

The Impact of Occupational Stigma on Turnover Intention Among Chinese Hotel Employees: The Mediating Role of Professional Identity and Surface Acting

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Abstract Drawing on Conservation of Resources Theory and Social Identity Theory, this study investigates the relationships among occupational stigma, professional identity, surface acting, and turnover intention among hotel employees in China. Based on survey data from 767 hotel employees, structural equation modeling was employed to test the proposed hypotheses. Results indicate that occupational stigma negatively influences professional identity while positively affecting surface acting and turnover intention. Professional identity is found to reduce turnover intention, whereas surface acting increases it. Mediation analyses further reveal that both professional identity and surface acting mediate the relationship between occupational stigma and turnover intention, with the mediating effect of professional identity being notably stronger. This research contributes to the hospitality literature by deepening the understanding of occupational stigma and its impact on employees' identity, emotional labor strategies, and turnover intentions, offering important implications for both practitioners and scholars.

Keywords: Occupational Stigma, Professional Identity, Surface Acting, Turnover Intention, Hotel Employees

INTRODUCTION

As a strategic pillar industry within China's modern service sector, tourism plays a critical role in driving economic growth within the nation's macroeconomic framework. According to the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC, 2023), China's tourism sector directly contributed 6.8% to the country's GDP and indirectly contributed 11.5% in 2023, with international visitor expenditure exceeding \$6.5 billion and domestic visitor expenditure surpassing \$200 billion, directly supporting 6.2 million jobs. As the core pillar of the tourism industry, China's hotel industry makes substantial contributions to the national GDP (Xie & Tveterås, 2020). Statistical reports from the China Tourism Academy (2023) indicate that in 2023, China's hotel industry generated total revenue of 580 billion RMB, accounting for 31.2% of total tourism revenue—a 24.7% increase from 2021. Regarding

employment, the hotel industry directly employed over 8.2 million individuals; when including indirect employment in accommodation-related sectors such as catering, exhibitions, and cleaning services, total employment reached 13 million, representing 1.7% of the national workforce (National Bureau of Statistics, 2024).

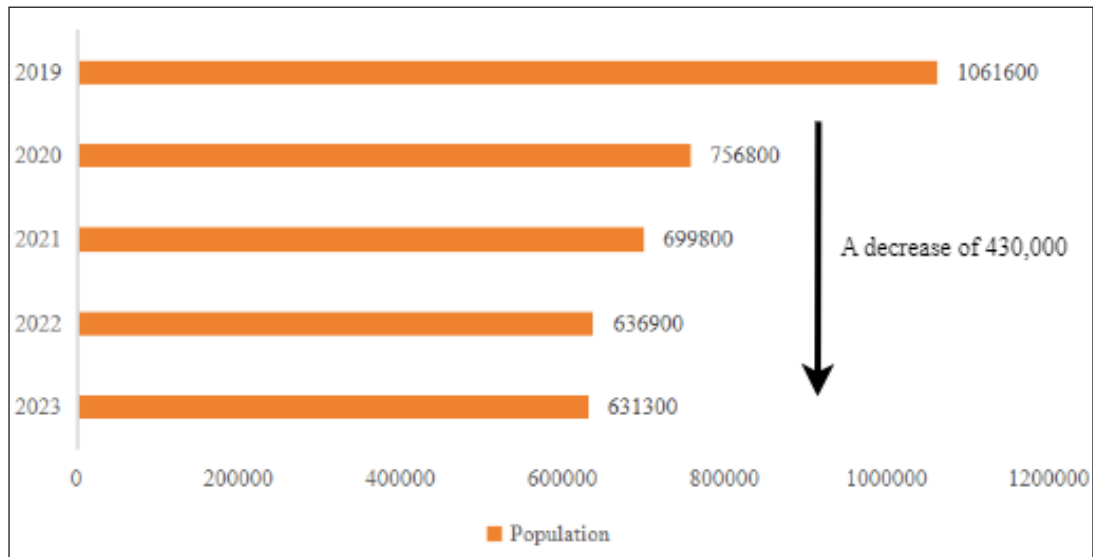
However, high employee turnover constitutes a core challenge in human resource management within China's hotel industry (Guo et al., 2024). As early as the World Tourism Economy Trend Report (2018), turnover rates in China's hotel industry reached as high as 40%. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated work pressures, resulting in substantial employee attrition (Peng et al., 2024). According to official data from China's Ministry of Culture and Tourism (see Fig. 1), the number of employees in star-rated hotels declined by 41.48% between 2019 and 2023.

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Frontline hotel employees are pivotal in delivering superior customer service; their retention and professionalism directly shape both customer experience and industry

competitiveness (Bumrah et al., 2024). Consequently, rapid talent attrition has emerged as a pressing challenge facing China's hotel industry.



