



Discussion paper

The antecedents and outcomes of food safety motivators for restaurant workers: An expectancy framework

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ABSTRACT

Individual food handlers' motivations to comply with established guidelines in restaurant organizations were explored in this national study of 755 restaurant managers and employees in the United States. Using expectancy theory, workers' motivations to comply with stated food safety regulations were measured. Overall, the results indicated support for expectancy theory and the proposed extension of this framework to restaurant employees' perceptions of food safety and sanitation. However, there was no support in the model for restaurant workers to follow food sanitation regulations in the relationship between extrinsic valence and motivation. It was determined that this relationship is moderated by the length of time the employee has worked in the restaurant industry.

Highlights:

- This manuscript investigates motivational theories with regard to employee compliance with food safety inspection expectations.
- Theories applied include Vroom's Expectancy Theory, which includes Expectancy, Instrumentation, and Valence and Herzber's Two Factor Theory. The researchers referred to these theories to derive five hypotheses.
- Results support the validity of the proposed model to explain the relationships among expectancy, instrumentality, and valence in the domain of food safety compliance.

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1. Introduction

The goal of food safety inspection programs is to provide safe food for public consumption. Regardless of how these programs are designed, their success often depends on the behaviors of the individuals handling the food and their ability (and willingness) to abide by the program's protocol (Gurudasani and Sheth, 2009; Walczak, 2000). Recent data suggest that there is room for improvement in both food handling behaviors and actions of compliance toward food safety policies. For example, the United States (U.S.)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimate that in the U.S. alone, one in six consumers (or approximately 48 million people) contract a foodborne illness each year (CDC, 2015). Of these, 128,000 are treated in hospitals and up to 3000 die as a result of their illness (CDC, 2015).

To counteract the growing incidence of foodborne illness, the U.S. government signed into law the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) in 2011. Hailed as a sweeping reform in legislation on the subject of food safety (FDA, 2015), the FSMA was designed to ensure sanitary food transportation, importation, and contaminant detection on a global scale. Provisions of the FSMA include funding for food safety training, employee protections, expanded jurisdiction/authorities, and compliance with international agreements. Despite improved laws, however, food safety programs in

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the U.S. are still more often reactive than proactive (FDA, 2016). Accordingly, the FSMA was designed to focus more on preventive measures to improve food safety.

While those in the industry have long recognized the importance of motivating food service employees to safely handle and prepare food, scholarly research has yet to contribute a theoretical and empirically verifiable account of this process. Numerous studies have contributed results showing the impact from an epidemiological standpoint, and the responsibilities and attitudes of individuals who handle food (Chapman, 2001; Frash et al., 2005; Guchait et al., 2016; Jacob et al., 2010; Redmond and Griffith, 2004). Although the specific motivations to comply with food safety regulations have been considered from a qualitative perspective (Arendt et al., 2014; Ellis et al., 2010), a motivational theory-driven study is absent from the literature. Additionally, an accompanying quantitative account of food service employees' motivations to engage in these practices has not yet been established. As a result, the hospitality literature has been of limited value to food service organizations interested in implementing a culture of safe food handling among their employees.

The purpose of the current study is to fill this gap in the literature by proposing and empirically testing a framework that establishes the antecedents of food safety motivators among food service employees. Additionally, this research seeks to establish the effect of motivation on the expected outcomes of safe food handling. The proposed framework is established within the theoretical parameters of Herzberg's (1968) Two-Factor Theory of Motivation as well as Vroom's (1964) Expectancy Theory of Motivation. Specifically, these frameworks are used to (1) identify the factors that motivate employees to comply with mandated food safety regulations and (2) establish the downstream relationship between employee motivations to comply with food safety regulations and the expected outcomes of compliance. The hypotheses inherent to the proposed framework are tested on a national sample of food service employees and managers in the U.S. In addition to finding general support for the hypotheses, a moderating effect of industry experience is identified.

