How to Reduce Hospitality Employees' Deviant Behavior: An Organizational Justice Perspective

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Abstract: This study explores the effects of organizational justice on employee deviance, analyzes why hotel employees engage in deviant behaviors, and provides solutions for hospitality organizations. Moreover, organizational commitment has been viewed as a mediating role between organizational justice and deviant behavior. A questionnaire survey research design was used to collect data, and a 375 dyad was sampled from hotel employees in Macau. A SEM analysis indicated that distributive justice, procedural justice, and interactional justice were negatively related to deviant behavior. Organizational commitment had a partial mediating effect in the relationship. In addition, implications and suggestions for future research are discussed.

1. Introduction

As a result of increasing globalization and international development, increasing organizational competitiveness is important because of the intense competition of service industry and is vital for the success of the hospitality industry (Nadiri & Tanova, 2010). A primary challenge for hotel managers is to manage human resources more effectively by creating fairer working context that will align with management strategies. Hospitality labor force especially the front-line staff should have a high perception of organizational justice to maintain such level of motivation and work effectively and efficiently. Otherwise, employees will not exhibit higher service quality, even may indicate deviant behavior. It was predicted that organizational justice would be a major influence in employer-employee relationships within the hospitality industry in the 21st century (Fulford, 2005).

The aim of this article is to feed theoretical reflexion on the use of the injustice at work as a contextual variable explaining hospitality employees' deviant behavior. Every individual, including hospitality staff, is worried about knowing if he/she is treated fair (Morris & Leung, 2000). Due to the unique boundary-spanning nature of this industry, many frontline employees in hospitality, such as receptionists, cashers, food and beverage servers, and casino dealers, spend considerable time providing services to customers. This further indicates that employees not only may engage in deviant behaviors directed at their organization or members within that organization but that they may show deviance targeted at external guests (Jelinek & Ahearne, 2006). If hospitality organizations succeed in identifying and understanding the reasons pushing employees to develop deviant behavior, it will be able to gain lots of benefits.

Despite the consensus that seems to be built around the importance of explaining the deviance in hospitality industry using the organizational injustice, the research devoted to it remains for explaining the mechanisms and processes articulating this relationship. In any organization, the attitudes of employees are of interest because those influence intentions to behave in certain ways, and in turn, influence actual behavior. The attitudes of service employees are especially critical given the high degree of personal contact with guests and the behaviors necessary in order to provide exceptional service to them (Fulford, 2005). As a extraordinarily important personal

attitude, organizational commitment was deemed to be a psychological link between an employee and his or her organization (Allen & Meyer, 1996). Thus, maybe we could view it as a mediator to indicate the mechanism about the effects of organizational justice on hospitality employees' deviant behavior. The depicted conceptual model is presented in Figure 1. Three types of organizational justice are assumed to be positively related to organizational commitment and reduce hotel employees' deviant behavior. Interestingly, organizational justice may have an indirect negative effect on deviant behavior mediated by organizational commitment. In addition, managerial implications of the results will be discussed from the evidence of Macau hotels.
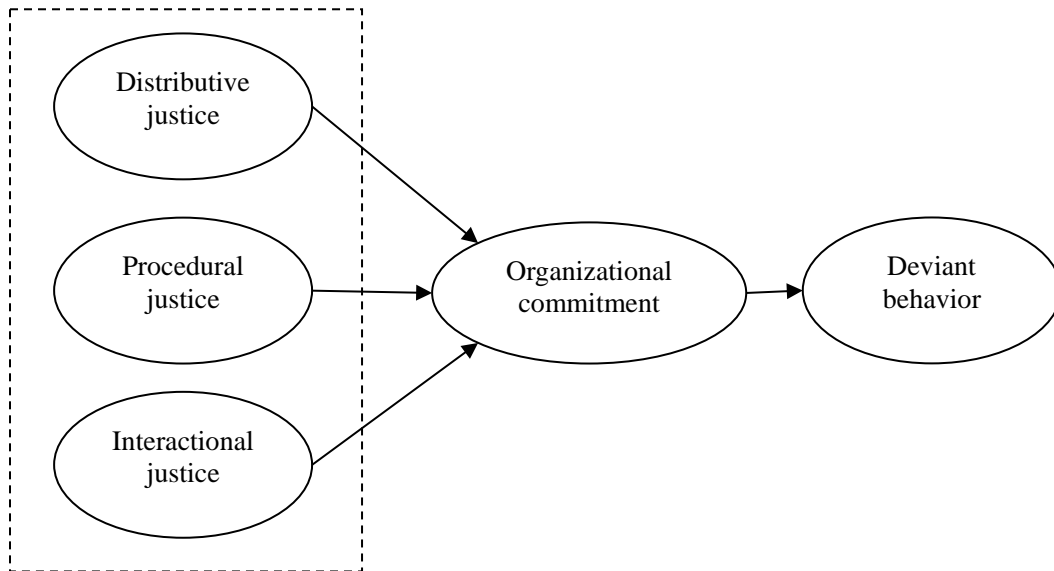

