

The Review of Work and Family Balance among Employees in Hospitality Industry in Taiwan

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Received: June 12, 2016

Accepted: July 7, 2016

Online Published: July 21, 2016

doi:10.5539/ibr.v9n9p51

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/ibr.v9n9p51>

Abstract

The research evaluated the effectiveness of flextime in achieving and sustaining work-family balance among male and female hospitality workers in Taiwan. Flextime's effectiveness in supporting work-family balance has implications on the achievement of organizational outcomes, particularly employee commitment and turnover intention. The study applied quantitative research design to test three major hypotheses and sub-hypotheses by using evidence obtained from a survey of managers and employees of hospitality firms in Taiwan. The evidence confirmed all the hypotheses. Flextime is effective in achieving and sustaining work-family balance. Work-life balance enhances employee commitment and dissuades turnover intention. Hospitality firms in Taiwan need to consider flextime as a long-term or continuous strategy as well as consider improvements relative to changes in the condition and needs of employees.

Keywords: hospitality industry, workplace flexibility, flextime, work-family balance, organizational outcomes, employee commitment, turnover intention

1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Taiwan, located in East Asia, has a growing hospitality industry. The Taiwan hospitality industry continues to develop (Wu, Hsiao & Tsai, 2008) together with the tourism industry with the focus geared towards attracting and building an international market. A decade ago, the industry does not have enough hospitality establishments to cater to the needs of domestic and international travelers especially within East Asia. The industry addressed this problem by boosting capital investments to build infrastructure. Now, with the focus on building an international market, the hospitality industry faces the challenge of further improving management practices in order to be at par with international standards (Berman, 2010). A step towards this effort is the establishment of the hotel rating system based on criteria including service quality (Su & Sun, 2007). Flextime is the most popular workplace flexibility practice in the global hospitality industry. This is also available to hospitality firms in Taiwan as a numerical flexibility practice targeting the industry's problem with high turnover and limited pool of resources.

1.2 Conceptual Framework of the Study

Existing literature pertinent to the study identified the variables for investigation and determined variable relationships, as shown in the diagram below. The literature provided the foundation of the current study by identifying the variables and variable relationships for investigation in the context of Taiwan's hospitality industry.

Workplace flexibility is a human resource management practice that involves firms developing flexible work options and enabling workers to employ flexibility options to manage responsibilities at work (Voydanoff, 2005). Hospitality firms practice workplace flexibility. The most common form of workplace flexibility is flextime, which involve arrangements on work time (Avery & Zabel, 2001; Robbins, 2009). Flextime has a number of benefits to employees including enabling women to take on higher positions (Ralston, 1990), reduction of role strain (Seib & Muller, 1999), fostering family benefits (Clark, 2001), enhancing family outcomes (Rothbard & Edwards, 2003), supporting harmony between work and life outside of work (Wickramasinghe & Jayabandu, 2007), and allowing time savings (Bussiere & Lewis, 2010). The impact of flextime on perceived sufficiency of time for work and family roles depend on personal

and work factors. Personal factors refer to the range of demographic characteristics, such as gender, age, marital status, parental status, and other conditions that influence the work and life conditions of employees (Rothbard & Edwards, 2003). Work factors pertain to the perception and use of flexibility options and management support of family-friendly practices (Clark, 2001).

Work-family balance is a human resource management issue faced by employees. The role of employers in helping employees achieve work-family balance determines the resolution of this issue. Work-family balance is the employee's capability to manage conflict arising from the demands for time of work and family roles (Clutterback, 2003). A specific concern of employees in balancing work and family roles is having sufficient time (Gropel & Kuhl, 2009). Perceived sufficiency of time to manage work and family roles eases role conflict or stress (Elliot, 2003; Ahmad, 2010, Leaptrott & McDonald, 2010). Family friendly practices that enable employees to have sufficient time or at the least hold the perception of sufficient time for work and family roles ease role conflict, overload or stress. Flextime is a family-friendly practice that helps employees to allocate sufficient time for work and family roles (Bussiere & Lewis, 2010).

