Antecedents and Outcomes of Flow in Sarawak’s Hotel Industry with Moderating Effects of Socio-Cultural Factors.

Mark Edmund Kasa

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Human Resource Development)
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Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SARAWAK 2015
DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my beloved parents, Mr. & Mrs. Edmund Kasa, for their continuous encouragement, love, and support. Let this thesis be an inspiration to all my nephews and nieces to embark on this journey of education that may transpire them to be successful graduates in the near future.
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ABSTRACT

Antecedents and Outcomes of Flow in Sarawak’s Hotel Industry with Moderating Effects of Socio-Cultural Factors.

As employees have become more educated, independent, and strive to be the best, they have begun to aim for better working life towards improving organizational outcomes. Besides, since most researches related to the hotel industry have concentrated on enhancing the well-being of its organization members, this study fits the field of organization development and its application to employees at workplace. This study emphasized on the flow at work and the influence of antecedents (Job characteristic and Burnout), hence the impact on the positive outcome (Organizational Citizenship Behavior) and the negative outcome (Work-Family Conflict). Job characteristic acted as the positive experience, whilst Burnout acted as the negative experience. More specifically, this study utilized moderated mediation approach, whereby socio-cultural factors (Individualism/collectivism) had been assigned as the moderator. The targeted population sample consisted of full-time 3, 4, and 5 star rated hotel employees from various departments in Sarawak, Malaysia. A total of 293 valid responses were obtained, which yielded a final response rate of 58.6%. A 2-stage Structural Equation Modeling (AMOS version 21) technique was used to test the validity of the overall model and the hypothesized relationship between the hypothesized constructs. In addition, this study employed the cross-sectional research design and was conducted within a hotel setting in the Malaysian context. In this study, the mixed-method approach of data analyses was utilized, which was the qualitative method of an in-depth interview, while the quantitative method involved descriptive statistics, Pearson Correlation, and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). Furthermore, two stages of approaches for the measurement model had been implemented. The result from the Structural Equation Modeling AMOS version 21 indicated that there was a significant relationship between flow and organizational citizenship behavior. None of the antecedents predicted flow while flow did not mediate both antecedents and outcomes. In addition, socio-cultural factor (Individualism) showed a moderating effect in the relationship between flow and organizational citizenship behavior. Understanding these relationships will provide a strategy for hotel employers to attract and to retain or to develop the most capable and talented human capital in the industry. In addition, it will also help hotel employers to facilitate flow experience for greater job satisfaction among the employees towards improving their competitiveness in the hotel business.
**ABSTRAK**

Penyebab dan Kesaran Asyik dalam Industri Perhotelan di Sarawak dengan kesan Penyederhanaan Faktor-faktor Sosio-Budaya.

Achievement

The PhD research “Antecedents and Outcomes of Flow in the Hotel Industry: Moderating Effects of Socio-Cultural Factors” had been funded by Research Acculturation Collaborative Effort (RACE) Grant Scheme. RACE/E(1)1100/2014(08)

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Oral Presentations

Presented by Mark Kasa


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1. Flow at work: Examining its antecedents and outcomes at the University Malaysia Sarawak Research & Development Expo, organized by Research and Innovation Management Center, Unimas on the 12 & 13 August 2014.
Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The study of flow has begun since in the 1960s. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi is the founder of flow, and since then, his fellow researchers have looked into the study of flow after Csikszentmihalyi became obsessed by artist, especially painter, who got so immersed in their work that they disregarded their need for food, drink, and even rest to sleep. Bakker (2005, 2008) defined work related flow as a short term peak experience at the workplace that is characterized by absorption, work enjoyment, and intrinsic work motivation. Absorption refers to a state of total focus and total immersion in one’s work. Work enjoyment refers to a positive judgment on the quality of working life and this enjoyment or happiness is the outcome of affective and cognitive evaluations of the flow experience (cf. Diener, 2000). Finally, intrinsic work motivation refers to the desire to do certain work related activities.

