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**What are the Economic, Psychological and Social Consequences of the Covid-19 Crisis on Tourism Employees?**

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**Abstract**

This paper aims to investigate the economic, psychological and social consequences of the Covid-19 crisis on tourism employees in Turkey. The exploratory research approach was adopted and an online interview, one of the qualitative research methods, was used for data collection. Meanwhile, the paper presents valuable evidence to contribute to the literature by emphasizing the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic on tourism employees. Tourism employees, who are the core of tourism employment, have been severely affected economically, psychologically and socially in the pandemic process. They were economically subjected to “*short-term working allowance*” and “*severe income loss*” and faced the “*fear*” of losing their jobs and their loved ones psychologically. Furthermore, they have a really “*boring*” social life during the pandemic. These consequences have been sought to strengthen with government incentives such as “unemployment benefit, short-term working allowance, unemployment benefit for suspended personnel, credit support, pandemic social support application, Covid-19 staff training, the supply of personal protective equipment and hygienic working environment”. The Covid-19 is an unprecedented and ongoing crisis for the global tourism industry. This paper serves as a prelude to a broader field of tourism employees during the pandemic and offers theoretical and practical insight for future crises and tourism employees.

**Keywords:** Tourism employment, tourism workforce, impacts of Covid-19, pandemic, government incentives

**Introduction**

The history of the Covid-19 coronavirus, which is the most fundamental disaster of 2020 and will not be forgotten for a long time, started with reports from the Chinese office of the World Health Organization on the unexplained cases occurring in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China on

31 December 2019. Between 31 December 2019 and 3 January 2020, 44 cases of unknown cause were detected. According to the statement made by the World Health Organization on January 11-12, 2020, these cases were reported to be associated with a seafood market in Wuhan city. 44 cases of an unknown origin were detected between 31 December 2019 and 3 January 2020. According to a report released on 11-12 January 2020 by the World Health Organization, these cases have been confirmed to relate to the seafood market in Wuhan city. This disease was confirmed to be a new type of coronavirus (2019-nCoV), according to the Chinese authorities' statements on January 7, 2020. As a result of extreme fluctuations in cases of new forms of coronavirus, which are at high risk of droplet contact exposure, this new form of coronavirus, also known as 2019- nCoV, was declared an epidemic by the World Health Organization (Lai et al., 2020). On 11 March 2020, nCoV, which is considered regional due to the continued rise in the number of cases and the inability to prevent infection, was declared a pandemic as a result of hitting over 118,000 cases in 114 countries and costing the lives of 4,291 individuals (WHO, 2020b).

Then, 2019-nCoV, which is humanity's common crisis, has triggered significant population losses, health concerns, foreign trade and travel interruptions, economic losses. A total of approximately 25 million cases and 800,000 deaths have been reported since the beginning of the outbreak (WHO, 2020a), according to the statistics in the 'Coronavirus disease' report released by the World Health Organization as of 30 August 2020 (WHO, 2020a). To avoid the spread of infection by travel and trade, most countries have adopted emergency measures. First, the borders of countries with the greatest risk of infectiousness (such as China, Italy, France, Spain, USA, Canada...) were closed and travel restrictions were enforced. However, schools and colleges, nurseries, cinemas, museums, restaurants were closed, public meetings and events were canceled, and people were quarantined to limit interaction (Hamouche, 2020). All countries have heavily limited international travel and have implemented bans to minimize the pandemic's spread (Jamal & Budke, 2020, p. 182). As a consequence of closing borders and limiting travel, most international flights have been suspended (Haryanto, 2020). All have faced a multi-faceted challenge for the global tourism industry in terms of both tourism demand and supply (massive fiscal deficits, job losses, business liquidation, human capital depletion) (Matiza, 2020).

Although large-scale quarantines travel restrictions and physical distance steps taken by state authorities to reduce the spread of the Covid-19 virus provide outbreak protection, they also cause businesses to lose their profits and employment (Altinay Ozdemir, 2020, p. 224; Jiang

& Wen, 2020; Khanal, 2020). Thousands of tourist businesses who, depending on the act of travel, continue their lives are trying to survive without production. According to a report released by the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) on the economic impacts of the pandemic on tourism on 28 April 2020, the impact of the pandemic on the global economy is eight times greater than the impact of the 2008 global economic crisis. The reason for this is explained by the 31 percent drop in employment in the tourism industry in 2020, namely the 100 million people lost their jobs and a 30 percent loss in tourism revenue of \$2.7 trillion (WTTC, 2020c). The WTTC has been assessing the impact of travel and tourism on the economy and jobs for almost 30 years and highlights the importance of the industry to the global economy. The 2019 report spans 25 regions and 185 countries. The report shows that 10.3% of global GDP and 330 million or 10.4% of total jobs are accounted for by the industry. However, in the last five years, four of the net new jobs created worldwide have been in travel and tourism (WTTC, 2020d). The situation for 2020 is sadly not the same, unlike the bright data from 2019. The losses in the April 2020 WTTC report mentioned above were further increased in the June 2020 scenario analysis. According to this scenario, employment losses in travel and tourism are predicted at 121.1 million in 2020 and 197.5 million in the downside scenario. Meanwhile, for the initial and \$5.5 trillion for the downside case, travel and tourism GDP losses are projected to be \$3.4 trillion (WTTC, 2020d).

These impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on the global economy represent unparalleled losses. These losses are described by WTTC as “unprecedented losses”. It should not be forgotten that in the tourism sector, the panic wave created by the pandemic worldwide is also effective (Bakar & Rosbi, 2020) and will trigger some changes in tourism (Altinay Ozdemir, 2020). These changes are likely to occur given that tourism is a labor-intensive sector and its demand is flexible. Panic and fear felt during the pandemic process against the risk of infection seem to cause serious changes in tourism demand for the coming years. CEO Arne Sorenson, president of Marriott International (NASDAQ: MAR), said in a speech to his employees that the impact of Covid-19 on the hotel chain was more devastating than the Second World War, September 9, or other historical crises (Hunt, 2020; Martins et al., 2020).

