



Multilevel model of management support and casino employee turnover intention



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H I G H L I G H T S

- Develops a trickle-down model of management support in the casino industry.
- Three specific mediators are identified from a cross-level mediation analysis.
- Provides fresh insight into management support in the casino industry.

A R T I C L E I N F O

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This study proposed and tested a trickle-down model that manager support at the functional department level affect frontline employees' attitudes toward supervisor support at the operational level and subsequently influence leader-member exchange (LMX), organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), and turnover intentions. Three mediators were identified from the cross-level analysis, namely, supervisor support, group trust, and OCB. A survey collected valid responses from 336 line level casino employees who represent 112 work groups from 39 departments nested in 17 casinos. The hierarchical linear model (HLM) results indicate that (1) supervisor support mediates the relationship between departmental support and individual level LMX, (2) group trust mediates the relationship between supervisor support and hence employee turnover intention, and (3) OCB mediates the relationship between LMX and employee turnover. Our findings have important implications for casino management and operators by developing an efficient management support system to reduce the intention of frontline employees to quit.

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1. Introduction

Employee turnover, in such industries as the casino industry, has long been a key concern of casino management and operators and a main focus of much academic interest because of the high costs associated with decreased productivity and reduced efficiency, as well as the costs incurred by having to recruit and train new employees (Wan & Chan, 2013). The casino industry has long been plagued with the problem of high turnover rate. According to Stedham and Mitchell (1996), the casino industry has the highest rate of employee mobility and turnover of any major industry. Due

to the 24-h operation of casinos, their employees are subject to long working hours that include weekends and holidays, which can have significant impacts the social lives of the employees. Casino front-line employees are subject to the physically demanding nature of their jobs, low and unpredictable wages due to seasonal fluctuations, and shift work that leaves little time for non-work commitments, such as time for family, friends, and personal health care. Combined, these factors can result in a lack of work motivation (Wan & Chan, 2013). Given the rather bleak picture just described, a high level of staff turnover, especially in the current economic climate, can have substantial and detrimental effects on the casino industry. Some of the possible outcomes of turnover intention that have been identified include attrition or absenteeism, slow productivity and low employee morale in the field of organizational behavior (Somers, 1995). Therefore, in recent years, the gaming industry has directed considerable attention to analyzing the

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specific antecedents of turnover intention (Lai, Chan, & Lam, 2013).

Management support is an important factor in the relationship between employees and the workplace (Wong & Pang, 2003). Management support refers to management appreciation of employee work efforts and concern about employee well-being (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986). When employees strongly perceive that managers support them, they often express greater satisfaction with their job and exhibit greater commitment to the organization (Clark, Hartline, & Jones, 2008; Johanson & Woods, 2008). As a result, work performance increases and employees have less intention to quit, both of which are significant returns on management support (Clark et al., 2008; Dawley, Houghton, & Bucklew, 2010). Management support has been rarely explored in the hospitality literature, however (Chew & Wong, 2008; Chiang & Hsieh, 2012), and does not appear to have ever been discussed in the context of the casino industry. In fact, no studies to date have examined the relationship between management support and employee turnover in the casino industry.

A casino is a unique business that has a complex organizational structure with several hierarchical levels, and accordingly, it has a comprehensive system of management support. In addition to the traditional departments of hotel operations, such as marketing, human resources, finance, Food and Beverage, and hotel accommodations/rooms, casinos have unique functional departments, such as slot operations, gaming tables, and surveillance and security (Hashimoto, Kline, & Fenich, 1996). Within each casino department, there is a vice-president who oversees a team of supervisors. The team of supervisors reports directly to the departmental managers, whereas the line-level employees are under the direct control of the group supervisors (Gu & Choi, 2004). For example, team supervisors oversee slot attendants, cashiers, dealers, and other entry level staff. Accordingly, management support at both the department and the team level is critical for the successful operation of a casino (d'Hautesserre, 2000).