1.3 Statement of the Problem

The hospitality industry in Taiwan is developing. The industry faces the challenges of focusing human resource management on employee issues, retaining key employees, and attracting new workers given a limited labor pool. Literature on the global hospitality industry provides the benefits of using workplace flexibility practices, particularly flextime in supporting work-family balance of employees and facilitating organizational outcomes. However, there are limited studies on the relationship of these variables in the context of the hospitality industry in Taiwan. Understanding the relationship of the variables in the context of Taiwan would provide a deeper understanding of the role of facilitating the relationship between flextime, work-family balance, and organizational outcomes in addressing the specific human resource issues in Taiwan's hospitality industry.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The research aim is to evaluate the effectiveness of flextime in achieving and sustaining work-family balance among male and female hospitality workers in Taiwan. How well flextime supports work-family balance has implications on the effectiveness of this flexibility strategy in influencing organizational outcomes, particularly employee commitment and turnover intention. To address this aim, the study investigated the following hypotheses:

H1: There is relationship among flextime, work-family balance, and organizational outcomes.

H1-1: Flextime would be positively related to work-family balance.

H1-2: Work-family balance would be positively related to organizational commitment.

H1-3: Work-family balance would be negatively related to turnover intention.

H1-4: Flextime would be positively related to organizational commitment.

H1-5: Flextime would be negatively related to turnover intention.

H2: There is causal relationship among flextime, work-family balance, and organizational outcomes.

H2-1: Flextime as an antecedent would influence work-family balance.

H2-2: Work-family balance as an antecedent would influence organizational commitment.

H2-3: Work-family balance as an antecedent would influence turnover intention.

H2-4: Flextime as an antecedent would influence organizational commitment.

H2-5: Flextime as an antecedent would influence turnover intention.

H3: Work-family balance would moderate the relationship of flextime with the organizational outcomes of employee commitment and turnover intention.

H3-1: Work-family balance would moderate the relationship between flextime and organizational commitment.

H3-2: Work-family balance would moderate the relationship between flextime and turnover intention.

Limitations, Assumptions, and Design Controls

The collection of quantitative data and statistical analysis to test the hypotheses of the study gave rise to limitations. One is the lack of accounts or descriptions from the respondents to explain their knowledge and experience of the variables relationships. Another is the limitation in collecting data within the context of the phenomenon investigated. Last is the limited room for adjustment when new but vital data emerges in the course of the study. While these are significant considerations, the collection of quantitative data and treatment using statistical analysis satisfactorily

addressed the aim of the study and the testing of hypotheses. Nevertheless, the limitations comprised areas for further study.

The study proceeded with two assumptions. One is the honesty of the participants in answering the survey questionnaire. Explaining the purpose of the study and guaranteeing confidentiality of personal data during the data collection process fosters the honest responses of the research participants. The other is the accuracy of the research instrument. The items included in the survey questionnaire came from the review of literature. Although, the survey instrument was made for the purpose of the study, this found support from literature.

2. Method

2.1 Research Purpose and Problem

The research aims to evaluate the effectiveness of flextime in achieving and sustaining work-family balance among male and female hospitality workers in Taiwan. The extent that flextime ushers work-family balance, support its effectiveness in influencing organizational outcomes, specifically that of employee commitment and turnover intention. Work-family balance offer benefits to male and female employees. Taiwan hospitality industry is developing and the identification of the effectiveness of flextime as a flexibility strategy has implications on the condition of male and female employees and the resulting organizational outcomes.

2.2 Research Design

The research design in investigating the relationship between the variables is quantitative research. The purpose in using quantitative research is to determine relationships and causality. The quantitative method of inquiry entails the counting and measurement of the phenomenon studied to come up with numbers or statistical data (Creswell, 2009; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). This constitutes the appropriate research design because the purpose of the investigation in the current study is to determine the relationship among the three variables flextime, sufficiency of time for work and family life, and the two organizational outcomes. The determination of the relationship among these variables involves the derivation of numerical or statistical data showing the existence of the relationship and describing the nature and extent of the relationship. The quantitative data also indicates the causality among the variables.

