



# The extension of the theory of person-organization fit toward hospitality migrant worker

Hyung-Min Choi<sup>a</sup>, Woo Gon Kim<sup>a,\*</sup>, Sean McGinley<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> International Center for Hospitality Research & Development, Dedman School of Hospitality, Florida State University, 288 Champions Way UCB 4117, Tallahassee, FL 32306-2541, United States

<sup>b</sup> Dedman School of Hospitality, Florida State University, 288 Champions Way UCB 4111, Tallahassee, FL 32306-2541, United States

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## ABSTRACT

The hospitality and tourism industry is suffering from a labor shortage, and migrant workers are supplying a large portion of labor in the contemporary economic market. This study extends the theory of person-organization fit in the context of hospitality migrant workers. This study also examines the effect of person-organization fit on migrant workers' turnover intentions via job satisfaction and work adjustment. The results reveal that all three levels of fit, person-supervisor, person-group, and person-job, have a significant influence on work adjustment and job satisfaction, which in turn influence migrant employees' turnover intentions. Among the three types of fit, person-group fit was the only one to have a direct effect on predicting turnover intentions. The findings imply that HR managers should make good hiring decisions for migrant employees based on the perceived three levels of fit between the applicant and the organization.

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## 1. Introduction

The global community sustains an estimated 232 million migrants, and about half of those migrants are workers (although approximately 15% of migrant workers have irregular status in their host countries; Vandemoortele, 2012). The International Labour Organization defines migrant workers as those who move out of their home country for 12 months or more for work. In the *Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families*, the United Nations defines a migrant worker as, "a person who is engaged or has been engaged in a remunerated activity in a State of which he or she is not a national." Migrant workers are by definition not asylum seekers, refugees, or those who enter nations illegally to flee from violence.

A report by the International Labour Organization argued that migrant workers are less likely to receive full legal protection and are more likely to be exploited: migrants are even at risk of being subjected to human trafficking (Artiles, 2008). In addition, workers who are born in a different country than where they work face more dangerous situations in the workplace than their native-born counterparts (Loh and Richardson, 2004; Richardson

et al., 2003) and have higher rates of fatal workplace accidents (Dong and Platner, 2004). Given the constraints placed on migrant workers in their host nations, researchers assume that many theories that explain worker behavior do not apply to the migrant worker population (Eggerth and Flynn, 2012). Essentially, Eggerth and Flynn (2012) suggest that migrant workers do not participate in the labor market the same way native workers do, narrowing the scope of many workplace theories, such as the Attraction-Selection-Attrition (ASA) Model (Schneider, 1987) or the Theory of Work Adjustment (TWA; Dawis and Lofquist, 1984). Not understanding how a significant segment of the working population behaves is a significant limitation for advancing both theory related to and industrial best practices in the hospitality industry.

Although migrant workers, in general, face constraints in the labor market, where there is a labor shortage, migrant workers sometimes find themselves on a more even playing field because, as Hall (2004) suggests, when employment prospects improve, so does professional mobility in an industrial context. In an industry with a labor shortage, such as nursing, host countries pass laws to facilitate foreign-workers' entry into the labor market, and migrant workers enjoy more empowerment in the labor market due to the need for their skills and labor (Browne and Braun, 2008). Specifically, the global hospitality industry may be suffering from a labor shortage (Taylor and Finley, 2009; Zopiatis et al., 2014). For example, during the period 2009–2015, the labor shortage rate in the South Korean restaurant industry escalated from 3.8% to 6.4%

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: [hchoi2@fsu.edu](mailto:hchoi2@fsu.edu) (H.-M. Choi), [wkim@fsu.edu](mailto:wkim@fsu.edu), [wogon@yahoo.com](mailto:wogon@yahoo.com) (W.G. Kim), [smcginley@business.fsu.edu](mailto:smcginley@business.fsu.edu) (S. McGinley).

(Ministry of Employment and Labor, 2015). In addition, projections for the hospitality workforce in the United States estimates a need to hire 0.8 million more workers in 2024 than in 2014 (United States Department of Labor, 2015). The declining working-age population (those aged 16–64), in part, due to demographic shifts such as low birth rates and an aging population, is rapidly leading to a potential workforce crisis (Bloom et al., 2011). Therefore, economists predict a severe labor shortage in the next decade for the hospitality industry, which may mean that migrant workers behave similarly to their native-born counterparts within this unique industrial context, rather than differently as suggested by Eggerth and Flynn (2012).

Successful careers and work adjustment are of importance to both migrant workers and employing hospitality organizations. As part of one's work adjustment, migrants should adjust to their new organizations with other native employees in order to achieve successful careers as migrant workers (Nolan and Morley, 2014). As the labor shortage becomes more acute in some industries (like it is in hospitality), it will also become more important to see how migrant workers are behaving or intending to behave. From an organizational perspective, work adjustment influences migrants' performance, successful assignment completion, and willingness to remain with the organization (Takeuchi et al., 2002b). Thus, to alleviate turnover intentions, which is an undesirable outcome for migrant workers and for the organizations that employ them, it is necessary that both academics and practitioners devote attention to identifying what factors drive migrants' work adjustment, especially in industries like hospitality that have labor shortages.