Figure 1 Hypothesized model

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses

2.1 Organizational justice and deviant behavior

Deviant behavior has become an emerging and expensive problem for organizations. Studies have sought to explore employee deviance in the workplace because it appears to produce large-scale organizational losses (Cameina & Ribeiro, 2014). Accordingly, Kaplan et al. (1986) identified that employee deviance was a voluntary act of an employee who either lacked motivation to comply with the social norm or actively violated those expectations. Scholars classified deviant behavior into four categories: property deviance (sabotaging equipment, accepting kickbacks, lying about hours worked, and stealing from company), production deviance (leaving early, taking excessive breaks, intentionally working slow, and wasting resources), political deviance (showing favoritism, gossiping about co-workers, blaming co-workers, and competing obstructively), and personal aggression (sexual harassment, verbal abuse, stealing from co-workers, and endangering co-workers).

Researchers have provided empirical evidence that perceived injustice in the workplace leads to deviant employee behaviors (Demir, 2011). Organizational justice refers to employee perceptions of fairness in organizations, including methods of allocating rewards and sanctions such as dismissals, training, promotions, trips, transfers, and money. Individuals who perceive that their employers have been fair, for example, receiving what they deserve (distributive justice), considering the allocation rules or process reasonable (procedural justice), and perceiving they are treated respectfully (interactional justice), are more likely to preserve the well-being of their organization and refrain from any actions or decisions that could potentially harm it. Thus, organizational leaders have a responsibility to utilize rewards and sanctions when necessary. When violations within the organization are sanctioned, others will receive a powerful signal regarding the values and norms of the organization. If leaders respond to violations of employees with neglect or indulgence, others

may become disappointed with organizational justice (Appelbaum et al., 2007). However, little research has focused on organizational justice in hospitality settings, particularly in regards to frontline employees of the hotel sector. Due to the unique boundary-spanning nature of this industry, many frontline employees in hospitality, such as receptionists, cashers, food and beverage servers, and casino dealers, spend considerable time providing services to customers. This further indicates that employees not only may engage in deviant behaviors directed at their organization or members within that organization but that they may show deviance targeted at external guests (Jelinek & Ahearne, 2006). Deviant behavior may be viewed as a response to inequiTable treatment in the workplace. According to the equity theory (Huseman et al., 1987), hotel employees compare their ration of outcomes (e.g., pay, raises, and promotions) to inputs (e.g., skill, training, education, and efforts). When hotel employees receive similar outcomes for similar inputs as perceived by comparison with co-workers, they will assume the presence of fairness. Based on the analysis above, we propose the following three hypotheses:

H1a: Distributive justice is negatively related to deviant behavior.
H1b: Procedural justice is negatively related to deviant behavior.
H1c: Interactional justice is negatively related to deviant behavior.

2.2 Organizational justice and organizational commitment

Organizational commitment was defined as "the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization" (Mowday et al., 1982, p. 27) and "a psychological link between an employee and his or her organization that made it less likely that the employee would voluntarily leave the organization" (Allen & Meyer, 1996, p. 252). Social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) may be used to explain the relationship between organizational justice and employee commitment. When individuals perceive fairness (e.g., fair rewards, reasonable procedures, and equiTable treatments) in the workplace particularly from authorities, they will be stimulated to become more loyal. In essence, perceptions and the prospect of obtaining benefits increases the degree to which employees are willing to reciprocate with acts that contribute, either directly or indirectly, to the goals of the organization (Lavelle et al., 2007). Indeed, scholars have demonstrated that perceptions of organizational justice are positively associated with organizational commitment of people in different work settings, such as hospital nursing staff (Chen et al., 2015), manufacturing employees (Cheng, 2014), and software development team members (Ganesh & Gupta, 2015). Furthermore, studies of the hospitality industry have demonstrated that perceptions of organizational justice by hotel employees have greatly influenced their commitment (Fulford, 2005). Organizational justice is crucial and hotel managers must be sensitive to their employees' perceptions of the decisions they make and the methods they use (Nadiri, & Tanova, 2010). Batool (2013) confirms that the justice perception factor may be considered as an antecedent to organizational commitment. Thus, we propose the following three hypotheses:

H2a: Distributive justice is positively related to organizational commitment.
H2b: Procedural justice is positively related to organizational commitment.
H2c: Interactional justice is positively related to organizational commitment.

