual violence practices also exist in hotels. Like in many other fields, sexual violence remains a significant issue in the tourism sector, particularly affecting foreign women who interact with customers frequently. Studies suggest that close and intense customer contact in this industry is one of the primary reasons for sexual violence cases (Lordoğlu, 2009; Gökmen, 2011; Coşkun, 2014; Poulston, 2008). Some women noted that they hadn't personally experienced violence but had witnessed it happening to others. Others shared their own experiences with sexual violence. Participants' statements include the following:

"One day, I had mistakenly filled out a form incorrectly, and he threw the form and pen right at my face, saying, 'Why are you making this difficult for me?' Actually, I was already going down to him with the form and pen; he just had to sign the paper." (P9)

"In another place, there was an issue with foreign women. I saw an older man who was drunk trying to approach a young foreign woman employee. I think she was Russian and very young; she worked in animation." (P4)

Sexual violence can stem from supervisors, coworkers, customers, or people outside the workplace (Rowe & Sherlock, 2005). Participants noted that customers often make sexually suggestive actions toward foreign female employees. They also mentioned being subject to sexual advances or harassment from coworkers and supervisors. Such actions include innuendos, inappropriate proposals, and unsettling behavior. Although accounts of physical assaults are rarer, they do exist. Participants' statements on this subject include:

"When I first started working, because I was foreign, they saw me as naïve. Male coworkers would flirt with me and make me uncomfortable. Back then, maybe I acted too innocent, and because I didn't know enough Turkish, I didn't know how to respond appropriately. Now I know what to say." (P11)

"The shuttle driver started approaching me—he's my father's age. Once, I called him just to ask about the shuttle time, and after that, he began sending messages, inviting me to go out in the evening. I was terrified. Going to work every day with that shuttle felt like torture because he would look at me differently and try to get close." (P10)

"There was an Azerbaijani woman who worked as a waitress in the restaurant. She had a relationship with the chef, but after they broke up, he started being violent toward her at work. One day, he assaulted her sexually in the staff dormitory. My friend quit her job after that incident. The situation escalated, and the hotel manager ended up firing the chef." (P1)

4.2 Non-Physical Violence Practices

The findings show that most participants are exposed to verbal and psychological violence. Psychological violence is mostly perpetrated by managers and colleagues, while verbal violence is inflicted by customers. Literature includes studies on the mocking and demeaning attitudes of customers towards employees. In this study, similarly, foreign female employees are seen to encounter such violent practices. Women workers, who are at the bottom of the social hierarchy and have almost no right to protest, are unable to resist degrading and scolding remarks, which is noteworthy. The participants' statements are as follows:

"There was a conflict between my department and the reception. There was a girl working with me, Aleksandra. She was very hardworking and always solution-oriented with the guests' problems. A guest wanted a room change because they were not satisfied with their room. She requested the room change from reception. Ahmet Bey, who was the head of reception, was very angry and had an immediate reaction. They fought in front of the guest at the reception. He started saying harsh words. This should never happen. The receptionist shouted, 'I'm the boss here, I decide whether to give the room or not'" (P12).

In environments with guests, verbal violence is applied among employees, and verbal violence from guests towards foreign female employees is also observed. It is stated that foreign female employees, who do not speak Turkish as their native language and struggle with accents and fluency, are often scolded by guests. P10, a trainee new to the sector, mentions that some customers, complaining about room cleanliness, verbally abuse her by shouting and cursing. Similarly, P5, a receptionist, states that she responds politely to verbal abuse from guests.

"I'm inexperienced, so many things seem strange to me, and because I'm not used to it, I often get upset and cry from the stress. I've cried at the desk before when a guest shouted at me because their room wasn't cleaned. Once, a Turkish guest cursed at me on the phone because I'm foreign and didn't understand. But I understood everything, I just don't speak fluent Turkish" (P10).