While these effects are described as “devastating” in the managers of tourism enterprises, how they are for tourism employees is a matter of curiosity. The primary reason for being curious is that tourism is labor-intensive and has characteristics of seasonal employment. Therefore in the face of any crisis, workers in the tourism industry are impacted more than workers from other industries. That’s why tourism employees are defined as non-standard employees by

Martin, Riordan, and Dolnicar (2020). They usually do not have rights, in other words, such as regular leave (Markey & McIvor, 2018). Unlike other industries, even though tourism employees' job security is not permanent, they are ineffective against risks. During the epidemic period, very few tourism employees had permanent employment contracts, as tourism enterprises made employment contracts before the peak season. For this reason, tourism employees are thought to be severely affected by the pandemic. To determine these impacts, in revealing the current perceptions of the employees, an exploratory study design was preferred depending on the qualitative research method.

### *Purpose of Research*

This study aims to investigate the economic, psychological and social consequences of the Covid-19 crisis on tourism employees. Therefore, as destinations where the numbers of tourists and tourism employees have the intensity of Turkey Istanbul, Antalya and Mugla have been identified as areas of research. The main research question is “*How has the Covid-19 pandemic process affected tourism employees-especially economically, psychologically and socially?*”

### **Literature Review**

#### ***Tourism Employment and Covid-19***

According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) travel and tourism rates, as of 2019, tourism contributed significantly to the economy, with 330 million jobs and \$8.9 trillion income worldwide (WTTC, 2020d). In the tourism industry in European countries, more than 3 million people were employed in 2016. About 8 million of these people were employed in the food and beverage industry, while 2 million were employed in transport. The accommodation sector (excluding real estate) means 2.7 million jobs in the EU; travel agencies and tour operators account for just over half a million. Three sectors (accommodation, travel agencies, air transport) almost entirely based on tourism employed 3.6 million people in the EU (Eurostat, 2020a). By 2017, there were 2.3 million businesses in Europe's tourism industry. Germany (2.5 million), Italy (1.6 million) and Spain (1.5 million), which make up more than half of them (56%), employed a total of more than 5 million people in tourism in 2017 (Eurostat, 2020b). According to World Bank statistics, travel and tourism contribute directly to employment, 1.65% for Turkey in 2018. Crises in Turkey in 2016 have led to a serious decline in this ratio. Therefore, while the contribution of tourism to employment was 1.81% in 2014, it decreased to 1.53% in 2016 (World Bank, 2020).

According to OECD Stat statistics, in 2017 as Turkey's tourism employment was reporting 646 thousand. Employment intensity is in food and beverage services (212 thousand), followed by accommodation (86 thousand) and transportation services (70 thousand) (OECD.Stat, 2020). Turkey tourism employment showed 2.5 million since 2019 and the total contribution of tourism to GDP is set at 11.3% (WTTC, 2020d). The tourism service with the highest employment rate is the food and beverage service sector with 717 thousand, followed by transport with over 598 thousand employees (Luty, 2020b). The tourism industry, which directly affects the economies of countries through employment, could not achieve the same acceleration in 2020 because of the Covid-19, contrary to the statistics in 2019. According to the 2020 Recovery Scenarios report dated June 15, 2020, published by the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), three scenarios related to the economic impacts of the pandemic have been identified. Under the optimistic scenario, there will be \$2.686 billion in revenue and 98.2 million job losses, down 30% in 2019. These rates will worsen according to the baseline scenario, with tourism revenue losses of 39 percent to \$3.435 billion and job losses of 37 percent to 121.1 million. In the worst-case scenario, at a loss of 62 percent, the loss of revenue would be \$5.543 billion, and the loss of jobs at 60 percent would be 197.5 million (WTTC, 2020b). The country most affected by the risk of coronavirus in terms of job losses is projected to be China, the source country for the virus. On the other hand, it is projected that about 1 million jobs in the travel and tourism industry will be lost in Italy, the European country most affected (Lock, 2020). According to the forecast report published by Statista in March 2020, the countries that will experience the most job loss in Europe in the travel and tourism sector are Germany with 1.6 million risks; Russia with 1.1 million; the UK with 1 million; France and Spain with 800 thousand; and Turkey is estimated as 700 thousand (Luty, 2020a).

Estimates of 98 million job losses across the worldwide demonstrate that the pandemic is severely impacting countries. The total population of Turkey is 83 million as of 2019. 27.5% of the population is children, 9% are the elderly (65 and over). When these rates are removed, 54 million female and male adult population remain (Official Statistics Portal, 2020). Among this population, employment in the tourism and travel industry corresponds to 4.6%. In this sense, nearly 5 percent population of Turkey of job losses in tourism is at risk.

Vulnerable and insecure hospitality workers were greatly affected by the closure of businesses and the increase in dismissals due to the Covid-19 crisis. There were also tourism workers in some countries who couldn't pay for benefits (Baum et al., 2020). In New Zealand, workers

(most immigrants) who had never accessed payment of benefits were unable to apply for benefits because they did not have personal identification numbers for social welfare, and the phone lines to which they were directed to contact were unanswered (Baum et al., 2020). Eighty-eight percent of Ethiopian hotels, which were severely affected by Covid-19, which increased unemployment in the country, were closed due to the pandemic, and the remaining 12% were used as isolation centers. Moreover, hotels with bank loans have difficulty paying their debts. For this reason, it is predicted that the hotels that cannot work at full capacity and cannot generate income due to the pandemic will not be able to pay their loans and salaries if the crisis continues (Bogale et al., 2020).

India (WTTC, 2020a), which earned \$28 billion from tourism in 2019, suffered serious damage from the coronavirus and faced job losses and an economic crisis. Also, it has been predicted that as of April 2020, more than 70% of the total workforce will be unemployed (Kumar & Rou, 2020). Due to Covid-19, India's tourism industry is expected to lose 11,221 Million USD in revenue due to the suspension and postponement of flight operations that will cause 2.93 million unemployment in 2020 (IATA, 2020). Besides, the Indian tourism industry is expected to lose 40 million jobs in 2020 (Kumar & Rou, 2020). Most restaurants, bars and cafes, especially accommodation businesses, decided to close after the pandemic tourist arrivals stopped (Bogale et al., 2020), and taxi drivers, tour organizers and tourist guides remained unemployed (Hakim, 2020). Travel restrictions have significantly affected hotels, campsites, or other types of accommodation, restaurants, museums and other activities frequented by both local and international tourists. Also, tourism campaigns, which were carried out for countries to increase the number of tourists and create new jobs, were canceled due to Covid-19 (Khanal 2020). Some SME industries have been reported to collapse in Bali due to the huge impact of the pandemic on employment<sup>1</sup>.

