Original Research Article

The price of success: A study on chefs' subjective well-being, job satisfaction, and human values

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ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

That there exists a reciprocal relationship of influence among the experiences, roles, and attitudes that a worker has in his/her personal life and work environment is widely known. However, few studies in the existing hospitality literature have examined this issue. This work examines the findings of a study that identifies the factors influencing the relationship between job satisfaction and subjective well-being. Based on the data collected from a sample of chefs in Europe, the findings offer a good understanding of the relationship as a central part of chefs' life satisfaction. Chefs are selected to be part of the sample because of the nature of their work, which largely involves work overload, excessive stress, and limited public recognition.

1. Introduction

People living in developed societies often ask themselves why they work and what they gain from their work. Consistent with the aim of the study, they also question how the role of workers fit their life roles to enable them to find meaning and value in their work (Hartung, 2009). The interaction between job satisfaction (JS) and life satisfaction (LS) has attracted significant interest from different disciplines, such as sociology, economics, administration, and organizational psychology, to name a few. Researchers within these areas of scientific knowledge seek to understand how this interaction affects individual well-being. Judge and Watanabe (1994) proposed that this non-relationship can prove the separation between JS and LS if these two domains are unrelated to each other. Such a finding indicates that life and work experiences are isolated from each other (Georgellis and Lange, 2012). Thus, feelings and behaviors in one of these areas do not affect the person's behaviors in other areas (Gupta and Beehr, 1981). Conversely, this relationship reveals the spillover or compensation effects between the two domains if LS and JS are correlated, and the result depends on the positive or negative sign of the correlation. The spillover effect indicates the attitudes and behaviors developed in one's personal life condition, one's work life, and vice versa. For example, the most active individuals at work are also possibly the most active individuals during their free time. The compensation effect then implies a negative

correlation. Dissatisfaction with the work environment is compensated with improved personal well-being, whereas dissatisfaction in one of the roles is balanced with improved involvement and satisfaction in the other (Zedeck, 1992).

The current study adopts "spillover theory" proposed by Staines (1980) as a reference framework, which is based on the assumption that a worker's experiences in one area essentially affect those in others. According to Newstrom (2007), the work environment of an employee determines his feelings toward the job. JS essentially determines the level of LS, given that work is one of the most important parts of a worker's life. This process can result in positive or negative effects, which in turn, lead to stress in some individuals and elevated satisfaction levels in others (Edralin, 2013). This work utilizes data from the European Social Survey (ESS) to examine the relationship between JS and subjective well-being (SWB) among chefs. JS and SWB are core measurements of LS. Meanwhile, this profession has acquired significant social relevance in recent years because of the proliferation of television programs that feature famous chefs. Yet, despite the apparent glamour that surrounds chefs, this profession stands out because of work overload, excessive stress levels, and with rare exceptions, limited public recognition (Murray-Gibbons and Gibbons, 2007). As Burrow et al. (2015) proposed, the life of an elite chef can be thrilling and rewarding on the one hand, but also mundane, degrading, and dehumanizing on the other hand. Several studies have proven that chefs

often work in aggressive environments (e.g., Einarsen and Skogstad, 1996; Johns and Menzel, 1999; Bloisi and Hoel, 2008; Kang et al., 2010). The qualitative study of Johns and Menzel (1999) confirmed that physical (e.g., hurt workers with kitchen utensils) and verbal (e.g., yelling and humiliation) abuses are widespread in high-caliber restaurants. Another paper published in the *International Journal of Hospitality Management* analyzed the abusive work practices among chefs (Bloisi and Hoel, 2008). Through a literature review, these authors concluded that abuse might be an expected part of the culture of kitchens. The widespread belief is that chefs must sacrifice their physical and psychological health and relinquish their social life to reach the pinnacle of this profession (Johns and Menzel, 1999). These beliefs largely arise because staying on top is difficult, and chefs must compete each season to renew their titles similar to what elite athletes do. This cycle generates considerable pressure that, ultimately, may interfere with their personal and family lives. In fact, Harris and Giuffre (2010) reported that chefs are often resigned to feeling guilty and to experiencing work–family conflicts as the consequence of their professional careers. Despite this circumstance, empirical studies that explore this peculiar profession remain limited (Robinson et al., 2014a).

The present study aims to identify the factors that affect the relationship between JS and SWB by using a multivariate regression model to advance the scientific knowledge of this profession. This profession is critical to the success of the hospitality industry, even with repercussions at the image–country level, in which the international reputation of a country can be evaluated by the number of Michelin stars obtained by native chefs. Similarly, this study adopts Schwartz's theory of basic human values (1992) to investigate whether the personal values (power, achievement, and benevolence) of these professionals determine the relationship between JS and SWB. Previous studies analyzed human values as predictors of work life and of SWB, but these studies did not examine the moderating effect of values on the interaction between these two variables. Even fewer studies were conducted in the context of culinary arts professionals.