"The guest requested that his room be cleaned at 12:00 PM. When the cleaning was delayed, he called reception and started shouting at me. I told housekeeping

and got the room cleaned. When the towels were missing, he called again and shouted at me. I stayed silent and responded politely, but he kept shouting” (P5).

The southern coasts of Türkiye are frequent vacation destinations for Russian, German, and English tourists. Therefore, foreign language skills are a significant advantage in recruitment. P2, an Iranian waiter, speaks English. However, some Russian tourists are seen to look down on employees who do not speak Russian, get angry with them, and complain.

“They call us ‘hey.’ What does ‘hey’ even mean? I haven’t had bad experiences with Turkish guests, but Russian guests behave very rudely. Once, they said something to me in Russian, but I don’t understand Russian, so I tried to speak English, and they got mad at me for not understanding... That guest complained to our manager that we weren’t serving them. We have to be nice to the guests no matter what. We have to smile all the time. But outside of work, or during breaks, I get upset, I go to a corner and cry” (P2).

According to Çiçeklioğlu (2022), verbal and psychological violence types are interconnected and negatively affect the emotional and mental health of employees. The difference between psychological harassment and verbal harassment is that psychological harassment involves the repetition of harmful actions (Rowe & Sherlock, 2005). Verbal and psychological violence between different departments is noteworthy, and it is observed that these practices cause significant psychological damage to employees. Newcomers to the field are not provided with the support needed to adapt to the job, and instead, the inexperienced ones are pressured and scolded by managers. This shows that the inexperienced and powerless individuals are left vulnerable in the workplace. The participants' statements are as follows:

“Mr. Mehmet always scolded all of us. Actually, we’re all foreigners in our department. Maybe because we’re not Turkish, he constantly acts this way on purpose. Because he is rude, he doesn’t sign our forms. One day he even said, ‘Tell your manager to come and get me to sign.’ I couldn’t say anything. I went to my manager and told him the situation. He cursed at him on the phone. But this shouldn’t happen just because we’re foreigners. It’s very immoral behavior. We’re doing our job, we’re working for the guest, not for ourselves” (P10).

“When I first started, I didn’t know the job, they didn’t teach me anything, and when they asked me to do things, I made mistakes because I didn’t know. They yelled at me, and we fought a lot. Then they taught me, and now I know my job, so there are no more fights” (P6).

In the workplace, different methods like gossip, mistreatment, defamation, and mobbing are used by employees for certain purposes. The competition that arises between employees leads to factionalism, causing them to act more individually. P12, a manager, describes the psychological violence among employees as follows:

“In winter, we only leave German-speaking staff here to work because we get German guests in the winter. This leads to competition among employees who want to show themselves to the managers. Flattery, badmouthing other employees to the manager. They’d say, ‘He did it wrong, but I did it better’” (P12).

The findings show that foreign women are frequently subjected to verbal sexual harassment by customers. In fact, this is not a treatment done specifically to foreign women but is seen as a

significant problem faced by female employees in the industry (Çıvık et al., 2024). P3 shares her views on this issue:

“Male guests invite foreign female employees to hang out outside of work. Foreign women employees are indeed beautiful, attractive, and well-groomed. That’s why they look at them differently” (P3).

It is stated that foreign women attract attention due to their different appearance and face discrimination. Furthermore, it is mentioned that foreign women employees are not paid for overtime and are given more work. Foreign women working in housekeeping are reported to be assigned more tasks than other employees due to their better performance. This situation reveals that foreign women employees are more exploited. The participants’ statements are as follows:

“They made us work overtime, we were very tired, and still didn’t get paid for it. We asked for our overtime pay, and they lied, saying we would receive it when we return to our country through your intermediary company. They always called us ‘foreigners,’ thinking we don’t understand Turkish... They give us more work, and we can’t say anything. They pretend to work and get us to do their jobs” (P8).