Data Source: Annual Statistical Bulletin of China's Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

Fig. 1: Number of Star-Rated Hotel Employees in China, 2019-2023

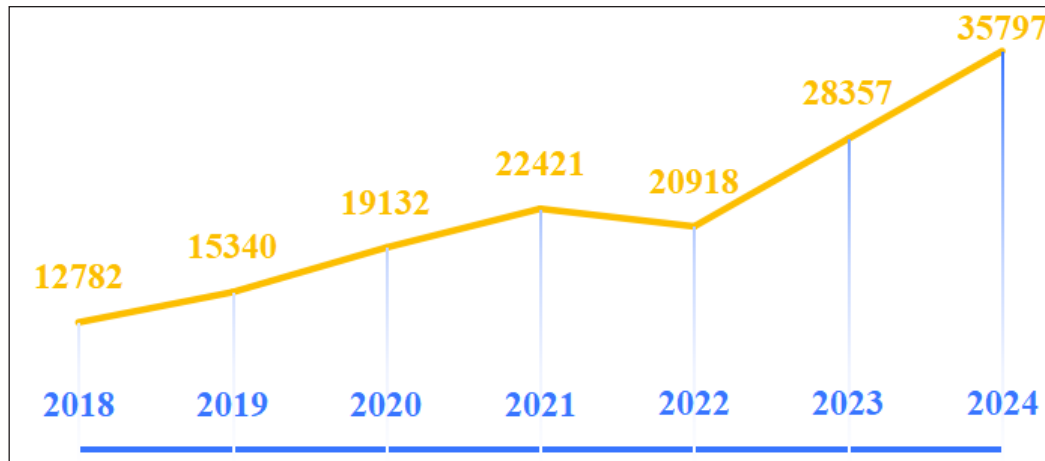
In the service sector, the hotel industry's high-frequency customer contact renders it particularly susceptible to public scrutiny and media amplification, with negative public opinion being especially salient. With the evolution of media technologies, the dissemination of negative information has accelerated exponentially. Illustrative incidents include the hygiene violations at multiple five-star hotels in Beijing (2017), the price gouging scandal at hotels in Heilongjiang's Xuexiang (2018), the hygiene and safety incidents at Huazhu Group (2020), the 'midnight fright' security incident at All Seasons Hotels (2021), and price fraud cases at multiple hotels (2023). The *2023 Report on China's Online Hotel Accommodation Market Status and Consumer Insights* indicates that, with China's tourism recovery in 2023, the hotel industry's online negative mention rate peaked at 0.57% (see Table 1). The report further documents that during the 2023 "Labor Day Golden Week" holiday period alone, a total of 31,600 relevant posts concerning negative hotel incidents were identified across the entire internet between April 1 and May 8. Simultaneously, data from the China Consumers Association (Fig. 2) demonstrate that accommodation service complaints surged over six years, escalating from 12,782 cases in 2018 to 35,797 cases in 2024. These factors collectively reinforce negative stereotypes of "inferior quality" and "unreliability" toward the hotel industry and its

practitioners (Li, Liu, et al., 2020). As a quintessential "dirty work" domain (Hughes, 1951), such negative public opinion further intensifies and solidifies occupational stigma within the sector.

Table 1: Negative Online Mentions in China's Hotel Industry (%)

Types of Negative Reflection	2020	2021	2022	2023
Supporting facilities	1.74	1.48	1.24	2.06
hygiene	0.7	0.69	0.76	0.91
cost-effectiveness	0.6	0.52	0.38	0.54
service quality	0.54	0.49	0.48	0.53
sound insulation	0.29	0.31	0.25	0.45
safety	0.06	0.06	0.04	0.06
dining options	0.02	0.01	0.01	0.01
location/ transportation	0.02	0.01	0.01	0.01
average	0.50	0.45	0.40	0.57

Source: China Daily. http://caijing.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202306/27/WS649a9655a310_ba94c5613ab5.html



Source: Compiled from the official website of the China Consumers Association.

Fig. 2: Number of Complaints About Accommodation Services in China (Cases)

Statistical analysis of online reviews further reveals that workplace bullying and “dirty work”(occupational stigma) rank prominently among numerous factors influencing hotel employees’ job satisfaction and turnover (Shi & Chen, 2021). Building on this, the present study, grounded in Conservation of Resources theory and Social Identity Theory, examines the direct effect of hotel employees’ perceived occupational stigma on turnover intention and investigates the mediating mechanisms of professional identity and surface acting, thereby providing novel theoretical perspectives and empirical support for the occupational stigma and employee turnover literature.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Occupational Stigma

The concept of “dirty work” serves as the conceptual foundation for research on occupational stigma. The term “dirty work” was first introduced by the American sociologist Hughes (1951), marking the beginning of occupational stigma studies. He noted that certain occupations exhibit “dirty” characteristics due to their inherent nature. “dirty work” is often subjected to public negative evaluations, reflecting societal stereotypes of specific professions. Occupational stigma is commonly categorized into three types: physical stigma, moral stigma, and social stigma (Ashforth & Kreiner, 2014).

