Human resources and workforce shortages in Jeju Island due to islandness: The challenges faced by former hospitality and tourism professionals

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Abstract: Workforce management is a problem in many islands. Although the Jeju tourism department and local business offer attractive promotions and opportunities, due to the demands faced by tourism professionals, many have left their positions in Jeju and returned to the mainland Korean peninsula. The purpose of this study is to explore the motivations, career decisions, and turnover behaviours of a group of former tourism professionals who had previously worked in Jeju for a period of less than two years. Based on social cognitive career and motivation theory, the study was guided by two research questions: 1) Why did the participants leave their positions in Jeju after less than two years of career development? and 2) How did the participants describe their working and living experiences in Jeju as professional tourism workers? The data from 42 participants indicated that overloaded responsibilities and unbalanced schedule, financial consideration, and personal consideration were the three major reasons for leaving Jeju. This study aims to help local businesses and governments to understand employees' motivations, career decisions, and turnover behaviours. Further, this research seeks fill gaps in the literature regarding workforce shortages and tourism management for islands and remote regions, particularly in East Asia.

Keywords: island human resources, island tourism, island workforce, Jeju, social cognitive career and motivation theory, tourism

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Introduction

Islands are one of the most popular tourism destinations globally, as visitors are attracted by their unique nature, various cultural backgrounds, and special tourism facilities (Moon

& Han, 2018). According to a recent study (Tiku & Shimizu, 2020), many states and countries have focused their national strategies on hospitality and tourism development to highlight their rich natural resources. Jeju Island is the largest island in South Korea, located in the Jeju Special Self-Governing Province (hereafter known as Jeju). As a province that mainly focuses on developing the hospitality and tourism industry, the Jeju government invests in and provides many resources for tourism development, such as parks, hotels, beaches, and restaurants.

In many island states and countries, human resources and workforce shortages are long-term problems (Baum, 2012). As some previous studies (Baum, 2012; De Saá-Pérez & Díaz-Díaz, 2010; Hieu et al., 2020) indicate, sustainable tourism and hospitality management for some island states and countries require long-term and sustainable human resources management. However, human resources and workforce shortages have been identified as the biggest concern in many island-states and countries, including, in this case, Jeju (Kang & Kim, 2017).

According to some previous studies from the past few decades (Lee et al., 2018; Yu et al., 2011), the South Korean government has established a long-term strategy to attract international visitors to South Korea for leisure, entertainment, and medical tourism, due to the rapid development of the country's international reputation. The number of inbound visitors to South Korea has significantly increased over the past decade. In 2008, only 6.89 million visitors came to South Korea; this number increased to 17.24 million in 2016. Although this number has since decreased to 2.52 million due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it may be revived after the pandemic, judging by this trend over the last decade (Statista, 2021).

Purpose of the study
The aim of this study was to understand and investigate the human resources and workforce shortages of some island states and countries, or states and countries with islands as part of their territories (Baum, 2012). More importantly, based on the outcomes of this study, the researcher aimed to provide some recommendations to the practice(s) in order to solve some long-term human resources and workforce shortage challenges for such islands. In this case, the researcher used Jeju as the research means and target for the investigation.

Although the Jeju tourism department and local business organisations offer attractive promotions and career opportunities, due to the demands faced by professionals with tourism backgrounds, many have left their positions in Jeju and returned to the mainland Korean peninsula (Li et al., 2021). The purpose of this study is to understand and explore the motivations, career decisions, and turnover behaviours of a group of former tourism professionals who had previously worked in Jeju for a period of less than two years. Based on the theoretical framework, social cognitive career and

motivation theory (Dos Santos, 2021a, 2021b; Lent et al., 1994), the research was guided by two research questions:

1) Why did the participants leave their positions in Jeju after less than two years of career development? What were their motivations for leaving?
2) How did the participants describe their working and living experiences in Jeju as professional tourism workers?

Significance of the study

First, according to Shakeela and Cooper (2009), small islands, such as Jeju and the Maldives, usually face human resources challenges; this is particularly the case in small island nations and regions with tourism and hospitality as their main industry. Although attractive salaries, benefits, and career opportunities are offered, turnover rates remain high for skilled professionals, particularly in the tourism and hospitality industry (Davidson & Wang, 2011). Currently, the hospitality and tourism industry in South Korea is in need of skilled workers, particularly professionals with hospitality and tourism backgrounds, related experience, and bilingual abilities, from hotel operation to back-office management. However, only a few studies have addressed this area. This scarcity is particularly evident in regard to human resources and workforce management for professional workers in Jeju. Unlike human resources planning in the mainland Korean peninsula, the uniqueness of human resources and workforce management in Jeju cannot be solved with traditional strategies, such as university internships and internal transfers. Therefore, the outcomes of this study aims to fill the research and practical gaps, particularly with regard to workforce shortage, employee turnover, and human resources management for employers and employees in Jeju (Li et al., 2021).