Working hours of active tourism employees have been shortened to alleviate the severity and spread of the disease due to the pandemic that disrupts tourism. During the pandemic process, businesses resort to dismissals that will significantly reduce the level of employment as they cannot work at their previous capacity (Alaeddinoğlu & Rol, 2020; Page et al., 2006). Therefore, during the Covid-19 pandemic process, this viewpoint was realized and employees who were fired were negatively affected by the loss of income (Zhou et al., 2020). While the employees' financial loss is a problem for employees who are quarantined, it carries a risk for their future professional activities (Brooks et al., 2020). In fact, in addition to the respiratory

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.thejakartapost.com/>

problems caused by Covid-19, it also caused the individuals who stopped working to deteriorate their psychology and experience distress (Hamouche, 2020). Moreover, inadequate insurance and compensation of employees are among the most important factors affecting their psychological health (Tam et al., 2004).

### ***Tourism Employees in Pandemic Process***

Though uninsured employees are more vulnerable to the pandemic than other employees, containment measures are dramatically affecting them (ILO, 2020; Khanal, 2020). Most employees who were uninsured and desperate during the pandemic process were penniless and committed illegal acts, such as raiding grocery stores to get food, according to some studies (Follain, 2020; He, 2020; Reuters, 2020). Employees who were not supported by the state, on the other hand, continued to work indifferently to maintain their economic existence, even when infected. All the preventive measures that governments have taken to reduce the risk of pandemic infection will be undermined in such a situation (Williams & Kayaoglu, 2020).

The majority of employees in the hotel industry in Kuala Lumpur were dismissed in line with the statistics of room cancellations due to the crisis. 542 out of 17,826 employees in total were dismissed. Meanwhile, 3641 (20%) employees were asked to take unpaid leave and 2880 (16%) employed faced wage cuts (Foo et al., 2020). Moreover, employees' psychology was seriously impacted during the pandemic (Mao et al., 2020). People are feeling the adverse economic and social consequences of being isolated and unemployed due to Covid-19. Moreover, state-imposed isolation results in financial deprivation and decreased quality of life due to the pandemic (The Lancet Planetary Health, 2020). According to research (Radic et al., 2020), Covid-19 strengthens tourism employees' feelings of fear, anxiety and stress and triggers anxiety disorder. Due to social isolation, employees who suffer from insomnia and anxiety disorder often fall into depression. For this reason, tourism employees encounter high levels of stress during the Covid-19 process that can develop mental health disorders, particularly anxiety and depression (Radic et al., 2020)

### ***Governments' Employment Incentives against the Pandemic***

Specific measures have been taken by the governments and other stakeholders of various countries to mitigate the economic impact of the pandemic on the tourism industry (Bogale et al., 2020; Williams & Kayaoglu, 2020). The UK government offered a taxable grant of 80 percent of its company income up to a limit of £ 2500 per month, with the deferral of payment

of direct and indirect taxes for self-employed persons (Bas & Sivaprasad, 2020; Williams & Kayaoglu, 2020).

The travel industry has requested government intervention in the package travel arrangement regarding the return of package tours. Some airlines have decided to reduce jobs as a measure to contain costs (Bas & Sivaprasad, 2020). The Ethiopian government has lent 3.3 billion Birr as rescue financing to hotels and tour operators so that they can cover wages and operating expenses. Businesses went through a 6-month impact analysis to get this loan. On the other hand, the private banks of the country have also decided to lower the interest rate and reschedule the loan for the tourism industry (Bogale et al., 2020).

The International Labor Organization (ILO) follows 3 steps for the pandemic: protecting employees at the workplace, stimulating the economy and employment, and promoting jobs and profits. The proposed steps include expanding social security, incentives for retention (i.e. short-term jobs, paid leave and other subsidies) and tax relief, particularly for micro, small and medium-sized businesses. This was implemented through the Support to mitigate Unemployment Risks in an Emergency (SURE) support program (European Commission, 2020), in Europe, one of the key centers of the pandemic. The program is designed to help Member States protect employees against the risk of dismissal and loss of revenue as a consequence of the pandemic by providing Member States with loans totaling up to EUR 100 billion (Williams & Kayaoglu, 2020). Malaysia, another country affected by the pandemic with measures such as tax incentives, restructuring of loans and postponement of repayments to banks, has attempted to promote cash flow in the tourism industry. In an attempt to minimize the potential for increasing unemployment, a wage subsidy program was initiated by a country heavily impacted by jobs and a monthly subsidy of RM 600 per employee was given for three months. The government offered a one-time payment of RM 600 and RM 500, respectively, to 128,000 employees (Kementerian Kewangan Malaysia, 2020) to compensate for the substantial reduction in their daily wages until May 2020. This incentive package, which lasts for six months, eliminates issues with employment, such as dismissing employees and forcing them on unpaid leave. Malaysia, which was hit by foreign tourism, turned to domestic tourism despite this to compensate for its loss. Several initiatives have been implemented to improve domestic tourism, such as a personal income tax deduction of up to RM1000 and digital coupons priced at up to RM100 per person for domestic flights, train travel and accommodation (Foo et al., 2020).



The situation isn't any different in Turkey. Both existing and seasonal employees are in danger of losing their jobs in the tourism industry, which has come to a standstill due to the pandemic. Some hotels were closed due to the crisis, some opened late. However, by putting the majority of employees on unpaid leave or by dismissing them, they agreed to downsize (Alaeddinoğlu & Rol, 2020; Altınay Özdemir & Ergün, 2020). Employees working in peak season leave the businesses as of October and November due to the seasonality of tourism employment. In short, until another season, they are unemployed and hence their insurances do not run. Turkish government provides some incentives for tourism employees in hard situations because of the pandemic. These incentives are; *unemployment allowance*<sup>2</sup>, *short-time working allowance*<sup>3</sup>, *unemployment and short-time working allowance for suspended personnel*<sup>4</sup>, *credit support*<sup>5</sup>, *pandemic social support*<sup>6</sup>, *personnel training*<sup>7</sup> (*hospitality businesses and tourist guides*), *the supply of personal protective equipment (gloves, masks), hygienic workplace*.