2.3 Organizational commitment as a mediator

Organizational commitment is an important element in analyzing employee work-related behavior. Mulki et al. (2006) define organizational commitment as "an enduring attitude that explains an individual's willingness to remain loyal to a firm" (p. 1225). This definition indicates that a psychological link between an employee and their employing organization decreases the likelihood that the employee will voluntarily leave the organization (Allen & Meyer, 1996). Therefore, benefits arise when employees are more committed to the organization. Employees may feel loyalty and passion towards their employing organization while conducting their work. In addition, commitment is considered to be an antecedent to organizational citizenship behavior and is negatively correlated with absenteeism and tardiness. Therefore, when employees are committed to their organizations, they are less likely to possess turnover intention; meanwhile, they will most

likely not engage in deviant behavior. Organizational commitment is negatively correlated with both interpersonal and organizational deviant behavior (Appelbaum et al. 2007). Empirically, prior studies demonstrated that positive perceptions of justice by employees in their workplace result in less employee deviant behavior (Berry et al., 2007).

Organizational justice refers to the perceived fairness of rewards and punishments, consistency and accuracy of procedures, and interpersonal treatment by organizational authorities. These aspects reflect a cognitive evaluation regarding the justice atmosphere of the organizations. Employees with relatively higher perceptions of fairness are likely to have more identification and involvement in coping with job demands; this may prevent them from engaging in behavior that may harm the organization, co-workers, or external guests. In contrast, employees who perceive less justice in the workplace may experience negative emotions such as anger and hostility (Rupp & Spencer, 2006), which reduce loyalty and commitment and may result in the likelihood that they may sabotage property, waste resources, gossip about co-workers or supervisors, and engage in verbal abuse. In addition, empirical results of Demir (2011) revealed that organizational justice significantly impacts deviant behavior, and the employee's commitment to the organization. Thus, organizational commitment can be viewed as mediating the relationship of organizational justice and organizational deviant behavior. As aforementioned, we propose the following three hypotheses:

H3a: Organizational commitment mediates the effects of distributive justice on deviant behavior

H3b: Organizational commitment mediates the effects of procedural justice on deviant behavior

H3c: Organizational commitment mediates the effects of interactional justice on deviant behavior.

3. Method

3.1 Procedure

We obtained access to participating hotels through personal contacts and the managers of eight hotels in Macau. Survey questionnaires were administered during normal working hours to employees of various departments. Using the employee lists of the different departments, we randomly selected 500 subordinates and direct supervisors to participate in the study. Each employee was assigned a unique identification number that was included at the top of each survey the supervisor completed to ensure proper matching of the employee's survey with the supervisor responses. Both supervisors and employees were informed of the day of the survey was to be offered and were instructed to be prepared to take the necessary time to complete the survey on-site on that same day. Completed questionnaires were collected by the coordinator.

3.2 Sample

To reduce self-report bias, deviant behavior was assessed by immediate supervisors. The questionnaire was developed in 1:1 dyads (scale for employees and scale for supervisors) to avoid the effect of Common-method Bias. Respondents were employees and their immediate supervisors who were employed by the Venetian Macao-Resort-Hotel, Wynn Resort Macau, Banyan Tree Macau, MGM Macau, The Grand Coloane Resort, Holiday Inn Macau, Rio Hotel, and the Metropark Hotel Macau.

Of the 500 dyad questionnaires that were completed in the survey, 406 dyads responded, resulting in an 81.2% response rate. Only 375 of the 406 dyads that responded to the survey were retained for analysis. The cases removed from the study were incomplete and lacked a significant number of responses across multiple variables. A total of 183 (48.8%) males and 192 (51.2%) females comprised the sample with ages ranging from 20 to 52 years (M = 32.79; SD = 8.01), and years of education ranged from nine to 20 years (M = 14.00; SD = 3.50). The marital status of the sample included single (n = 271), and married (n = 104). Working hours per week ranged from 30 to 60 hours (M = 45.48; SD= 10.30).

3.3 Measures

The questionnaires were originally constructed in English but were administered in Chinese. We used a standard translation and back-translation procedure to ensure the equivalence of the measures in the Chinese and English language versions of the questionnaire (Brislin, 1980).