Second, although this study only focuses on the situations and human resources problems in Jeju (Li et al., 2021), the outcomes of this research could reflect the workforce shortage, employee turnover, and human resources management of other similar islands and remote regions. Therefore, government leaders and business owners could reform and upgrade the current policies and regulations.

Third, the findings of this study raise significant concerns regarding social equality, health issues, and gender rights in Jeju, due to the unique and traditional culture brought about by isolation and islandness. The government and education systems should promote and improve the related social equality issues in Jeju. Otherwise, these long-term human resources and workforce shortages cannot be solved (Baum, 2012; Zopiatis & Theocharous, 2020).

Literature review

Theoretical framework

This study employs social cognitive career and motivation theory (Dos Santos, 2021a,b; Lent et al., 1994) to understand and explore the issue at hand. *Social cognitive career and motivation theory* was developed based on the guidelines of the self-efficacy approach (Bandura, 1982) and social cognitive career theory (Lent et al., 1994; Lent & Brown, 1996), and argues that individuals' motivations, career decisions, and turnover behaviours may be influenced by both internal beliefs and external elements in their society (Dos Santos, 2021a,b).

Social cognitive career and motivation theory considers two key categories of factors: psychological/internal factors, and social/external factors. Psychological and internal factors regarding self-efficacy affect individuals' 1) academic interests, 2) personal considerations, and 3) achievements of education and career goals. The self-efficacy approach (Bandura, 1982) played a role in the development of the theory's psychological and internal factors, as it describes how individuals make sense of their internal understanding and behaviours — for example, the ways that individuals might describe and conduct their intentions and goals based on their own self-efficacy and understanding of social phenomena and personal experiences (Dos Santos, 2021b, 2022).

Social and external factors, including 1) interests in career development, 2) financial considerations, and 3) surrounding environments and individuals, also influence individuals' beliefs and behaviours. For this category, social cognitive career and motivation theory argues that individuals' and groups' behaviours might be impacted by different types of external, social, and cultural factors in communities and society. As individual and group behaviours can be significantly influenced by other social factors — particularly in collectivist communities, such as the East Asian region (Campion & Wang, 2019; Im, 2019) — the influence of other external and social factors also play roles in this category.

To sum up, social cognitive career and motivation theory (outlined in Figure 1) posits that individuals and groups in complex societies may be influenced by single or multiple interactive factors and elements. This theory provides a platform for researchers to understand which elements are at play and how they may influence individuals' beliefs and behaviours.
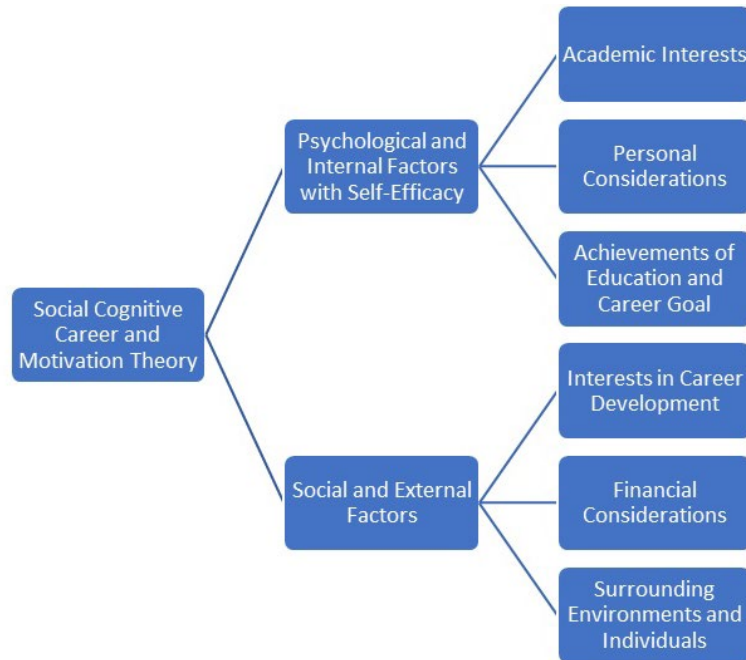
Figure 1. Social cognitive career and motivation theory (Dos Santos, 2021c).

Employee motivations and career choices in tourism
Unlike other for-profit organisations, hospitality and tourism employees and workers usually gain their vocational practice and experience from their workplace environments. In other words, many of the practical skills, such as housekeeping operation arrangement and front office practice, could only be gained from the frontline environment (Wong & Lee, 2017). Although college and university courses and programmes allow learners to understand relevant theoretical knowledge, practical skills can only be learnt from operation management (Chiu et al., 2016; Law & Jogaratnam, 2005). Consequently, skilled hospitality and tourism employees are in high demand due to their professional skills and backgrounds. A previous study (Lu & Adler, 2009) employed social cognitive career theory to understand career motivations for hospitality and tourism students. The findings indicated that opportunities for personal development and high salaries were the two main themes (Lu & Adler, 2009). Another recent study (Chao, 2020) employed social cognitive career theory to understand the career interests of professional hotel workers, and found that career selection and the desire for work both played significant roles in the career decision-making processes. Another study (Cunningham et al., 2005) also argued that satisfaction and power in the field could change and impact the career decision-making processes, particularly for workers with strong self-efficacy.

