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Examining the Impact of Job Insecurity on Psychological Resilience and Well-being: A Study on Tourist Guides

İş Güvencesizliğinin, Psikolojik Dayanıklılık ve Esenlik Üzerindeki Etkisinin İncelenmesi: Turist Rehberleri Üzerine Bir Araştırma

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Abstract

This study examines the perceptions of job insecurity, experiences of psychological resilience, and psychological well-being among professional tourist guides operating in Türkiye through a qualitative approach. Adopting a phenomenological design, semi-structured, open-ended survey responses were collected from 23 tourist guides, and the data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's reflexive thematic analysis. According to the analyses, three main themes were identified: experiences of job insecurity, processes of psychological resilience, and effects on psychological well-being. Findings reveal that tourist guides experience insecurity in a multi-layered pattern encompassing seasonality, economic crises, and institutional and legal deficiencies. It appears that resilience processes are shaped by active coping strategies, including occupational diversification, proactive network management, and self-care practices. Passion for the profession and a sense of meaning emerged as the strongest resilience resources. The study demonstrates that the relationship among job insecurity, resilience, and well-being is not linear but multi-layered. One of the best individual approaches for tourist guides is professional diversification, which involves acquiring new skills in related sectors. It is also advised that the Ministry of Culture and Tourism should create structural systems and pass laws that maintain the professional position of tourist guides.

Keywords: Tourist guides, job insecurity, psychological resilience, psychological well-being, qualitative research.

Öz

Bu çalışma, Türkiye'de faaliyet gösteren profesyonel tur rehberlerinin iş güvencesizliği algılarını, psikolojik dayanıklılık deneyimlerini ve psikolojik esenlik hallerini nitel bir yaklaşımla incelemektedir. Fenomenolojik bir tasarım benimsenerek 23 turist rehberine yarı yapılandırılmış, açık uçlu sorular yöneltilmiş ve elde edilen veriler Braun ve Clarke'ın yansıtıcı tematik analizi kullanılarak incelenmiştir. Analizlere göre, iş güvencesizliği deneyimleri, psikolojik dayanıklılık süreçleri ve psikolojik esenlik hali üzerindeki etkiler üçlü bir tema olarak belirlenmiştir. Bulgular, tur rehberlerinin mevsimsellik, ekonomik krizler ve kurumsal ve yasal eksiklikleri kapsayan çok katmanlı bir örüntüde güvencesizlik yaşadığını ortaya koymaktadır. Psikolojik dayanıklılık süreçlerinin, mesleki çeşitlendirme, proaktif ağ yönetimi ve öz bakım uygulamaları da dahil olmak üzere aktif başa çıkma stratejileriyle şekillendiği görülmektedir. Mesleğe duyulan tutku ve anlam duygusu en güçlü dayanıklılık kaynakları olarak ortaya çıkmıştır. Çalışma, iş güvencesizliği, dayanıklılık ve esenlik hali arasındaki ilişkinin doğrusal değil, çok katmanlı olduğunu göstermektedir. Tur rehberleri için en iyi bireysel yaklaşımlardan biri, ilgili sektörlerde yeni beceriler edinmeyi içeren mesleki çeşitlendirmedir. Ayrıca, Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı'nın tur rehberlerinin mesleki konumunu koruyacak yapısal sistemler oluşturması ve yasalar çıkarması da önerilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Turist rehberleri, iş güvencesizliği, psikolojik dayanıklılık, psikolojik iyi oluş, nitel araştırma.

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Introduction

Tourism remains one of the most dynamic yet most fragile sectors of the global economy. According to the World Tourism Organization, before the pandemic, tourism accounted for approximately 10% of global GDP and supported one in every ten jobs worldwide either directly or indirectly (UNWTO, 2019). However, beneath this economic magnitude lies a deep structural vulnerability to external shocks. Unforeseeable events such as terrorist attacks, geopolitical tensions, economic crises, and global pandemics can dramatically collapse tourism demand within a short period, and the burden of this collapse is borne primarily and most deeply by sector employees (Gössling et al., 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic exposed this fragility on a historic scale; according to the ILO (2020), the tourism and hospitality sectors were among those that experienced the highest global employment losses. This situation indicates that individuals working in the sector experience job insecurity not merely as a periodic threat but as a structural component of their occupational existence.

This structural fragility most heavily affects tourist guides in the tourism sector. Tourist guides typically work without a written employment contract with agencies, are paid on a per-tour basis, and lack regular income; they fit neither the category of dependent employee nor that of independent entrepreneur (Ap and Wong, 2001; Weiler and Black, 2015, p. 8). Required to obtain state licensing and maintain specific competence standards, tourist guides bear bureaucratic obligations on the one hand while being largely deprived of institutional protection mechanisms on the other. In this profession—where each tour constitutes an independent work relationship, where seasonality renders income flow intermittent, and where cultural and emotional labor are pronounced—insecurity is experienced in a far sharper, more multidimensional manner than standard employment frameworks anticipate (Huang et al., 2010; Baum, 2015). In the Turkish context, this picture becomes even more striking. Successive major crises, such as the 2001 economic crisis, the 2015–2016 terrorist attacks, and the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, have profoundly shaken not only the income but also the professional identity and psychological well-being of thousands of Turkish tourist guides. Based on the information above, this study addresses both structural/chronic insecurity in health (e.g., lack of contracts, seasonality) and crisis-related/acute insecurity (e.g., COVID-19, economic crises). Furthermore, the open-ended survey questions were designed to differentiate between these two dimensions.

The effects of job insecurity on tourism employees have attracted increasing scholarly attention in recent years. Existing studies show that job insecurity negatively affects organizational commitment and job satisfaction (Vujičić et al., 2015), increases future anxiety (Tellioğlu, 2020), impairs job performance (Abouelenien, 2024), and strengthens turnover intention (Oğuz et al., 2022). In studies specific to tourist guides, insecurity has been documented to increase burnout (Katlav et al., 2021), and psychological resilience has been shown to play a moderating role in this negative relationship (Jiang et al., 2023). However, the existing literature involves two fundamental gaps. First, the majority of research on job insecurity and psychological resilience has been conducted with samples such as factory workers, nurses, and white-collar employees, in which standard employer-employee relationships and predictable income flows prevail. These studies cannot capture the unique structure of the guiding profession, which is characterized by informal, project-based employment. Second, this research has focused on quantitatively determining individuals' levels of insecurity using scale-based instruments and has fallen short of revealing in depth how the experience of insecurity is interpreted, through which mechanisms psychological resilience operates, and how this process affects well-being.

Building on these gaps, the principal aim of the present study is to examine, from a qualitative perspective, the perceptions of job insecurity, psychological resilience experiences, and psychological well-being levels among professional tourist guides, and the relationships among these three constructs, adopting a phenomenological research design and analyzing the

data through reflexive thematic analysis. Through semi-structured open-ended survey responses, the study examines how guides interpret insecurity, the psychological mechanisms they employ to cope with difficulties, and how these processes shape their well-being. The study's original contribution is evident at both theoretical and practical levels. Theoretically, this study tests the explanatory power of Western-centric job insecurity and resilience models in a tourism context characterized by high fragility and informal employment in a developing economy such as Türkiye, and reframes the insecurity-resilience-well-being relationship within a multi-layered model. In practice, the findings provide a basis for developing evidence-based policy and intervention proposals for stakeholders, including TUREB, local guide chambers, travel agencies, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, and tourism education institutions. The study thus aims to fill a notable gap in the Turkish tourism literature, both methodologically and by holistically addressing psychological processes specific to tourist guides.

