University of Massachusetts Amherst

ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst

An Exploratory Investigation of Frontline Employees' Family Interferences on Job Attitudes and Service Outcomes

Xinyuan Zhao
Department of Hospitality & Service Management, Business School Sun Yat-Sen University

Anna S. Mattila
School of Hospitality Management, Pennyslvania State University

Zhao, Xinyuan and Mattila, Anna S., "An Exploratory Investigation of Frontline Employees' Family Interferences on Job Attitudes and Service Outcomes" (2016). *Travel and Tourism Research Association: Advancing Tourism Research Globally*. 50.
https://scholarworks.umass.edu/ttra/2012/Oral/50

An Exploratory Investigation of Frontline Employees' Family Interferences

on Job Attitudes and Service Outcomes

Xinyuan Zhao

Department of Hospitality & Service Management

Business School, Sun Yat-Sen University

and

Anna S. Mattila

School of Hospitality Management

Pennsylvania State University

ABSTRACT

This study examines the negative spillover effect of hospitality frontline employees' work-family conflicts on their affective reactions and commitment and on customer satisfaction. As a field survey indicated, frontline employees' role conflicts between work and family result in less positive affective job-related reactions, decreased emotional attachment to the organization, and lower levels of customer satisfaction. The findings suggest that tourism & hospitality organizations need to be aware of how factors outside the workplace influence service excellence.

Keywords: work-family conflict, customer satisfaction, affective reactions, affective commitment

Frontline employees always work under the employment of long work hours, high job insecurity, irregular and inflexible work schedules, and limited weekend time off (Karatepe & Olugbade, 2009; Wong & Ko, 2009). These work characteristics create role conflicts between work and family domains (work-family conflict, or WFC), which in turn decrease frontline employees' work motivation and attitudes heavily influencing customer

satisfaction (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Schneider, Macey, Lee, & Young, 2009). However, little research empirically investigated the impacts of frontline employees' family interferences on work attitudes and ultimately customer satisfaction. The present study has been designed to fulfill this research gap.

WFC consists of two dimensions: work interfering with family (WIF), and family interfering with work (FIW) (Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992; Frone, Yardley, & Markel, 1997). Both WIF and FIW negatively influence frontline employees' attitudes toward job and organization (Kossek & Ozeki, 1998). Specifically, frontline employees' affective reactions play a more influential role than cognitive appraisal, while affective commitment has more significant impacts than continuance and normative commitments (Allen, Herst, Bruck, & Sutton, 2000; Grandey, Cordeiro, & Crouter, 2005). When feeling happy with the job and committing to the organizations, frontline employees would serve well and customers are more satisfied with service (Pettijohn, Pettijohn, & Taylor, 2004). Thus, we hypothesized the effects of WIF and FIW on customer satisfaction mediated by affective reactions and commitment.

A dyadic data set (146 paired employee-customer responses; response rate = 60.833%) was collected from six full-service hotels at Macau. Forty front-line employees in each hotel from various departments, including front desks, bars & restaurants, and business centers, were randomly surveyed from a list of employees provided by the human resource department. Customers who had just interacted with the sampled employees were asked to provide their satisfaction levels. Further, the employee-customer surveys were immediately matched and coded as one-employee to one-customer. All measures were from established scales and the back-forth translation process was conducted.