3.3.1 Distributive justice

Distributive justice was assessed with five items evaluating the fairness of different work outcomes utilizing Niehoff and Moorman's (1993) scale, and included work schedule, pay level, work load and job responsibilities. The scores of each of the five items were combined into a composite score (Cronbach's alpha=.85).

3.3.2 Procedural justice

We measured procedural justice with six items that also utilized the scale of Niehoff and Moorman (1993), which included mechanisms that insured the gathering of accurate and unbiased information, employee voice, and an appeals process. We averaged responses to the six items to create the procedural justice measure (Cronbach's alpha=.83).

3.3.3 Interactional justice

Interactional Justice was measured by nine items designed to identify how employees felt their needs and explanations were considered in regards to job decisions (Niehoff & Moorman, 1993). The scores of each of the nine items were combined into a composite score (Cronbach's alpha=.81).

3.3.4 Organizational commitment

Organizational commitment was measured using the nine item version of the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ, ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree) that was proposed by Bozeman and Perrewe (2001). The nine-item scale was averaged for an overall score (Cronbach's alpha=.82).

3.3.5 Deviant behavior

Supervisors rated their subordinates' deviant behavior with a 19-item scale developed by Bennett and Robinson (2000). The scale of deviance includes a two-dimensional structure which reflects interpersonal deviance and organizationally directed deviance. The overall score was averaged by these items (Cronbach's alpha=.90).

4. Results

4.1 Descriptive statistics

According to employee attribute data, results of the employee data indicate that the gender ratio was close to 1:1, with a total of 48.8% males and 51.2% females. Respondent ages ranged from 20 to 52 years, and 96.2% of respondents were young and middle-aged, ranging from 20 to 49 years. Respondent education was divided into five sections and indicated that 81.3% of respondents attended senior high school, junior college, or university. The gender, age distribution, and educational status conformed to the conditions of investigated hotels and generally met the expectations of the hospitality industry. Marital status was a relatively complex variable, specifically including single, married, divorced, and widowed. In this study, we only investigated if the respondent had a spouse. Divorced and widowed were classified as single. The results indicated that a total of 72.3% respondents were single, and 27.7% were married. There were eight categories of employee departments that included 14.7% housekeeping, 11.5% concierge, 14.9% front office cashier, 13.1% reception, 11.7% business center, 11.5% F&B, 9.8% transship service, and 12.8% hotel operator. The tenure of employees was divided into six categories; tenure ranging from one to four years (74.4%) made up the largest number of the sample. Most of the employees had only worked with their present supervisor for one year (57.6%), and others reported two years (26.9%).

According to the Macau decree no.24/89/M, employees may not work more than 48 hours per week. The results of this study indicated that the majority of employees worked between 40 and 49 hours, while the total sample averaged 45.48 hours per week.

4.2 Correlation analysis

All variables had acceptable reliabilities, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients higher than .70. As shown, distributive justice was positively correlated with organizational commitment (r=.72, p<.001) but negatively correlated with deviant behavior (r=-.66, p<.001). Procedural justice was positively related to organizational commitment (r=.65, p<.001) but negatively related to deviant behavior (r=-.51, p<.001). Interactional justice was positively correlated with organizational commitment (r=.51, p<.001) but negatively correlated with deviant behavior (r=-.44, p<.001). Furthermore, organizational commitment was negatively related to deviant behavior (r=-.45, p<.001).

In addition, employee education was negatively correlated with organizational commitment (r=-.12, p<.01) and negatively correlated with deviant behavior (r=-.15, p<.01). Employee tenure was positively correlated with deviant behavior (r=.12, p<.01). Employee weekly working hours were negatively correlated with organizational commitment (r=-.11, p<.01) and deviant behavior (r=-.18, p<.001). Supervisor's education was negatively correlated with organizational commitment (r=-.21, p<.01) and deviant behavior (r=-.16, p<.01). Supervisor's marital status was negatively correlated with deviant behavior (r=-.09, p<.05). Length of supervisor employment at present hotel was positively correlated with organizational commitment (r=.19, p<.01) and negatively correlated with deviant behavior (r=-.39, p<.001). Number of employees supervised was positively correlated with organizational commitment (r=.31, p<.001) and negatively correlated with deviant behavior (r=-.26, p<.001) Supervisor's position was positively correlated with organizational commitment (r=.20, p<.01) and negatively correlated with deviant behavior (r=-.17, p<.01). These eight descriptive variables were used as control variables in the regression analysis.