Research on occupational stigma primarily develops along these three dimensions. Physical stigma refers to stigma arising from the nature of the work itself or the work environment—such as being dirty, dangerous, or harmful—

as seen in occupations like sanitation workers (Mendonca et al., 2024), funeral service workers (Kibbi et al., 2024), nursing staff (Meng et al., 2024), firefighters (Johnson et al., 2020), and miners (Maibvise et al., 2022). Moral stigma pertains to occupations deemed deceptive, confrontational, or violating social norms, leading to contempt, such as sex workers (Benoit et al., 2020) and abortion providers (Janiak et al., 2018). Social stigma involves either secondary stigma acquired through frequent contact with stigmatized groups or stigma associated with low-social-status service occupations, such as social workers (Zhan & Zhao, 2023), psychiatrists (Shi et al., 2023), as well as preschool educators (B. Huang et al., 2022), hairdressers and beauticians (Harness, 2022), tour guides (Li et al., 2020).

In recent years, hotel and restaurant service workers have also gained attention as subjects of social stigma (Lv et al., 2023; Bhardwaj et al., 2023; Moufakkir, 2023; F. Peng et al., 2024). However, academic research on occupational stigma in the hotel industry remains relatively limited (Moufakkir, 2023). Such stigma can lead to a series of adverse outcomes, including feelings of shame, helplessness, and emotional exhaustion among employees. These effects further exacerbate occupational stress and contribute to behavioral tendencies such as withdrawal, disengagement, and even turnover (Baker & Kim, 2018; Baran et al., 2012; Barbier et al., 2013; Benoit et al., 2015).

Turnover Intention

Turnover intention refers to an individual’s inclination, thought, attitude, desire, or plan to leave an organization (Martin, 1979). It is a psychological state of withdrawal that develops after an employee experiences dissatisfaction (Steel & Ovalle, 1984). Both sociology and psychology

agree that “behavioral tendencies are a prerequisite for actual behavior” (Baruch & Peiperl, 2000).

Multiple factors contribute to turnover intention. Hom et al. (2012) classify its antecedents into four categories: proactive career planning (spontaneously considering alternative occupations), negative workplace experiences (e.g., bullying, loss-of-face incidents), external job opportunities, and low job satisfaction or organizational commitment. Within the hospitality sector, existing research on the antecedents of turnover intention can be grouped into three levels: individual factors, organizational factors and social environment factors. Individual factors include demographic characteristics (e.g., age, gender, tenure, education level, marital status) (Chowdhury, 2015) and psychological or attitudinal variables such as psychological capital and burnout (Gom et al., 2021), well-being (X. Shi et al., 2021), work engagement (Asghar et al., 2021), and job pride (Le et al., 2023), etc. Organizational factors cover conditions directly related to the workplace, such as job requirements and role stress (Huang et al., 2018), work environment (Qadri et al., 2022), organisational support (Akgunduz & Sanli, 2017), leadership style (Gom et al., 2021), and so on. Socio-environmental factors include the impact of external contexts on employees’ turnover intention, such as technological changes (e.g., robotics (L.-X. Zhang et al., 2023), uncivil behaviour of customers (Pu et al., 2022), and major public events e.g., epidemics (Xu et al., 2023).

As an external factor, occupational stigma has been widely examined in its causal relationship with turnover intention across various industries (Ferdous et al., 2022; Manchha et al., 2023; Labrague et al., 2021). However, research specific to the hospitality sector remains limited.

Surface Acting

Surface acting refers to an emotional labor strategy whereby employees, when experiencing a misalignment between their felt emotions and the emotions demanded by the organization, regulate their outward expressions—such as facial expressions and tone of voice—without altering their internal emotional state (Grandey, 2000).

Emotional labour is usually achieved through two strategies: surface acting and deep acting (Grandey & Melloy, 2017). Both occur when personal emotions conflict with organizational expectations, but they differ in depth of emotional modification. Surface acting involves modifying only outward emotional expressions while leaving internal feelings unchanged—characterized by a “mismatch” between internal and external states—whereas deep acting entails internal reframing to align felt and displayed emotions, resulting in “consistency” between them (Mastracci, 2022).

Although both strategies aim to bridge the gap between an individual’s true feelings and organizational display rules, the underlying emotional dissonance exerts sustained negative effects on employees’ attitudes and behaviors (Grandey & Melloy, 2017). Surface acting, which relies primarily on suppression, exaggeration, or feigning of emotional expressions without altering underlying feelings, is considered as a more negative emotional labour strategy (Gross, 1998). Compared to deep acting, surface play induces greater negative effects (Prati et al., 2009), surface acting has been associated with greater emotional exhaustion (Grandey, 2003), job burnout, reduced job satisfaction, diminished performance (Hülshager & Schewe, 2011), and ultimately, heightened turnover intention (Wang et al., 2023).

