Antecedents and consequences of job satisfaction in the hotel industry

Jen-Te Yang *

Department of Hotel Management, National Kaohsiung Hospitality College, P.O. Box 608, Kaohsiung City (800), Taiwan, ROC

ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to investigate the antecedents (i.e., role ambiguity and conflict, burnout, socialization, and work autonomy) and consequences (i.e., affective and continuance commitment, absenteeism, and employee turnover intention) of employee job satisfaction. Data obtained from a sample of 671 respondents drawn from 11 international tourist hotels in Taiwan were analyzed with the LISREL program. According to the results, role conflict, burnout, socialization, and work autonomy, but not role ambiguity, significantly predicted job satisfaction. In addition, job satisfaction significantly contributed to psychological outcomes in terms of organizational effectiveness (i.e., greater affective and continuance commitment and lower employee turnover intentions).

© 2009 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

In the competitive and people-oriented business environment characterizing the modern hospitality industry, frontline employee performance represents a crucial component of service. Better employee performance yields greater guest satisfaction and loyalty. Moreover, frontline employees in the hospitality industry seem to be underpaid and to suffer job-related stress (Weatherly and Tansik, 1993; Karatepe and Sokmen, 2006). An appropriate quality of service includes employee attitudes and behaviors that meet customer expectations. Consequently, employee job satisfaction is a necessary contributor to meeting such expectations (Rust et al., 1996; Kim et al., 2005; Karatepe and Sokmen, 2006).

The literature on job satisfaction covers an enormous territory with ambiguous boundaries, apparently as a result of the growing interest of academic researchers and managers in three perspectives on this domain. The first views job satisfaction as an antecedent of organizational outcomes, e.g., business performance (Iffaldano and Muchinski, 1985; Schyns and Croon, 2006), employee turnover (Williams and Hazer, 1986; Griffeth et al., 2000; Lam et al., 2001a,b; Martin, 2004; Silva, 2006; Schyns and Croon, 2006), and organizational commitment (Chatman, 1989, 1991; Chatman and Barsade, 1995; Harris and Mossholder, 1996; Lowry et al., 2002; Lam and Zhang, 2003; Martin, 2004; Taris et al., 2005; Li, 2006; Silva, 2006). The second treats job satisfaction as an outcome of organizational conditions, e.g., leadership (Williams and Hazer, 1986; Schriesheim et al., 1992; Podsakoff et al., 1996;

Sparks and Schenk, 2001; Schyns and Croon, 2006), social support (Frone, 2000; Liden et al., 2000; Schirmer and Lopez, 2001; Schyns and Croon, 2006), and task characteristics (Seers and Graen, 1984; Williams and Hazer, 1986; Stepina et al., 1991; Dodd and Ganster, 1996; Schyns and Croon, 2006). The third examines job satisfaction in terms of the temperament of employees, which is affected by individual traits (Judge et al., 1998, 2000; Dormann and Zapf, 2001; Judge and Bono, 2001; Schyns and Croon, 2006).

1.2. Previous studies of job satisfaction in hospitality

Previous studies on the antecedents and consequences of job satisfaction in the hotel industry have examined antecedents in terms of individual, organizational, and job-related factors.

Much of the literature regarding individual factors in the hospitality industry has identified salary, benefits, and marital status as contributors to employee turnover (Iverson and Deery, 1997; Pizam and Thornburg, 2000). For Chinese managers, job satisfaction was affected by the work environment, the nature of the job itself, and the rewards associated with the job, but not by manager characteristics (Lam et al., 2001a,b). Rewards, particularly those related to job security, emerged as an influential factor relating to job satisfaction. This study also indicated that high levels of job satisfaction resulted in low levels of turnover intentions among managers. Aziz et al. (2007) studied fast food restaurants and found that satisfaction with financial rewards minimized absenteeism and hence turnover rates. Martin (2004) and Silva (2006) applied a psychological perspective to a sample drawn from the hotel industry, using a correlation analysis to identify significant relationships among job satisfaction, organizational commitment, employee turnover, and personality traits. Carbery et al. (2003) applied a hierarchical regression analysis to a sample of 89 hoteliers and showed that individual affective

* Tel.: +886 935 927 138; fax: +886 7 238 3553.
  E-mail address: jenteyang@Mail.Nkhc.Edu.Tw.

commitment accounted for a significant amount of variance in turnover intentions, that job satisfaction did not explain managers' levels of commitment to a significant extent, and that job satisfaction and affective, but not continuance, commitment were important factors in predicting the turnover intentions of employees. These findings were also echoed by Iverson and Deery (1997).

Second, at the organizational level, organizational support and socialization have been identified as crucial factors influencing individual behavior. Cho et al. (2009) empirical study demonstrated that perceived organizational support and commitment negatively influenced individual intentions to leave, but only the former positively affected intentions to stay. Young and Lundberg (1996) proposed that organizational socialization significantly contributed to newcomers' job performance, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment and hence to their intentions about leaving the organization. The study indicated that role ambiguity, role conflict, and job burnout could be minimized by well-organized orientation and training programs during the early stage of employment, and that this approach would increase the level of job satisfaction. A similar study also showed that socialization difficulties negatively affected the organizational culture with respect to employee turnover (Iverson and Deery, 1997). Tepeci and Bartlett's (2002) empirical study went one step further, implying that organizational socialization resulted in increased job satisfaction and intentions to remain in an organization. Subramaniam et al. (2002) empirically showed direct and positive relationships between variables measuring decentralized structures and organizational commitment among managers.

