

Analyzing the Moderating Effects of Past Work Experiences on Job Burnout in off-campus Hospitality Internship Using Structural Equation Model

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ABSTRACT

The study estimated interns' job involvement and tested its impact on job burnout, job performance, and intention to stay with 395 Taiwan technology university students in the off-campus hospitality internship. The structural equation model rejected the null hypothesis that interns' job involvement negatively affects job burnout and showed that job involvement has a positive effect on interns' job performance, intention to stay, and further negatively influences job burnout and intention to stay through the predictor of job burnout. Furthermore, the past work experiences in hospitality showed its moderating effect on the job involvement-job burnout relationship. The findings of this study provided suggestions for internship management to promote interns' retention willingness.

Keywords: Hospitality Intern, Intention to Stay, Job Burnout, Job Involvement, Job Performance

1. INTRODUCTION

Due to hospitality graduates' lack of practical skills, as well as the lack of talent in the industry, colleges and universities have started internship courses to foster professional and practical skills and allow students to bridge their careers. Therefore, hospitality department has made off-campus internships required credits, in both higher education and the technological and vocational education system. Even in informal internships, students are required to work for a certain amount of hours in the related industry [1] in order to build experience, bridge the gap between practice and theory, and become prepared to start working.

While having an off-campus internship is an important experience for hospitality students in colleges and universities, common phenomena in the industry such as long working hours, repetitive primary-level jobs, low income, and fewer benefits [2] influence people's decision making when choosing their career. Moreover, West and Jameson [3] also pointed out that due to poor internship planning, the more experience gained from internship, the more burnout students perceive and the less committed they are to the hospitality career. As a result, only 30 to 40 percent of graduates are willing to enter the hospitality industry. It is a waste of educational resources that hospitality students cannot apply what they have learned into practice.

Through Rabinowitz et al. [4] integrative theoretical model, the influence of the interaction between individual characteristics and the work situation of job involvement was discovered. The resulting job involvement

corresponds to the current situation of hospitality interns. Therefore, based on the established conceptual framework [4] for future research, this study aims to further explore the relationship between interns' job involvement, job burnout, job performance, and intention to stay.

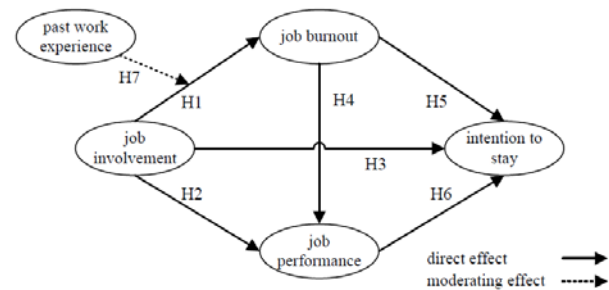


Figure 1. Conceptual model

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Job involvement

Job involvement refers to the degree of one's identification with and the impression of the importance of a job [5–6]. Schaufeli et al. [7] pointed out that a person with high job involvement has positive working attitudes, high energy, and professional dedication and can face job burnout positively. Rabinowitz et al. [4] showed that job involvement influences job burnout, job performance, turnover rate, and absenteeism, among other factors. In

general, job involvement has a negative correlation with job burnout [8–11], and job involvement also positively influences job performance [12–14]. Furthermore, another study found that job involvement has a positive correlation with future retention in the industry [15]. The abovementioned points suggested testing the following hypotheses:

H1: The degree of Interns' job involvement has negative effect on the degree of job burnout.

H2: The degree of Interns' job involvement has a positive effect on the degree of job performance.

H3: The degree of Interns' job involvement has a positive effect on the degree of the intention to stay in the future.

2.2. Job burnout

Based on the existing literature, job burnout can be defined as the exhaustion of individuals' energy, physical strength, or other bodily resources, which causes physical overextension, exhaustion, and mental fatigue, thus leading to a state of helplessness and emotional exhaustion at work [16]. Due to problems like long working hours, low pay, and few benefits in the hospitality industry, burnout happens frequently to personnel and results in emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a low sense of accomplishment [17]. This leads to not only fatigue and severe distress in individuals but also deterioration of job performance [18] and a high level of burnout and turnover rate [11]. As a result, this has influence over the overall operation of an organization. To further understand the feeling of burnout in hospitality interns, this study considered dimensions such as emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a low sense of accomplishment as the basis from which to evaluate the feeling of job burnout in hospitality interns, in accordance with the work of Maslach and Jackson [17]. Moreover, another study [3] also pointed out that due to it is a matter of poor internship planning, the more internship experience students gain, the more burnout and the less committed they are to hospitality. By summarizing the above, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

H4: The degree of Interns' job burnout has a negative effect on the degree of job performance.