Professional Identity

Professional identity refers to the process through which individuals use their current or anticipated occupation to answer the question “Who am I?” It emphasizes the role of occupational group characteristics in self-construction and integrates experiences, skills, interests, and values (Chope & Johnson, 2008). This identity evolves over time and through social interactions (Beijaard et al., 2004), representing the outcome of socialization through which individuals acquire knowledge and skills and internalize the values and norms of their profession (Niu & Haugen, 2019). Once formed, professional identity leads employees to hold relatively stable attitudes toward their occupation, such as emotional attachment, positive evaluation of its worth, and intention to remain in the profession (Chen et al., 2023).

Given the different perspectives of research and the different measures of professional identity, there are currently three mainstream scales for measuring professional identity. The first is a measurement scale that focuses on the recognition status of professional identity, reflecting the degree of liking, acceptance, and internalization of the occupation (Hekman et al., 2009). A notable example involves adapting Mael and Ashforth’s (1992) organizational identification scale into a professional identity scale (Wang et al., 2020), which has been widely recognized and applied in top-tier journals such as *AMJ*. The second approach uses occupation-specific scales, which have primarily focused on measuring teachers and nurses (Jin & Fan, 2017; Wang et al., 2018). The third approach focuses on the developmental process of professional identity. For example, Melgosa (1987) proposed a measurement model based on the classic Marcia’s identity status model (1966) theory, which is one of the most influential theoretical models for studying the process of identity construction in various fields. Mancini and Caricati (2015) further refined and developed the Professional Identity Scale based on the process of professional identity development, covering Affirmation, In-depth exploration,

Practices, Identification with commitment, Reconsideration of commitment five dimensions.

Drawing on these theoretical foundations, the present study conceptualizes hotel employees' professional identity as a dynamic process. Consequently, this research adopts a process-oriented, multidimensional analytical framework to examine professional identity, thereby ensuring both structural measurement integrity and theoretical explanatory power (Wang et al., 2020).

Occupational Stigma and Turnover Intention

Occupational stigma in hotels leads to a loss of social resources as employees' social identity is compromised, their status is lowered, and their social value is questioned, which may also lead to prejudice against the occupation, resulting in alienation and resistance, and a reduction in the investment of personal resources. According to COR theory the loss of personal resources is faster than the input of resources, which can trigger individuals to adopt resource-protective behaviours such as adopting avoidance strategies (including physical and social withdrawal) (Major & O'Brien, 2005). Consequently, when hotel employees experience sustained and uncompensated resource loss, they are likely to engage in withdrawal behaviors, with turnover intention or actual resignation being a primary means of conserving resources.

Existing research also suggests that occupational stigma has a significant positive effect on employees' willingness to leave, and this relationship has been validated across industries and cultures. Ferdous et al. (2022) confirmed that, among gig workers, occupational stigma indirectly increased turnover intention by diminishing employee well-being. Similar conclusions have emerged in healthcare settings. Manchha et al. (2023) reported that internalized stigma among aged care workers heightened psychological stress and reduced job satisfaction, thereby fostering turnover intention. Labrague et al. (2021) observed that, during the COVID-19 pandemic, perceived occupational stigma among nurses was significantly associated with experiences of discrimination, which in turn—via psychological stress—predicted mobility intention.

In the hospitality industries, Xing et al. (2023), in a study of 324 hotel interns in China, found that occupational stigma heightened turnover intention through the mediating effect of job burnout.

Therefore, this study hypothesised:

H1: Occupational stigma has a significant positive effect on hotel employees' turnover intention.

Occupational Stigma and Surface Acting

There is a strong and intrinsic link between occupational stigma and emotional labour. Existing research suggests that service occupations, such as the hotel sector, are often viewed by society as "low status" occupations (Hochschild, 1983) due to their emotional service (Erickson & Ritter, 2001). Conversely, in the face of occupational stigma, employees must cope with identity damage through emotional labour (Grandy & Mavin, 2012).

This phenomenon has also been confirmed in academia. Sommerfeldt and Kent (2020) found that public relations faculty, stigmatized due to their field's occupational image, bore a heavier emotional labor burden, spending more time suppressing negative emotions and engaging in surface or deep acting strategies. Similarly, Ostaszkievicz et al.'s (2016) study of Australian caregivers revealed four stigma coping strategies, with the 'self-distancing' strategy directly reflecting the surface acting strategy of emotional labour.

From a COR perspective, occupational stigma can lead to greater emotional burden and work stress for individuals (Baran et al., 2012). To prevent excessive resource depletion, employees are likely to adopt less resource-intensive coping strategies (Sloan, 2004). Accordingly, compared with deep acting—which requires sustained emotional investment—hotel employees facing occupational stigma may be more inclined to employ surface acting strategies.