The quantitative research as the design of the study has strengths and weaknesses. One of the strengths of the quantitative research is the couching of the problem under investigation into clear and specific terms through the variables (Creswell, 2009). Another of the strength of quantitative study is the achievement of a significant degree of reliability of the data collected and the results by employing measures that support replicable data and results given similar circumstances (Saunders et al., 2009).

One weakness is the limitation of the quantitative study in deriving data within the actual context of the investigation such as conditions and circumstances surrounding the study. While quantitative study can determine the existence of a relationship among variables and describe the nature of the relationship, it does not cover explanations of the context of the relationship (Creswell, 2009). The study addressed this weakness by augmenting numerical primary data with secondary data which provides the context and support explanations for measurable data. Another weakness of the quantitative research is the limitation of the results of the study by the predetermined purpose, achievable through a structured investigation and closed-ended questions (Saunders et al., 2009). Additionally, quantitative research is the limited room for the evolution of the research method and the allowance for new data during the research process (Creswell, 2009).

2.3 Data Requirements

The investigation of the effectiveness of flextime in achieving and sustaining work-family balance among hospitality workers in Taiwan in affecting organizational outcomes required both primary and secondary data. Primary data emerge from an original research purpose. Secondary data come from studies made for a different purpose from the current study and reported in books, journals, papers or reports. Collecting both primary and secondary data fulfilled the purpose of the study as well as addressed the limitation of the quantitative research to measure data by combining secondary and primary data in the current study.

2.4 Population and Sample

The research population comprised of male and female hospitality workers in Taiwan. Collecting data from both male and female hospitality workers is in recognition of the importance of flextime and sufficiency of time for work-family balance to hospitality workers regardless of gender as shown in the literature review (Avery & Zabel, 2001; Clutterbuck, 2003; Elliott, 2003; Tsai, 2005). The hospitality industry in Taiwan comprise of both male and female workers to support the gathering of information from both groups of workers.

The research population in the current study comprised of nearly 264,000 accommodation and food services employees

as of 2009, out of which roughly 106,000 are men and 157,000 are women (Statistical Bureau, 2010). This means that 40.30 percent are males and 59.70 percent are females. This coincides with the expectation that hospitality workers in Taiwan comprise of significant ratio and men and women.

The research sample targeted in the study is 384 respondents computed at the confidence level of 95 percent confidence interval of ± 5 . Setting the sample size calculation at these confidence level and confidence interval ensures significant representation of the population (Ardilly & Tille, 2006). To ensure the achievement of the targeted sample of respondents, the researcher sent out 450 questionnaires with an expected return rate of 90 percent or higher. The sampling method is snowball sampling, which determines key respondents with access or connections to the larger population of the study.

2.5 Data Collection Method

The data collection method for the quantitative research design is survey. As a systematic method, survey involves an organized process directed towards a purpose. In the current study, the purpose of the survey is to gather information from hospitality employees about their experiences of flextime and its relationship with ensuring sufficient time for work-family balance to influence the two organizational outcomes of organizational commitment and turnover intention.

2.6 Data Analysis

Multiple hierarchical regression analysis is the method employed in analyzing quantitative data derived from responses to the survey questionnaire. This analytical method applies to studies involving the investigation of the relationship of a dependent, criterion or response variable to a set of independent variables also called predictor, antecedent or explanatory variables (Osborne, 2008). This analytical method is applicable to the current study because the intention was to determine the relationship flextime with sufficiency of time for work-family balance and the concurrent influence on two determinations of organizational performance given employee characteristics, such as gender, age and family situation, as independent variables. The statistical software SPSS was the tool employed in conducting the multiple hierarchical regression analysis on the quantitative data collected.

