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Factors of Job Burnout among Chefs in Malaysia

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Abstract

Job burnout in the service industry can bring harmful impact compared to nonservice industries. Chef professions are frequently exposed to negative physical and psychological demand, such as tight time constraint within poor physical working environment. This unfavorable condition can be tiring and may develop towards job burnout. Many factors of job burnout have been widely identified by human resource researchers, however with less focused within the food and beverage industry specifically on Malaysian kitchen workers. The objective of this study is to identify the predictors of job burnout by adopting the job demand resources (JD-R) model. This study adopted desk research and systematic review on previous literature regarding job burnout in service industry. This study found that role conflict, job autonomy, physical work environment and job satisfaction are the factors of job burnout. The output of this study may assist managers on identifying the factors of job burnout that may affect their staff performance. Apart from that, the result may also assist managers to develop strategies to combat job burnout in the workplace.

Keywords: Job Burnout, Hospitality Industry, Hotel, Kitchen Staff, Chef

Introduction

It is undeniable that hospitality industry is a highly stressful industry (Kim et al., 2007; Wildes, 2007). These closely related to the nature of its work as it is a labor intensive and involve frequent rotations, work overload and anti-social working hours (Anderson et al., 2002; Chiang et al., 2010). Furthermore, working in hospitality industry also is characterized by its requisition on close cooperation between departmental and personnel, time pressure and elastic demand. Hence, working in hospitality industry can be tiring for employees who must deal with a demanding work tempo, complex procedures and intensive interpersonal relations at every step of their working day (Birdir & Tepeci, 2003).

Past research has reported the job stress experienced by chefs and within the hospitality industry (Papadoupoulou- Bayliss et al., 2001; Murray-Gibbons & Gibbons, 2007; Kim et al., 2007 & Wildes, 2007). These has been supported by current research that suggests chefs often work in stressful, unstable, highly bureaucratic and unpleasant work environment (Rowley & Purcell, 2001) that might have exposed chefs to the job stress. Researcher has visualized typical work as chefs that sacrifice their lives by spending most of their time into their professions instead of their family (Borchgrevink et al., 2001). Working as a chef required certain and specific skills, passion and knowledge. However, in conjunction to high demand in daily occupational activities, they are frequently exposed to negative physical and psychological demands such as tight time constraints and high levels of perfectionism within a hot and cramped working environment that leads to occupational stress among chef (Murray-Gibbons & Gibbons, 2007). One of the adverse effects of job stress is job burnout. Job burnout can be defined as a 'syndrome of emotional exhaustion and cynicism that occurs frequently among individuals who do people-work of some kind (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). According to Maslach and Leiter (2005), job burnout emerged when there is significant disharmony between nature of person's job and the nature of the person doing the job.

Pertaining to the job burnout, over last 20 years, increasing evidence has documented the occupational stress experienced by chefs within the hospitality industry compared to other occupational groups (Murray-Gibbons & Gibbons, 2007). This phenomenon related to the long history of retention in hospitality industry (Hinkin & Tracey., 2000; Pizam & Thornburg, 2000) and seriously felt in cooking profession (National Restaurant Association, 2004). Various studies have been carried out on this matter and the findings demonstrated a few factors contribute to this situation including length of working hours, pressure of work and poor job design. In addition, Zellars et al. (2000) also stated that high level of burnout usually leads to employee dissatisfaction and high turnover rates. This finding was also supported by Prattern (2003) in his study among British culinary employees discovered a variety of problems including cramped work conditions, long working hours, low wages and lack of training were major reasons for turnover. If the burnout of individuals is less concern, it would result in a loss of productivity or quality of their work, as well as reductions in morale, psychological or physical health. Meanwhile, for the organization, such individual present a serious cost- issue in terms of absenteeism or turnover, productivity losses or healthcare expenses (Gill et al., 2006; Gillespie et al., 2001).

The Malaysian Hotel industry shows a slight of growth after strongly affected by the worldwide economic recession in 2009. According to Economic Census (2011) in Accommodation Service report in (2012), direct employment in the hotel industry shows an increment by 5.6 percent from 104,545 in 2009 to 110, 535 in 2010. This indicates that serious precaution must be taken to minimize the exposure of hospitality industries employees to job burnout.