Tourism in Jeju
Although the uniqueness of the Jeju tourism industry has been highlighted (see, e.g., a recent study by Moon and Han [2018]), Jeju is not usually the destination that first-time

visitors to Korea choose. International visitors tend to instead visit cities located in the mainland Korean peninsula, such as Seoul and Busan, for comprehensive experiences, and most of the nation's destinations, theme parks, and facilities are located in the metropolitan region (Cheng & Lu, 2013). Although islands can provide unique experiences for both visitors and workers from the mainland, the unique island culture may not fit the needs of all visitors.

However, this trend has changed in recent years due to the development of budget airlines, low-cost hotels, medical tourism, theme parks, and changes in visa regulations. While Chinese visitors to the mainland South Korean region need to apply for a visitor's visa in order to enter the country (Moon & Han, 2018), Jeju has a relaxed visa requirement for Chinese tourism visitors, who do not require a visa to visit Jeju for up to 30 days. A report showed that the number of visitors to Jeju exceeded 15 million in 2019, indicating a nearly 6% increase from 2018 ("Tourists to Jeju", 2019). Although the government and local business organisations have created additional accommodation (e.g., Airbnb, youth hostels), restaurants, and shops to meet increasing demands, these facilities need to be handled and operated by workers and professionals, particularly those with backgrounds in tourism and hospitality management and with bilingual skills (Paik, 2020). Local businesses have announced vacancies all over the region, including for international workers who require sponsorship from their employers. However, human resources and workforce management continue to be concerns for the government, local businesses, and non-Korean-speaking visitors (Kang & Kim, 2017).

Human resources and workforce shortages in Jeju
Although the South Korean government has not published any statistics about student enrolment based on university majors, the number of tourism graduates is likely considerable, given that 67 of the nation's colleges and universities offer bachelor's degrees in tourism. Based on this number, the South Korean hospitality and tourism industry should have enough human resources to fill the gaps caused by workforce shortages (Choi, 2018). Furthermore, as most positions in the tourism industry do not require registrations or licenses, individuals with other backgrounds, previous experience, and educational qualifications may also join this industry (Abukhalifeh & Chandran, 2020) — and yet, the human resources and workforce gaps in Jeju still cannot be filled.

From the perspective of human resources management, some scholars have argued that disadvantages such as geographic distance, costs of living, isolated cultural backgrounds, family settlement, school, and medical concerns may limit individuals' interest in working in island regions (Sharpley, 2012). Another recent study (Abukhalifeh & Chandran, 2020) collected data from 100 hotel workers in South Korea about their job satisfaction and intentions for their career development. The results indicated that compensation, benefits and rewards, and job security and work environment usually led to long-term career development and career decisions (Abukhalifeh & Chandran, 2020).

Confusion related to job satisfaction, particularly the unbalanced ratio between workers and hotel occupancy, has also been identified in a previous study about hotel operation management in Jeju (Kim, 2017). As a result, a large number of workers and professionals, regardless of their industry background, are leaving the island due to the unbalanced workplace environment, confusing career and family development, and negative job satisfaction (Hieu et al., 2020; Zopiatis & Theocharous, 2020).

Methodology

Research design

This study employed and was guided by the phenomenological approach (Giorgi, 1985). The wider scope and qualitative design enables the researcher to collect and conclude the current situations and problems. Merriam (2009) advocates that the phenomenological approach allows a researcher to capture the in-depth voices and understanding of a social phenomenon or behaviours of the participants. Tang and Dos Santos (2017) argue that qualitative methodology allows researchers to investigate the research aims and purposes based on participants' lived stories and voices. As the aim of the present study was to understand and investigate the human resources and workforce shortages of Jeju (and other island states and countries, or states and countries with islands as a part of their territories), the phenomenological approach was deemed appropriate.

Participants and recruitment

Purposive and snowball sampling strategies were used to recruit the participants. Based on their personal network, the researcher invited three former hospitality and tourism professionals who had worked in Jeju for less than two years to participate in interviews. After the first interview session, the participants were encouraged to refer at least one additional participant with a similar background. After several rounds of referral and recommendation, 42 participants were willing to join the study. As this study has a particular focus on hospitality and tourism professionals who had previously worked in Jeju for less than two years, the participants were required to meet all of the following criteria:

1) Formerly a paid hospitality and tourism professional in Jeju;
2) Worked in Jeju for a total of less than two years;
3) Currently working in the hospitality and tourism profession in the mainland Korean peninsula;
4) Do not have any potential plans for the return to Jeju (i.e., for personal and/or career developments).

Data collection

Three data collection tools were employed: interview sessions, focus group activities, and member checking interview sessions. First, after the participants orally agreed to be part of the study, the researcher sent the research protocol, interview questions, risk statement, consent form, and related materials to the participants. According to Seidman (2013), rich qualitative data can only be collected when there is a strong relationship between the participant(s) and researcher(s). In order to establish the relationship, the researcher conducted two semi-structured interview sessions with each participant (Seidman, 2013).

