

Does Flow Experience Really Matter among Hotel Employees in Sarawak?

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Abstract

Studies on flow in the Malaysian hotel context are still very limited even though it is an important psychological phenomenon toward developing human resources. This present study aims to investigate the role of flow experience as a mediator between the causes of burnout and its outcomes (turnover intention and work-family conflict) among the hotel employees in Sarawak, Malaysia. In the hotel industry, which has a highly demanding working environment, employee burnout would eventually lead to turnover intention and work-family conflict (WFC). To minimize these causes and outcomes, flow is hypothesized as a possible mediator in this study. The data were collected from 210 full time hotel employees, selected by random sampling method, and analyzed using SPSS version 20 and PROCESS version 2.11. The findings revealed that flow played a direct and indirect significant role between the causes of burnout and its outcomes. The findings suggest flow to be an important approach in alleviating the effects of burnout – turnover intention and work-family conflict.

Keywords: Burnout; Flow; Hotel; Turnover Intention; Work-Family Conflict

1. Introduction

Tourism industry has become one of the contributors in the economic growth of Malaysia's gross national product. Hotel operators and management should seriously consider to further enhance and developing this industry by producing quality employees in their operations. One of the ways for hotel employers to contribute to the plan is to have quality employee that are motivated, passionate, and driven to serve hotel guests. One aspect that they could look into is by encouraging their employees to experience flow in completing their daily tasks.

Hotel employees work in night shifts, irregular schedule (1) as well as low pay, unstable, and seasonal employment; all of which make a career in hotels seem unattractive (2). In addition, unstable and uncertain work settings have been suggested to correlate with turnover intention, which is a serious problem for human resource management (3). Previous studies mentioned that employees that are deeply engaged in very complex and challenging work setting; which would require them to utilize their talents and strength, tend to be eager to unleash other potential new skills to perform the tasks in enjoyable and motivating manner (4). From the above findings, this present study will determine whether flow has a significant influence on turnover intention among hotel employees in the eastern context.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Flow

Flow is defined by Csikszentmihalyi (5) as a state of deep concentration and absorption of an individual in an activity done with

passion and excitement. Flow experience were related to need of achievement and predicated leading to better work performance and positive affect on work (6). As such, flow has a high potential to become an important aspect to the workforce, as it contributes to higher work productivity, innovation, employee development (7). Kasa and Hassan (8) mentioned that the positive mood induced by flow can generate creativity and positive thinking. To put it simply, employees who experience flow would be totally immersed with completing their task as it is seen as something that is genuinely worthwhile and truly beneficial for them.

Although flow is important in the organization, there is still lack of research on the role of flow among the hotel employees in Malaysian context; Sarawak. At present, a limited amount of known studies used flow in the context of Malaysian hotel employees, which were conducted by Kasa & Hassan (9–11). Of these three previous studies, only one study, Kasa & Hassan (10) which looked at flow as a mediator between exhaustion and WFC and between disengagement and WFC. The results of that particular study suggested that flow does act as a mediator between the variables. Apart from Kasa & Hassan (10), there is no other known research that used flow as the mediator among hotel employees. This current study was conducted to fill this knowledge gap.

2.2. Work-Family Conflict & Burnout

Being engaged and concentrating deeply whilst performing certain tasks may lead to WFC (12). WFC is known as an inter-role conflict and occurs when there is an incompatibility of the role demand stemming from other demands (family or work) which bring a negative impact to the employee (13). Numerous studies also revealed that in the hotel setting in Western country; night shift working hours and irregular working schedule were consistently correlated to a variety of negative outcomes (1,14,15). Byron (16)