As there is a managerial ecosphere of cross levels in the casino hierarchy, to achieve organizational goals, casino top management should seek to intensify employees' perceived organizational support from the various levels of management within the organization. As mid-level management, department managers should adopt certain behaviors and actions to influence supervisors who are under their supervision (Brazeal, 1996). Supervisors should then mirror the positive efforts of the department managers as they (the supervisors) perform their supervisory responsibilities and deploy their managers' organizational support practices to ensure that individual frontline employees demonstrate a high level of engagement and commitment. As a result, frontline employees, if they trust that the casino management cares about their well-being and values their contributions to the organization's goals, may likely exert greater effort to provide high quality customer service and achieve the stated goals and objectives of the casino (Back, Lee, & Abbott, 2010; Brazeal, 1996; Cable & Judge, 2003). However, there is a current lack of sufficient knowledge regarding management support across the various organizational levels in the casino industry.

Although leadership may shift from one department or from one group to another, group supervisors are responsible for their immediate subordinates (Brownell, 2010; Chen & Chiu, 2008), and moreover, department managers are challenged with the responsibility of overseeing all employees in their units (Cable & Judge, 2003). Furthermore, the provision of management support by the casino creates not only fertile ground for building a mutually beneficial manager-employee relationship, but it also opens the door for propagating strong group trust and strengthening individual employee attitude toward the casino by improving LMX and OCB, which, in turn, may decrease employee turnover (Chen & Chiu, 2008). Despite its increasing prevalence and its importance in the

workplace, this multilevel management support mechanism, with respect to conventional employment relationships, has received surprisingly little attention in the gaming industry. Regardless of the lack of research, however, it is advisable that casino management and operators completely understand this multilevel management support mechanism to promote strong and healthy employee relations and to evaluate and adapt current research findings from other areas into their own human resource management initiatives.

Accordingly, this study proposes and examines the extent to which departmental support (i.e., management support at the department level) influences supervisor support (i.e., management support at the group level) and, ultimately, impacts employee perception of the LMX. Second, the study examines how supervisor support affects group trust, which, in turn, determines employee turnover. Finally, this study explores the impacts of supervisor support and LMX on employee OCB, which influences employee intention to quit (Fig. 1).

2. Literature review

2.1. Management support research

Many corporations today consider management support an imperative business strategy for attaining a sustainable competitive advantage (Dawley et al., 2010). To provide a more comprehensive theoretical framework of the concept of management support and its measurement, an interdisciplinary literature review was conducted. We established four main sets of keywords for filtering the search results. For example, the reviewed papers needed to focus on organizational support, company support, team support, and group support. We deleted unrelated papers and performed a manual search of related topics. This resulted in 12 relevant studies. Table 1 presents the existing 12 papers published on management support in chronological order from 1997 to 2016 and includes all pertinent information, such as author/s, year, sample size, participants, country/region, statistical procedure/s, analyses levels, key constructs, and major findings.

The first column lists the authors and the year of publication. The second column provides precise information regarding the number of respondents or participants in the research project. The third column presents the type of representative samples. The fourth column reveals the study's relationship to a particular geographical, national/federal, or cultural region. The fifth column contains the main statistical analyses methods employed to analyze the data. The sixth column indicates the unit of analysis the study analyzes, such as individual, team, firm, etc. The seventh column represents the key conceptual and measurable research constructs involved. The last column provides a summary and discussion of the most important findings.

The results from Table 1 provide revealing insights with respect to previous management support research. Compared to previous studies conducted on management support in other settings, relatively few empirical studies in the hospitality and tourism fields have explored this concept. In fact, the hotel context was explicit in only three of the 12 papers. The most popular region for study was North America, followed by Asia. Previous studies on management support focused primarily on a survey-based individual level of analysis. Only three studies examined the effect of group level support on individual employee attitude or behavior. As presented in Table 1, management support is positively related to job satisfaction, affective commitment, task performance, and service recovery performance, but it is negatively correlated with turnover intention (Chew & Wong, 2008; Karatepe, 2011; Riggle, Edmondson, & Hansen, 2009). However, only a handful of studies have examined the mechanisms underlying the relationship

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