## Methodology

The study is overview research as it examines the recent and unprecedented consequences of the Covid-19 on tourism employees. The purpose of the study is to investigate the economic, social and psychological impacts of the pandemic on the employees of the tourism industry. Given that the Covid-19 poses a serious risk to tourism employment, this new situation needs to be explored in-depth and qualitative research should be adopted with an interpretive paradigm. Nevertheless, a qualitative method was adopted, which seeks to find out what kind of meanings individuals assign to occurrences (Karagöz, 2017). Moreover, the interpretive research paradigm (Guba & Lincoln, 1994) aims to reveal the interviewers' real and subjective views and phenomenology approach (Welman and Kruger, 1999) which is based on understanding social and psychological phenomena from the perspectives of individuals experiencing, was preferred.

## Research Area

Research is actualized in Turkey as a country at the crossroads between Europe, Asia and Africa; home to countless civilizations and a crossroads between continents of more than a

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.iskur.gov.tr/is-arayan/issizlik-sigortasi/issizlik-odeneği/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.iskur.gov.tr/isveren/kisa-calisma-odeneği/>

<sup>4</sup> That is the suspension during the low seasons of the job contract (contract) for employees due to the fact that tourism is a seasonal job.

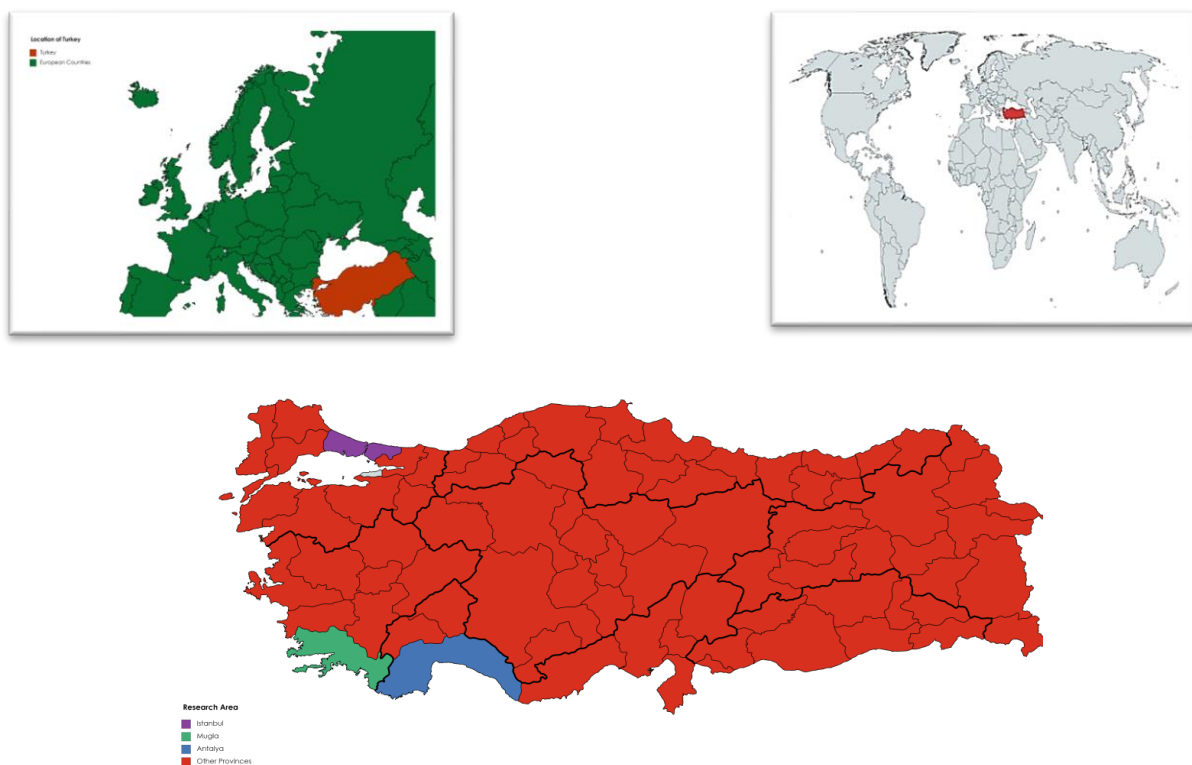
<sup>5</sup> <http://www.tureb.org.tr/tr/Notices>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.ailevecalisma.gov.tr>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.ktb.gov.tr/Eklenti/72780,genelge20206pdf.pdf?0>

few ages<sup>8</sup>. The country is located in a very strategic region, right in the center of the world, connecting East and West<sup>9</sup>. The research was carried out in three tourist destinations (Istanbul, Antalya and Mugla) located in the west of Turkey. Istanbul as a cultural destination, Mugla and Antalya as coastal destinations are the most popular tourist centers of Turkey (Figure 1). According to statistics of the Turkey Statistical Institute with the Ministry of Culture and Tourism (TSI), 45 million foreign tourists came to Turkey in 2019. According to the provinces where foreign tourists enter, Istanbul hosted 14 million, Antalya 14 million, and Mugla 3 million (Provincial Culture and Tourism Directorate, 2019; Turizm Ajansı, 2020; TUROB, 2019). A significant factor in tourism-centered employment has been the fact that tourism is active in these three cities, which host more than half of the total number of tourists. Tourism businesses suffering from the Covid-19, which is the global problem of 2020, have decided to stop and reduce employment by decreasing their employment (Hakim, 2020; Kumar & Rou, 2020).

**Figure 1. Research Area**



Although the determination of these numbers in official statistics is early, via press representatives, destination managers will represent these losses. For example, the Mayor of

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.goturkeytourism.com/about-turkey/geographical-features-of-turkey.html>

<sup>9</sup> <https://geology.com/world/turkey-satellite-image.shtml>

Antalya Metropolitan Municipality stated in his interview in Tourism Today that there was a 125 thousand employment loss in the tourism industry only in Antalya due to Covid-19 (Turizm Ajansı, 2019).

## **Research Design**

### ***Research Questions***

Remarkably, there are very few studies on this issue (with tourism employees' perspectives) in the literature, because Covid-19 is a severe problem global. Therefore, this research aims to contribute to tourism literature and find answers to the main question of *How the Covid-19 crisis-impacted tourism employees economically, psychologically, and socially?*

### ***Data Collection***

Qualitative research aims to obtain a holistic representation by including, instead of generalizing, the diversity, richness, difference, and contradictions possible in a population (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). The "purposive sampling method" was preferred, which allows for in-depth study of the situations thought having rich information according to Patton (1987) in sample selection to provide in-depth information on the research subject. The purposive snowball sampling method "which is effective in identifying individuals or situations that can be a rich source of information about the problem of the research" (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013, p. 139) has been adopted as one of the purposive sampling methods to reach the research questions and individuals who are appropriate for the purpose.