Furthermore, Surface acting entails regulating emotional displays to conform to organizational norms, even when personal feelings conflict with these requirements. Such emotional dissonance can have persistent negative effects on employees' attitudes and behaviors (Grandey & Melloy, 2017). A net loss of resources occurs over time. In such cases, withdrawal intentions or actual turnover become strategies for conserving resources (Goodwin et al., 2011).

Therefore, the following research hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Occupational stigma has a significant positive effect on hotel employees' surface acting.

H3: Hotel employees' surface acting has a significant positive effect on their turnover intention.

Based on the above reasoning, a chain mediation mechanism is proposed among occupational stigma, surface acting, and turnover intention. Specifically, occupational stigma prompts employees to adopt surface acting as an emotion regulation strategy, which subsequently exacerbates their turnover intention. Multiple empirical studies support this mechanism. Frost et al. (2022), in interviews with female workers in the spa tourism sector, found that occupational stigma led them to conceal genuine emotions (surface acting), resulting in emotional dissonance, emotional loss,

and reduced employment sustainability. Gou et al. (2022) also verified that Chinese nurses, when confronted with occupational prejudice and exclusion in the workplace, tend to adopt surface acting, which in turn mediates the relationship between such experiences and their turnover intention.

Therefore, the following research hypothesis is proposed:

H4: Hotel employees' surface acting mediates the relationship between occupational stigma and turnover intention.

Occupational Stigma and Professional Identity

It has been shown that the effect of occupational stigma on employees' occupational identity is characterized by a significant duality. On one hand, stigmatized workers may proactively construct a positive professional identity to imbue their "dirty work" with meaning, thereby buffering against external negative feedback (Simpson et al., 2012). On the other hand, occupational stigma can lead to ambivalent identity, thereby reducing professional identity (Kreiner et al., 2006).

Although occupational stigma exerts differentiated effects on employees' professional identity, this study—drawing on social identity theory—argues that its core mechanism lies in the process of social comparison. Occupational stigma first leads practitioners to perceive their professional group as being in a disadvantaged position in terms of prestige or status. Such a disadvantaged group identity naturally triggers an initial negative professional identity. Under this low-identification state, individuals are likely to activate different identity management strategies (e.g., social mobility, social creativity, or social competition) to reconstruct their professional identity in response to the identity threat posed by stigma.

Further, different identity management strategies ultimately lead to different career mobility outcomes. Although some studies have shown that professional identity does not have a significant effect on turnover intention (Qu et al., 2023; T. Zhang et al., 2021; Hu et al., 2022), which may lie in the adoption of social competition or social creation strategies by employees. However, when employees form an initial negative career identity, they will be more inclined to adopt social mobility strategies to change the status quo, and leaving the job often becomes the most direct way to cope with the situation (Li, 2021). This mechanism is supported by empirical studies in several occupational groups in China. Professional identity has been found to negatively predict turnover intention among Chinese public health workers (Zhang et al., 2022), civil servants (Wen et al., 2016), and hotel employees (Wang et al., 2020).

Accordingly, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H5: Occupational stigma has a significant negative effect on hotel employees' professional identity.

H6: Hotel employees' professional identity has a significant negative effect on their turnover intention.

Based on H5 and H6, occupational stigma negatively affects professional identity, which in turn negatively affects turnover intention, suggesting that professional identity may mediate the relationship between occupational stigma and turnover intention. According to social identity theory, collective identity is an important buffer against stress. Professional identity, as a type of collective identity, is bound to mitigate occupational stress caused by occupational stigma, thus reducing turnover intentions. Hanners and Malvini Redden's (2021) interviews with 19 restaurant employees also revealed that employees cope with the negative effects of occupational stigma by constructing a positive occupational identity, thereby increasing job sustainability.

Accordingly, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H7: Hotel employees' professional identity mediates the relationship between occupational stigma and turnover intentions.

Combining the above hypotheses, the theoretical model for this study is as follows:

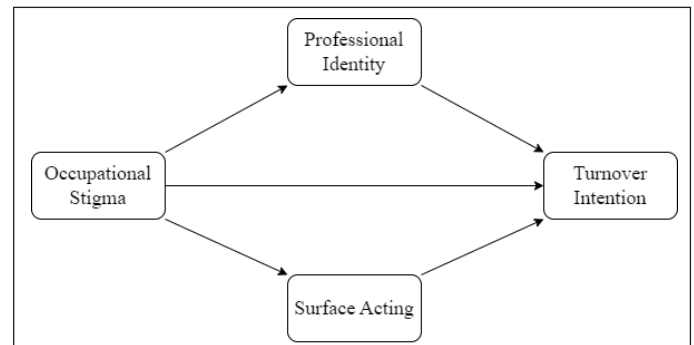


Fig. 3: Research Model

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Measures and Instrument Development

This study used quantitative method to collect data through a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of two parts: the first part included demographic characteristics of the questionnaire participants including Gender, Age, Education Level, Years of Working Experience, Job Categories, Hotel star.

