Hotel employee job crafting, burnout, and satisfaction: The moderating role of perceived organizational support

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ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

Given the pivotal role of job crafting in the hospitality industry, this study investigates the relationship of job crafting to job satisfaction and the mediating effect of job burnout along with the moderating effect of perceived organizational support. Survey data from 355 frontline hotel employees in Taiwan show job crafting is positively related to job satisfaction, while job burnout negatively mediates the relationship between job crafting and job satisfaction. Furthermore, perceived organizational support moderates the relationships among job crafting, burnout, and satisfaction. These findings suggest courses of action for human resource managers as well as future research directions.

1. Introduction

Consumers' point of contact with the hotel industry is most often the moments of truth during service interactions with frontline employees (Ustrov et al., 2016). This makes these employees especially important, but their jobs are not easy. According to Kim (2008), service employees frequently encounter demanding and difficult customers. Frontline hotel positions involve excessive workloads and role stress, often resulting in employee burnout (Karatepe et al., 2012; Min et al., 2015). Job burnout is defined as "a state of exhaustion in which one is cynical about the value of one's occupation and doubtful of one's capacity to perform" (Maslach et al., 1996p.20). Chalkiti and Sigala (2010) showed that job burnout can occur in all types of jobs, including frontline service in the hospitality industry, which threatens job satisfaction (Lee and Ok, 2012). Job satisfaction refers to "a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences" (Locke, 1976p.1300). Yang (2010) found that greater job satisfaction substantially reduces employee absenteeism and is an important factor in alleviating employee turnover. Therefore, decreasing job burnout and enhancing job satisfaction are crucial for the hospitality industry.

Recently, many scholars have sought to solve the problems of employee burnout from the perspective of job design (Despoina et al., 2007; Oreyzi and Ahmadi, 2014), and put forward the concept of job crafting (Schaufeli et al., 2009; Tims et al., 2013). Job crafting refers to "the physical and cognitive changes individuals make in the task or relational boundaries of their work" (Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001p.179). Based on the job demands–resources (JD-R) model, Tims et al. (2013) found that job crafting, by employees, led to increased job resources. Job resources refer to the physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of the job (Demerouti et al., 2001). Over time, more job resources improve job satisfaction and decrease burnout. Numerous studies report employees have higher job engagement and lower burnout when they are able to craft their own job demands and resources (Bakker and Costa, 2014; Bakker et al., 2016). Additionally, Slemp and Vella-Brodrick (2014) have shown job crafting is an approach employees use to satisfy their needs at work, enabling them to shape their work experience and increase job satisfaction. Because job crafting is so helpful for frontline employees, managers should focus on encouraging job crafting behaviors in the hospitality industry (Chen et al., 2014).

Job crafting behavior can decrease burnout, since burnout comes from psychological strain, as the JD-R model shows (Tims et al., 2012). Such burnout and strain negatively impact job satisfaction (Lee and Ok, 2012; Lewin and Sager, 2007). Employee engagement in job crafting behaviors is negatively associated with job burnout, which in turn is negatively associated with job satisfaction. Therefore, job burnout may be mediated by a relationship between job crafting and job satisfaction.

Hur et al. (2013) found that perceived organizational support (POS) plays a contingent role in determining employees' attitudes and behaviors. The extent to which employees' feel an organization values their work contributions, while also caring about their well-being, is the

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foundation of POS (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Han et al. (2016) found that organizational support moderates the relationship between customer incivility and employee burnout. Stamper and Johlke (2003) demonstrated that POS has a moderating effect on the relationship between boundary spanner role stressors and job satisfaction. These relationships weaken as employee perceives improved organizational support. Therefore, POS may moderate the relationships among job crafting, burnout, and job satisfaction.

In view of the literature, this study examined the relationships among job crafting, burnout, and job satisfaction. We explored the mediating role of burnout in the relationship between job crafting and job satisfaction, while also examining whether POS moderates these relationships. The results suggest strategic directions for hotel managers in human resource management and organizational behaviors.