Based on the guidelines of the social cognitive career and motivation theory (Dos Santos, 2021a,b; Lent et al., 1994), the researcher used the directions and factors of the theoretical framework to design and create the interview and focus group protocols. Importantly, the interview and focus group activity questions were designed to answer the research questions regarding workforce management, in this case, the challenges in Jeju.

For the first interview session, the researcher asked the participants about their stories and experiences in Jeju. For the second interview session, the researcher asked the participants about their motivations, career decisions, and turnover behaviours of their career developments and living standards in Jeju. All of the interview sessions were conducted in a private, one-on-one environment in the community centre. Each interview session lasted from 78–114 minutes.

After all of the interview sessions were completed, the researcher arranged the focus group activities. As all participants live in different parts of South Korea, the researcher arranged the virtual-based focus group activities via a social media application. Six participants were in each focus group chat, and a total of seven focus group activities were conducted. Each focus group activity lasted from 136–156 minutes, with two ten-minute breaks.

All of the interview sessions and focus group activities were recorded using a digital recording device, with participants' consent. No virtual information could be marked, however, as facial expressions were insignificant during the data collection procedure. After the data collection procedure, the researcher categorised the data based on each participant. Trustworthiness is important for qualitative study (Merriam, 2009). Therefore, the researcher sent the related information to each participant for confirmation, and virtual-based member checking interview sessions were conducted individually to confirm the validity of the data. All participants agreed with their parts.

Data analysis

After the data collection procedure, the researcher transcribed the voice recordings to written transcripts. The researcher re-read the data multiple times to identify connections.

First, the researcher employed the open-coding technique (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) to categorise the themes and subthemes as the first-level themes. From this, 11 themes and 15 subthemes were categorised. However, further actions should be taken. Therefore, the researcher employed the axial-coding technique (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) to narrow the data. As a result, three themes and four subthemes were yielded.

Human subject protection
Privacy is the most important part of this study. Therefore, all of the signed consent forms, personal contacts, personal information, voice messages, written transcripts, computers, and related materials were locked in a password-protected cabinet. Only the researcher could access the materials. After the researcher completed the study, all of the related materials were deleted and destroyed immediately.

Results and discussion

Through 84 interview sessions and seven focus group activities, the researcher captured rich data from participants' sharing of lived stories from before, during, and after their work in Jeju. Unlike other studies with a general focus on the overall performance and situation in South Korea, the present study demonstrates that the uniqueness of Jeju's working background and experience significantly influences the motivations, career decisions, and turnover behaviours of former hospitality and tourism professionals. It is worth noting that the shared and lived stories of participants have connections with ideas about the islandness of Jeju. Table 1 outlines the themes and subthemes of this study.

Table 1. Themes and subthemes.

Themes and subthemes
Overloaded responsibilities and unbalanced schedule
Job duties after working hours
Financial considerations: Unbalanced income and spending
Lower incomes but higher costs
Personal considerations: Isolation and discrimination on the island
Loneliness away from families and friends
Outdated health facilities and services

Overloaded responsibilities and unbalanced schedule
The participants argued that the expectations of Jeju employers and managers could exceed employees' backgrounds, which might significantly impact their motivations, career decisions, and decision-making processes. For example, many participants argued

that the overloaded responsibilities and unbalanced working schedules negatively influenced their behaviours and job satisfaction. One participant said:

> Perhaps supervisors and employers in Jeju do not understand the management and styles in the mainland… they have their own ways of management…but many of the mainlanders cannot work in this way… although I work in a small-size hotel, but I don't want to work as a housekeeper, culinary manager, and front desk manager at the same time… this is not uncommon in many small-size hotels in Jeju…but would not happen in the mainland, such as Busan… the overloaded responsibilities… perhaps this is the Jeju Island managerial styles… but this is not acceptable. (Participant #44, Hotel)

All participants experienced additional responsibilities and tasks beyond their position. More importantly, some of the additional tasks were not covered by the participants' accident and medical insurance if accidents occurred during their office hours. In other words, their supervisors and employers asked them to conduct illegal behaviours in their workplace. As one participant said:

> My position was a restaurant manager for the tables, customers' services, cashier, and logistics… I did not have the kitchen and the fire license because it requires other types of licenses and training from the government… I always told the owner I could work in the kitchen… but the owner didn't listen and forced me to work… I could not accept that and I called the local government for the recommendations… but the local governments did not care about my requests… this is the first time I have ever experienced as an experienced restaurant manager in Korea… this must be unique in Jeju. (Participant #31, Restaurant)

Besides concerns about licenses and registration, some supervisors and employers asked the participants to fix electronic problems, even after participants refused as they did not have the proper license to do so. One participant said:

> My experience is unique in Jeju, I am sure… no mainland Korean managers would do this… the Jeju owner thought all men can fix the electronic and water problems… but I don't… I am a white-collar professional who only knows computer and management… but the owner forced me to do so and told me that no salary can be given for this month… I felt this was illegal… but I called the community centre for help… the civil servant told me that I should have evidence… otherwise, the owner could sue me for harassment. (Participant #4, Hotel)