1. Conceptual Framework

1.1. Job Insecurity

Job insecurity has become an increasingly studied research topic over the past two decades, in connection with rapidly changing organizational environments (Sverke et al., 2002). Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt (1984) defined job insecurity as the perceived powerlessness experienced by an individual in a threatened work situation that they wish to maintain, placing both fear of job loss and the sense of helplessness in the face of this loss at the center of the concept. Building on this foundation, De Witte (1999) treated job insecurity as a subjective perception regarding the likelihood of losing one's job, emphasizing that this perception can take shape independently of objective working conditions. Accordingly, even an employee in an objectively secure position may subjectively experience insecurity. Sverke, Hellgren, and Näswall (2002) further conceptualized job insecurity along two fundamental dimensions: a cognitive dimension encompassing thoughts and expectations about losing one's job, and an affective dimension expressing anxiety, fear, and worry concerning this possibility.

The tourism sector possesses unique dynamics that render job insecurity particularly pronounced for employees. The uneven distribution of tourism demand throughout the year directly affects employment structures: demand concentrated in the summer season leads to temporary, seasonal, and fixed-term contracts, while in the off-season, employees face the risk of unemployment. Baum and Szivas (2008) demonstrated that this structural condition produces a persistent perception of insecurity among tourism employees. The combination of the sector's labor-intensive structure and low-wage policies makes high employee turnover inevitable; employees simultaneously fear losing their jobs and approach the sustainability of their current employment skeptically.

Tourist guides occupy a particularly vulnerable position within the tourism labor market. Given the critical role they play in destination promotion and the foreign-currency contribution they make to the national economy, the welfare and performance of guides carry strategic importance (Gümüş and Şahbaz, 2024). Guides who cannot cope with adverse conditions may fail to perform their duties properly and may face weak interpersonal relationships, personality disorders, depression, and various health problems (Katlav et al., 2021).

Katlav et al. (2021), in their study of tourist guides' perceptions of job insecurity and burnout, found that guides experience marked job insecurity. They further established that perceptions of job insecurity have a positive and significant effect on emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, and a negative and significant effect on personal accomplishment. These findings indicate that job insecurity is a strong predictor of occupational burnout among tourist guides. Oğuz et al. (2022) likewise reported a statistically significant, positive effect of perceived job insecurity on the intention to leave the profession among Turkish tourist guides.

Gümüş and Şahbaz (2024), in their examination of pandemic-induced job-loss anxiety on the work performance of professional tourist guides, found a low-level positive relationship between perceived insecurity and job performance.

A larger body of research supports the detrimental effects of job insecurity across tourism and hospitality professions, going beyond the guide-specific studies included above (see Table 1 below). Taken together with the guide-specific findings of Katlav et al. (2021), Oğuz et al. (2022), and Gümüş and Şahbaz (2024), these studies indicate that job insecurity is a pervasive and multidimensional stressor across the tourism and hospitality sector, with tourist guides occupying an especially precarious position due to the project-based, contract-free nature of their employment. The major research on job insecurity in tourism and hospitality is compiled in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Summary of key studies on job insecurity in tourism and hospitality employment

Author(s) & Year	Sample / Sector	Method	Key Finding
Baum & Szivas (2008)	Tourism sector employees	Conceptual/structural analysis	Seasonal demand fluctuation produces a persistent perception of job insecurity among tourism employees.
Vujičić et al. (2015)	Hotel employees	Quantitative survey	Job insecurity negatively affects organizational commitment and job satisfaction.
Tellioğlu (2020)	Tourism employees	Quantitative survey	Perceived job insecurity increases future anxiety.
Çalışkan & Özkoç (2020)	Accommodation employees (Turkey)	Quantitative survey	High job insecurity perceptions were detected; perceived employability reduces insecurity.
Katlav et al. (2021)	Tourist guides (Turkey)	Quantitative survey	Job insecurity increases emotional exhaustion and depersonalization and reduces personal accomplishment.
Oğuz et al. (2022)	Tourist guides (Turkey)	Quantitative survey	Job insecurity has a significant, positive effect on intention to leave the profession.
Gümüş & Şahbaz (2024)	Tourist guides (Turkey)	Quantitative survey	Pandemic-induced job-loss anxiety is positively (but weakly) related to job performance.
Abouelenien et al. (2024)	Hospitality employees	Quantitative survey	Job insecurity impairs job performance.

Considered together, these findings demonstrate that job insecurity produces multidimensional, mutually reinforcing negative outcomes for tourism employees, especially for tourist guides. A holistic perspective on these effects across psychological health, organizational commitment, job performance, and occupational sustainability offers important academic and practical implications.

1.2. Psychological Resilience

One of the oldest studies of psychological resilience belongs to Cicchetti and Garmezy (1993). Resilience is defined as the individual's capacity to maintain psychological adjustment in the face of challenging environmental conditions (Block and Kremen, 1996). Over time, the conceptual definition of resilience has been examined across various dimensions and has become more comprehensive. The American Psychological Association (2020) defines psychological resilience as the process and outcome of mentally, emotionally, and behaviorally adapting to challenging life experiences.

Çetin et al. (2015) define psychological resilience as the ability to overcome difficulties, recover, and remain strong in the face of stressful events, whereas Saltık and Kızılırmak (2020) conceptualize it as a personality trait that describes how individuals confront and gain control over stressful situations. Çelik (2024) approaches the concept from a broader perspective, defining psychological resilience as the ability of individuals to self-regulate, remain strong, and transform adverse experiences into positive outcomes in the face of the negative events and circumstances encountered throughout life.

Studies focused on tourist guides indicate that the unique structure of the profession renders psychological resilience an especially critical competence. Factors such as the unpredictability of working hours, intense physical effort, seasonal employment patterns, competitive pressure from unlicensed guiding, pressure exerted by travel agencies, and occupational health risks render psychological resilience particularly salient (Büyüktepe, Gökdemir, and Korkmaz, 2020). In this context, Dündar (2025) emphasizes that tourist guides with strong psychological resilience can minimize burnout symptoms during peak seasons, maintain composure during crises, and sustain the quality of the experience by keeping group morale high. Psychological resilience is therefore a strategic competence that not only affects tourist guides' own welfare but also destination image and tourist satisfaction.

Kırıcı Tekeli et al. (2021) found, in their study of professional tourist guides in Nevşehir, that occupational identification positively affects psychological resilience and that self-efficacy mediates this relationship. Saltık and Kızılırmak (2020) identified a significant relationship between the dimensions of psychological resilience and the active-planning dimension of stress management among tourist guides. Çelik (2024) revealed a significant relationship between mindfulness levels and psychological resilience among tourist guides, demonstrating the link between resilience and cognitive processes.