A number of approaches have been made in previous study focusing on managerial and organizational aspect within the organization to gain better understanding on job burnout (Shen & Huang, 2012; Kang et al., 2010; Neill & Xiao, 2010; Dasgupta, 2012). However, few studies have

directly investigated the effect of physical work environment on psychological aspect even though a few studies did mention that poor working condition in kitchen has been linked to stress and burnout among chef (Chuang & Lei, 2011; Murray-Gibbons & Gibbons, 2007). Apart from that, job characteristic within hotel kitchen staff in Malaysia also remain less focused. As for these reasons, this study will review the role of role conflict, job autonomy, physical work environment and job dissatisfaction as predictors on influencing job burnout among hotel kitchen staff in Malaysia.

Reviewing the Literature

This study attempts to review the existing literature on job burnout and its predictors in particular role conflict, job autonomy, physical work environment and job dissatisfaction in hospitality industry. Job Demand Resources (JD-R) model will be referred throughout the discussion.

Job Burnout

This paper is based on conceptual work from a collection of books and published journals within the hospitality industry. The job burnout was first discovered by Maslach and Jackson in 1981 by developing the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI). Together, Maslach and Jackson categorized burnout into three dimensions known as emotional exhaustion (EE), depersonalization (DP) and personal accomplishment (PA). Later on, Maslach and Leiter in 1988 has initially explored job burnout using qualitative approach and significantly develop the process model specifying the developmental sequence of the phenomenon. EE is interpreted and characterized by lack of energy and feeling of emotional resources is used up due to excessive psychological and physical demands which bring tension and frustration to workers as they are unable to perform their job and gradually lose their usual sense of responsibility towards clients and customers. DP characterized by negative and inappropriate attitudes towards customers, loss of idealism and withdrawal. PA characterized by a loss of efficiency and capability, low morale and inability to cope and this syndrome is the tendency to evaluate one negatively, particularly with regards to one's work with clients (Murray-Gibbons & Gibbons, 2007).

Previous studies have conceptualized job characteristics as the degree of variety, autonomy, task identity, task significance and feedback that employee perceive in their job in organization (Öztürk et al., 2014). Variety indicates whether a job requires different activities such as the use of different skills in the workplace, task identity indicates whether the job requires the completion of the entire work from beginning to the end, task significance means the degree to which job affects the lives or work of other people, autonomy is the degree to which employees can have substantial freedom, independence and discretion in scheduling the work and determining the procedures during work while feedback can be from the job itself or agents; employee can get information about the effectiveness of their performance while carrying out jobs and from supervisors or co-workers. Job characteristics can be classified into two: job demand and job resources (Demerouti et al., 2001).

Later on, theory of Job-Demand-Resources (JD-R) is the widely known latest theory and model leads to employee burnout process (Demerouti et al., 2001). This model has classified job burnout antecedent into two: job demand and job resources, known as job characteristics. In general, job

demands lead to employee burnout by requiring substantial physical and or psychological efforts. It is not necessarily negative but can turn out to be job stressors when meeting those demands requires high effort from each employee (Meijman & Mulder, 1998). Job demand refers to that physical, psychological, social or organizational aspect of the job that requires sustained physical and or psychological cost. Furthermore, job demand can also be interpreted as physical, social or organizational aspects of the job that require sustained physical or mental effort and are therefore associated with certain physiological and psychological cost (Demerouti et al., 2001)- role conflict can be classified as job demand (Kim et al., 2007). Meanwhile, job resources refer to those physical, psychological, social or organizational aspects of the job that are either or functional in achieving work goals, reduce job demand and development. Examples of job resources such as social support, autonomy, control coping, performance feedback, organizational support and participation in decision making. All of these assist in reducing job demands, thereby helping to decrease the feeling of job burnout. JD-R model provides useful guidelines to develop relationship between physical work environment and job characteristics towards job burnout among hotel kitchen staff in Malaysia. In addition, paucity of empirical research using JD-R model to study job burnout in hospitality industry particularly chef profession (Karatepe, 2009) seeking further investigation.