Flow is an ultimate positive experience and it is known for its improvement on work performance, especially in satisfying achievement, and besides, it has been proven to produce intense feeling of joy (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988). Flow has a strong impact and it has been proven by research findings that flow is indeed correlated positively with performance enhancement, especially in the area of artistic and scientific creativity (Perry, 1999; Sawyer, 1992), teaching (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996), learning (Csikszentmihalyi et al., 1993), and sports (Jackson, et al., 2001). In addition, flow experience is correlated with a higher motivation to perform well in all work activities.
(Csikszentmihalyi; Abuhamdeh, & Nakamura, 2005). In addition, Csikszentmihalyi (2004) quoted that frequent experiences of flow at work would lead to higher work productivity, innovation, and employee development. In the year of 2006 study revealed that job characteristic have significant relationship on flow among 113 employees from various type of occupation in Netherlands (Demerouti, 2006). Flow experience induce consequences of better continuous scoring, promotion to higher level, immediate feedback and achievement for self satisfaction in each game level among the online gaming personnel (Chen, 2007). A study in the year of 2008 revealed that flow correlated with better performance as flow experience is highly functional state, thus individual could feel motivated intrinsically to complete the task (Engeser & Rheinberg, 2008). Most of the study are conducted in Western context.

A study in Taiwan conducted and revealed that flow is correlated with life satisfaction among the acrobatic performers (Chen et al., 2010). Numerous studies conducted in Netherlands revealed that flow encouraged employee productivity while enhanced organization production (Seligman et al., 2011). This is due to flow could trigger the active investment of ultimate effort and time in a task performed that lead to increase in competencies skills. The most unique of flow experience revealed by past study revealed that employees with job resources properly allocated would enhance employees motivation level and job engagement during the time of global recession and competitive business environment (Demerouti et al., 2012). In an empirical paper written by Kasa & Hassan (2013) concluded that flow can be applied in many aspect of life. Thus, this present study conducted in hotel industry in Sarawak, Malaysia and revealed the uniqueness of finding in Eastern context.
As most researches pertaining to the hotel industry have concentrated on enhancing the well-being of its organization members, this study fits into the field of organization development, and its application to employees at workplace. The focus area on the role of flow at work had been examined to comprehend its relationship with the antecedents (Job Characteristics and Burnout), the positive outcomes (Organizational Citizenship Behavior), and the negative outcomes (Work-Family Conflict), and if it moderated with Socio-Cultural Factors (monochronic/polychronic time orientation and individualism/collectivism).

Furthermore, this research emphasized on flow at work, the influence of antecedents, and the impact on outcomes. More specifically, it investigated the influence of Socio-Cultural Factors as the moderator, of which the variables selected were individualism/collectivism, and monochronic/polychronic time orientation, as well as based on Job Demand-Resources (JD-R) model as grounded theory, job resources constructs that acted as positive, while job demand as negative experiences. This study also looked into the outcomes of these relationships on flow. This study was conducted in the hotel industry setting in Malaysian context.

This chapter depicts the problem statement of study, the objective of study, the hypotheses, the definition of terms, and the conceptual framework. The frameworks of the study had been proposed to highlight the importance of flow as a significant mediator, whereas socio-cultural factors as vital moderators in this study.
1.2 Background of Study

Researches on flow at work have been conducted in several fields, such as flow in relation to executives (Donner & Csikszentmihalyi 1992), technology employees (Webster et al. 1993; Ghani & Deshpande 1994), internet usage (Chen et al. 1999), and music teachers (Bakker 2005). Based on findings obtained by Ellis et al. (1994), flow occurred when an optimal experience is gained from the consequences of a situation whereby challenges and skills are high and are in equilibrium. With flow at work, an organization can actually develop and increase productivity among employees, as supported by Csikszentmihalyi (2003), and additionally, a few researches have proven that by developing enriching and challenging working environment that promote the experience of flow may increase employee productivity, besides boosting the level of organization productivity as a whole.

Moreover, Hektner et al. (2007) also suggested that the existence of optimal experience due to the situation of which challenges and skills are high and are in equilibrium facilitated the occurrences of flow related phenomena, such as positive emotions, enjoyment, interest, and absorption. Therefore, studying the concept of flow, integral to the antecedents and the outcomes in the hotel industry, would be interesting in determining the effective method in the development of human resources. Furthermore, according to Bakker (2005, 2008), work related flow is a relatively new construct and only a limited number of studies have investigated its relationship with job