In light of the above, this study intends to answer two basic research questions: "Is there a direct relationship between chefs' JS and SWB?" and "Do these professionals' human values have a moderating effect on the JS–SWB relationship?" Given that no previous study has addressed this issue in the hospitality sector, and more specifically, in a professional group as interesting as chefs, the present study aims to fill a major research gap and contribute to the increase in scientific knowledge on the subject.

The rest of the paper is organized into sections. Section 2 develops the conceptual framework. Section 3 describes the methodology. Section 4 presents the main results. Section 5 discusses the most critical empirical results. Finally, the paper ends with an analysis of certain implications and the main limitations of the study.

2. Literature review and hypotheses

The tourism industry is a growing industry that includes accommodation services (hotels and camping grounds) and food service activities (restaurants, bars, taverns, and catering activities). According to the long-term forecast report of the United Nations World Tourism Organization entitled Tourism Towards 2030, international tourist arrivals worldwide are expected to increase annually by 3.3% between 2010 and 2030; arrivals are also predicted to reach 1.4 billion and 1.8 billion by 2020 and 2030, respectively (UNWTO, 2016). That report indicates that Europe shall remain the world's top tourist destination, followed by Asia and the Pacific.

According to the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report (Crotti and Misrahi, 2017), published by the World Economic Forum, the tourism industry contributes over 10% to the global GDP and accounts for 1 in 10 jobs in the world. In the context of the European Union (EU), tourism has been proven to be a strategic sector, as proven by the Treaty of Lisbon (2009) and the Madrid Declaration (2010). Once

again, Europe is recognized as the region with the strongest overall travel and tourism (T & T) competitiveness. Europe has 6 out of the 10 most competitive countries in the T & T sector—Spain (1st), France (2nd), Germany (3rd), United Kingdom (5th), Italy (8th), and Switzerland (10th)—and has attracted 620 million of the 1.2 billion international visitors who travelled in 2016.

The hospitality sector is a main subgroup in the tourism industry. According to the European Working Conditions Survey, conducted in 2010 by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, the tourism industry (Section I of the Statistical Classification of Economic Activities in the European Community: Accommodation and Food Service Activities) accounted for 5.5% of the total employment in Europe. This sector provides employment for diverse profiles, thereby providing an opportunity to integrate immigrants, young people, females, and other groups that experience distinct employment difficulties into the mainstream labor market (Ariza-Montes et al., 2017a). Meanwhile, the quality of employment created by the sector is another issue. Uncertainty in the hospitality sector is well known. The White Paper on Human Resources in Tourism (Exceltur, 2004) highlights several reasons as to why many people consider work in the tourism industry as highly unattractive aspects. These include, among others, uncomfortable work schedules (including holidays, weekends, and evening shifts), more weekly work hours than other sectors, uncompetitive wages, low investment in training, poor expectation in one's professional career, little external recognition, and low social prestige.

Despite this situation, this article focuses on a privileged group in the industry, at least in comparison to other professions in the sector: chefs or culinary arts professionals. Without a doubt, human resources in the hospitality industry is a key factor of competitive advantage, because this is a sector where an employee's smile could mean the difference between success and failure. In all likelihood, chefs are the most relevant individuals in the tourism industry because they perform the core business of the kitchens, namely, food preparation. This study examines the relationship between JS and SWB with the moderators of human values (power, achievement, and benevolence) from Schwartz's theory. Subsequent sections will further discuss the issues that have been previously mentioned.

2.1. Relationship between JS and SWB

The interaction between work and life is a complex research area that has attracted considerable interest. This area has generated a considerable amount of studies that, unfortunately, could sometimes become confusing and even contradictory. Several researchers use different labels, such as "enhancement," "facilitation," "positive spillover," or "enrichment," to refer to this phenomenon (McNall et al., 2010). Previous studies identified some aspects of this phenomenon, but several gaps related to the conceptual framework continue to exist. These gaps can help explain the processes through which the work sphere is linked with personal life (Georgellis and Lange, 2012).

The literature review reveals two circumstances related to this study. On the one hand, the number of studies that support the thesis indicates that the influence of work on personal life can be direct and indirect (Lambert, 1990; Robinson et al., 2014b). On the other hand, most research on work–family relationship focused on the negative connections between both areas (McNall et al., 2010). Studies on the conflict of work–family roles indicate that the pressure to increase participation in either the work or the family area irretrievably reduces the time and/or energy devoted to the other (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985; Kalliath et al., 2012). Thus, conflict is inevitable between work and life because involvement in one of the roles reduces the resources meant for the other (Karatepe and Bekteshi, 2008).

The effects of work–life balance in the hospitality industry on different aspects of business management or worker attitudes have been addressed in different studies (Deery and Jago, 2015). However,