The selection criteria are to be over the age of 18 and have at least one year of experience in the tourism industry. The fact that tourism businesses were closed during the outbreak made it difficult to access tourism employees; therefore, first of all, the researcher's industry relations were benefited. Thus, in the first interview list, five participants who have been employed in the tourism industry for 10 years were listed, and an appointment was made by presenting information about the interview. With the direction of the first interviewed participants, the same process was replicated and employees with more than a year of tourism experience were reached.

A semi-structured interview technique was used to collect research data as a tool for the in-depth interview method. Data were obtained from 63 employees who have at least one year of experience in tourism and work in hospitality, travel, transportation, food and beverage, and entertainment businesses in three tourist centers (Istanbul, Antalya and Muğla) of Turkey's most popular tourist areas in April 2020. The online interview technique (Järvinen & Mik-

Meyer, 2020, p. 14) was implemented because face-to-face interviews were not possible due to the Covid-19 outbreak in the research. In fact, because of the outbreak of data collection due to the rapid increase of cases in Turkey, control curfew and quarantine were applied in the provinces that included the research area. For this reason, an online interview was decided to be the most appropriate method for data collection, and the data was collected online through the internet.

The semi-structured question form used in the interviews consists of three open-ended and seven closed-ended ten questions about the research problem and two demographic and three sectorial questions about the characteristics of the participants. One of the interviews approaches defined by Patton (1987), the “standardized open-ended interview approach” was adopted in conducting the interviews. According to this method, in the same order and in the same manner, the interviewer asks each interviewee the questions previously prepared in the questionnaire in a particular order (Patton, 1987, p. 112). Each interview lasted 35-45 minutes, according to this approach, which decreases interviewer bias and subjectivity. It was recorded in writing in compliance with the consent of the participants to avoid data loss during the long-term online video call. The video interview recordings were not accepted by some of the participants, so their responses were only recorded on the form.

### ***Data Analysis***

Content analysis was used in the analysis of qualitative data. Voice recordings were transcribed to make the data ready for analysis, and the interview forms were put into clean forms to avoid confusion. The edited data were transferred to the computer software package for qualitative data analysis. As a result of the content analysis, the most repeated same or similar expressions were specified in the findings section according to frequency values. Diversification, rich data, and quasi-statistical methods suggested by Maxwell (1996) were used to assess validity. However, to reflect the accuracy of the results obtained for external validity, the most frequently used method is “direct quotations” (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013).

## Findings

### *Demographic Profile of Participants*

Most of the participants are male (68.3%) and between the ages of 18-23 (46.0%), and they work mainly in Istanbul (47.6%) (Table 1).

**Table 1. Participants' Demographic Profile**

	n	%		n	%
<i>Gender</i>			<i>Age</i>		
Female	20	31,7	18-23 years old	29	46,0
Male	43	68,3	24-30 years old	19	30,2
<i>City</i>			31-37 years old	10	15,9
Istanbul	30	47,6	38-44 years old	4	6,3
Antalya	20	31,7	45 and above	1	1,6
Mugla	13	20,6			
<b>Total</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>100</b>

According to Table 2, while the majority of participants work in hospitality businesses (47.7%), their experience in the tourism industry is generally 2-4 years (33.3%) and 11 years or more (25.4%). 77.8% of the participants stated that they worked for 1-4 years in the tourism business where they last worked.

**Table 2. Employees' Tourism Experience Descriptive Characteristics**

<i>Which tourism business do you work in?</i>	n	%
Entertainment Business	2	3.2
Hospitality	30	47.6
Travel Agency	18	28.6
Transportation	1	1.6
Food and Beverage	12	19.0
<i>How many years have you been working in the tourism industry in total?</i>		
1 year	8	12.7
2-4 years	21	33.3
5-7 years	13	20.6
8-10 years	5	7.9
11 years and above	16	25.4
<i>How many years did you work in the tourism business where you last worked?</i>		
1 year	24	38.1
2-4 years	25	39.7
5-7 years	8	12.7
8-10 years	2	3.2
11 years and above	4	6.3
<i>Total</i>	<i>63</i>	<i>100</i>

The majority of the tourism employees (61.9%) stated that they were actively working in the tourism industry during the pandemic process. However, 55.6% stated that they do not want their managers to continue their work during the post-pandemic process. (Table 3).

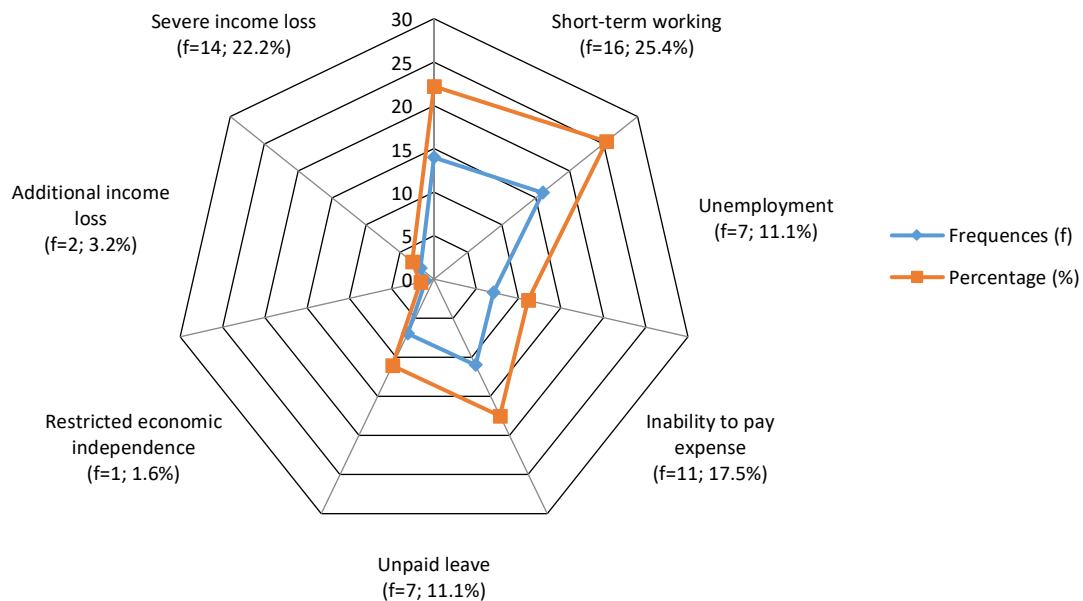
**Table 3. Working Status in the Tourism Industry in Pandemic and Post-Pandemic**