Factors of Job Burnout

Role Conflict

It has been reported that job demands have been positively associated with emotional exhaustion and depersonalization but negatively correlated to personal accomplishment. According to Karatepe and Uludag (2008), role conflict occurs when individual have incompatible job demands from various parties such as customers, co-workers, and managers and find that they are incapable of satisfying all job demands at the same time. In chef profession, Mcfadden (2013) reported that chefs who climb the ladder for career development are responsible for many duties including menu planning, budgets, managing people and compliance hence can be a good example of inconsistent demand. Furthermore, according to Karatepe and Uludag (2008), individuals who are confronted with role conflict experienced emotional exhaustion. This finding also supported by Lee and Ashforth (1996), in their meta-analytic study, reported that role conflict was significantly and positively correlated with emotional exhaustion. When employees are prone to high levels of EE, DP and PA, their job performance starts to erode because employee is no longer possess adequate resources to cope with difficulties that stem from the three components of burnout. Hsieh and Hsieh (2003) found evidence in the manufacturing and service sectors of Taiwan that the previously mentioned role stressors had significant positive effects on employees' emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. They further indicated that role ambiguity was significantly and positively associated with diminished personal accomplishment whereas role conflict was not. Later, Piko (2006) also reported similar findings regarding the impact of role conflict on the three dimension of burnout for a sample of healthcare employees. Karatepe and Uludag (2008) in their study within hospitality industry using a sample of frontline hotel employees in Northern Cyprus has found that two major job demands, role conflict and ambiguity exacerbate frontline EE and DP. The results reported are constant with those of Babacus et al., (1999), Hsieh and Hsieh (2003) and Lee and Ashforth (1996). Based on aforementioned literature, the following hypotheses are proposed.

H₁ Role conflict will significantly influence job burnout

Job Autonomy

Job autonomy defined as the degree of control a worker has over their own immediate scheduling and tasks (Lieu et al., 2005). Among hotel and restaurant work environment, problems due to autonomy comprising lack of control in and over work, no time for breaks and vagueness in finishing work time (European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, 2008). The relationship between perceived job autonomy and work's psychological outcome were extensively discussed in literature (Kim & Stoner, 2008). Research has demonstrated that perceived organizational support and job autonomy are among the two critical job resources that mitigate burnout (Babakus et al., 1999; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004 and Ito and Brotheridge, 2003). For instance, Maslach et al. (2001) have concluded that lack of job autonomy can reduce personal accomplishment. Furthermore, research showed that burnout is triggered by individual perceptions of lack of control over their job (Glass & Mcknight, 1996) and lack of involvement in decision making (Posing & Kickul, 2003). Based on literature review discussed, the following hypotheses were proposed.

H₂ Job autonomy will significantly reduce job burnout

Physical Work Environment

Physical work environment can be defined as physical characteristics surrounding employees within the work environment including noise, lighting and ventilation (Xanthopoulou et al., 2007a). Murray-Gibbons and Gibbons (2007) stated that stressed work environment in terms of physical conditions such as a crowded, hot and noisy environment produced aggressive behavior among chef and this leads to high levels of pressure- decisions to leave the profession. Prattern (2003) described a variety of problems among British culinary employee's experience and found one of the major reasons for stress that leads to turnover is cramped work conditions. Physical environment in which people work affects both job performance and job satisfaction (Thayer et al., 2010; Clements-Croome, 2000). Current research suggests that chefs often work in stressful, unstable, highly bureaucratic and unpleasant work environments (Newsham et al., 2004). According to Visher (2007), the concepts of workplace environmental comfort links to psychological aspects of workers environmental likes or dislikes with the outcome measures such as improved task performance as well as with organizational productivity. Even though physical work condition is curtailing in causing stress, little theoretical work in literature has been done regarding working conditions and mental health (Liena- Noval, 2009) in particular hotel kitchen staff. Pertaining to the literature review discussed, the following hypotheses are proposed.

H₃ Physical work environment significantly influence job burnout

Job Dissatisfaction

In servicing industry, it was clearly define by researchers that dissatisfaction among staff is the disconfirmation of service expectation cause by service failure and later on causing consumer complaint (Ndubisi & Tam, 2005). As jobs in hospitality industry have been considered 'dull, routine,

low skilled and low status' (Kusluvan et al., 2010), this characteristic heading to high dissatisfaction among employees. In addition, employees in hospitality industry tend to disguise their emotions in the workplace due to their nature of work to be polite at all time, experienced burnout and dissatisfied with their jobs (Karatepe & Aleshinloye, 2009). These obnoxious conditions biologically drove a person to search for mechanism in order to reduce dissatisfaction. Consequently, employee's commitment will deplete and causing them to turnover from organization either physically or mentally (Pathak, 2012). Several employees prefer to find another job; somehow several choose to stay which ended for employers to bare the low performance work of staff. A common cause of job dissatisfaction is positively correlates with employee burnout (Jamal, 1990). Job dissatisfaction has often been construed as significant factor in the development of stress and burnout (Happell et al., 2003; Pines & Keinan, 2005). Furthermore, Acker's (1999) study, which was conducted among 128 social workers and which demonstrated moderate associations between job satisfaction and the EE and DP dimensions of burnout, but none between job satisfaction and the PA dimension. Hence, based on the literature above, we posit the following hypothesis.