Structural equation modeling was conducted to test the hypothesized effects. The structural model fits the data adequately ($\chi^2_{(200)} = 329.277$, $p < .000$, $\chi^2/df = 1.646$, GFI = .902, AGFI = .849, IFI = .898, NFI = .782, CFI = .893, RMSEA = .066), and the results of path coefficients support our principal predictions. Specifically, WIF has marginally significant negative effects on affective reactions ($B = -.149$, $S.E. = .080$, $p = .062$) but the effects on affective commitment were not significant ($B = .160$, $S.E. = .103$, $p = .122$), while FIW has significant negative effects on both affective reactions ($B = -1.278$, $S.E. = .424$, $p < .001$) and affective commitment ($B = -1.488$, $S.E. = .646$, $p = .021$). Further, affective reactions ($B = .727$, $S.E. = .292$, $p = .013$), rather than affective commitment ($B = -1.122$, $S.E. = 2.287$, $p = .624$), have significant effects on customer satisfaction, at the meanwhile both WIF ($B = -.033$, $S.E. = .136$, $p = .808$) and FIW ($B = .109$, $S.E. = .082$, $p = .184$) have no significantly directly impacts on customer satisfaction. Taken together, the findings suggest that family interferences first reduce frontline employees' affective reactions to jobs and ultimately decrease customer satisfaction levels, while affective commitment has no such effects. Comparing to affective reactions, affective commitment may be more relevant to frontline employees' attitudes toward the organizations and subsequently their staying or leaving decisions (e.g., turnover intentions).

The present results imply that domains outside of the workplace (e.g., family responsibilities) may influence line-employees' efforts to satisfy customers. Well-designed, family-friendly policies and benefit programs could help managers ensure service excellence. A hospitality firm's work-family policies should aim to establish a supportive organizational culture in which employees perceive great social supports from hotels (Grandey, Cordeiro, & Michael, 2007). Such an organizational climate would help employees balance interferences between work and family domains, have high job satisfaction and well-being, and ultimately serve customers happy.

The present study was cross-sectional and correlational in nature, while relying on self-reports without controls on potential factors influencing employees' stress and mood states. Future research could further take individual characteristics and climate level variables into consideration, and explore how different employees may react to WFC and to what extent hotel policies, systems, and practices could play a role in supporting customer service.

REFERENCES

Allen, T. D., Herst, D. E. L., Bruck, C. S., & Sutton, M. (2000). Consequences associated with work-to-family conflict: A review and agenda for future research. *Journal of Occupational and Health Psychology, 5*(2), 278-308.

Frone, M. R., Russell, M., & Cooper, M. L. (1992). Antecedents and outcomes of work-family conflict: Testing a model of the work-family interface. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 77*, 65-78.

Frone, M. R., Yardley, J. K., & Markel, K. S. (1997). Developing and testing an integrative model of the work-family interface. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 50*, 145-167.

Grandey, A. A., Cordeiro, B. L., & Crouter, A. C. (2005). A longitudinal and multi-source test of the work-family conflict and job satisfaction relationship. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology, 78*(3), 305-323. doi: 10.1348/096317905X26769

Grandey, A. A., Cordeiro, B. L., & Michael, J. H. (2007). Work-family supportiveness organizational perceptions: Important for the well-being of male blue-collar hourly workers? *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 71*, 460-478.

Greenhaus, J. H., & Beutell, N. J. (1985). Sources of conflict between work and family roles. *Academy of Management Review, 10*, 76-88.

Karatepe, O. M., & Olugbade, O. A. (2009). The effects of job and personal resources on hotel employees' work engagement. *International Journal of Hospitality Management, 28*(4), 504-512. doi: 10.1016/j.ijhm.2009.02.003

Kossek, E. E., & Ozeki, C. (1998). Work-family conflict, policies, and the job-life satisfaction relationship: A review and directions for organizational-human resources research. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 83*(2), 139-149.

Pettijohn, L., Pettijohn, C., & Taylor, A. J. (2004). The relationships between food service workers' skills, satisfaction, commitment, and customer orientation levels.

International Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Administration, 5(2), 405-424.

Schneider, B., Macey, W. H., Lee, W. C., & Young, S. A. (2009). Organizational service climate drivers of the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) and financial and market performance. *Journal of Service Research, 12*(11), 3-14.

Wong, S. C.-k., & Ko, A. (2009). Exploratory study of understanding hotel employees' perceptions on work-life balance issues. *International Journal of Hospitality Management, 28*, 195-203.