The second part of the questionnaire investigates the occupational stigma, professional identity, surface acting, and turnover intention of hotel employees.

Occupational stigma was adapted from Shantz and Booth's (2014) Occupational Stigma Scale, which consists of six items in two dimensions: Label Identification (LI), Status Loss and Discrimination (SLD).

Professional identity was measured using Mancini and Caricati's (2015) scale, which consists of five dimensions and twenty items: Affirmation (AF), In-depth Exploration (IE), Practices (PR), Identification with Commitment (IC), Reconsideration of Commitment (RC).

Surface acting was measured with seven items from the surface acting dimension of the emotional labor scale developed by Diefendorff, Croyle, and Gosserand (2005).

Turnover intention was adapted from the scales of Rosin and Korabik (1991) and Scott (1999), comprising three dimensions and nine items: Thinking of Quitting (TQ), Intention to Search (IS), and Intention to Quit (IQ).

All items were rated on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree"). The questionnaire was initially developed in English, translated into Chinese by the researcher, and then reviewed by two bilingual experts. To ensure translation accuracy, the Chinese version was back-translated into English. Subsequently, five tourism experts evaluated the quality of the questionnaire, after which the finalized Chinese version was used for data collection.

Sampling and Data Collection

Following the classification standards of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of China for star-rated hotels, the study adopted a stratified simple random sampling approach, drawing samples proportionally according to hotel star rating. To minimize common method bias, data were

collected through two channels. First, questionnaires were distributed via the WJX Survey platform, a professional Chinese online survey service widely used by scholars in China. Second, electronic questionnaires were distributed to hotel employees through the HR departments of selected star-rated hotels, after obtaining formal approval. Prior to participation, respondents were assured that the survey was anonymous, data would be used solely for academic purposes, and no information would be disclosed to employers or third parties.

A total of 792 questionnaires were collected, and after the initial data were statistically screened (for completeness, logical errors, and no differences) and 25 invalid questionnaires were excluded, the final valid questionnaires were 767, and the validity rate of the questionnaires was 96.84%.

The sample reflected the demographic characteristics typical of the Chinese hotel workforce. Female employees accounted for 80.4% of respondents, substantially outnumbering males (19.6%), aligning with the female-dominated nature of the industry. The majority were aged 18–34 years (75.8%), consistent with the youthful profile of hotel employees in China. Over half (53.2%) had attained higher vocational or above qualifications, indicating a relatively high educational level. Most respondents had short-term work experience of 6 months to 6 years (70.2%), matching the high turnover and mobility in the sector. Frontline staff constituted the largest group (80.1%), in line with the "pyramid" structure of hotel labor. Employees from four-star/quasi-four-star (43.2%) and five-star/quasi-five-star (31.5%) hotels were most represented, with fewer from three- and two-star hotels—broadly reflecting the distribution reported in the official database of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of China. Overall, the sample was representative of the general demographic composition of hotel employees in China.

Table 2: Basic Information About the Valid Sample

Stat. Item	Option	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	152	19.82%
	Female	615	80.18%
Age	18-24	422	55.02%
	25-34	164	21.38%
	35-44	105	13.69%
	45-54	61	7.95%
	More than 55	15	1.96%
Education Level	Below Vocational College	236	30.77%
	Vocational College	197	25.68%
	Bachelor's degree	202	26.34%
	Master's degree and above	132	17.21%

Stat. Item	Option	Frequency	Percentage
Years of Working Experience	Less than 6 months	130	16.95%
	6 months-3 years	277	36.11%
	4-6 years	257	33.51%
	7-9 years	66	8.60%
	More than 10 years	37	4.82%
Job Categories	Front-line staff	620	80.83%
	Department foreman	85	11.08%
	Department Supervisor	36	4.69%
	Department Manager	19	2.48%
	Department Director and above	7	0.91%
Hotel Star	Five-star/quasi five-star standard	233	30.38%
	Four-star/quasi four-star standard	320	41.72%
	Three-star/quasi three-star standard	187	24.38%
	Below two-star and others	27	3.52%

RESULTS

Reliability and Validity Analysis

To assess the construct validity of the scales and questionnaires—namely, whether the measured variables

align with the hypothesized structures in the theoretical model—this study conducted Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) for all variables and dimensions. Accordingly, separate CFAs were performed for the four variables, with the results presented in Table 3. As shown, all fit indices for the four variables met the recommended thresholds, indicating that the CFA models for these measurement scales are valid and demonstrate a good fit with the survey data.