“Foreigners clean better, so they give them more rooms. But their salaries are the same. I think this is unfair, and they demand a lot from foreigners. Foreigners are constantly under stress” (P13).

5. CONCLUSION

This research discovers the violence practices faced by foreign women working in hotel establishments. The main finding from the study is the prevalence of non-physical violence practices. While physical assaults were found to be less common than verbal violence, some participants did report facing suggestive, sexualized offers and unsettling behaviors. From an intersectional perspective, being both female and foreign appears to contribute significantly to experiencing sexual violence. Like in many other fields, sexual violence remains a significant issue in the tourism sector, particularly affecting foreign women who interact with customers frequently. Studies suggest that close and intense customer contact in this industry is one of the primary reasons for sexual violence cases (Lordoğlu, 2009; Aytaç et al., 2011; Gökmen, 2011; Coşkun, 2014; Poulston, 2008; Çıvık, 2021; Eger, 2021).

It has been determined that foreign women employees are subjected to verbal and psychological violence. While psychological violence is mostly applied by managers and colleagues, it has been determined that verbal violence is frequently applied by customers. It has been observed that foreign women who are at the bottom of the hierarchy in power relations cannot show sufficient resistance. Foreign women employees were also found to feel isolated and vulnerable, which made them unable to effectively resist violence practices and remain silent. This silence highlights a significant human rights issue. It also indicates that employees work under a despotic regime. The violence practices imposed by managers, co-workers, and customers further reinforce unequal power relationships and clearly reflect a class-based subordination.

The study identified several key causes of violence against foreign women employees, such as low status, temporary work contracts, gender, negative stereotypes about foreigners, and barriers to understanding cultural codes. These factors were found to be fundamental reasons for the prevalence of violence practices. Gender inequality and discrimination are widespread issues in many aspects of daily life, and being both an immigrant and a woman often leads to marginalization and discrimination. Foreign women employees, particularly in low-status jobs, face challenges such as

low wages, late payments, overtime, verbal and psychological abuse, lack of job security, and poor working conditions. The research also found that foreign women often work in jobs unrelated to their formal education and training. Many participants had previously worked in skilled professions such as fashion design, nursing, accounting, teaching, translation, and computer engineering in their home countries. However, due to socio-cultural and economic reasons, they had become temporary migrants and were subjected to deskilling. Despite their qualifications, they were employed in unskilled jobs with low pay.

This study affirms some existing findings; it deepens the understanding of violence through a focused, intersectional, and role-based qualitative approach, bringing new depth and detail to a known but under-explored problem.

5.1 Academic Contribution

This study contributes to critical literature by shedding light on the violence practices experienced by foreign women in the hospitality sector. It addresses gaps in the literature concerning migrant issues in tourism, undocumented labor, uninsured employment, and authoritarian regimes. The research draws attention to the hidden nature of asymmetrical power relations in the hospitality industry and provides insights for future research. It expands on previous studies addressing exploitation, domination, resistance, and insecure labor in tourism (Çıvık et al., 2024; Yıldırım, 2021; Çıvık, 2023; Çelik & Erkuş-Öztürk, 2016; Lee et al., 2015; Robinson et al., 2019). By revealing the challenges faced by foreign women employees, this research contributes to discussions on their liberation. This study is expected to make a significant contribution to the tourism literature.

