



Do workaholic hotel supervisors provide family supportive supervision? A role identity perspective



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ABSTRACT

Drawing from role identity theory and social exchange theory, the current study presents a moderated mediation model which I use to examine how supervisor workaholism and the perception of subordinate's family-work conflict affect family supportive behavior. This supervisor behavior further influences subordinate's organizational citizenship behavior toward the supervisor and withdrawal behavior at work. Using a sample of supervisor-subordinate dyads in hotels, I found that (1) supervisor's perception of subordinate's family-work conflict enhanced the positive relationship between supervisor workaholism and family supportive supervisor behavior, (2) family supportive supervisor behavior was positively related to subordinate's organizational citizenship behavior toward the supervisor and negatively related to subordinate's withdrawal behavior at work, and (3) only when supervisor's perception of subordinate's family-work conflict was high did I find a significant indirect effect of supervisor workaholism on subordinate's organizational citizenship behavior toward the supervisor and withdrawal behavior at work via family supportive supervisor behavior.

1. Introduction

The success of the hospitality business largely depends on employees to deliver high service quality (Dhar, 2015; Walz and Niehoff, 2000), especially when the market situation is highly competitive. Hotels rely on highly committed and proactive employees to handle those challenging working conditions and to satisfy customers' various needs (He et al., 2011; Jung and Yoon, 2016). Such a work environment results in employees' devotion to work, particular for those holding managerial roles. For example, in a survey of 588 hotel managers from 50 full-service hotels across the United States, Lawson et al., 2013 reported an average work hour of 56.56 per week. Likewise, Hsieh and Lin (2010) found that the average weekly work hours in peak seasons for Taiwan B & B managers is 51.05 hours, and 66.68 hours for American B & B managers. Hotel supervisors tend to work long hours. Several factors have come together to increase their work hours, such as the nature of the work itself, and their intrinsic motivation to work. Indeed, in addition to spending substantial time at work, hotel supervisors also cognitively dedicate themselves to work (Jung and Yoon, 2016; Niu, 2010; Zopiatis et al., 2014). Analogously, Kilroy (2007) found that, as compared to non-managers, managers not only made greater time commitment at work but also had a stronger inner drive to work. In fact, these two indicators represent the typical behavioral and cognitive components of workaholism (Schaufeli et al., 2009a).

Since workaholism is related to outcomes that are favorable to the

organizations, such as high job performance, high productivity, and constructive workplace deviance, companies often reward their workaholic employees (Galperin and Burke, 2006; Gorgievski et al., 2010; Machlowitz, 1980). However, there is a lack of research on how supervisor workaholism influences supervisory behavior. The research idea for the present study stems from a qualitative study by Friedman and Lobel (2003), in which interviews of 100 managers revealed two interesting findings. First, most of the senior managers were characterized as workaholics who invested most of their time on work and sacrificed their personal life to achieve business goals. Second, even though workaholic managers set work as the first priority in their lives, they were also capable of providing a friendly working environment to help employees fulfill both work and personal life goals. Although this pioneering research suggested that workaholic supervisors could also be supportive of subordinates' family life, there is a lack of empirical support and we have limited knowledge about how these two variables are related.

Family supportive supervisor behavior (FSSB) has been defined as being physically and mentally supportive in dealing with subordinates' work and family demands (Hammer et al., 2009), and has received increased attention over the past decade, especially in the hospitality industry (Kong, 2013; Mansour and Tremblay, 2016). Although research has shown that FSSB has beneficial effects on subordinates' outcomes, fewer studies empirically examined the antecedents of FSSB. Only a limited number of studies have examined the organizational

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environment as the determinant of FSSB (Foley et al., 2006; Hammer et al., 2007). Apart from viewing FSSB as a moldable behavior, the present study attempts to extend the current literature on FSSB by proposing that some supervisors inherently engage in more of such behavior than do others in certain circumstances.

Some scholars have treated FSSB as an extra-role behavior such that this new expectation of being family-supportive is above and beyond a supervisor's formal job description (Straub, 2012; Toegel et al., 2013). Role identity theory is the primary perspective used to explain individuals' motivation to engage in extra-role behavior (Finkelstein and Penner, 2004; Kamdar et al., 2006). According to role identity theory (Burke and Reitzes, 1981; Callero, 1985), the salient role identity represents an important aspect of the self, and helps individuals define themselves. Individuals act in ways that are consistent with what is important to them. Being cognitively addicted to matters of work and behaviorally spending substantial personal time on work imply that workaholic supervisors have a strong work role identity and higher intention to engage in extra-role behavior when necessary (Scottl et al., 1997). Given this, supervisor's perception of subordinate's family-work conflict (FWC) is regarded as a stimulus eliciting workaholic supervisor's intention to engage in a certain type of extra-role behavior, that is, FSSB.

In addition to examining why supervisors enact FSSB, the present study also examines how subordinates react to FSSB. Research has indicated that individuals are more likely to reciprocate toward those who have supported and cared about them. In the case of subordinates, this reciprocation can take one of two forms: (1) engaging in volitional behaviors (Cho and Dansereau, 2010), or (2) reducing tardiness, lateness and absenteeism (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002). Accordingly, the most identifiable ways for subordinates to express gratitude include lessening withdrawal behavior and providing help to family-supportive supervisors.