2.7 Ethical Issues

The research complied with the policy of the university on ethical research, particularly by paying close attention to informed consent and confidentiality. Participation as a respondent in the study is strictly voluntary and not by force. All participants received an explanation of the purpose of the study and the exact participation requested from them. Respondents also have the opportunity to ask questions from the researcher about the study and their role as respondents. Answering the questionnaire meant that the respondents have given their consent to become participants in the study. De-identification of the survey questionnaire involved not asking for the names of the respondents. Instead, each questionnaire has a unique code as identifier. Confidentiality of the information provided required placing the questionnaires and raw data in a locked cabinet or drawer accessible only to the researcher. Measures used to ensure confidentiality when respondents opted to complete the questionnaire on the spot included having a separate table, using dividers, or having a room exclusively for use of respondents whenever available.

3. Results

The respondents of the study totaled 411 individuals who are employees of the hospitality industry in Taiwan. This number represents a 91.33 percent return rate to meet the 95 percent confidence interval. This supports the significance of the data obtained from the sample in representing the population of hospitality workers in Taiwan.

The descriptive statistics summarized the mean and standard deviation of the ratings made by respondents on five statements on flextime, work-family balance, organizational commitment, and turnover intention. The direction of responses is agreement with the statements on the research variables but with significant dispersal of responses. Organizational commitment has the least dispersed rating followed by work-family balance and then by turnover intention. Ratings of statements on flextime were most dispersed to indicate the highest variance in the perspective towards the variables.

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) determined the relationship of the demographic variables (age, education, employment status, years of employment, annual salary) with flextime, work-family balance, organizational commitment, and turnover intention. The results shows the significant relationship of the five demographic variables with flextime, work-balance, organizational commitment, and turnover intention. Manager or higher positions, longer years of employment and higher annual salary have strongest connection to flextime. The 31-40 age range, graduate education, and manager position have the strongest relationship to work-family balance. The 41-50 age range, graduate education, manager or higher position, 6 or more years or employment, and \$NT 1,000,001-1,500,000 annual salary have the most significant impact on organizational commitment. The 41-50 age groups, post-secondary education, contractual

employment, 1-5 years of employment, and \$NT 500,000 or less annual salary have the strongest impact on turnover intention. These demographic variables can explain the degree of concentration or dispersal in ratings of the statements on flexitime, work-family balance, organizational commitment, and turnover intention.

The independent samples t-test determined the relative means of two groups under sex (male and female), marital status (married and single), having children (no and yes) relative to flexitime, work-family balance, organizational commitment, and turnover intention. The results showed marital status relative to flexitime as having the only significant variance in mean. The mean for the married group is larger than the mean for the singles group. Married status has a stronger positive relationship with flexitime. Married hospitality workers are likely to be older and have more experience in the company to provide them with greater authority to arrange their work time. Moreover, married employees are likely to have more family roles competing with work role to make flexitime a useful or a valuable organizational practice. No significant difference was found for the other groups relative to flexitime. No significant variance in the group means also emerged relative to work-family balance, organizational commitment, and turnover intention.

The hierarchical multiple regression analysis operated in three stages. In the first stage, the correlation analysis, together with descriptive analysis, ANOVA and t-test, established the existence of a significant relationship between flexitime, work-family balance, and organizational outcomes of employee commitment and turnover intention. In the second stage, linear regression confirmed flexitime as an antecedent variable, work-family balance as both independent and dependent variable, and organizational commitment and turnover intention as response variables. The linear regression analysis also indicated the influence of work-family balance on organizational commitment and turnover intention as the strongest among the variable pairs. The third stage of the analysis is the use of hierarchical regression analysis, to test the moderating effect of work-family balance in the link between flexitime and the organizational outcomes of employee commitment and turnover intention.

