



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Journal of Destination Marketing & Management

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/jdmm

Research Paper

Work-related attitudes and behaviors: Empirical evidence from a casino destination

Jun (Justin) Li^a, Xiaoming Liu^{b,*}, Faizan Ali^c^a School of Tourism Management, South China Normal University, Higher Education Mega Center, 510006 Guangzhou, Guangdong, China^b Faculty of Business Administration, University of Macau, Macau, China^c College of Hospitality & Technology Leadership, University of South Florida Sarasota Manatee, 8350N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota, FL 34243, USA

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Psychological contract breach
 Leader-member exchange
 Organizational citizenship behavior
 Organizational identification
 Turnover intentions

ABSTRACT

Gambling is the most viable and sustainable economic development option for many travel destinations and in some countries, gambling is a major economic sector. Gambling is a multibillion dollar business that continues to grow at an exponential rate each year in many countries around the world. However, the rapid growth of gambling poses great challenges for destination operators to maintain workers' positive workplace attitudes and behaviors. This study examines the effects of psychological contract breach (PCB) on the work-related attitudes and behaviors of casino dealers and explores the moderating role of leader-member exchange (LMX) on these relationships. This study also compares the effect of PCB on the turnover intentions of dealers in VIP rooms and mass tables. The findings indicate that: (1) dealers' perceived PCB is negatively related to their work-related attitudes but positively related to turnover intentions; (2) LMX partially moderates the effects of PCB on work-related attitudes; and (3) PCB is associated more with turnover intentions of casino dealers who work in the VIP gambling rooms than with those who work at the mass tables. These results offer valuable insights for casino operators to promote managerial efficiency in the workplace.

1. Introduction

In the commercial gaming industry, companies normally apply a unique business model with a complex matrix organizational backbone of hotel, casinos, and other facilities for entertainment and events. Casinos operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week, the year round, and are more labor-intensive than other units. Frontline workers play an important role in advising, supporting, and serving guests, which can ultimately determine the competitive success of a casino (Wan, 2010). Workplace attitudes and behaviors have received considerable academic attention over the past few years. For example, improving frontline employees' satisfaction and enhancing their loyalty to the casino have become essential practices in the gaming industry (Chan, Wan, & Kuok, 2015; Tian, Zhang, & Zou, 2014; Wan & Chan, 2013).

Various evidence-based human resources management (HRM) practices and processes have identified the enhancement of frontline employees' satisfaction and retention as part of a long-range HRM strategy for the hospitality industry. For example, extensive empirical studies have been completed to elucidate these processes, including results-oriented appraisals (Gibbs, MacDonald, & MacKay, 2015; Lockyer & Scholarios, 2004), extensive training (Karatepe, 2013),

rewards and incentives (Li, Sanders, & Frenkel, 2012), promotion and development (Liang, 2012), employees' emotional exhaustion (Chiang, Birtch, & Kwan, 2010), and quality of work life (Wan & Chan, 2013). In addition, the interest in maintaining a stronger employer-employee relationship within an organization has grown considerably in recent years. Prominent within this growing attention on the employer-employee relationship are studies focused on individual employees' beliefs and attitudes about psychological contracts (Blomme, Van Rheede, & Tromp, 2010). Previous research has highlighted the importance of assessing the impact of the psychological contract on employees' work-related attitudes and behaviors in order to further understand the nature of the employer-employee relationship (Conway & Briner, 2002).

A psychological contract (PC) refers to the unwritten set of reciprocal understandings, mutual beliefs, perceptions, commitments, and expectations that exist between an employee and an employer (Conway & Briner, 2002). A PC plays an important role in determining employees' beliefs and job performance. Employees with a higher perceived PC suffer less stress at work, promote a sense of belonging, and tend to reciprocate by performing in ways that benefit the organization, such as improving their in-role and extra-role performance (Li,

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: justinli83@scnu.edu.cn (J.J. Li), xmliu@umac.mo (X. Liu), faizanal7@hotmail.co.uk (F. Ali).<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2018.01.004>Received 18 July 2017; Received in revised form 26 December 2017; Accepted 10 January 2018
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Wong, & Kim, 2016). However, a breach in the psychological contract occurs if employees perceive that management has failed to fulfill the promises. Serious problems can arise if a breach is perceived, leading to damaging effects on the employer-employee relationship. For example, when employees experience a breach of trust or unfulfilled promises, they may fail to fully satisfy their roles and responsibilities. This may lead to disruptive and harmful behaviors or toxic attitudes in the workplace, including lower commitment to the organization, decreased job satisfaction, increased job stress, and reduced loyalty (Kale, 2007; McInnis, Meyer, & Feldman, 2009; Smidts, Pruyn, & Van Riel, 2001; Yu & To, 2013). Awareness of the potential effects of employees' perceived PCB on their work-related outcomes has experienced increased interest from organizational scholars. In addition, prior hospitality literature has demonstrated that hotel employees' PCB is a significant predictor of their beliefs and behaviors (Li et al., 2016; Lub, Nije Bijvank, Matthijs Bal, Blomme, & Schalk, 2012). However, the effects of PCB on important employment-oriented variables (organizational identification and organizational citizenship behaviors) and turnover intentions remains uncertain since these relationships have rarely been empirically tested in a casino context. Moreover, very little research has been conducted exploring these relationships for the special group of casino frontline dealers. Thus, the first main objective of this study is to examine the effects of casino dealers' perceived PCBs on their work-related attitudinal organizational identification (OID), organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB) and turnover intentions (TI) to better understand the underlying processes and mechanisms of the workplace.