More recent research confirms the strategic importance of psychological resilience for guides from various angles. Li et al. (2025) showed that tourist guides with resilient personality profiles are more effective in transforming work resources into individual situational awareness and are accordingly better equipped to manage their mental states and behaviors. Knudson and Rose (2025), in their study of nature-based tourism guides, found that guides' reported resilience levels significantly predicted differences in their subjective well-being, positioning resilience—alongside health-insurance coverage and the reduction of workplace conflicts—as a focal point of management strategies. Dündar (2025) found that psychological resilience supports guides' capacity to cope with difficulties and adapt, while perceived workload and long-term career dynamics weaken psychological commitment and increase job stress. Ak et al. (2025) found significant positive effects of psychological resilience on individual innovativeness and career adaptability among tourism undergraduates, concretizing the link between resilience and professional development.

Taken as a whole, these findings indicate that psychological resilience plays a determining role in both individual welfare and service quality in the tourist guiding profession, serving as a protective factor against negative working conditions such as job insecurity, stress, and burnout. In this context, the present study—by holistically addressing the relationships among job insecurity, psychological resilience, and well-being—offers a substantive contribution to the literature.

1.3. Psychological Well-being

Psychological well-being is a multidimensional and comprehensive concept that researchers have approached from various perspectives. Early definitional attempts framed it more narrowly in relation to happiness and life satisfaction. Diener et al. (2008) defined subjective well-being as a concept encompassing happiness, life satisfaction, engagement, and positive emotions, which is observable across social groups and activities and traceable over time.

Today, psychological well-being is understood within a broader, more inclusive framework. Martela (2026) explains psychological well-being as an umbrella term covering all relevant aspects of human psychological experiences and processes, sometimes also referred to as subjective well-being, personal well-being, positive psychological functioning, and flourishing. Pelagi et al. (2025) similarly define psychological well-being as a multidimensional construct encompassing emotional, cognitive, personality, and social factors, emphasizing its determining role in mental health and quality of life. Wan et al. (2025) define psychological well-being as a mental state that enables individuals to realize their full potential, be productive and innovative at work, and manage daily stressors.

In the tourism context, psychological well-being assumes a determining function for both tourists and sector employees. Karaca and Tağraf (2021) found that the dimensions of the memorable tourism experience—novelty, knowledge, meaningfulness, involvement, and refreshment—positively and significantly affect psychological well-being, demonstrating that as people are refreshed, their psychological well-being also rises. With respect to tourism employees, psychological well-being takes on particular significance under the pressure of demanding working conditions. Abdou et al. (2024) demonstrated that the demanding, high-pressure environment of the hospitality sector exposes employees to numerous stressors, significantly impairing their psychological well-being.

The psychological well-being of tourist guides has become the subject of a separate research agenda. Alrawadieh and Dinçer (2021) showed that emotional labor—particularly emotional dissonance—negatively affects tourist guides' psychological well-being by increasing burnout and reducing quality of work life, whereas emotional effort supports well-being by reducing burnout. Alrawadieh et al. (2022), in their study of female tourist guides, found that experiences of sexual harassment negatively affect psychological well-being and that burnout mediates this relationship. Demirdelen Alrawadieh and Alrawadieh (2022) showed that perceived organizational support enhances tourist guides' quality of work life and contributes positively to their general welfare by reducing burnout. Akkuş and Arslan (2023) emphasized that high and persistent job stress leaves enduring negative effects on tourist guides' physiological and psychological well-being and that psychological burnout is among the most prevalent problems in this occupational group. Dönmez et al. (2024) identify psychological resilience as a personal resource that helps tourist guides maintain well-being and increase happiness by balancing work and family demands. Taken together, these findings indicate that psychological well-being is a fundamental construct shaping both the quality of tourists' experiences and employees' service performance in the tourism sector.

1.4. The Relationship between Job Insecurity and Psychological Resilience

Scholars have been quite interested in the connection between psychological resilience and job insecurity, especially in the context of tourism and hospitality. The evidence points to at least three distinct ways the two variables interact, rather than a single consistent pattern: resilience serving as a buffer against the impacts of insecurity, insecurity depleting resilience as a resource, and resilience mediating downstream effects.

According to a first line of research, resilience serves as a moderating or buffering mechanism that lessens the psychological cost of insecurity. In their research on hotel employees during the COVID-19 epidemic, Aguiar-Quintana et al. (2021) discovered that job insecurity had significant detrimental impacts on anxiety and depression, and that psychological resilience mediated this association, lessening the detrimental effect of uncertainty on depression. Jiang et al. (2023) found that job insecurity served as a mediator, and resilience as a moderator, in examining the impact of COVID-19 fear on psychological distress among tourist guides. This finding highlights the interrelated roles of these constructs in guides' mental health processes.

A third piece of research demonstrates that, once established, resilience mediates effects that go beyond the relationship between insecurity and resilience. Dönmez et al. (2024) investigated the impact of psychological resilience on tourist guides' satisfaction and reported that resilience enhances life satisfaction by mitigating work-family and family-work conflicts.

When viewed together, these three pathways reveal a persistent negative correlation between psychological resilience and job insecurity, with resilience appearing as a crucial personal resource that might lessen the harmful effects of uncertainty. However, it is still susceptible to depletion under persistent threat. This provides the theoretical foundation for the current investigation by suggesting that the same link may also apply to tourist guides.

1.5. The Relationship between Job Insecurity and Psychological Well-being

Job insecurity is defined as the perceived potential threat to the continuity of one's current job and stands among the most important occupational stressors negatively affecting psychological well-being in tourism and hospitality. The variable, seasonal, and crisis-prone structure of tourism renders employees particularly vulnerable to fear of job loss, a condition extending well beyond performance to encompass psychological-health problems such as anxiety, depression, and emotional exhaustion. At least three mechanisms—a direct psychological health pathway, an indirect pathway operating through mediating or moderating variables, and a crisis-specific pathway rooted in the structural vulnerability of tourism—have been identified in the literature as linking insecurity to well-being.

The impact of insecurity on particular psychological health outcomes is the most direct pathway. Utilizing a sample of hotel and travel agency employees, Elshaer and Azazz (2023) discovered that employment uncertainty has a negative impact on stress, anxiety, and depression, and that family financial strain exacerbates these effects. Gharbi et al. (2025), in a moderated-mediation model conducted in the hotel sector, found that job insecurity is significantly associated with job anxiety and work alienation; the imbalance that arises when organizations fail to adequately reciprocate employees' contributions transforms into emotional pressure—a mechanism of particular salience for guiding, given the structural embedding of the absence of contracts in the agency–guide relationship. In the Turkish context, İnci and Bozkurt (2010) likewise demonstrated that perceived job insecurity adversely affects psychological well-being—particularly weakening the optimism subdimension—and increases unethical behavioral tendencies.

A second indirect pathway operates through controlling and mediating mechanisms. Using work-related self-efficacy as a mediator and supervisor support as a moderator, Pires (2025) investigated the effects of job insecurity on psychological well-being and work engagement. The results indicated that insecurity had a negative impact on self-efficacy, well-being, and engagement, highlighting that organizational and individual resources can either amplify or mitigate its effects on well-being.

There is evidence of a third, crisis-specific pathway among tourism and guiding communities, in which their structural susceptibility to external shocks intensifies the relationship between insecurity and well-being. According to Demirel et al. (2022), crises have a significant impact on the tourism sector and present significant challenges for tourism employees, particularly tourist guides. During the pandemic, tourist guides expressed discontent with their jobs and reported looking for work in other industries. In a similar vein, Seyitoğlu et al. (2024) examined professional tourist guides' post-pandemic perspectives and found that a major future-oriented risk is increased unemployment, combined with associated anxiety and stress. Bai et al. (2023), drawing on data from Chinese guides, found that psychological capital positively affects psychological well-being and that work–family conflict mediates the relationship between occupational stressors and well-being outcomes.