<i>Do you continue to work actively in the tourism industry?</i>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes, I do.	39	61.9
No, I do not.	24	38.1
<i>Does your manager want you to continue your work post-pandemic?</i>		
Yes, she/he does.	28	44.4
No, she/he does not.	35	55.6
<i>Does your business regularly make salary payments despite reservations postponed and canceled due to pandemics?</i>		
Yes, it does.	30	47.6
No, it does not.	33	52.4
<i>How many years do you see yourself in the tourism business where you work?</i>		
Below 1 year	23	36.5
2-4 years	21	33.3
5-7 years	7	11.1
8-10 years	7	11.1
11 years and above	5	7.9
<i>Is this pandemic a threat to your work? If yes, what is the level?</i>		
<i>Yes, it is a .... a threat to my work.</i>	60	95.2
(5) Very high-level	52	82.5
(4) High-level	6	9.5
(3) Medium-level	2	3.2
(2) Low-level	0	0
(1) Very low-level	0	0
No, it is not a threat to my work.	3	4.8
<i>Total</i>	<i>63</i>	<i>100</i>

As seen in Table 3, most of the employees (52.4%) were unable to receive regular salary payments due to canceled and delayed bookings. The question of how *many years do you see yourself in the tourism business* where tourism employees work for their future? In response, *below one year* was received. On the other hand, 82.5% of the employees responded “Yes, it is a very high-level threat to my work”

#### *Economic Consequences of Covid-19 Crisis on Tourism Employees*

Participants stated that they were affected by 92.1 percent, according to the economic impacts of Covid-19 on tourism employees. Some participants were undecided (7.9%) as to whether there were economic impacts. Tourism employees, who were impacted economically by the Covid-19, interpreted these consequences with the codes of *short-term working, severe income loss, unemployment, inability to pay expenses, unpaid leave, restricted economic independence and additional income loss* (Figure 2). Most participants stated, “My economic situation was impacted negatively”. Representative statements regarding severe income loss are: “Economically wasted a year caused it” (P59); “Huge financial loss” (P58); “I do not have a source of income” (P62); “I cannot earn money because I cannot go on tour. I am wasting my savings” (P48).

**Figure 2: Economic Consequences of Covid-19 Crisis on Tourism Employees**

*Short-term working* is one of the disadvantages due to a serious loss of income. It can be said that because they mainly work short-time (25.4%), the participants receive short-time work allowance. According to the statements of P54 as "... our income decreased by half" and P38 as "... there is a bad salary cut", there is a *severe* (22.2%) in the wages of the employees due to partial employment. There are participants who, because of these uncertainties, have trouble *paying their expenses and debts* (17.5%), according to representative statements of P46, "I'm barely paying the loan" and P9, "It multiplies because I cannot pay our debts". In addition to *the inability to pay expenses* during the pandemic, some employees are *unemployed* (11.1%). For instance, it was described by P20 as "I was fired" while P25 expressed that as "... I have no source of income left". Some of the participants stressed that the businesses (11.1%) offered them *unpaid leave* as the reason for their severe financial loss. Moreover, the participants emphasized that their wages were cut because they were taken on *unpaid leave*. For example, P18 replied, "I was on compulsory unpaid leave so I get a lower wage" as a representation. Regarding the seasonality and *additional income opportunities* (3.2%) of the tourism industry, participants' representative statements are as P26 "... we cannot make much money in winter anyway, everything is in the summer season but this year the season has not started"; P7: "... if the outbreak impacts the whole season, I might suffer during the winter months.". However, P46 drew attention to the *additional income loss* such as "Much over time we will earn and our extra income is gone". Stating *restricted economic*

*independence* (1.6%), P15 expressed this with the statement “My economic freedom has been restricted”.

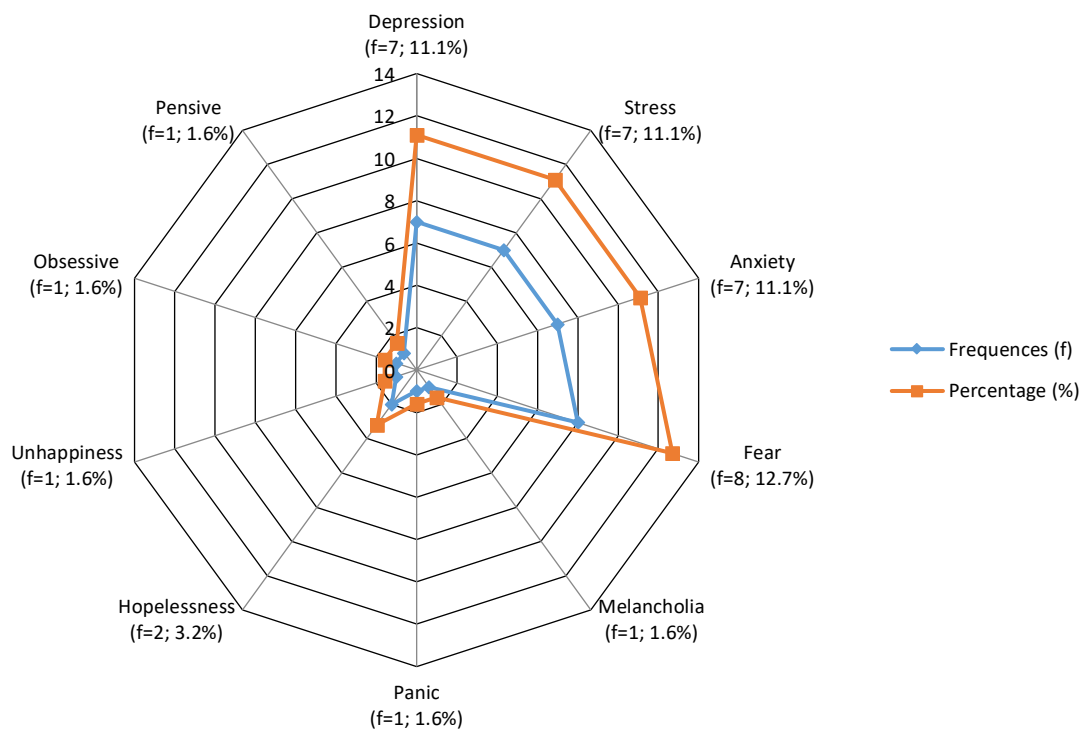
#### *Psychological Consequences of Covid-19 Crisis on Tourism Employees*