Table 3: CFA Model Fit Indicators for Variables

Model Fit Metrics	Optimal Criterion	Statistical Value			
		Occupational Stigma	Professional Identity	Surface Acting	Turnover Intention
CMIN/DF	<3	2.115	1.541	1.599	1.708
RMR	<0.08	0.022	0.029	0.019	0.029
GFI	>0.9	0.993	0.966	0.992	0.988
AGFI	>0.9	0.981	0.955	0.983	0.978
NFI	>0.9	0.993	0.969	0.992	0.985
CFI	>0.9	0.996	0.989	0.997	0.994
RMSEA	<0.08	0.038	0.027	0.028	0.028

Furthermore, the reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity of the measurement models for the four variables were examined. Table 4 presents the factor loadings, Cronbach's α coefficients, Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values. Results show that all dimensions had Cronbach's α values greater than 0.80, indicating high reliability. CR values ranged from

0.80 to 0.90, exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.60, suggesting strong internal consistency. The AVE values fell between 0.57 and 0.70, surpassing the recommended minimum of 0.50, thus confirming adequate convergent validity. Overall, the measurement models demonstrated acceptable levels of reliability and validity, indicating suitability for subsequent structural equation modeling.

Table 4: Factor Loadings, Cronbach's Alpha, CR and AVE for Variables

Variables	Dimensions	Items	Factor Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE
Occupational Stigma (OS)	Label Identification (LI)	LI1	0.81	0.85	0.86	0.68
		LI2	0.81			
		LI3	0.82			
	Status Loss and Discrimination (SLD)	SLD1	0.85	0.87	0.88	0.70
		SLD2	0.80			
		SLD3	0.84			
Professional Identity (PI)	Affirmation (AF)	AF1	0.74	0.85	0.86	0.60
		AF2	0.76			
		AF3	0.78			
		AF4	0.78			
	In-depth Exploration (IE)	IE1	0.76	0.85	0.85	0.60
		IE2	0.77			
		IE3	0.79			
		IE4	0.73			
	Practices (PR)	PR1	0.79	0.85	0.86	0.60
		PR2	0.75			
		PR3	0.77			
		PR4	0.77			
	Identification with Commitment (IC)	IC1	0.79	0.86	0.86	0.61
		IC2	0.79			
		IC3	0.77			
		IC4	0.75			
	Reconsideration of Commitment (RC)	RC1	0.80	0.86	0.86	0.61
		RC2	0.78			
		RC3	0.78			
		RC4	0.74			
Surface Acting (SA)		SA1	0.79	0.90	0.90	0.57
		SA2	0.75			
		SA3	0.75			
		SA4	0.75			
		SA5	0.76			
		SA6	0.75			
		SA7	0.72			
Turnover Intention (TI)	Thinking of Quitting (TQ)	TQ1	0.78	0.80	0.80	0.58
		TQ2	0.74			
		TQ3	0.76			
	Intention to Search (IS)	IS1	0.77	0.81	0.81	0.59
		IS2	0.77			
		IS3	0.76			
	Intention to Quit (IQ)	IQ1	0.81	0.82	0.82	0.61
		IQ2	0.74			
		IQ3	0.79			

Table 5 reports the discriminant validity results for the four variables, assessing the extent to which constructs are distinct from one another. First, Pearson correlation analysis was conducted using SPSS, and then all variable correlation coefficients were compared with the square root of the AVE values. If the square root of AVE for each variable exceeded

its inter-variable correlation coefficients, discriminant validity would be confirmed. As shown in Table 5, all square roots of AVE values were greater than the corresponding correlation coefficients, indicating satisfactory discriminant validity across all constructs.

Table 5: Discriminant Validity Test

	LI	SLD	AF	IE	PR	IC	RC	SA	TQ	IS	IQ
LI	0.825										
SLD	0.568	0.837									
AF	-0.302	-0.332	0.775								
IE	-0.299	-0.309	0.49	0.775							
PR	-0.368	-0.345	0.532	0.515	0.775						
IC	-0.328	-0.331	0.458	0.468	0.498	0.781					
RC	-0.343	-0.349	0.465	0.503	0.519	0.494	0.781				
SA	0.374	0.424	-0.323	-0.345	-0.394	-0.351	-0.34	0.755			
TQ	0.322	0.325	-0.257	-0.316	-0.315	-0.331	-0.303	0.391	0.762		
IS	0.310	0.31	-0.329	-0.358	-0.288	-0.300	-0.327	0.331	0.477	0.768	
IQ	0.310	0.352	-0.382	-0.384	-0.372	-0.377	-0.354	0.390	0.452	0.442	0.781

Note: Diagonal lines are AVE square roots. Off-diagonal elements are the correlations between the constructs.

Structural Model and Testing Hypotheses

The study employed AMOS to perform structural equation modeling (SEM) path analysis to examine the relationships among occupational stigma, professional identity, surface acting, and turnover intention among hotel employees. Since the data exhibited a normal distribution, maximum likelihood estimation was used. Model fit was first assessed, and the indices indicated a good fit to the data: $\chi^2/df = 1.278$, GFI = 0.939, CFI = 0.986, NFI = 0.941, AGFI = 0.932, RMSEA = 0.019, and standardized RMR = 0.047. As illustrated in Fig. 4, all direct paths were statistically significant. The signs and magnitudes of the standardized path coefficients reflected the direction and strength of the direct effects. Overall, the results support the hypothesized associations proposed in H1, H2, H3, H5, and H6.