In summary, research consistently indicates that job insecurity, whether through direct psychological-health effects, mediating and moderating individual resources, or the industry's crisis-prone structural features, constitutes a widespread and serious threat to the psychological well-being of tourism employees. These negative impacts are especially noticeable for tourist guides because of the crisis-prone nature of their employment.

2. Methodology

This study aims to examine tourist guides' perceptions of job insecurity, experiences of psychological resilience, and levels of psychological well-being using a qualitative approach, with a focus on the relationships among these constructs. The multidimensional job insecurity model developed by Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt (1984) serves as the foundation for the conceptual framework. As a result, job insecurity is viewed as a multifaceted construct encompassing wages, status, and working conditions, as well as the likelihood of job loss. The model integrates the subjective severity of the danger, perceived powerlessness, and the subjective relevance of the job for the individual, thereby stating that insecurity originates not only from objective conditions but also from how the individual understands them. Also, the study is predicated on Hobfoll's (1989) conservation of resources theory, which maintains that it occurs when there is a real net loss of resources, a threat of resource loss, or no resource gain after major effort or resource expenditure.

The conceptual framework was not employed to limit data analysis inside predefined categories, despite the fact that this study takes an inductive, phenomenological method. Instead, Hobfoll's (1989) Conservation of Resources (COR) theory and Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt's (1984) multidimensional model performed two complementary roles in this study. First, they developed the semi-structured, open-ended survey question form, ensuring that the questions addressed the cognitive, affective, and resource-related dimensions of insecurity identified in these models. Second, they provided a theoretical lens for interpreting the themes that emerged inductively during analysis, without predetermining their content or boundaries. In other words, the conceptual framework contributed to the design of the data collection instrument and provided a theoretical grounding for interpreting the patterns that emerged during data analysis, rather than serving as an a priori coding scheme.

Phenomenology was selected as the research design. Phenomenological design aims to reveal how a particular phenomenon is experienced and interpreted by multiple individuals, directing the researcher's focus toward participants' subjective experiences and the meanings they attribute to it rather than objective facts (Creswell, 2013, p. 76). The principal phenomenon examined here is occupational insecurity among tourist guides. How guides perceive job insecurity, how this perception shapes their resilience processes, and how it affects their well-being were evaluated holistically from a phenomenological perspective. Data analysis was carried out using reflexive thematic analysis.

The analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2021, p. 33) six-phase framework: (1) familiarization, in which the researcher read the transcripts several times to become fully immersed in the data; (2) generating initial codes, in which significant textual segments were methodically labeled throughout the entire dataset; (3) constructing themes, in which codes sharing conceptual similarity were grouped into candidate sub-codes and themes; (4) reviewing themes, in which candidate themes were compared to the coded extracts and the dataset as a whole to ensure internal coherence; (5) establishing and naming themes, where each theme's bounds and scope were clarified; and (6) constructing the report, where the final thematic framework was integrated into a story reinforced by participant extracts that served as illustrations (Braun & Clarke, 2021, p. 33).

The principal research question was: *How do the perceived experiences of job insecurity among tourist guides affect their general well-being, and what role does psychological*

resilience play in this process? In addition, three more questions were prepared, notably, "*How do tourist guides define and interpret the job insecurity inherent in their profession from their own perspective?*" "*How does this experienced job insecurity affect the psychological, physical, and social well-being of tourist guides in their daily lives*?" "*How do tourist guides manage their psychological recovery processes during crises and stressful situations caused by job insecurity*?"

The study group comprises professional tourist guides actively working in Türkiye. Criterion sampling, a form of purposive sampling, was used to determine participants. Criterion sampling enables the systematic selection of information-rich individuals consistent with the study's purpose, facilitating in-depth and meaningful data collection (Patton, 2002, p. 230). Inclusion criteria were defined as: (1) holding a regional or national guide card issued by TUREB; (2) actively practicing guiding during the research period or having practiced within the last two years; and (3) voluntarily agreeing to participate in the study.

Within these criteria, 23 professional tourist guides participated in the study. In qualitative research, sample size is evaluated not by statistical representation but by whether theoretical saturation has been achieved (Creswell, 2013, p. 157). After the 23rd participant, no new codes emerged, and themes began to repeat, indicating saturation. A semi-structured, open-ended survey questionnaire was used as the data collection instrument.

When formulating the study questions, the studies by Katlav et al. (2021) on job insecurity and by Işık (2016) on psychological resilience were employed. For psychological well-being, Memnun's (2006) study was used to develop the open-ended survey questions. The draft was then submitted to two academicians with official guiding authority, respectively, and revisions were made in line with expert feedback. After expert review, the form was piloted with two active tourist guides. The pilot tested clarity, flow, and estimated duration, and, based on the feedback, some items were reworded, and the question order was revised. Pilot data were not included in the main analysis. The final form comprises 6 closed-ended demographic items and 13 open-ended items distributed across three thematic areas: 4 on job insecurity experience, 5 on psychological resilience processes, and 4 on effects on psychological well-being.

Data collection began after obtaining institutional ethics approval. Ethics committee approval was obtained from Afyon Kocatepe University on 15.04.2026, under approval number 07. The data were collected through an online survey method between 16 and 24 April, 2026. Participants were initially reached through TUREB-affiliated tourist guide groups and professional networks, and an information note outlining the study's purpose, voluntary participation, and confidentiality assurances was shared. To protect participant anonymity, codes P1-P23 were used. Data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) reflexive thematic analysis, with assistance from MAXQDA qualitative data analysis software. MAXQDA was used solely to facilitate the processes of organizing, retrieving (accessing), and encoding the data. The interpretation of the data, however, was entirely the responsibility of the researchers. Analysis yielded 113 coded segments, clustered into 10 sub-codes and structured into three main themes consistent with the conceptual framework: job insecurity experience, psychological resilience processes, and effects on psychological well-being.

The transformation from codes to themes followed an incremental, interpretive logic rather than a mechanical reduction. From the 23 transcripts, 113 codes were produced inductively in the first stage. The researcher then examined these codes for conceptual similarity and iteratively compared, combined, and improved them: codes pertaining to closely related experiences (such as various expressions of seasonal income loss) were grouped under a single sub-code, while conceptually distinct codes were kept separate, resulting in ten sub-codes. Sub-codes that had a common conceptual core were grouped into larger, theoretically coherent units to produce the three primary themes. In the second step, these ten sub-codes were analyzed in relation to one another and to the study's conceptual framework. To ensure that each theme

reflected a coherent pattern of meaning rather than a superficial topic description, candidate themes were frequently compared with the coded extracts and the entire dataset.

Validity and reliability in qualitative research are evaluated using criteria distinct from those in quantitative work. This study adopted Lincoln and Guba's (1985, p. 301) criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. For reliability, the open-ended questions, codes, and theme structure were independently reviewed by two academic guides. The discussion aimed to deepen the researcher's interpretations, identify their blind spots, and foster reflective discussions that enriched the interpretation. The coding process was documented to create an audit that transparently records methodological decisions.