One lens for examining migrants' work adjustment is the person-organization (P-O) fit theory, which is grounded in the interaction approach (Kristof, 1996). Fit is defined as the congruence of values, beliefs, and preferred behaviors between two parties, for example, an employee and employer (Schneider, 1987). Several studies in organizational behavior have demonstrated a correlation between P-O fit and job outcomes such as job satisfaction, turnover intentions, and job performance (e.g., Judge and Zapata, 2015; Mostafa and Gould-Williams, 2014; Velez and Moradi, 2012). In addition, Kim and Kim (2013) have operationalized P-O fit in terms of multiple domains such as person-supervisor (P-S), person-group (P-G), and person-job (P-J).

Despite the potential for an alarming labor shortage in the hospitality industry and the significant number of migrants in the workplace, hospitality literature has hardly discussed migrant workers. Only a few studies have addressed migrant workers' behaviors in the hospitality sector (e.g., Janta et al., 2012; Loi et al., 2014); however, these studies do not explain the selection, training, and retention strategies for migrants, which may be important issues in the near future. Moreover, limited hospitality literature (e.g., Chen et al., 2014; Jung et al., 2010) has examined the relationship between P-O or P-J fit and employees' job outcomes. Other studies that do focus on migrant workers tend to focus on their barriers in the workplace (Janta et al., 2012), how they are exploited in their new nations (Artiles, 2008), or how they behave differently than the general workforce in their employment and careers (Eggerth and Flynn, 2012). To determine which aspects of P-O fit are most salient to the population of interest, it is important, both theoretically and empirically, to simultaneously estimate the effects of the different instantiations of fit within one study. Furthermore, there have been few attempts not only to expand P-O fit into multidimensional constructs of P-S, P-G, and P-J fit but also to examine the relationship between P-O fit and work adjustment. Knowing and understanding how the different manifestations of fit relate to work adjustment, especially for a population that is understudied and theoretically distinct from the general working population, should provide useful insights into how these theories can be applied in a natural field setting, thereby filling a gap in the

current hospitality literature. Thus, the objective of this study is to examine the linkages among three types of P-O (P-S, P-G, and P-J) fit, job satisfaction, work adjustment, and turnover intentions in the context of hospitality migrant workers.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. The theory of person-organization fit

The theory of P-O fit focuses on the congruence between an individual's values and those of his or her organization (Velez and Moradi, 2012). Fit can be where a person brings in similar skills, values, and perspectives to an organization (supplementary fit) or where a person brings in novel and unique skills, values, and perspectives to an organization (complementary fit; Jex and Britt, 2008; Kristof, 1996). In addition, researchers have proposed various facets of P-O fit such as person-supervisor (P-S), person-vocation (P-V), person-job (P-J), and person-group (P-G) fit (Kristof-Brown, 2000; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). The majority of P-O fit studies employ P-S and P-G fit in terms of the supplementary congruence between individual and organizational values (e.g., Greguras and Diefendorff, 2009; Kim and Kim, 2013) and P-J fit from the complementary perspective of correspondence between organizational demands and an individual's knowledge, skills, and abilities (Hinkle and Choi, 2009).

Schneider (1987) proposed the ASA Model in which he stated that people will be attracted to organizations in which they perceive a congruency of values, will be selected by organizations that perceive a fit between the two parties, and ultimately people will exit (attrition) from organizations when they no longer feel as though there is a suitable level of P-O fit. Workers attempt to match their talents, skills, and abilities to the needs of employers (Jex and Britt, 2008). Fit between a worker and an organization is a stronger force of attraction than pay and promotion opportunities (Judge and Bretz, 1992). People perceive fit from an organization's culture and their own values (Judge and Cable, 1997) and from their personalities and the requirements of the job (Hiller and Hambrick, 2005). In a recent hospitality study, the fit between job seekers' values and an organization's values was a strong predictor of attraction to an organization (McGinley et al., 2015).

Ultimately, migrant workers may be particularly sensitive to issues surrounding P-O fit because they challenge social norms at work and within their communities (Rogers et al., 2009). Scholars assume migrant workers have a different frame of reference for work and thus different social norms in the workplace. However, hospitality and tourism work tends to lead to the formation of 'occupational communities' due to the nontraditional hours worked, which leads to workers socializing together and apart from the larger community in which they live (Lee-Ross, 1999); this socialization may help facilitate migrants' adjusting to their work in hospitality more so than in other fields. In addition, service workers, in general, tend to bond on the job in support of each other because of difficult guest interactions, a phenomenon known as teaming up (van den Broek et al., 2008). It may be that in the hospitality setting, different types of fit then become more salient to migrant workers when determining outcomes like turnover intentions because the work group itself is a strong force due to teaming up with colleagues and forming occupational communities. Unlike other low-wage employers of migrants such as factories, hospitality and tourism jobs afford workers opportunities to interact with people from the larger society, which may help migrants to understand local social norms better (Wilczek et al., 2009); migrant workers, therefore, will work with locals and interact with guests in the hospitality and tourism industry in their new countries. In summation, migrants employed in the hospitality industry may find they are

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