According to Figure 3, the majority of tourism employees (88.9%) were psychologically impacted by the Covid-19 crisis. Participants generally stated that their mental health deteriorated (31.7%). They experience psychological problems that remind them of *fear, depression, stress, anxiety, melancholia, panic, hopelessness, unhappiness, obsessive* and *pensive* codes. The most dominant psychological problem experienced by the participants during the Covid-19 process is “*fear*” (12.7%). Tourism employees cope with the fear of losing their jobs and loved ones in this process. As a representation, P32 explained that he was afraid of losing his relatives as “The fear of losing loved ones is wearing down”. P56 and P44 emphasized their fear of being unemployed by expressing “...fear of hunger in the future” and “...fear of work due to cancellations”.

Some participants (33.3%) mentioned the *depression, stress* and *anxiety* consequences of Covid-19. Tourism employees are anxious about being infected and the future of their jobs (11.1%). P10, representing this situation, explained as “I am worried about the future in terms of whether I will make a living in the future”. Saying that they stay at home all the time, P27 replied that “being stuck at home is psychologically stressful and psychologically worn”. The participants who stated that their working time decreased or they did not work and they became depressed during the pandemic process attribute this situation to *the change of customary life*. This situation is confirmed by P45’s response: “Being at home because we are used to working and not going out unless necessary causes me to be depressed”.



**Figure 3: Psychological Consequences of Covid-19 Crisis on Tourism Employees**



The remaining participants (11.1%) who stated that they were psychologically impacted by Covid-19 were *hopeless, pensive, obsessive, unhappy, panic* and *melancholic*. For example, it is revealed that P7 is unhappy, P37 melancholic, P61 pensive, P57 hopeless, P29 obsessive and P5 panic.

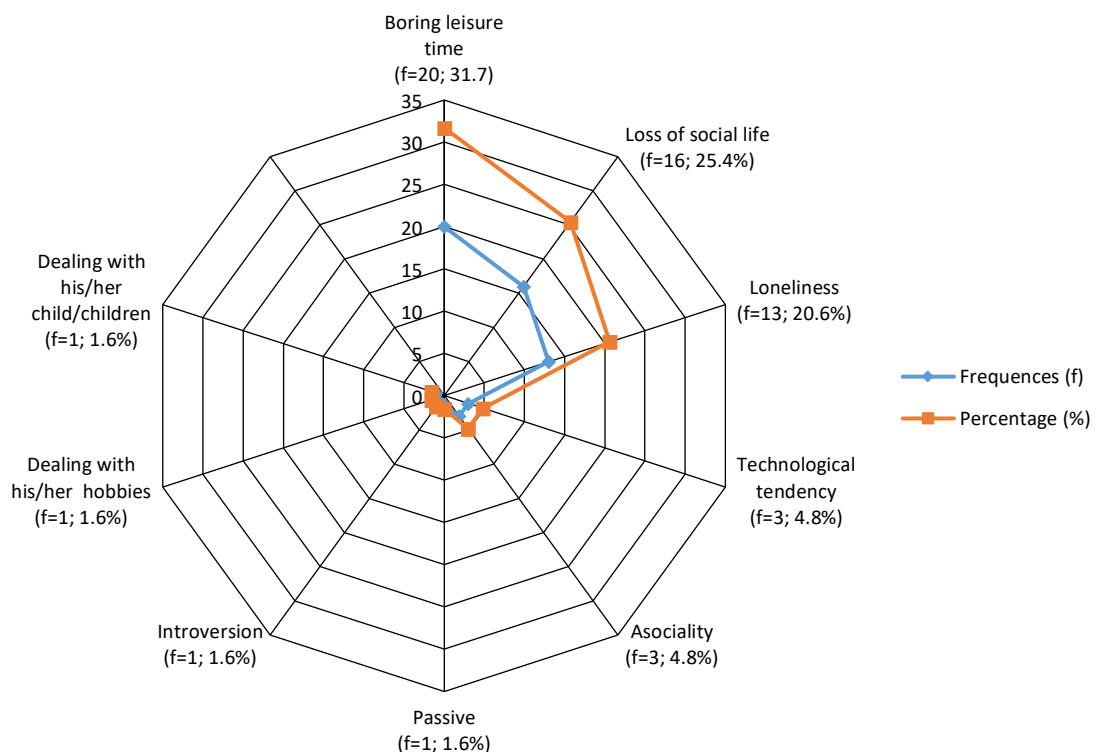
#### *Social Consequences of Covid-19 Crisis on Tourism Employees*

The social consequences on tourism employees (95.2%) that are socially impacted by the Covid-19 crisis are discussed under the codes of *boring leisure time, no social life, loneliness, technological tendency, asociality, passive, introversion, dealing with hobbies and their children* (Figure 4). “Bored” (31.7%) is the social consequence that is most felt in this process. Participants stated that they were quite *bored* as their stay at home increased because they stayed at home or worked short-time during the pandemic. While P17 expressed as “I’m very tired of just sitting at home”, P56 stated, “We cannot leave the house, but we are bored with the internet”. According to P56, the lack of internet makes this process boring. On the other hand, the participants (25.4%) who pointed out that they do not have any *social life* represent P51 “I stopped going out. We cut home conversations with our relatives”. Similarly, the expression “... there is no social life...” was used in the P8, P9, P17, P18, and P47 responses. Participants who were socially impacted in the pandemic process emphasized that

they felt *loneliness* (20.6%) accordingly. The P50 replied representation “Terrible, I feel lonely because I can’t leave the house”.

Participants with a greater *technology tendency* (4.9%) said they were more interested in technological devices such as phones and computers than ever before. This is shown by the statement of P10, “I moved away from my friends, became more interested in devices such as phones and computers”. On the other hand, P4 explained this as “There was no social interaction and no activity, and we had to socialize only on the phone and computer”. As a representation statement of P21, “I got away from all my surroundings, I feel asocial under house arrest” showed that one of the social consequences can be *asociality* (4.8%) as a result of staying at home. Although the participation rate is low, with the phrase “I have a passive life” P22 mentioned the *passive* (1.6%) consequence. Besides a participant (P63) was *introversion* (1.6%), other participants dealt with their hobbies (P48, 1.6%) and children (P51, 1.6%).