By increasing our understanding of how supervisor workaholism and supervisor's perception of subordinate's FWC interact to influence FSSB, and how subordinates respond to FSSB, the present study extends the research on workaholism and work-family issues in several ways. First, the present study provides new insight into the positive effects of workaholism. Because its structure mimics that of a psychological disorder ("alcoholic"), the term "workaholic" carries more of a stigma than it deserves. Ng et al., (2007) argued that though the enjoyment component was excluded from the definition of workaholic in the majority of the literature, workaholics' happiness stems primarily from work. In support of this, Stock et al. (2014) found that some top executives are most truly satisfied with their work when they are engrossed in it. In the same vein, Friedman and Lobel (2003) underscored that there are a variety of options for work-life investment, and that being a work-focused person should not be stigmatized. Recognizing the detrimental effects of workaholism found in previous studies (Bakker et al., 2009; Porter, 2001; Schaufeli et al., 2009b), the current study does not attempt to defend workaholics, chooses instead to objectively explore the positive side of the coin. Accordingly, the present study aims to examine the possible positive downward influence of supervisor workaholism in the workplace.

Second, the present study's theoretical model enriches the work-family literature by broadening the domain of research on the emergence and consequences of FSSB in the hospitality industry. Although work-family issue is salient among hotel employees (Karatepe and Karadas, 2016; Zhao, 2016), it is still an understudied realm in hospitality research (Dai et al., 2016). Drawing on role identity theory and research in the leadership literature, the present study moves beyond the traditional approach to study FSSB by posing it as a complex product of supervisor's attribute and a contextual factor. Additionally, this study uncovers the consequential relationship that follows FSSB, in which subordinates are more likely to reciprocate by enacting organizational citizenship behavior toward supervisors and ameliorating withdrawal behavior at work when receiving more extra-role behavior

from the supportive supervisors. This demonstrates that FSSB creates mutual benefits for both supervisors and subordinates.

2. Theory and hypotheses

2.1. Positive side of supervisor workaholism

Oates (1968) coined the term "workaholism" to describe people who are addicted to work. Schaufeli, Shimazu, and Taris defined workaholism as "the tendency to work excessively hard (behavioral dimension) and being obsessed with work (cognitive dimension)" (Oates, 1968), and developed a two-component scale to measure workaholism, accordingly. While a variety of sub-dimensions have been developed to define workaholism since Oates' research (e.g., Ng et al., 2007), there are three common characteristics: discretionary time spent in work activities, thinking about work when not at work, and working beyond the organizational and economic requirements (Scottl et al., 1997). There is also a consensus that workaholics are motivated to devote a great deal of individual resources to their work by an inner compulsion, rather than by an external pressure (Clark et al., 2014). Although workaholism has been linked to some negative outcomes, previous research has consistently found that workaholism is positively related to both job satisfaction and career success (see reviews by Clark et al., 2014; Ng et al., 2007). In light of existing research, it seems inappropriate to treat workaholism as an entirely bad or good work attitude. Particularly, since career success can be regarded as a long term, cumulative outcome derived from daily endeavors, the research on the relationship between workaholism and work-related behaviors can be considered to be still in the exploratory stages.

Role identity theory has been widely adopted by social psychology researchers to predict individuals' repetitive behavior (Burke and Reitzes, 1981; Charnge et al., 1988). Role identity is one's self-view regarding a specific role. Given that individuals engage in many roles, these identities are further organized hierarchically to produce the self (Callero, 1985). Positioned at the top of the hierarchy, the most salient role identity represents the dominant aspect of the self. Implicitly, workaholics have a salient work role identity. As continuous working is a meaningful part of "who they are," workaholics tend to prioritize work over other life domains and feel satisfied and happy only when they work (Ng et al., 2007; Snir and Zohar, 2008). The salient role identity further motivates individuals to behave consistently with this identity, because the enactment of a salient role fulfills the need for self-verification (Riley and Burke, 1995). Hence, research has shown that employees who strongly identify with a certain role are prone to engage in more citizenship behavior associated with that role (Blakely et al., 2005; Finkelstein and Penner, 2004; Finkelstein et al., 2005). Indeed, Galperin and Burke (2006) pointed out that workaholic employees are more likely to engage in volitional behaviors that improve the well-being of the organization, such as adopting creative resolutions.

2.2. Family supportive supervisor behavior as an extra-role behavior

Although it is often expected that supervisors will show concerns for subordinates' work-family problems, caring about subordinates' well-being and non-work life, FSSB is still considered an extra-role behavior for supervisors (Tepper and Taylor, 2003; Toegel et al., 2013). The work-family literature posited that FSSB is a socioemotional resource that supervisors have the discretion to provide to their subordinates, because such behavior is not mandated by the managerial role (Matthews and Toumbeva, 2014). Therefore, Straub concluded that FSSB "fits within the general class of extra-role behaviors and specifically proactive behaviors" (2012, p. 16).

FSSB is manifested in the following four aspects: (1) emotional support, in which supervisors make employees feel comfortable expressing concerns regarding incompatibility between work and family demands, and show understanding and sympathy regarding

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