Specifically, the findings revealed a significant positive direct relationship between occupational stigma (OS) and turnover intention (TI) ($\beta = 0.259$, $p < 0.01$), thereby supporting H1. Occupational stigma (OS) was found to have a significant positive direct relationship with surface acting (SA) ($\beta =$

0.618, $p < 0.001$), supporting H2. Surface acting (SA) had a significant positive effect on turnover intention (TI) ($\beta = 0.210$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H3. Moreover, occupational stigma (OS) demonstrated a significant negative relationship with professional identity (PI) ($\beta = -0.684$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H5. Professional identity (PI) was significantly and negatively associated with turnover intention (TI) ($\beta = -0.421$, $p < 0.001$), confirming H6.

To further examine the mediating effects of professional identity and surface acting, thus testing Hypotheses H4 and H7. In this study, the test was conducted using the Bootstrap method that comes with AMOS. The Bootstrap method generates a large number of samples by resampling multiple times from the original dataset, and these samples were used to calculate the estimates of the mediating effect, which allows for the construction of confidence intervals for the effect sizes, which can indicate the significance of the mediating path if the confidence intervals do not contain zero. The estimation of the indirect effect in this study is based on 2000 samples of self-help method with 95% confidence interval, the specific results are shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Bootstrap Test Results for Mediators

Mediating Path	Effect	Effect Proportion	95% CI		P
			LLCI	ULCI	
Ind1:Occupational Stigma→Professional Identity→Turnover Intention	0.271	42.5%	0.184	0.39	0.001
Ind2:Occupational Stigma→Surface Acting→Turnover Intention	0.122	19.2%	0.065	0.19	0.001
Total effect:Ind1+Ind2+direct	0.637	100%	0.515	0.773	0.001
Contrasting mediating effects: Ind1-Ind2	0.149	.	0.050	0.288	0.004

The total effect of occupational stigma on turnover intention was found to be 0.637. The mediating effect of surface acting was 0.122, with a 95% Bootstrap confidence interval of 0.065–0.190, indicating significance and thereby supporting H4. The mediating effect of professional identity was 0.271, with a 95% Bootstrap confidence interval of 0.184–0.390, also indicating significance and supporting H7. Notably, the contribution of professional identity accounted for 42.6% of the total effect, whereas surface acting accounted for 19.2%. The comparative mediation effect value was 0.149 (> 0), with a 95% Bootstrap confidence interval of 0.050–0.288, indicating that the mediating effect of professional identity was significantly greater than that of surface acting.

DISCUSSION

This study employed structural equation modeling to systematically reveal the dual-path mechanism through which occupational stigma influences turnover intention among Chinese hotel employees.

The direct effect path demonstrated that occupational stigma significantly and positively predicts turnover intention. When Chinese hotel employees perceive negative societal evaluations of their profession, it triggers turnover intention; intensified perceptions of occupational stigma directly elevate employees' turnover intention.

Indirect effects operate through two core mediators: surface acting and professional identity. On one hand, occupational stigma amplifies surface acting behaviors among Chinese hotel employees, compelling them to adopt emotional disguises to cope with job demands; surface acting, in turn, significantly escalates turnover intention. This pathway corroborates the predictions of Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, indicating that when confronted with occupational stigma as a stressor, employees resort to defensive emotional labor strategies to protect psychological resources. Forced emotional camouflage exacerbates psychological depletion, thereby strengthening turnover intention. On the other hand, occupational stigma erodes professional identity—when employees perceive societal devaluation and discrimination toward their profession, their intrinsic identification with occupational values becomes

severely undermined, consequently intensifying turnover intention.

These findings extend the theoretical boundaries of occupational psychology research in the hospitality industry and offer a triple practical pathway for human resource management in China's hotel sector: (1) reducing stigma perception through enhancing occupational prestige and guiding public cognition; (2) strengthening professional identity by constructing a professional value system and recognition mechanisms; and (3) optimizing emotional labor management to facilitate the transition from surface acting to deep acting, thereby systematically lowering employee turnover rates.

The present study's sample was confined to star-rated hotels; future research should extend to non-standard accommodation sectors in China, such as economy hotels and private homestays, to validate the generalizability of findings across diverse hotel employee populations. Additionally, incorporating proximal outcome variables (e.g., job burnout, job satisfaction) and examining organizational-level moderating factors (e.g., perceived organizational support, identification climate) would enable the construction of a multilevel integrated model. This approach would not only deepen theoretical understanding of the boundary conditions governing the stigma-turnover relationship but also provide a comprehensive, organization-level perspective on the mechanisms through which occupational stigma influences turnover intentions among Chinese hotel employees.

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