3. Results

The study was conducted with 23 tourist guides selected via purposive sampling. Of these, 12 (52.2%) were female, and 11 (47.8%) were males, with a mean age of 35 (min: 23, max: 53). In terms of education, 12 participants (52.2%) held a bachelor's degree, 10 (43.5%) a graduate degree, and 1 (4.3%) an associate degree. 16 participants (69.6%) held regional guiding cards, and 7 (30.4%) held national guide cards. The majority (n = 15, 65.2%) worked independently and on a seasonal basis, and 13 (56.5%) reported holding additional employment beyond guiding—a strong structural indicator of the profession's inadequacy as a sole source of livelihood. In accordance with the depth-oriented logic of reflexive thematic analysis, coding was done at the level of meaning units rather than individual lines, yielding a moderate number of coded segments per participant. That is, participants' responses to 13 open-ended questions were coded on a meaning-unit basis in MAXQDA and categorized into themes.

3.1. Frequency distribution of codes and themes

The frequency distribution of codes and themes from the thematic analysis is presented in Table 2. It provides information on themes, sub-codes, and statistics.

Table 2. Frequency distribution of codes and themes from the thematic analysis

Theme / Sub-code	f	n
Job Insecurity Experience	**32**	19/23
Structural and external sources	11	9/23
Individual and occupational sources	9	7/23
Institutional and legal perceptions	12	12/23
Psychological Resilience Processes	**53**	21/23
Difficulty and stress experience	10	9/23
Coping strategies	17	13/23
Resilience resources	14	14/23
Positive and negative transformation of resilience	12	12/23
Effects on Psychological Well-being	**28**	15/23
Occupational meaning and purpose	10	10/23
Subjective well-being	9	9/23
Multidimensional life balance	9	8/23
Total	**113**	—

Note. f = number of coded segments and n = number of participants supporting the theme/sub-code.

Examination of the theme–code frequency results in Table 2 shows that the coping strategies code—nested within psychological resilience processes—has the highest value with 17 frequencies. The coping techniques sub-code provides highly detailed insight into the practical behavioral strategies that tourist guides use to actively combat insecurity. It is followed by resilience resources, institutional and legal perceptions, and positive/negative transformation of resilience. On the other hand, individual and occupational sources of insecurity were less emphasized.

3.2. Theme 1: Job Insecurity Experience

This theme reveals how participants experience job insecurity and which sources they attribute it to. The vast majority of participants (19/23) used at least one expression related to insecurity. The theme comprises three subcodes: structural and external sources of insecurity; individual and occupational sources; and institutional and legal perceptions.

3.2.1. Structural and External Sources of Insecurity

This sub-code covers macro-level sources of insecurity beyond participants' control. Seasonality emerged most frequently and with the deepest emotional expression. Economic crises, political tensions, and pandemic-like external shocks also constitute important components. Participants' responses include:

> *P15: "...Once November arrives, it feels as if the world has stopped. The phone doesn't ring, no messages, no tours. When the season ends, I'd say I fall into a mild depression. Constantly calculating whether I'll be able to pay this month's bills wears me out…"*

> *P14: "...I spend in winter what I save in summer. Because it's a freelance profession, I'm not advantaged either in terms of insurance or stable income. It affects me both materially and emotionally…"*

P15's metaphor of *"the world has stopped"* reveals that seasonality is not merely a loss of income but transforms into an existential experience that suspends one's social world and daily life rhythms. P14's depiction of a *"saving–spending cycle"* concretizes the structural difference between guides' income flow and a standard salaried employment relationship.

3.2.2. Individual and Occupational Sources of Insecurity

This sub-code covers micro-level sources of insecurity that materialize in daily occupational practice. The most prominent are power asymmetries between the agency and the guide, unlicensed guiding, tour cancellations, and gender-based challenges. Participants' responses include:

> *P6: "...Because agencies see guides not as stakeholders but as a cost item, when they find someone willing to work for less, tour cancellations occur frequently…"*

> *P15: "...I have played the roles of guide, organizer, and psychologist all at once…"*

P6's characterization of guides as a *"cost item"* concretizes Ap and Wong's (2001) observation that guides are typically positioned as freelancers without written contracts. The multiple-role pressure described by P15 (guide–organizer–psychologist) shows that the profession imposes responsibilities beyond its formal job description.

3.2.3. Institutional and Legal Perceptions

As one of the most densely coded sub-codes, this sub-code reflects participants' perceptions of the existing legal framework, professional bodies, and the profession's institutional structure. More than half of the participants offered negative evaluations. Participants' responses include:

P13: "...The gaps in the law leave us in limbo, which of course negatively affects our psychology..."

P15: "...Unfortunately, the current system protects the agency, not the guide..."

P18: "...I think the system protects agencies, not guides..."

P13's metaphor of being *"in limbo"* strongly mirrors Weiler and Black's (2015, p. 9) observation regarding guides' indeterminate status as neither fully dependent employees nor independent entrepreneurs. The fact that P15 and P18 independently voiced the same systemic critique (*"the system protects the agency, not the guide"*) confirms a widespread perception of injustice across the profession concerning the agency-favoring regulatory framework. The mentioned expressions about career insecurity are consistent with Katlav et al.'s (2021) finding that tourist guides experience pronounced job insecurity and Oğuz et al.'s (2022) finding that insecurity increases intention to leave the profession. Özbey and Zorlu (2025) similarly found that under the Tourist Guiding Profession Law No. 6326, guides' rights are insufficiently protected.

3.3. Theme 2: Psychological Resilience Processes

This theme is the most densely coded. Twenty-one participants used at least one expression about resilience. This intensity demonstrates that tourist guides do not remain passive in the face of insecurity but instead develop multidimensional, active coping mechanisms. The theme comprises four sub-codes: difficulty and stress experience, coping strategies, resilience resources, and positive and negative transformation of resilience.

3.3.1. Difficulty and Stress Experience

This sub-code captures the psychological symptoms directly triggered by insecurity. Participants reported anxiety, stress, restlessness, burnout, and motivational decline. Participants' responses include:

P21: "...Uncertainty and irregularity make it harder to plan for the future; my stress level rises, and my professional motivation can decline..."

P23: "...Uncertainty creates occupational anxiety. That's why I feel myself cooling toward the profession..."

P8: "...There are times I feel exhausted. I can't say I fully maintain my well-being..."

The chain depicted by P21—uncertainty → inability to plan → rising stress → falling motivation—is consistent with Hobfoll's (1989) Conservation of Resources Theory, in which loss of resources in one domain systematically erodes resources in others. P23's expression of *"cooling toward the profession"* represents the most extreme point of this spiral. P8's direct use of *"burnout"* is consistent with Katlav et al.'s (2021) finding of a significant positive effect of insecurity on emotional exhaustion. These findings also align with Elshaer and Azazz (2023), who showed that insecurity adversely affects depression, anxiety, and stress among tourism employees.

3.3.2. Coping Strategies

As the most densely coded subcode, this captures participants' active, multidimensional strategies for coping with insecurity. Strategies are organized in three main categories: occupational diversification, personal development/networking, and physical-mental self-care. Participants' responses include:

P3: "...Because I have a second career, my stress level doesn't get high..."

P11: "...I work as a physiotherapist and trainer, besides guiding..."

P18: "...I always had an alternative job—life coaching, consecutive interpretation, etc.…"

Regarding occupational diversification, the development of second careers and alternative income sources among P3, P11, and P18 supports Çalışkan and Özkoç's (2020) finding that perceived employability reduces insecurity. Türkoğlu et al. (2025) similarly found that guides develop strategies to find additional work and change professions in response to future crises.