Table 1. Hierarchical Regression Analysis (H3-1)

	Independent variable	Dependent variable	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Beta	F	T	Sig.
Model 1	Flexitime	Org. comm.**	0.321	.103	.101	.321	46.957	6.853	.000*
Model 2	Flexitime	Org. comm.**	0.529	.280	.276	.170	79.220	3.804	.000*
	Work-family balance					.447		10.005	

* p<0.01

**Organizational commitment

Table 2. Hierarchical Regression Analysis (H3-2)

	Independent variable	Dependent variable	R	R square	Adjusted square	R	Beta	F	T	Sig.
Model 1	Flexitime	Turnover intention	0.293	.086	.083		-.293	38.330	-6.191	0.000*
Model 2	Flexitime	Turnover intention	0.432	.187	.183		-.178	47.033	-3.756	0.000*
	Work-family balance						-.339		-7.145	

* p<0.01

All hypotheses were confirmed.

Table 3. Summary of Hypotheses Test Results

Hypotheses	Hypothesis test used	Hypothesis test result
H1: There is relationship among flextime, work-family balance and organizational outcome.		Confirmed significant relationship
H1-1: Flextime would be positively related to work-family balance.		Confirmed significant positive relationship
H1-2: Work-family balance would be positively related to organizational commitment.	ANOVA, independent samples t-test, correlation analysis (stage 1)	Confirmed significant positive relationship
H1-3: Work-family balance would be negatively related to turnover intention.		Confirmed significant negative relationship
H1-4: Flextime would be positively related to organizational commitment.		Confirmed significant negative relationship
H1-5: Flextime would be negatively related to turnover intention.		Confirmed significant negative relationship
H2: There is causal relationship among flextime, work-family balance and organizational outcome.		
H2-1: Flextime as an antecedent would influence work-family balance.		Confirmed significant positive causal influence
H2-2: Work-family balance as an antecedent would influence organizational commitment.		Confirmed significant positive causal influence
H2-3: Work-family balance as an antecedent would influence turnover intention.	Linear regression analysis (stage 2)	Confirmed significant negative causal influence
H2-4: Flextime as an antecedent would influence organizational commitment.		Confirmed significant positive causal influence
H2-5: Flextime as an antecedent would influence turnover intention.		Confirmed significant negative causal influence
H3: Work-family balance would moderate the relationship between flextime and organizational outcome.		Confirmed moderating role of work-family balance
H3-1: Work-family balance would moderate the relationship between flextime and organizational commitment.	Multiple regression analysis (stage 3)	Confirmed partial moderating role of work-family balance between flextime and employee commitment
H3-2: Work-family balance would moderate the relationship between flextime and turnover intention.		Confirmed partial moderating role of work-family balance between flextime and turnover intention

4. Discussion

The findings address the research problem on the effectiveness of flextime in achieving and sustaining work-family balance among male and female hospitality employees in Taiwan to achieve organizational outcomes by identifying three hypotheses with sub-hypotheses and testing these hypotheses using statistical tools to analyze quantitative survey data.

The actual use of employees of flextime varies depending on the availability of options that apply to them to also vary the outcomes. As such, empirical studies on flextime and its effect on organizational outcomes comprise an assessment of flextime options. The results of the study indicated significant positive perception, especially by married employees likely to have dependent children, which coincides with the results of a previous study. This means that hospitality workers in Taiwan may have flextime options, as expressed through their positive perception of this workplace flexibility strategy. Nevertheless, near average but leaning towards agreement mean values also indicate a wide room for improvement. This is especially so, since many hospitality workers in Taiwan are single and without dependent children. As such, areas for improvement on flextime in hospitality firms in Taiwan could be fitting flextime options with the needs and conditions of married employees with children and providing flextime options for single employees without children. Flextime offers benefits not only to married parents but also to single employees as covered by the concept work-family balance, with the life component pertaining not only to family but also to social life. Developing a range of flextime options for different employee conditions could enhance positive perceptions of flextime and the effect on organizational outcomes.

Acknowledgments

Thanks for the supports from Chinese Innovation Design Management Comity (C. I. D. M. C) for contributing the grants for this research.

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