Due to the cultural differences between mainland and Jeju managerial styles, all participants expressed their concern about the managerial style of their supervisors and employers in Jeju (Kang & Kim, 2017). Although all participants were South Korean residents who had a common understanding of Korean practices and managerial expectations, the participants shared many concerns and a great deal of confusion about their Jeju experiences. However, this confusion related to managerial style is not uncommon in many countries and regions, particularly in collectivist regions such as East Asian (Im, 2019). A previous study by Choochote (2014) reflects how managerial styles and customers' behaviours in Phuket island in Thailand could be different from mainland Thailand, as people in Phuket have their own practices and unique styles in these respects. In the case of the current study, the participants expressed the conflict between their expectations and the unique managerial styles of their Jeju supervisors and employers. In line with social cognitive career and motivation theory (Dos Santos, 2021a,b; Lent et al., 1994), the researchers advocated that overloaded responsibilities significantly influenced the participants' motivations, career decisions, and turnover behaviours in Jeju (Abukhalifeh & Chandran, 2020).

Job duties after working hours
A recent study by Kim et al. (2020) indicated that working overtime is not uncommon in South Korea. Although many researchers have argued that overtime and unbalanced working responsibilities significantly impact individuals' performance due to the stress and burnout caused, many employers do not pay attention to employees' organisational and mental health. In the current study, all participants confirmed that their Jeju supervisors and employers abandoned good practices regarding psychological health, which was particularly evident in problems around working hours. As the participants were able to balance their working hours and job duties on the mainland, many decided to give up their career development in Jeju and return to the mainland for better well-being and development (Kim, 2017). A group of participants in the hotel industry expressed their concerns about the Jeju managerial style. One said:

> There are early morning flights to late-night flights to Jeju… in the mainland… even in small hotels. After our schedule, the hotel owners will take over the office… employers can leave the office and go back home… but in Jeju, all hotel employers… I mean all or it is common management in Jeju… the employers need us to standby… 24/7… in the peak seasons… I am just a worker… but not the owner… but I worked like an owner in my year in Jeju… I shared my stories with other peers in Jeju… they have the same problems… but we do not have such experiences in the mainland. (Participant #5, Hotel)

Many participants expressed concerns about the operation schedules in mid-sized facilities. All had had to call in sick due to the overload of working responsibilities that they had experienced, which could lead to mental illness and physical disorders due to the high-stress environment. According to a recent study (Oh & Park, 2020), South Korean organisations are known for stressful and depressing workplace environments. The unbalanced operation schedule was confirmed as the key to this issue in this group of participants. Furthermore, all expressed that the negative management is unique to Jeju (Moon & Han, 2018), as employers on the mainland do not force their employees to work under the same conditions. Two participants shared their stories about coming back to work with leave notifications from a hospital:

> I was very sick because of the unique weather, water, and food in Jeju during my first month… I vomited and had fever during my second week here because of the water and food… I went to the hospital and the doctor issued me a two-day-off notice… I called and sent the notice to my supervisor… he was mad and went to my apartment… kicked my door and caught me back to the office… I did not even dress… was brought back to the office on that day. (Participant #16, Restaurant)

> I worked from 6AM to 4PM… at 4:40PM I had an appointment with my doctor in the hospital… I told my supervisor… I had to see a doctor in the morning… but the supervisor intentionally gave me an additional task at 3PM and held me until 5PM… I could not accept that and I switched to other three hotels in Jeju… three did the same thing… this is not going to happen in Seoul. (Participant #32, Hotel)

The researchers captured many similar comments based on the participants' sharing. Recent studies (Kim & Choi, 2020; Yi & Kim, 2020) have shown that many Korean employers do not pay attention to their employees' workplace environments and conditions, particularly small business owners and employers who tend to take advantage of their staff. Negative workplace environments greatly influence the motivations, career decisions, and turnover behaviours of employees in hospitality and tourism management. Although Jeju could offer some interesting career developments, many decided to give up their career in Jeju due to managerial and cultural differences. In line with social cognitive career and motivation theory, the researcher can confirm that the career decisions of employees (i.e., leaving) are connected to the managerial style of their employers; in particular, many employees intend to go back to the mainland due to the unique Jeju managerial style.