3.3.3. Resilience Resources

This sub-code covers the internal and external resources that enable participants to remain strong. Participants' responses include:

P4: "...I do my profession with all my heart, and I want to do nothing but this for my whole life. This love and passion give me strength to endure and continue…"

P15: "...My spouse now knows the cost of this profession better than I do; on tough days, she gives a lot of support…"

P21: "...Sharing experiences with colleagues makes it easier to cope with stress…"

Love and passion for the profession emerged as the strongest resilience resource. P4's articulation of *"love and passion"* can transform one's perceptions, aligning with Kırıcı Tekeli et al.'s (2021) finding that occupational identification positively affects resilience. Regarding social support networks, P15's spousal support and P21's collegial solidarity stand out, consistent with Demirović Bajrami et al. (2022), who showed that social support moderates the negative effect of job demands.

3.3.4. Positive and Negative Transformation of Resilience

This sub-code captures the outcomes of the resilience process. Most participants reported positive transformation following adverse experiences, while some highlighted negative transformations. Participants' responses include:

P18: "...This profession taught me to look at things from many angles, to see that there are as many different thoughts as there are people, and to act flexibly within infinite possibilities. I have clearly transformed into a stronger and more solution-oriented character…"

P22: "...Every adverse situation I overcome makes me stronger…"

P15: "...I came through that period; I can now say that this too shall pass…"

The character transformation P18 describes, and P22's experience of strengthening, exhibit strong parallels with what is conceptualized as post-traumatic growth in the resilience literature. P15's *"this too shall pass"* perspective shows that past experiences can serve as a cognitive source of assurance. These findings align with Çelik's (2024) definition of resilience as the capacity to transform negative experiences into positive ones, and with Li et al.'s (2025) finding that guides with resilient personality profiles are better equipped to manage their mental states.

3.4. Theme 3: Effects on Psychological Well-being

In this theme, more than half of the participants used at least one expression about the effects of insecurity on their well-being. The theme comprises three sub-codes: occupational meaning and purpose, subjective well-being, and multidimensional life balance.

3.4.1. Occupational Meaning and Purpose

This sub-code reveals how participants support their psychological well-being through the meaning and purpose the profession provides. Participants' responses include:

P18: "...Truly explaining my beloved country and our people, breaking prejudices, and bidding farewell to guests with mutual love so they will return creates the feeling of 'I'm so tired but glad I do this work'—happiness and fulfillment…"

P15: "...A tourist once told me, 'You taught us not just Türkiye but a civilization.' That memory still makes me happy when it comes to mind…"

P4: "...I see myself as a storyteller…"

P18's "*so tired but glad I do this*" expression aligns closely with the eudaimonic well-being construct: the individual finds meaning in the work despite fatigue, and this sense of meaning offsets exhaustion. P15's recollection demonstrates that a single interaction can become a source of meaning lasting for years. P4's identity as a "*storyteller*" further illustrates how professional identity itself becomes a source of psychological meaning. These findings are consistent with Alrawadieh and Dinçer's (2021) finding that emotional effort supports well-being by reducing burnout, and with Dündar's (2025) observation that resilient guides sustain the quality of experience.

3.4.2. Subjective Well-being

This sub-code captures the direct effects of insecurity on participants' subjective well-being. Participants' responses include:

P15: "...In mid-season, my energy is high, and I'm fully self-confident. In winter months, I become more withdrawn…"

P14: "...If I'm financially well, I am well; but if my finances reach zero, no one is unhappier than I am. I worry deeply at times…"

P20: "...I generally wake up late as if I have no reason to get out of bed; sometimes I feel purposeless…"

The seasonal mood variation depicted by P15 points to a unique phenomenon that may be regarded as *"psychological changes in seasons."* P14's tying well-being directly to financial standing confirms Darvishmotevali and Ali's (2020) finding that insecurity erodes individuals' psychological well-being and adversely affects performance. P20's *"feeling purposeless"* indicates that insecurity carries an existential dimension that threatens life meaning and daily motivation, consistent with De Witte's (1999) work, which shows the systematic erosion of well-being by insecurity.

3.4.3. Multidimensional Life Balance

This sub-code covers the effects of insecurity on family life, social relationships, and work–life balance. Participants' responses include:

P22: "...The biggest problem I face is family conflict. Because I have a family with two children, back-to-back tours significantly affect family life…"

P14: "...When you go on back-to-back overnight tours, you don't even see yourself…"

P22's identification of family conflict as the most significant dimension, and P14's *"you don't even see yourself,"* overlap with Dönmez et al.'s (2024) finding that work–family conflict mediates the relationship between occupational stressors and well-being.

3.5. Inter-theme Relationships

Examination of the relationships among the three themes reveals a network of mutual interaction. Job insecurity (Theme 1) both triggers and shapes psychological resilience (Theme 2). A joint analysis of participant narratives shows that the structural resources of Theme 1 are frequently cited alongside the coping strategies of Theme 2. The relationship between resilience (Theme 2) and its effects on well-being (Theme 3) is more complex. Resilience resources and

coping strategies serve as protective factors that buffer the negative effects of insecurity on well-being. The strong co-occurrence between cognitive reframing and occupational meaning sub-codes shows that guides reconstruct adverse experiences via meaning-making, consistent with Luthans et al.'s (2007, p. 3) findings on the protective function of psychological capital. A feedback effect from Theme 3 to Theme 1 was also observed: a sense of occupational meaning attenuates the perceived intensity of insecurity. The tourist guides who find their work meaningful perceive the same objective insecurity at lower threat levels—a feedback loop aligned with Hobfoll's (1989) Conservation of Resources Theory. Based on the relationships discussed among these three themes, the following figure was formed.

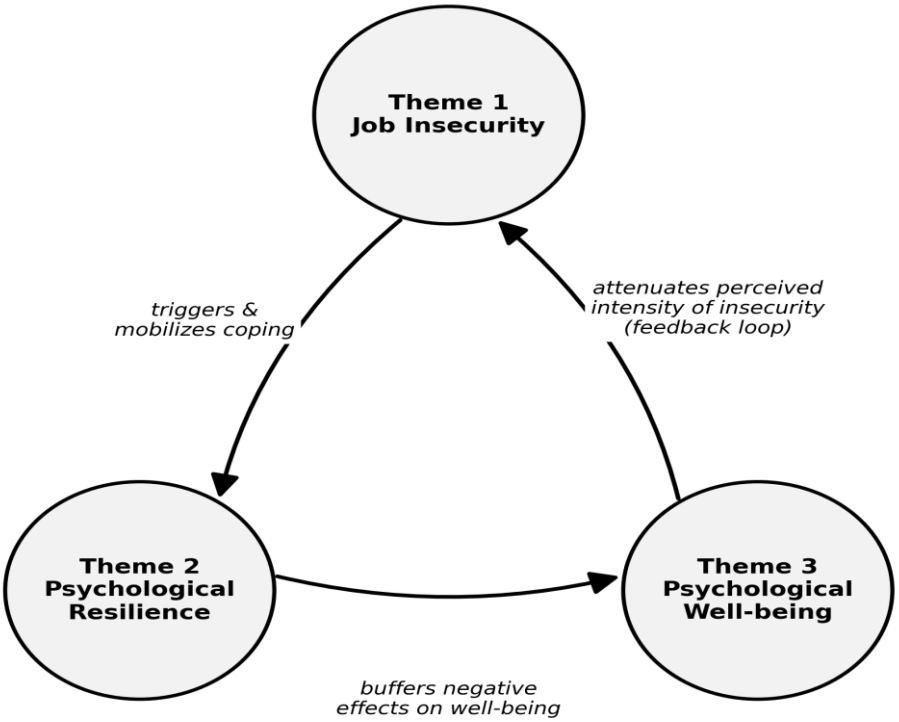

Figure 1. Conceptual model of the relationships among themes

The figure shows that the conceptual model of the relationships among the three themes exhibits a cyclical pattern in which job insecurity mobilizes resilience-related coping, resilience buffers well-being, and occupational meaning feeds back to mitigate perceived insecurity.