In addition to the job opportunities provided by the tourism sector for women, it contributes to the literature by revealing the negative working conditions of the sector and attitudes towards foreign women employees. As in previous studies (Aytaç et al., 2011; Lordoğlu, 2009; Aytaç et al., 2011; Gökmen, 2011; Coşkun, 2014; Poulston, 2008; Çıvık, 2021; Eger, 2021), this study also confirmed the existence of sexual violence cases. Being a foreigner makes women even more vulnerable. Although the difficulties faced by foreign workers in the tourism sector have been addressed (Kita et al., 2015), studies focusing on foreign women have been limited. There are studies that draw attention to the difficulties faced by immigrant women in the tourism sector. Academic research conducted in recent years has highlighted the labor exploitation, personal safety concerns, and violence in modern businesses that women employees in the tourism sector are exposed to. For example, Turguter & Ağılı (2024) examined the working conditions and experiences of immigrant women working in the tourism sector in Marmaris and addressed the advantages and disadvantages that these women face in their work lives. Beyaz (2020) shows that immigrants who are included in informal labor markets are more exposed to negative working conditions, insecure work types, mistreatment and racist attitudes; in addition, jobs in the tourism sector are seen as an extension of gender roles attributed to women and deepen gender-based inequalities. Díaz-Meneses & Vilkaitė-Vaitonė (2020) examined how sexist attitudes in tourism feed violent behaviors. On the other hand, Bagheri et al., (2023) discussed the gender-based discrimination that women entrepreneurs face in their empowerment processes and evaluated gender inequality. Adam et al., (2023) examined the impact of the level of inclusion of immigrant workers working in the tourism sector on their psychological well-being. However, the issues of violence and resistance that foreign women employees are exposed to are often overlooked. It is important to conduct new studies to understand the violence and resistance practices that foreign women are exposed to in the tourism sector and to raise awareness on this issue. It is also stated that studies on migrant workers in Asian countries are

insufficient (Adam, Agyeiwaah & Dayour, 2023). By revealing the challenges faced by foreign women employees, this research contributes to discussions on their liberation.

5.2 Managerial Implications

The violence practices encountered by foreign female employees in hotel businesses point to gaps in supervision and unequal power relations. Although it may not be entirely possible for hotel management to eliminate all forms of pressure and violence, various measures can be taken to prevent them. These practices, as well as coping strategies, can be addressed through training programs. A corporate culture can be established in which employees feel free to report experiences of pressure and violence to the human resources department. In this regard, HR units may assign specialist staff responsible for dealing specifically with cases of violence and their resolution. It is believed that such steps could help prevent significant potential crises. In addition, it has been observed that foreign women are often employed in positions below their potential and subjected to deskilling. It is recommended that hotel businesses develop planning strategies to employ foreign female workers in roles where their language skills and competencies can be fully utilized. Moreover, the pressure of unemployment and fear of dismissal is known to create asymmetric relationships between managers and employees (Dardot & Laval, 2014). To overcome this, job security must be ensured. Due to their foreign status and feelings of isolation, foreign workers may experience difficulties in coping with violence. Therefore, especially in hotels with a high concentration of foreign labor, human resources departments should make an effort to better understand their employees, adopt an open attitude toward suggestions and complaints, and act with a solution-oriented approach.

5.3 Limitations and Future Research

The major limitation of the study is its focus on hotel establishments in Antalya and Bodrum. However, the research offers valuable insights for future studies. Based on the study's findings and limitations, several recommendations for future research are provided. Future research could focus on racism and gender discrimination within the tourism industry. In addition, exploring forms of resistance to violence could make an important contribution to literature.

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ETİK BEYAN FORMU

Araştırma Desteği Bilgisi: Araştırma desteği alınmamıştır.
Etik Kurul Onay Durumu
(X) Etik kurul onayı gerekmektedir.
Etik Kurul Raporunu Veren Kurum
Anadolu Üniversitesi Rektörlüğü Sosyal ve Beşeri Bilimler Bilimsel Araştırma ve Yayın Etiği Kurulu
Etik kurul raporu karar tarihi: 04.07.2024 Karar Sayı No:752334
() Etik kurul onayı gerekmemektedir. Nedeni aşağıda belirtilmiştir.
() Çalışmada kullanılan yöntem etik kurul izni gerektirmemektedir.
Yazar(lar)ın Katkı Oranı
1.Yazar: 60%
2.Yazar 40%
Bilgilendirilmiş Onam Formu: Tüm taraflar kendi rızaları ile çalışmaya dâhil olmuşlardır.