Lam and Zhang (2003) surveyed 203 employees in the Hong Kong fast-food industry about their jobs. A multiple regression model showed that organizational commitment was correlated with and predicted by variables reflecting training and development, job characteristics (including the extent to which a job is challenging, the sense of accomplishment associated with the job, the meaningfulness of the work, the friendliness of co-workers, and job security) and compensation and fairness. Job satisfaction was correlated with the first two factors. Subramaniam et al. (2002) found a direct and positive relationship between variables measuring managers' needs for achievement and their organizational commitment to and use of a participatory budgeting process. Lowry et al. (2002), drawing on a sample of 454 employees working in registered clubs in Australia, show that job satisfaction significantly affected organizational commitment and that formal training plans as well as empowerment and flexible work hours were dominant factors influencing job satisfaction. Iverson and Deery (1997) and Silva (2006) presented empirical results showing that organizational commitment was connected with employee turnover, as mediated by job satisfaction. Kim et al. (2005) refined the aforementioned statistical relationship by applying structural equation modeling.

Manageable levels of job stress should have a certain number of positive effects on individual and/or organizational behaviors. The most significant empirical studies in this regard were conducted by Faulkner and Patiar (1997) and Iverson and Deery (1997). Zohar (1994) and Brymer et al. (1991) claimed that stress included three aspects of role conflict and ambiguity: workload, decision latitude, and psychological stress. Faulkner and Patiar (1997) identified five sources of the job stress suffered by front-office employees: "coping with office politics, dealing with ambiguous situations, inadequate guidance from superiors, under-promotion, and staff shortages" (p. 110). This empirical study implied that these five stressors should be eliminated to stimulate individual adaptive behaviors. Recent research conducted by Karatepe and Uludag (2007) with employees of Northern Cyprus hotels found that work–family conflict did not significantly contribute to job satisfaction or intentions to leave an organization. Karatepe et al. (2006a,b) and Kim et al. (2009) found that role conflict and ambiguity were significantly associated with

job satisfaction, given sex as a mediating variable. The study conducted by Kim et al. (2007) implied that job burnout might increase rates of employee turnover.

Employee turnover constitutes a critical issue for many hoteliers and academics. Some hoteliers view turnover as a part of the culture of the hospitality industry as a whole (i.e., a so-called turnover culture). Hotel operations in Taiwan are also characterized by this sort of culture (Yang, 2008). Recent studies of the hotel industry in Taiwan conducted by Yang (2008) demonstrated that organizational socialization contributed to job satisfaction and commitment and minimized newcomer turnover intention. This study, applying a multiple regression analysis, showed that job satisfaction affected affective commitment and hence influenced turnover intentions. Yang (2009) indicated that newcomers enjoyed observing and reading job-related information to learn how to perform tasks, implying that organizational socialization and job stress were correlated with job satisfaction.

1.3. Justification for and contribution of the study

Although many empirical studies have focused on issues related to job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and employee turnover, many unanswered questions about the nature of job satisfaction seem to remain. One such unanswered question concerns the importance of different job factors, such as role stress and job burnout, in determining satisfaction.

This empirical study attempts to explore the relationships among several components of the antecedents and consequences of job satisfaction. The main impetus for conducting this comprehensive and holistic study derived from the need to narrow three theoretical gaps. First, although prior studies have revealed the relationship between antecedents (i.e., role stress, socialization, and burnout) and consequences (i.e., organizational commitment and employee intentions to leave an organization) and job satisfaction, few studies have investigated the interactive effects of these variables within the context of a more inclusive model. Second, a great deal of the literature in the hospitality and tourism field shows a strong relationship between job satisfaction and organizational commitment, but few studies have examined this relationship by distinguishing affective from continuance commitment. Third, no empirical evidence about whether absenteeism mediates between organizational commitment and intention to leave has been presented.

This study will contribute to a growing body of research on job satisfaction that illustrates the need to adopt a multi-faceted approach to the study of employee turnover intentions. It will also demonstrate the importance of considering not only the effects of job characteristics on job satisfaction, but also the effects of job satisfaction on organizational commitment, absenteeism, and turnover intention.

1.4. Purpose of the study

The study focuses on interactions among employees in hotels in Taiwan and empirically examines the effectiveness of an integrated understanding of applied psychology that includes organizational socialization. The purpose of this research is to explore (1) the effect of role stress, burnout, socialization, and work autonomy on job satisfaction; and (2) the situational relationships among job satisfaction, individual commitment to organizations, absenteeism, and employee turnover intentions.

2. Hypotheses development

This study aims to recast our perspective on job satisfaction by applying organizational theories pertaining to job stress, burnout,