3.6. Overall Evaluation of Findings

Holistic evaluation of the findings reveals a three-way, cyclical relationship among job insecurity, psychological resilience, and well-being. Unlike linear approaches in the existing literature, this study captures a dynamic, reciprocal interaction network specific to the guiding profession.

The first component—job insecurity—is structured at three levels: structural-external (seasonality, crises, economic fluctuations), individual-occupational (agency pressure, tour cancellations, gender-based difficulties), and institutional-legal (regulatory inadequacy, system distrust). The interaction of these three levels reveals the multi-layered and cumulative nature of insecurity, extending Sverke et al.'s (2002) cognitive-affective conceptualization to the guiding context.

It appears that psychological resilience plays a dominant role in the relationship between insecurity and well-being. The mediating function manifests as insecurity, which activates coping strategies that, in turn, support well-being. The moderating function manifests as guides with high resilience experiencing less psychological distress under the same objective conditions of insecurity. This dual function is consistent with Jiang et al. (2023) and Aguiar-Quintana et al. (2021).

The third component—psychological well-being—emerges as a multidimensional construct with eudaimonic (occupational meaning, cultural ambassadorship) and hedonic (subjective happiness, life satisfaction) dimensions. The eudaimonic dimension functions as a strong buffer: guides who find their profession meaningful report higher well-being despite economic insecurity, confirming Candar et al.'s (2026) finding that the effect of eudaimonic well-being on behavioral intention is stronger than that of hedonic well-being.

The most original contribution of this study is the demonstration of the relationships among these three components. P21's expression—*"when insecurity rises, stress increases and erodes well-being; but frequent encounters can also build resilience over time"*—captures the essence of this cycle. Hobfoll's (1989) Conservation of Resources Theory offers a strong framework for explaining this cycle: guides with adequate resources can transform insecurity into a growth opportunity, while those with inadequate resources enter a loss spiral leading to burnout.

4. Discussion

This study analyzed the semi structured open-ended questions with 23 professional tourist guides and yielded 113 coded segments structured into three main themes. The first theme indicates that the vast majority of participants experience job insecurity at three interlocking levels: seasonality, economic crises, and institutional-legal inadequacy. Seasonality is described not only as income loss but also as existential rupture; P15's metaphor of *"the world has stopped"* and P14's depiction of a *"saving–spending cycle"* reflect how this structural fragility permeates daily experience. This finding aligns with Katlav et al. (2021) on the deepening of insecurity due to the tourism sector's shock-prone structure, and with Çalışkan and Özkoç's (2020) detection of high insecurity perceptions among accommodation employees—signaling a sectoral pattern.

The institutional and legal perception sub-code shows that almost all participants find the existing legal framework inadequate and openly express distrust in the protective function of professional bodies. P13's *"in limbo"* and P15 and P18's *"the system protects the agency, not the guide"* reveal that the perception of institutional injustice is widespread and systematic. Consistent with Oğuz et al. (2022), this finding is striking when read alongside the fact that approximately one-quarter of participants no longer view guiding as their primary occupation, and that nearly half developed a tendency to move into different professions during the pandemic. Saltık and Kızılırmak's (2020) finding that guiding becomes attritional over time intersects directly with this finding, and Tellioğlu's (2020) findings on the effect of insecurity on future anxiety align with the career-insecurity expressions of P9, P17, and P19.

The psychological resilience processes theme accounts for almost half of total codings, making it the most densely coded theme—strongly reflecting that participants do not remain passive in the face of insecurity but develop multidimensional, active coping mechanisms. The coping strategies sub-code, the highest-frequency sub-code, encompasses three main strategy categories: occupational diversification, proactive network management, and physical-mental self-care. The orientation of P3, P11, and P18 toward second careers and alternative income sources supports Çalışkan and Özkoç's (2020) finding that perceived employability reduces insecurity and aligns with the *"opportunity dependency"* pattern implied by Tellioğlu (2020).

In the resilience resources sub-code, love and passion for the profession emerged as the dominant resource. P4's articulation of *"love and passion give me strength to endure and continue"* closely aligns with Kırıcı Tekeli et al.'s (2021) finding that occupational identification positively affects resilience. Ak et al.'s (2025) detection of significant positive relationships among resilience, individual innovativeness, and career adaptability supports implementing resilience-development interventions for tourism educators and field professionals. The positive and negative transformations of the resilience sub-code constitute one of the most original dimensions of the findings: P18's transformation into a *"stronger and more solution-oriented character"* and P22's *"every adverse situation makes me stronger"* directly overlap with the post-traumatic growth literature. However, transformation is not always positive; P8's *"brief breakdowns"* and P13's long-term negative transformation clearly demonstrate the limits of resilience. Considering Onan et al.'s (2021) finding that resilience positively affects both employee and organizational resilience, these bidirectional dynamics carry critical implications for both individual and organizational capacity.

The third theme indicates that insecurity produces multidimensional and at times paradoxical effects on psychological well-being. In the occupational meaning and purpose sub-code, participants drew strength from the eudaimonic dimension despite insecurity. P18's *"so tired but glad I do this work"* tangibly demonstrates that meaning can offset exhaustion, and P15's recollection shows that a single interaction can become a years-long source of meaning—confirming Candar et al.'s (2026) finding that the effect of eudaimonic well-being on behavioral intention exceeds that of hedonic well-being. In the Subjective Well-being sub-code, a striking pattern of *"psychological changes in seasons"* was observed: P15's *"in mid-season my energy is high; in winter I become more withdrawn"* shows that well-being fluctuates with employment rhythm. Abouelenien et al.'s (2024) findings on the adverse effects of insecurity on performance and work alienation align with P20's *"feeling purposeless."*

The multidimensional life balance sub-code reveals that the profession significantly strains work–life balance. P22's identification of family conflict as the heaviest burden and P14's *"you don't even see yourself"* reinforce Saltık and Kızılırmak's (2020) characterization of guiding as *"more a way of life than a profession."* Conversely, P20's strategy of conscious work refusal and P21's seasonal balance approach show that some guides develop proactive balance strategies—supporting Elshaer's (2024) finding that highly resilient employees contribute more to organizational resilience.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study aimed to reveal, from a qualitative perspective, the relationships among job insecurity, psychological resilience, and psychological well-being including 23 professional tourist guides in Türkiye. Findings indicate that guides experience insecurity at three interlocking levels—seasonality, economic crises, and institutional-legal inadequacy—and that the vast majority define this insecurity not merely as an economic threat but as an existential experience profoundly shaking daily life rhythms and professional identity. The institutional and legal perception findings expose a widespread perception that the existing legal framework disproportionately protects agencies relative to guides; combined with nearly half of participants reporting a tendency to move into different professions during the pandemic, this constitutes a serious warning regarding occupational sustainability.