2. Literature review

2.1. Food safety compliance

The food service industry is made up of facilities that serve prepared food for immediate consumption by consumers. Sales in the U.S. food service industry in 2016 are projected to be more than \$783 billion, with commercial food service establishments accounting for the bulk of these expenditures (NRA, 2016). For the first time in history, U.S. consumers are spending more in restaurants than grocery stores, and millennials are choosing to spend more money dining out than eating in (Jamrisko, 2015).

It has been reported that approximately half of the documented foodborne illness outbreaks in the U.S. still occur in restaurant settings (CDC, 2014). Restaurants inherently bring people together and in doing so provide opportunities for contamination through the abuse of established standards and/or the general unsafe handling of food. To help prevent food contamination, restaurants are required to follow the safety and sanitation guidelines specified in the FDA Food Code and/or local statutes. Sanitarians, otherwise known as health inspectors, use these guidelines to evaluate the procurement, production, storage, and service of food products. Additionally, these inspectors verify that restaurant staff are properly trained, current certifications by management staff are available, directive food safety signage is in place, and information used to guide the safe and sanitary management of the restaurant is

up-to-date. Failure to comply can result in citations, fines, closure, or loss of licensure (FDA, 2014; Lund and O'Brien, 2011).

2.2. Food safety training

The standardized training of managers and employees in food safety criteria is an essential part of preventing foodborne illness outbreaks and the associated penalties for noncompliance. Hedberg (2013) found that restaurants with trained and certified kitchen managers experience fewer incidents of foodborne illness outbreaks, including those caused by bare hand contact with food and those associated with the norovirus infection. Unfortunately, in a longitudinal study on the effects of food safety training, Strobbeln (2003) found that only half of food service workers receive appropriate food safety or sanitation training.

In addition to initial training, follow-up training is also essential. Walczak (1997, 1999, 2000) suggests that initial training is actually ineffective without regular follow-up training combined with a managerial commitment to safe practices. Walczak (1997) also emphasizes the importance of what he calls "pride in cleanliness" (p. 73), or a culture that places value on the health and stress levels of employees but also refuses to allow short cuts when it comes to food safety. According to Walczak (1997, 2000), such a commitment to cleanliness can result in employees who are more loyal, respectful, engaged, and protective of the goals of the organization.

Unfortunately, there is evidence that training employees alone is not enough. For example, Frash and MacLaurin (2010) suggest that more attention should be paid to the relationship between employee belief systems and the behavioral change expected from the training process. Their results indicate that health inspection outcomes can be predicted based on employees' perceptions of training procedures, suggesting that beliefs about training can impact behaviors. In support of this interpretation, Pivarnik et al. (2013) found that food safety training is most effective when (1) employees believe that a food safety culture is a priority, (2) leaders listen to issues employees have with expected food safety behaviors, and (3) follow-up training is conducted with attached rewards.

Along with training and culture, a number of additional tangible and non-tangible variables have been found to affect individual food safety behaviors in a restaurant. For example, Griffith et al. (2010) found that factors such as the environment, systems, consistency in rules, and risk perception are all important predictors of individual commitment to food safety compliance. Similarly, Yiannas (2009) found that improved food safety compliance can be partly attributed to swift and direct consequences for non-compliance. Others, such as Pfeffer and Sutton (1999), have suggested that monetary and social rewards are equally important (see also Griffith et al., 2010; Roberts and Barrett, 2011; Walumba and Schaubroeck, 2009).

To summarize, previous research in food safety compliance has identified a number of potential drivers of compliance behavior. However, while this research has been important in advancing the knowledge of food safety compliance in a general way, a theory-based account of the myriad drivers of food safety motivators remains elusive. To address this issue, the present research seeks to integrate the seemingly fragmented research on food safety motivation into the broader theoretical context of motivational theory. Specifically, the framework proposed in this research is based on the contention that food safety training must be implemented with an understanding of the factors that motivate employees to effectively put their training to work. Accordingly, Herzberg's (1968) Two-Factor Theory of Motivation and Vroom's (1964) Expectancy Theory are used to develop a construct nomenclature that predicts not only the antecedents of motivation to comply with food safety regulations but also the expected outcomes of these motives. The

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