2. Literature review and research hypotheses

2.1. Job crafting

Job crafting describes changes employees make in their work, including tasks, relationships, and cognitions (Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001). Redefining and redesigning their work makes the job more meaningful to employees (Berg et al., 2013; Tims et al., 2016). According to Leana et al. (2009), job crafting takes two forms: individual crafting and collaborative crafting. Individual crafting occurs when an employee plays an active role in altering the boundaries of his/her task while shaping the actual way of working. Collaborative crafting refers to employees who work together to determine how to change the task boundaries in order to fulfill shared work goals. Based on the JD-R model, Berg and Dutton (2008) reported that job crafting focuses on shaping a job in line with the individual's preferences, skills, and abilities. The JD-R model describes how employee well-being is based on numerous workplace characteristics, including job demands (physical, social, or organizational, requiring sustained physical or psychological effort) or job resources (characteristics of the job that reduce job demands and help with achieving work goals and/or encourage personal growth, learning, and development) (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007). Four types of job crafting behaviors include: increasing structural job resources, increasing social job resources, increasing challenging job demands, and decreasing hindering job demands (Tims et al., 2012). Job crafting encompasses proactive employee behaviors that include actions preceding a specific situations. Such crafting also includes concurrent efforts to control or influence a situation as it unfolds (Parker and Collins, 2010). Through job crafting employees change the tasks and relational boundaries of their jobs, which makes them more engaged in their jobs (Chen et al., 2014). Thus, job crafting behaviors are crucial in determining job-related employee outcomes.

2.2. Job satisfaction

Job design's impact on job satisfaction is a traditional organizational behavior topic that has received much attention (Parker et al., 2001). Job satisfaction is determined by feelings toward the job (Spector, 1997). These feelings encourage positive and pleasurable emotional states when positive job values are promoted (Locke, 1976). Wider positive attitudes toward the profession improve job satisfaction (Organ, 1990). This profession level attitude increases individual productivity, ensures physical and mental health, and improves morale—all of which contribute to life satisfaction and the quicker learning of new job skills (Moghimi, 2006). Employees with a sense of achievement exhibit a favorable attitude toward the workplace, leading to better commitment to the organization (Bufquin et al., 2017). Ultimately, such employees have a lower intention to quit (Kim et al., 2015; Tongchaiprasit and Ariyabuddhiphongs, 2016).

2.3. Job crafting and job satisfaction

Job crafting alters the meaning of work by changing its tasks and relationships in such a way that employees can reframe the purpose of the job in a wider context (Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001). Based on the JD-R model, the motivational process assumes that resources have a motivational potential. Employees in possession of resources will mobilize those resources to gain even more resources. This leveraging, when taken advantage of, results in the employee experiencing better well-being (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007). The JD-R model was used by Janssen et al. (2004) to investigate relationships between job resources and job satisfaction. In their study, job control was included as a measure for job resources. Job control includes the skill and creativity required to do one's job, and includes organizationally mediated opportunities to make decisions about the job (Karasek et al., 1998). Job control and job crafting overlap, given that both represent aspects of employee autonomy at work. The level of perceived control at the job is likely to differentiate job experiences and the personal understanding of job meaning and work relationships. Active employees shape their workplace and, as a result, experience enhanced feelings of well-being due to increased control over the environment and future outcomes. Job crafting enables individuals to gain resources from coworkers, resulting in greater feelings of well-being (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007; Slemp et al., 2015). Such employees tend to change their jobs in order to increase their available resources, thereby increasing their level of job satisfaction (Tims et al., 2013).

Although the association between job crafting and job satisfaction has been examined among manufacturing firms (Tims et al., 2013), scant attention has been paid to the service sector. Service experience includes results of interactions among organizations' processes, service employees, and customers (Bitner et al., 1997). Service employees play a crucial role in creating a delightful service experience for customers. Hospitality employee work is often characterized by considerable levels of human interaction. The hospitality industry requires service employees to deliver superior service that is customized to satisfy various customers' needs. To our knowledge, no studies have previously investigated how job crafting influences employee job satisfaction within the field of hospitality research. Thus, differences in context may influence this relationship in important ways, a topic not currently well understood, warranting further investigation within the domain of JD-R theory (Bakker and Demerouti, 2016). Based on this research thread, we propose the first hypothesis:

H1. Job crafting is positively related to job satisfaction

2.4. Mediating role of job burnout

Job burnout has been dubbed the twenty-first century's greatest occupational hazard (Leiter and Maslach, 2005). Previous studies reported service workers tend to exhibit higher levels of job burnout (Lu and Gursoy, 2016). Job burnout includes serious psychological and/or physical issues that result from long periods of stress and/or frustration at work (Maslach et al., 1996). The maslach burnout inventory (MBI) categorizes burnout into three components: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach and Jackson, 1981). Emotional exhaustion implies being excessively burdened due to one's work. Depersonalization is the impersonal feeling or reaction toward service receivers. Diminished personal accomplishment refers to an individual's sense of ineptitude and lack of accomplishment (Maslach et al., 1996).

Based on the JD-R model, individuals who increase their job resources are more engaged in their job and show lower levels of burnout (Bakker and Demerouti, 2016). Tims et al. (2013) showed employee job crafting lowers burnout rates by the changes made in job demands and resources. Crafting a challenging job or minimizing job demands leads to increased feelings of well-being as measured by lower levels of