4.3 Model fit analysis

Before testing our hypotheses, we adopted Anderson & Gerbing's (1988) comprehensive, two-step analytical strategy to test the hypothesized model depicted. According to this strategy, the measurement model was first confirmed using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and then we performed SEM based on the measurement model to estimate fit of the hypothesized model to obtained data. The measurement model results indicated a good fit to the data (2 [124] =405.03, p<.001; CFI=.95, NFI=.93, IFI=.95, RMSEA=.075). They provided evidence that further examination of the structural model was justified.

Table 1 Results of CFA for the Measures of Variables Studied[a]

Model	χ^2	df	CFI	NFI	IFI	RMSEA
1. Independence model	5631.31	190				
2. Measurement model	514.68	132	.93	.91	.93	.084
3. Hypothesized model	405.03	124	.95	.93	.95	.075
4. Alternative model 1: Direct path from distributive justice to deviant behavior	422.25	124	.95	.93	.95	.077
5. Alternative model 2: Direct path from procedural justice to deviant behavior	440.29	124	.94	.92	.94	.079
6. Alternative model 3: Direct path from interactional justice to deviant behavior	434.58	124	.95	.94	.95	.077
7. Alternative model 4: Combine distributive justice and procedural justice	453.57	128	.94	.92	.94	.079
8. Alternative model 5: Combine distributive justice and interactional justice	573.41	128	.92	.90	.92	.093
9. Alternative model 6: Combine procedural justice and interactional justice	564.99	128	.92	.90	.92	.091
10. Alternative model 7: Combine distributive justice, procedural justice, and interactional justice	595.75	129	.94	.92	.94	.079
11. Alternative model 8: Combine distributive justice, procedural justice, interactional justice, and organizational commitment	791.51	132	.88	.86	.88	.111

[a] χ^2-values for the measurement and structural models are significant at p<.001.

4.4 Structural Equation Modeling Analysis

Hypothesis 1 stated that distributive justice, procedural justice and interactional justice were all negatively related to deviant behavior. The testing results supported H1a (β=-.21, p<.001), H1b

(β=-.29, p<.001)and H1c (β=-.48, p<.001). Hypothesis 2, which said that distributive justice, procedural justice and interactional justice were all positively related to organizational commitment, was supported (H2a: β=.21, p<.001; H2b: β=.32, p<.001; H2c: β=.43, p<.001).

5. Discussion

A limited number of studies in the hospitality industry examine why the antecedents are related to organizational deviance; many studies have been conducted in different industries (Demir, 2011). As supported by other empirical studies (Chiu & Peng, 2008), this study demonstrated that hotel employee perceptions of distributive justice, procedural justice, and interactional justice in the workplace were negatively related to deviant behavior. Furthermore, the negative effects of interactional justice were stronger on hotel employee deviance than the two other types of justice. Based on the social exchange theory and equality theory, our explanation for the relationships between organizational justice and deviant behavior implies that hotel employees are generally loyal and committed to organizations.

The implication drawn from this study is that hotel managers should focus on increasing the positive influence of organizational justice. Hospitality organizations should concentrate on creating a fair work environment that prevents negative behavior by providing employees with socio-cultural supports and access to information (Ali & Jan, 2012). In a workplace with fair procedures, equiTable outcome distributions, and respectful treatment of employees, employees will experience increased perceptions of justice (Aquino, Galperin, & Bennett, 2004). Therefore, hotels should consider the effects that distributive, procedural, and interactional justice have on employees. In the current organizational environment, it is vital to reinforce positive behavior with rewards and control violations with sanctions. Organizational leaders have a responsibility to utilize rewards and sanctions when necessary. Unfairness and excessive scrutiny perceived by employees will result in aversion. Thus, employees are more likely to take part in aggressive behavior towards their organizations, supervisors, co-workers, and customers, particularly for frontline staff in the service sector.

In addition, perceived fairness would result in more loyal and committed employees. Hotel managers must consider the extent to which their decisions and methods of making decisions influence the commitment of their staff and, in turn, impacts deviant behavior. When employees are committed to the organization, their behaviors are important in playing a key role in outcomes such as higher job satisfaction, decreased turnover intention, and subsequent decreased organizational deviance (Demir, 2011). As a result, organizational policies must emphasize how employees manage their emotions during an interaction with colleagues and managers. It is vital for hospitality organizations seeking long-term success to discourage negative deviant behavior within the workplace, and encourage positive workplace behaviors that contribute to organizational goals. Reevaluating or remodeling an organization's norms, attitudes, and social values are necessary for the survival of organizations in the face of deviant employees (Appelbaum et. al., 2007).

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