H5: The degree of Interns' job burnout has a negative effect on the degree of intention to stay in the future.

H7: The past work experiences in hospitality have a moderating effect on the path of job involvement to job burnout.

2.3. Job performance

Brouthers [19] considered job performance to be the level of achievement in various work objectives. When an employee achieves his/her work objectives better, they exhibit good job performance. Borman and Motowidlo [20] further divided job performance into task performance and contextual performance; the former indicates an employee's contribution to the core technology of the organization and the proficiency the employee demonstrates at work, while the latter means the contribution to the organization's efficiency outside the assignment. Past studies also indicated that turnover intentions impact negatively on job performance [21]. As the measurement of hospitality interns' job performance includes proficiency within the scope of their work and the evaluation of the behaviors and performance outside the scope of work, this study used Borman and Motowidlo's [20] task performance and contextual performance as the basis to evaluate job performance. Thus, these works lead to the following hypothesis:

H6: The degree of Interns' job performance has a positive effect on the degree of intention to stay in the future.

2.4. Intention to stay

The so-called turnover intention means that employees' overall performance is related to their attitude toward quitting or looking for other job opportunities [22]; in other words, it is a withdrawal behavior that follows from employees' dissatisfaction with their work [23]. Since turnover intention and intention to stay are two sides of the same coin, this study hopes to understand the tendency toward retention after the research subjects interact with the organization. Therefore, the study used the intention to stay as a variable to predict whether the participants work in the hospitality industry in the future. The arguments of Gregory et al. [24], Tett and Meyer [25] were also adopted to define the intention to stay as an intern's willingness to work in the hospitality industry after graduation.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

3.1. Data collection and questionnaire design

All of the items were adapted to match the researches of hospitality literature so that the content and expert validity of the questionnaire were deemed as adequate. Next, to avoid distorted results caused by misunderstanding or incomprehension of the questions, 30 newly graduated hospitality students who had completed their internship were invited to a preliminary test. After performing reliability and validity tests on the samples, we concluded that none of the question items needed to be removed, thus verifying the content of this questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of five parts, including job

involvement (10 items from Kanungo [6]), job burnout (21 items from Maslach and Jackson [17]), job performance (16 items from Borman and Motowidlo [20]), intention to stay (3 items from Chou [26]), and respondent’s demographic profile (4 items). In addition to the respondent’s demographic information as a category scale, all items were evaluated using a five-point Likert scale from 1 strongly disagree to 5 strongly agree.

3.2. Research Subjects and Sampling Method

This study focused on the new hospitality graduates who had completed internships as research subjects and used questionnaires as the survey method for data collection. Considering the low recovery rate of online questionnaires, this questionnaire used purposive sampling, both in hard copies and online, to increase the recovery rate. A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed from February to April, 2019. After deleting incomplete responses, 395 useful samples were obtained, yielding an effective response rate of 98.75%. Furthermore, there was no significant difference between hard copies respondents and online respondents ($p > 0.05$), meaning non-response bias doesn’t exist.

4. RESEARCH RESULTS

4.1. Basic information

395 valid questionnaires were recovered from this study. In terms of gender, participants were 60.8% female and 39.2% male. In terms of the type of industry for the internship, chain restaurants (36.7%) accounted for the highest proportion, followed by international tourist hotels (18.5%), tourist hotels (18.5%), others (e.g., bread central kitchen) (11.6%), hotels (7.9%), and self-employed restaurants (6.8%). In terms of internship type, restaurant attendants (49.1%) accounted for the highest proportion, followed by restaurant kitchen staff (21.8%), customer service staff (11.4%), room attendants (7.1%), others (e.g. baking assistants) (4.6%), club service staff (4.3%), and administrative staff (1.8%). Moreover, more than seventy percent (71.4%) of the respondents had hospitality-related work experience prior to their current internship.

4.2. Verification of the Relationship Between the Hypothetical Paths

The hypotheses of the research model were tested with two structural equation path models using AMOS version 21.0. The first model involved testing the casual relationships among seven latent variables (H1–H6) with the full sample ($N = 395$). In the second model, we examined the moderating effect of hospitality work experience prior on job involvement to job burnout (H7). Therefore, based on whether they had hospitality-related work experience prior to the internship, this study divided the participants into those “with experience” ($N = 282$) and those “without experience;” ($N = 113$).