Financial considerations: Unbalanced income and spending
In some countries, the government and local business owners may provide bonuses and reimbursements to people who decide to move to a particular island or regional area, in

an effort to encourage human resources and workforce development (Marston et al., 2019). However, this is uncommon in Jeju. According to statistics from the Minimum Wage Commission of the Republic of Korea (2021), the minimum wage of a Korean worker is 1,822,480 Won/month ($1,500 USD/month) or 8,720 Won/hour ($7.6 USD/hour) (Minimum Wage Commission, Republic of Korea, 2021). Although the salaries of all participants while in Jeju were beyond the recommended minimum wage, their salaries were below the average of their counterparts in the mainland, particularly in Seoul and Busan. Many participants also claimed that their salaries did not reflect their job responsibilities due to the demanding workload and low number of human resources (Kim, 2020). Many expressed concerns about the unbalanced schemes and salaries between the mainland and Jeju (Kang & Kim, 2017). One participant shared his story about bringing his talent to the island in order to develop it; however, the islanders and government did not meet the needs of his family:

> The local business and government should provide help… perhaps family, children, and housewives' support because the mainland Korean came here to help the development of tourism… we can bring the top management to the island… but the island cannot help us… we are all lost… my salary was much lower… but I was fine because I want to contribute my talent to the island and the country… but the local business was taking advantage of the mainland Korean people… and the foreign workers… we could not stand anymore. (Participant #33, Hotel)

Another group of participants expressed that many mainland Korean people want to contribute their skills and knowledge to the regional island's development. However, many local business owners believe that mainland Koreans are taking advantage of the island's unique development and culture (Kim, 2017; Kim, 2020). For example, more than 70 participants said that their employers expressed at least once per month that "the mainland Korean come to Jeju Island and hope us to follow your management, your language, and your culture" (Participant #17, Restaurant). All participants expressed that they wanted to upgrade the outdated management style, particularly in the hospitality and tourism industry, as Jeju is representative of Korean tourism. Unfortunately, feedback from their employers tended to be negative, as one participant explained:

> I was planning to stay in Jeju for five years as I want to upgrade some of the local business management and trained the islanders for some good managerial skills… but my employer froze my salary… and did not give me my bonus after my contract… my reference letter stated that because I want to change the Jeju managerial style as the bad islander. (Participant #42, Club)

Lower incomes but higher costs

Financial considerations were found to be an important element in this study. Jeju relies on business and income from the hospitality and tourism industry. Although materials can be easily imported to the mainland Korean peninsula by ships and air flights, the cost of living is higher on the island than in mainland cities. Regardless, many participants received a standard or below-average salary (Minimum Wage Commission, Republic of Korea, 2021). Participants conveyed that the high living costs placed significant pressure on their families, motivations, career decisions, and turnover behaviours. In terms of accommodation, almost all participants expressed that the quality of their apartments was much lower but with higher rental fees than their counterparts in metropolitans and cities in the mainland Korean peninsula. The researcher captured one such comment:

> The apartment has no washing machine… a mattress with blood… wall with fungus… and a 20-year-old air conditioner… but the monthly rental fee is higher than a five-star apartment in Busan and Daejeon… there were some cheaper selections but I had no cars and bikes… it was also dangerous to ride a bike at night… I had no choice. (Participant #10, Restaurant)

Besides accommodation, many expressed their concerns about the costs of food. Like many remote islands with no local food and material facilities, many materials must be imported to Jeju from the mainland, particularly daily necessities. Although logistics and shipping businesses have rapidly grown over the past decade in South Korea, individuals need to pay additional shipping fees for products to be sent to Jeju (Park & Thangam, 2019). Due to the unbalanced costs of living, many decided to leave within two years of their services in Jeju. One participant said:

> I can receive a higher salary but lower rental fees in big cities, such as Seoul and Busan… I cannot afford the high costs because I still want to save money with a good living style… even if I want to buy a bottle of water… the cost of the water is double… the rental fee is double but with ants and mosquitos… I can ship some food from the online shops… but I have to pay the additional charges because I was in Jeju. (Participant #9, Club)

In short, in line with social cognitive career and motivation theory (Dos Santos, 2021a,b; Lent et al., 1994), financial considerations, particularly the high living costs accompanying low rewards and salaries, significantly restricted the motivations, career decisions, and turnover behaviours of participants. Unlike other countries and regions which might offer bonuses and support to people who move to a regional area for work (Marston et al., 2019), Jeju does not have any such significant support in place. As

individuals and groups may need to consider various financial factors such as these, many decide not to come to Jeju, or choose to leave after a few years of service.

Personal considerations: Isolation and sense of belonging on the island
Like many islands and remote areas, although islanders and mainlanders share the same political structures and nationality, islanders have different cultural practices, languages, local customs, managerial styles, and daily behaviours from their mainland counterparts (Chartofili & Fokides, 2019). Although some mainlanders enjoy their island counterparts' unique cultures and practices, many decide to leave and go back to the mainland, based on personal considerations (Lee et al., 2017). Over 60 participants indicated that language barriers caused many inconveniences in their daily life in Jeju. For example:

> Although we speak Korean, the Jeju dialect contained at least 30% of the unique vocabulary and grammatical structures… the mainland Koreans do not speak… I do not understand the language my co-workers are talking… when they wanted to laugh at me, they must use their dialect… I did not feel good as I do not belong to this island. (Participant #29, Park)

A sense of belonging was an important element, as none of the participants had previously lived in Jeju. However, the sense of belonging among their island counterparts significantly impacted their motivations, career decisions, and turnover behaviours. The research marked down one story:

> They always called us the outsider or the mainlander… they are the native islanders who do not want any mainland culture and language… invade their native environment… although we want to upgrade their local business and management… they do not seem like this way… they have their own ways… although they advertised some managers or leaders in their business… once the manager came, they tried their best to laugh at the mainland managers and judge the management from the Seoul practice. (Participant #20, Hotel)

Loneliness away from families and friends
The relationship between self-efficacy (Bandura, 1982) and personal consideration also played a significant role in this study (Dos Santos, 2021a,b; Lent et al., 1994). Although the air flight route from Seoul-Kimpo to Jeju is a busy domestic route, individuals cannot commute between the mainland and Jeju weekly due to the prices involved and their work schedules (Peak & Kim, 2008). Unlike the trains and buses people may use to travel between cities on the mainland, frequent air travel is still uncommon for many South Korean people. In this case, many participants expressed their concerns about the loneliness they experienced away from their families and friends, as none were Jeju

natives (Kang & Kim, 2017; Li et al., 2021; Moon & Han, 2018). The first such story in this respect indicated that people could reach each other in three hours by trains and buses on the mainland:

> Most parts of Korea are connected by train and bus… we can go back to our home in a maximum of three hours by train… but in Jeju, as it is an island… it is hard… we need to book the ticket… go through the immigration… wait at least two hours before the departure… when we go back to Jeju, the same process again… take at least four or five hours in total. (Participant #1, Hotel)

All participants are adults and have spent at least 20 years on the mainland with their families and friends. However, none have any families or friends in Jeju, except for their co-workers. Therefore, all participants expressed that they would like to go back to the mainland to easily reach their families and friends. One participant explained:

> I was not satisfied with my job… bad salary, bad workplace condition, bad co-workers, bad schedule with no relationships and connections with anyone in my network… I just want to go back to the mainland… even if I need to live in the countryside in the mainland, I can still take the bus after my working hours… see my mother and go back to work in the morning. (Participant #28, Club)

Outdated health facilities and services

South Korea is well-known as a top destination for medical tourism (An, 2014; Junio et al., 2017; Yu et al., 2011). However, most top hospitals and clinics are located in the mainland, particularly in the Seoul area. For Jeju, as a remote island area, natural resources and beaches are the main destinations for tourism. Many participants expressed their concerns about the outdated health facilities and medical treatments as compared to the services available to their mainland counterparts. One participant shared his story about his son's problem in this respect:

> My older son needed to do the circumcision operation… we sent him to the biggest hospital during the normal weekday for the check… but the doctor told us that they do not have the newest treatment and tool in Jeju… if my son wanted to do the newest technology, he needed to go back to the mainland for the operation… I cannot believe it because circumcision is a minor operation… but they could not handle it. (Participant #11, Hotel)

Another participant said that significant delays caused frustration because the local medical facilities did not have enough medical professionals:

Unlike the hospitals in Seoul, Busan, Daegu or so... many hospitals in Jeju do not have enough doctors... or top-level doctors and physicians... top professionals go to Seoul... only some local or low-level people stay in this remote island... but if we need to see doctor, we have to wait for a long time because of no doctors... if you have some serious illness, they can only send you back to Seoul for a body check... no medical equipment... very confused. (Participant #38, Restaurant)

Discrimination

According to some previous studies (Allen, 2017; Marutani et al., 2020), residents of islands and remote regions face discrimination and social biases from mainland residents, due to their place of origin, living status, unique culture and language, and special behaviours and practices. In the case of South Korea, Jeju residents face similar discrimination due to their island status. Due to the long-term discrimination from mainland residents in the Korean peninsula, when mainlanders enter Jeju for personal and career development, many Jeju residents dislike and challenge them, particularly their behaviours and practices. Many participants expressed confusion about medical situations and their daily experiences in Jeju. One participant said:

I had a fever during my first month in Jeju... I had to go to the hospital and the doctor issued me a day off because I couldn't work at all... I called my employer and begged for the off because it was the first month... the language was not positive... my own families were asked... and they even called my wife and my son's school for my fever... they told me that this is a common practice in Jeju... call my family members because of my illness... this is not legal... my illness was my problem... but my son's teacher and school head knew my illness... I could not accept. (Participant #12, Hotel)

In 1998, the Presidential Commission on Women's Affairs established an order to handle the problems of social equality and minorities' rights. After several discussions and developments, the current government department is called the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family. Although the government has established schemes and plans for social equality, discrimination is still a significant problem in South Korea (Dos Santos, 2020; Kim et al., 2016; Walcutt et al., 2012; Yi & Kim, 2020). Over the decades, due to positive promotion from the government, minorities' rights have been upgraded. However, people's place of origin, disabilities, age, cultural characteristics, and spoken language and accents continue to lead to discrimination that is hindering social equality in South Korea. In this case, many Jeju residents have experienced long-term discrimination from their mainland counterparts. Therefore, when mainlanders come to Jeju for the sake of their career development, the cultural and practical differences significantly challenge the

mainlanders and restrict their self-efficacy. One participant shared an example of the language and cultural challenges in Jeju:

> Jeju and Seoul residents spoken Korean language… but the language is different because of the dialect… in Seoul or the capital region, many people think the language from the capital city should be the standardised language because it is used in most of the government materials and textbooks from schools… but in Jeju… they have their own language, vocab, and structure… they will use these elements to laugh at the mainlanders. (Participant #35, Club)

As mentioned above, the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family promotes ideas about gender equality and women's rights in South Korea (Lee et al., 2019). Most South Korean regions, particularly in metropolitan areas, understand and accept ideas about equality and fairness for minorities, women, and foreigners. However, as a remote island province in South Korea, Jeju continues to follow traditional practices and conduct (i.e., social status is based on gender). As a result, many participants expressed their confusion about living in Jeju. The researcher captured one such story:

> My daughter is a disabled student who needs to have a wheelchair… when we moved to Jeju, she started her first year at high school… when we were in Seoul, the school leaders, teachers, classmates, and the government department offered us a lot of help, such as technology classroom and user-friendly restroom… but in Jeju, school, teachers, classmates, and friends never cared and needed us to solve the problems… many of her classmates bullied her because of her disabilities… we had to move away from this area because it was not acceptable at all. (Participant #19, Club)

In conclusion, personal consideration and self-efficacy (e.g., self-understanding) significantly impacted the decision-making process and sense-making process (Bandura, 1982) of the participants in this study. Many participants expressed that they had experienced isolation, a lack of a sense of belonging, medical concerns, and poor social interactions as some of the concerns that arose during their services in Jeju (Abukhalifeh & Chandran, 2020). As in many previous studies (Dos Santos, 2019; Halsey & Drummond, 2014; Russell et al., 2017), outsiders in remote regions were found to face challenges due to the unique contexts there, particularly in island areas. A recent study (Dos Santos, 2019) indicated that the turnover rate in an international school in the archipelagic region has reached 50% over the past decade. In line with social cognitive career and motivation theory (Dos Santos, 2021a,b; Lent et al., 1994), social and external factors significantly influence individuals' motivations, career decisions, and turnover behaviours.

Limitations and future research directions

First, human resources and workforce shortages are significant problems in Jeju, South Korea. However, due to Jeju's islandness, many essential problems exist and cannot be solved immediately, such as education and health issues. In the future, research studies may expand the scope of this study to other social problems, such as university acceptance rates and high school students' challenges in Jeju, in order to create a holistic picture of the current society in Jeju.

Second, the current studies collected data from a group of former professionals in the hospitality and tourism industry who had only worked for less than two years in Jeju. However, there is still a group of people who continue their career development in Jeju for various reasons. Future research studies may cover the stories of these groups of people who decide to live in Jeju for an extended period of time, as their voices may change the points of view of other mainland Koreans.

Third, although hospitality and tourism play a significant role in Jeju, many industries and professions still face human resources and workforce shortages, such as in terms of medical professionals. As such, future studies may focus on other industries and professions as the means for further investigation. In light of one participant's story about a small medical operation not being able to be conducted on the island, it is important to understand problems in this area.

Conclusions

Contribution to policy
The results of this study may contribute to three areas, particularly at the governmental level. First, they may help local business owners and supervisors to understand their employees' motivations, career decisions, and turnover behaviours. In the current database, many Korean studies tend to focus on managerial styles and practices in the mainland. Only a few have unique focuses on Jeju and the islandness of Jeju. Therefore, the findings of this study may provide recommendations and solutions to fix companies' human resources and workforce management problems.

Second, government leaders in Jeju and Seoul (i.e., the capital city on the mainland) may wish to use this study as a blueprint to fill the gaps between these two regions. As Jeju is the only remote island province in South Korea with regular residents and tourism activities, policies from Seoul cannot usually fit the unique needs of Jeju. With support from this study, the Jeju government can advocate for the unique challenges in Jeju to be addressed by the capital city with additional support and assistance.

Third, the findings of this study raised significant concerns regarding social equality, health issues, and gender rights in Jeju due to the unique and traditional culture brought about by isolation and islandness. Many participants expressed that a large gap in social

equality is found in Jeju. Due to this gap, many participants decided to leave the island for the sake of their personal and career development. Therefore, the government and education system should promote and improve the related social equality issues in Jeju. Otherwise, these long-term human resources and workforce shortages cannot be solved.

Contribution to practice

In addition to the contribution to policy, the results of this study may particularly contribute to managerial practice. Although the government has established standardised benefits and compensation plans for all workers in South Korea (or other island states and countries with a similar problem), many participants in this study and other workers in Jeju do not satisfy the balance (because mainland residents need to give up some points to Jeju but only receive the same benefit). Therefore, business employers, managers, and administrators should upgrade and establish a unique benefit and compensation plan for all Jeju workers in order to attract and retain professional and skilled workers in Jeju. Otherwise, the human resources and workforce problems will not be solved. Additionally, researchers, employers, managers, and administrators in other island states and countries may use the example from Jeju, South Korea, to improve their own companies and organisations.

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