The Hobfoll and Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt models were created in a Western setting (corporate employment, regular wage, positions with social security). However, the results of this study demonstrate that these models function slightly differently in an informal, non-contractual, seasonal Turkish environment (e.g., dominance of the institutional-legal dimension and cyclical relationships). This fact seems to highlight the originality of the study.

Psychological resilience emerged as the most densely coded theme. Tourist guides developed active coping mechanisms in three categories—occupational diversification, proactive network management, and physical-mental self-care. While love and passion for the profession emerged as the strongest resources, spousal support, collegial solidarity, and spiritual belief also nourished them. Findings on the positive and negative transformation of resilience indicate that some participants can convert insecurity into post-traumatic growth, while the limits of resilience cannot be ignored. With respect to psychological well-being, the eudaimonic dimension—the sense of meaning and purpose—functions as a powerful buffer against objective insecurity, while the multidimensional life balance findings concretely document the heavy burden the profession imposes on work–family relationships.

The research's most innovative contribution is demonstrating a cyclical, dynamic relationship among psychological resilience, job insecurity, and psychological well-being rather than a linear one. The current findings indicate a repeated pattern in which job insecurity promotes the development or strengthening of psychological resilience, resilience contributes to the recovery of psychological well-being, and the renewed experience of job insecurity reactivates and further bolsters resilience. This contrasts with the existing literature, which has primarily modeled this relationship as a one-directional path from job insecurity to psychological well-being. For example: job insecurity → development/strengthening of psychological resilience → recovery of psychological well-being → renewed experience of job insecurity → further strengthening of psychological resilience. To put it another way, the study highlights that rather than being a single linear chain of cause and effect, the relationship between job insecurity, psychological resilience, and psychological well-being develops as a continuously repeated process of reciprocal interaction. This finding both extends Hobfoll's (1989) Conservation of Resources Theory to a cyclical, repeated-exposure context and offers a corrective to prior tourism-employment research, which has largely treated insecurity and well-being as endpoints of a linear causal sequence (e.g., Elshaer & Azazz, 2023; Pires, 2025).

In four significant areas, this study adds to the body of literature. First, it shows that job insecurity is a multifaceted phenomenon unique to the tourism guiding industry, influenced not by a single general source of threat but rather by seasonality, economic crises, and institutional-legal insufficiency. Second, it demonstrates that psychological resilience is not a fixed individual attribute but rather a coping mechanism and developmental resource actively created by guides through self-care, network management, and occupational diversification. Third, it suggests that psychological well-being is a dynamic structure that is continually shaped by the significance professionals attach to their work, rather than merely an outcome variable. Lastly, the study offers a conceptual framework that proposes a cyclical relationship between psychological resilience, psychological well-being, and job insecurity. This framework offers a theoretical foundation for future longitudinal or mixed-methods research that can empirically test this cyclical pattern, as well as an alternative to the linear models that predominate in the current literature.

Drawing on these findings, several practical and policy recommendations can be developed. For tourist guides themselves: occupational diversification is among the most effective individual strategies; developing additional competencies in adjacent fields (translation, cultural consultancy, content creation, training) supports income continuity and mitigates the psychological cost of insecurity. Internalizing psychological self-care practices as a mandatory component of occupational sustainability—through meditation, physical activity, and conscious boundary setting—is critical to preventing burnout. Collegial solidarity, identified as a strong resilience resource, indicates that guides should maintain active, continuous informal support networks.

Professional bodies are primary actors in addressing perceptions of institutional injustice. TUREB is recommended to conduct comprehensive monitoring research on guides' resilience and well-being, and to report the findings as policy proposals. Particularly during

season transitions and crises, peer-support programs, supervision mechanisms, and free psychological counseling for guides constitute structural interventions. Resilience training programs should be designed within the chambers, and effective complaint and mediation mechanisms should be established for structural problems such as unlicensed guiding, sub-minimum-wage employment, and non-enforcement of mandatory written contracts. Travel agencies, given that guide well-being directly affects service quality and destination image, should adopt standard written-contract practices, develop fair and predictable wage policies, and institute transparent and secure protocols for tour cancellations.

Almost all participants found existing legal regulations inadequate, and gaps under the Tourist Guiding Profession Law No. 6326 deepen occupational uncertainty. Accordingly, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism should enact regulations that strengthen tourist guides' professional status and develop structural mechanisms, such as passport and visa facilitation, livelihood support during crises, and integration with social security systems. Effective enforcement against unlicensed guiding will safeguard fair competition. Designing specialized support mechanisms for guides during pandemic and economic crisis periods—and keeping them ready to deploy rapidly—should be considered a strategic necessity. Finally, findings indicate that resilience competencies should be systematically developed within professional education: tourism guidance curricula should integrate stress management, emotional self-regulation, work–life balance, and resilience-building modules combined with practice. Designing career preparation programs that frame insecurity as an occupational reality will enable graduates to enter the sector with realistic expectations and prevent early occupational burnout. Expanding behavioral research through qualitative and mixed-methods studies that center on the welfare of tourist guides will further advance academic knowledge and evidence-based sectoral policy.

This study has a number of limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the study was designed using a qualitative approach. Therefore, future research could employ quantitative or mixed methods with larger datasets to test the proposed cyclical relationships. Secondly, since the sample is limited to tourist guides, it would be fruitful for future research to examine these variables among different groups within the tourism sector, such as tourist guide candidates.

Evaluation**/** *Değerlendirme:* Double Blind Refereeing System / *Çift Taraflı Kör Hakemlik Sistemi*

Ethics Committee Approval Certificate */ Etik Kurul İzni*: It was deemed ethically appropriate with the letter dated 15.04.2026 and numbered 07 of Afyon Kocatepe University Rectorate Ethics Committee. / *Afyon Kocatepe Üniversitesi Rektörlüğü Sosyal ve Beşeri Bilimler Araştırma ve Yayın Etiği Kurulu'nun 15.04.2026 tarih ve 07 sayılı kararı ile etik açıdan uygun görülmüştür.*

Ethics Notification */ Etik Bildirim*: info@esosder.org

Declaration of conflict of interest/ Çıkar Çatışması Beyanı: There is no potential conflict of interest in this study. / *Bu çalışmada herhangi bir potansiyel çıkar çatışması bulunmamaktadır.*

Use of Artificial Intelligence/ Yapay Zekâ Kullanımı**:** Artificial-intelligence-based applications were used in the preparation of this study only to translate and paraphrase the text and to check the grammar of the entire text. In addition, all content was produced by the authors in accordance with scientific research methods and academic ethical principles. / *Bu çalışmanın hazırlanmasında yapay zekâ tabanlı uygulamalar yalnızca metnin çevrilmesi, yeniden yorumlanması ve metnin tamamının dilbilgisi bağlamında kontrol edilmesi amacıyla kullanılmıştır. Ayrıca, tüm içerikler bilimsel araştırma yöntemleri ve akademik etik ilkelerine uygun olarak yazar tarafından hazırlanmıştır.*

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