Recent research in management studies and organizational psychology has focused on how a high-quality leader-member exchange (LMX) relationship in the workplace contributes to improving individual employees' job attitudes and work outcomes. The concept of LMX describes the two-way (dyadic) connection that exists between supervisors and their employees (Graen & Cashman, 1975). Previous studies on LMX have documented that maintaining a stronger employer-employee relationship is a major contributor to individual employees' morale, performance, satisfaction, and job loyalty (Lundberg, Hansson, Wentz, & Björkman, 2009). In particular, it is important to assess and understand the critical factors that might help attenuate its detrimental effects given the negative consequences of PCB. It seems appropriate to speculate that employees' reactions to perceived PCB rely on the quality of the supervisor/subordinate relationships, which influences an individual's assessment of information given by their employers as reliable and trustworthy or discourteous (Furst & Cable, 2008). The violated balance of the supervisor/subordinate relationship and management's failure to keep its commitments may negatively affect an employee's workplace conduct or ethics. However, clearly defined roles in the supervisor-subordinate relationship are an essential component for employees' satisfaction and management commitment. Thus, to advance the understanding of the role of LMX, the second aim of the current study is to explore whether casino dealers' perceived LMX affects the strength of the relationships between PCB and work-related attitudinal and behavioral variables.

Increasing service complexity requires a more complex corporate structure and different casino positions. Many gaming groups have set up VIP rooms to protect the privacy of high-rolling gamblers. In the processing of operating table games, casino dealers in the VIP rooms work in a more stressful environment than those working on mass tables. Dealers in VIP rooms are required to provide more exceptional service to high-rollers at all times (i.e. higher service expectations from high rollers and job performance expectations from supervisors). It is expected that the working attitudes and behaviors of dealers in VIP rooms are significantly different from those who work on mass tables. Perhaps a more critical question is the effect of dealers' PCB on their turnover intentions and how it might be mitigated by their work environment (VIP dealers and mass table dealers). Therefore, the third goal of this research is to compare the effect of PCB on the turnover intentions of VIP dealers and mass table dealers.

2. Literature review

2.1. Psychological contract breach

A PC can be understood as a relationship between an employee and employer, where there are informal arrangements, mutual beliefs, and common expectations from both sides (Turnley & Feldman, 2000). PCB occurs when an employee perceives that the organization has failed to adequately maintain its promises and obligations (Gakovic & Tetrick, 2003). In other words, a breach of the psychological contract occurs when individuals perceive that their firm declines or cannot fulfill its pledge. It is critical for organizations to avoid PCB since it would result in suboptimal outcomes, such as undermining or diluting the long-term employment relationship and job security (Deery, Iverson, & Walsh, 2006; Rousseau & McLean Parks, 1993). For example, employees who report a breach of their psychological contract perceive a relatively high violation of their beliefs on interpersonal treatment, such as a lower level of adherence to core workplace principles.

2.2. Effects of psychological contract breach on job outcomes

Scholars from multiple fields have demonstrated the importance and significance of the PCB in the workplace. An increasing number of studies have focused on the process of perception on PCB and how it affects employees' workplace attitudes and behaviors (Lester, Turnley, Bloodgood, & Bolino, 2002; Morrison & Robinson, 1997; Rousseau, 1995; Turnley & Feldman, 1999). For example, prior research has shown that PCB is negatively associated with employees' level of organizational trust (Robinson, 1996), overall job satisfaction (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994), and organizational identification (Coyle-Shapiro & Kessler, 2002). Subsequently, more recent studies have confirmed a negative association between employees' perceived PCB and their turnover intentions (McInnis et al., 2009).

OID is one of most important concepts in management studies and organizational psychology. OID refers to the propensity of employees' belongingness to the organization (Riketta, 2005). OID is the potential work-related outcomes pertaining to the positive side of employees' working attitudes and behaviors. However, employees seek to actively psychologically distance themselves from their colleagues, managers, and the recipients of their services if they experienced higher levels of a contract violation (Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004). Thus, employees' perceived PCB is expected to provoke their perceived OID. Based on the explanation above, we hypothesize that:

H1. Casino dealers' perceived PCB has a significant impact on their perceived OID.

OCB has garnered much academic attention in industrial and organizational psychology due to the rising management perception of managerial efficacy and a unique aspect of employees' activity at the workplace. OCB is an evolving concept that reflects a norm of reciprocity where individuals recognize being part of a team and comply with general rules and expectations (Bunderson, 2001; Robinson & Morrison, 1995). Considerable research effort has been directed at examining the consequential variables (such as job satisfaction, work productivity, and employee effectiveness) of OCB in the short and long term. Empirical evidence demonstrated that an exchange-based relationship or the norm of reciprocity between employers and their employees within any organization and culture plays a very vital role in the dynamics of understanding individual workplace behavior such as OCB (Coyle-Shapiro, 2002; Organ, 1990; Rousseau, 1995). Previous studies further revealed a strong negative effect of the PCB on OCB (Coyle-Shapiro, 2002; Hui, Lee, & Rousseau, 2004; Robinson & Morrison, 1995). This study proposes that employees' PCB perception has a significant relationship towards their perceived OCB in the context of the casino industry. Therefore, the second hypothesis is proposed:

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