**Figure 4: Social Consequences of Covid-19 Crisis on Tourism Employees**



Finally, the participants were asked, “What measures would you take first when a similar outbreak is involved in the future?” The question was asked and mainly (31.7%) the response

was “*I start saving money from the first moment I hear the outbreak*”. Afterward, the statement of “*Since I think the outbreak will affect the tourism industry, I start looking for a job in another industry*” was the most (23.8%) response. Some participants (17.5%) stated that they will continue to work in the tourism business they are working in when they encounter a similar pandemic in the future with the statement “*I continue in the tourism business where I work*”. Some participants (11.1%), on the other hand, consider taking their family and going to rural areas as one of the measures taken for the pandemic.

## **Discussion**

It is thought that tourism employees’ perspective towards the tourism industry has also changed at this study examining the economic, psychological and social consequences of the Covid-19 crisis. The reason is that, similar to the study of Zhou et al. (2020) severe income losses or unemployment due to their short-time work during the pandemic process, they are not able to receive their additional income regularly, and their managers are not welcomed to continue their work for the post-pandemic. As stated by Brooks et al. (2020), income loss is a problem for tourism employees who are quarantined and employed short-time, as well as a risk for their future in tourism. Because most tourism employees who are economically affected by the pandemic, see themselves in the tourism business where they work for 1 year below. This is a very risky issue for tourism employment. It shows that tourism employees do not receive the support they expect from their businesses and think that they will either quit their jobs or be fired soon. According to the majority of the participants, tourism employees who think this way are usually hospitality and travel agency employees.

During the Covid-19 process, tourism employees had a noticeable income loss, job loss and lack of ability to pay. Hamouche (2020) and Mao et al. (2020) psychologically impaired and mental fatigue is observed in employees who lost their jobs or short-time working. In addition to the insufficient insurance and compensation of the most important factors affecting the psychological health of employees by Tam et al. (2004), the irregular payment of wages and the conversion of wage payments to short-time working allowance are seen as the most important psychological reasons in this study. In the face of fear of unemployment, fear of losing family members, uncertainty for the future, perception of stress due to feelings of emptiness, and an extraordinary lifestyle, depression occurs in particular. Radic et al. (2020) state that “Covid-19 reinforces tourism employees’ feelings of fear, depression and anxiety and triggers anxiety disorder”. Therefore, tourism employees experience high levels of stress in the Covid-19 process that can create mental health disorders, especially anxiety and

depression. Tourism employees, who have a boring social time, have had a lonely time during the pandemic process by being away from their friends and social life. The isolation imposed by the government due to Covid-19, as Radic et al. (2020) said, causes people's quality of life to decrease and even shift. Asocialization and the increase in the time spent at home caused the employees' technological tendencies to increase. Tourism employees have indicated that they will save money in the future as a measure against similar outbreaks or seek jobs in other industries from the tourism industry, as they are influenced economically, psychologically and socially during the Covid-19 process.

### **Conclusion**

Three viewpoints are adopted in the research. The first one is the economic consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic on tourism employees. These consequences were revealed to be severe income loss, short-term working, unemployment, inability to pay expenses, unpaid leave, restricted economic independence, and additional income loss. The second viewpoint has revealed the psychological consequences of the pandemic on tourism employees. These consequences were obtained as fear, depression, stress, anxiety, melancholia, panic, hopelessness, unhappiness, obsessive, and pensive. Finally, the third is the social consequences as boring leisure time, no social life, loneliness, technological tendency, passive, introversion, dealing with hobbies and their children. It has been revealed, in line with the results obtained, that tourism employees are exposed to negative economic consequences and psychologically try to cope with negative feelings. While Covid-19's economic and psychological consequences on tourism employees are entirely negative, its social consequences are somewhat positive. Since tourism employees, due to Covid-19, have begun to spend more time with children and hobbies, and have tended to use their technological devices more. The consequences of Covid-19 on tourism employees are radical for the future of tourism employment. The reason is that considering the negative consequences they have encountered during the pandemic process, tourism employees are more likely to change their jobs or change the industry -since tourism has a more flexible structure relative to other industries.

### *Practical Implications*

The paper is stated that tourism employees who earned less income because of short-term employment witnessed a severe loss of income during the pandemic process. In this regard, close collaboration and cooperation between tourism stakeholders should be provided. The fact that tourism employees experience several emotional transitions and are psychologically

pessimistic brings to mind the need for psychological support. In the case that the tourism industry continues to work again post-pandemic, employees' psychological well-being should not be ignored. Tourism businesses should be aware that their employees no longer have a social life as they used to since they face the situation as short-term working, unemployment, or unpaid leave. Socializing practices in a controlled manner among tourism employees after the pandemic would ensure that these consequences are minimized. Considering the possibility of tourism employees to move from tourism to another job as a measure to a similar outbreak in the future due to the flexible structure of the tourism industry, tourism businesses and destination management stakeholders should work to avoid losing their qualified workforce in tourism.

#### *Theoretical Implications*

This study before reaching the first peak period of the pandemic and Covid-19 cases when the diagnosis is made in Turkey coincided with the preparation of tourism. The consequences of Covid-19 on tourism employees can vary from when the data is collected. The consequences of the outbreak on tourism employees can be exposed more comprehensively by constantly performing similar studies. Furthermore, as attempts to restructure and strengthen the tourism industry increase, the severity of these influences perceived by tourism professionals will change. Because at the time of this study, the incentives undertaken by the government for tourism employees were not sufficient, these results were determined to be more negative and severe. For this reason, it is necessary to examine tourism employees' perceptions of the economic, psychological, and social consequences of Covid-19 in line with the government's incentives.

#### *Originality/value*

The paper serves as a prelude to the broader field of tourism employees in the pandemic process and offers a theoretical and practical direction for future crisis studies and tourism employees. This study emphasized the perceptions of tourism employees who have been subjected to the consequences of this unprecedented pandemic. Therefore data collected when Covid-19 cases diagnosed to be seen in Turkey has ensured the detection of the first consequences of the crisis on tourism employees. As a prelude to further empirical research, this article sets out a research agenda from the employee role for academic research examining the increasingly ambiguous relationship between Covid-19 and tourism.

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