4.2.1. Overall model results

The simultaneous maximum likelihood estimation procedures were used to examine the hypothesized relationships among variables. The fit indices of the structural model indicated that the proposed model was accepted: $\chi^2/df = 2.95$, $GFI = 0.92$, $CFI = 0.93$, $IFI = 0.93$, and $RMSEA = 0.07$ [28–30].

According to Table 1, within the model, job involvement had a positively associated with job preference and intention to stay, the coefficients were 0.18 and 0.29, respectively. Thus, H2 and H3 were supported and statistically significant at the $p < 0.05$ level. The empirical result also suggested that the negative effect of the job burnout on job performance ($\beta = -0.33$) and intention to stay ($\beta = -0.15$), H4 and H5 were supported. However, the expected relationships between job performance and intention to stay (H6) was rejected. The anticipated correlation between job involvement and job burnout in the structural model turned out to be positive and reached the level of significance, which was inconsistent with H1 of the study. A potential reason for this could be that the more internship experience students gain, the more burnout and less committed they are to hospitality [3]. Therefore, this study subsequently tested if hospitality experience prior to the internship had a moderating effect on the relationship between job involvement and job burnout (H7).

Table 1. Structural model results

Hypothesized relationship	Proposed model		
	Standardized path coefficient	t-value	Results
H ₁ : job involvement → job burnout	0.18	2.90 ^{***}	Rejected
H ₂ : job involvement → job performance	0.18	3.12 ^{***}	Supported
H ₃ : job involvement → intention to stay	0.29	4.97 ^{***}	Supported
H ₄ : job burnout → job performance	-0.33	-5.35 ^{***}	Supported
H ₅ : job burnout → intention to stay	-0.15	-2.59 ^{***}	Supported
H ₆ : job performance → intention to stay	0.04	0.73	Rejected

Note: ^{***} Significant at the 0.001 level

4.2.2. Moderation model results

We examined the moderating effect of hospitality-related work experience prior to their current internship on job involvement to job burnout is testing the multigroup simultaneous path analysis, the data set was split into two groups named “with experience” ($N = 282$) and “without experience” ($N = 113$). The proposed model provided an adequate fit to the data ($\chi^2/df = 2.24$, $GFI = 0.88$,

$CFI = 0.92$, $IFI = 0.92$, and $RMSEA = 0.056$). The results show evidence of reasonable consistency. Table 2 shows the results of multigroup comparison test. The result of χ^2 difference comparison provided evidence that the moderating effect on the path of job involvement to job burnout ($\Delta\chi^2/\Delta df = 52.92$, $p < 0.05$), suggesting there are significant differences between the two groups. Hence, H7 was supported. A further comparison of the coefficients showed that the path coefficient of hospitality work experience prior to internship ($\gamma = 0.19$) was higher than the path coefficient ($\gamma = 0.18$) for those without prior experience.

Table 2. Results of multi-group comparison test

Hypothesized relationship	Standardized path coefficient (<i>t</i> -value)	
	with experience	without experience
job involvement → job burnout	0.19(2.53) ***	0.18(2.23) **
job involvement → job performance	0.20(2.95) ***	0.08(0.24)
job involvement → intention to stay	0.32(4.50) ***	0.18(0.62)
job burnout → job performance	-0.35(-4.89) ***	-0.23(-0.12)
job burnout → intention to stay	-0.16(-2.31) **	-0.16(-0.12)
job performance → intention to stay	0.03(0.39)	0.05(0.15)

Note: ** Significant at the 0.01 level, *** Significant at the 0.001 level

5. CONCLUSION

The unexpected positive correlation between interns’ job involvement and job burnout reached the significance level did not match with hypothesis H1. Further, we examined whether students’ hospitality past work experiences before the internship course and found that it has a moderating effect on the correlation between interns’ job involvement and job burnout. The result showed that the more hospitality work experience, the more intense the effect of job involvement on burnout. This means that most experienced respondents are dissatisfied with low wages and long working hours of repetitive tasks. Therefore, the more time one devotes oneself to hospitality jobs, the more likely they feel burnout at work.

Off-campus internships are an important experience for hospitality students in colleges and universities. The findings of this study provided suggestions: (1) to avoid a lower retention rate after internship courses, the course administration office should implement counseling and inspection program during the off-campus internships, so as to allow students to understand the characteristics of the hospitality industry, the working environment, required professional skills and work ethics to overcome the conflicted emotions; (2) the internship unit could provide a compensation program that attract, retain, motivate and reward fairly a skilled, experienced workforce.

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