H₄ Job dissatisfaction significantly influence job burnout

Conceptual Framework

Based on the above findings, a conceptual framework was developed as per Figure 1. The conceptual framework indicates the predictors of job burnout which includes Role conflict, Job autonomy, Physical work environment and Job dissatisfaction.

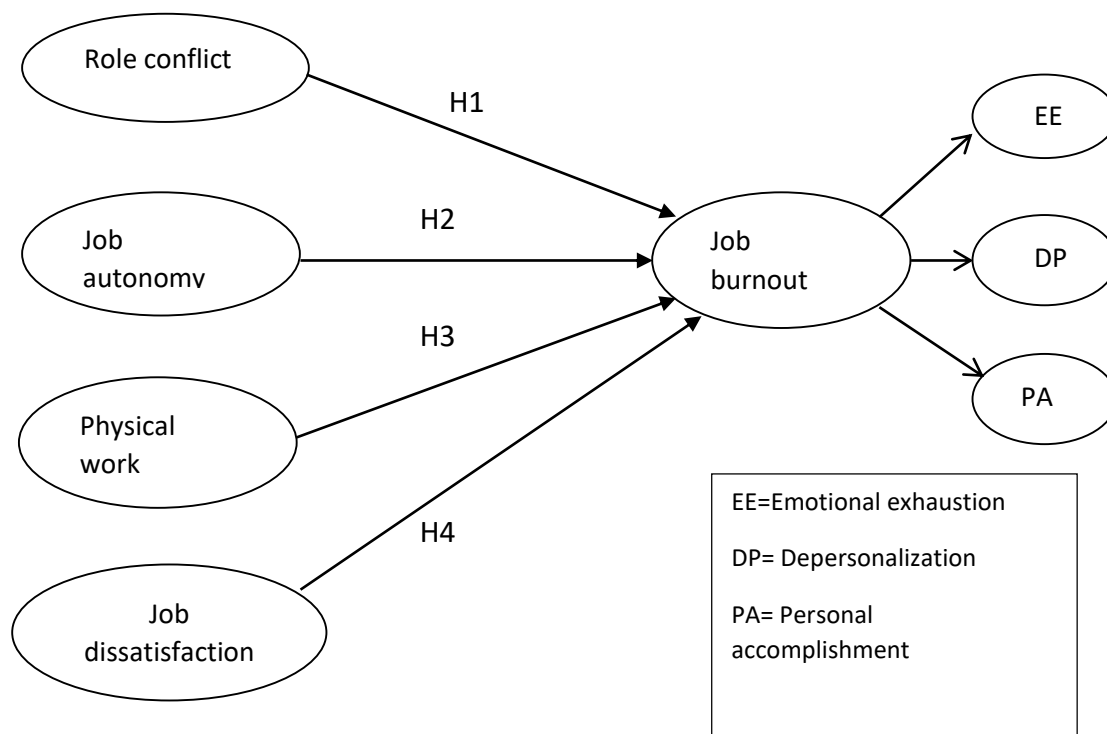


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of antecedents towards job burnout.

Research Design and Sampling Procedure

This study will apply survey design where chefs at all level in hotel's kitchen will be given a set of questionnaire to be answer using self-completion technique. Selangor will be the sampling location of the study by considering Kuala Lumpur as a capital city of Malaysia with abundance numbers of four and five star hotels.

The sampling size will be determined using G-power with alpha of 0.05. Furthermore, this study will apply snowball sampling. In this sampling design, researcher selects one executive chef as the head of the kitchen from four or five star hotels. The executive chef will be the key person to distribute the questionnaire to other chefs. Prior to distribution, the exec chef will be given written guideline and explanation by researcher during the handover of the questionnaire. After obtaining data from the first executive chef, the researcher asks him to locate his friends who possess the same characteristics. The second executive will also assist the researcher to locate the next respondent. Later on, the proposed theoretical framework will be test using Structural Equation Model (SEM). Hence, to the data will be analyze using Smart PLS 3.2.1 version.

Instrumentations

The instrument consists of five parts. All of the items were adapted from sources stated in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1 Propose Items for factors on job burnout

Predictors	Items (adapted)	Sources
Role conflict (6 items)	<p>I receive an assignment without adequate information to execute it</p> <p>I receive an assignment without enough manpower to complete it.</p> <p>I do things that can be accepted by one person but not others.</p> <p>I work with two or more groups who operate differently.</p> <p>I receive incompatible requests from two or more people.</p> <p>I have to do things that should be done differently.</p>	Karatepe and Uludag (2008)
Job autonomy (5 items)	<p>I am able to choose the way to go about my job.</p> <p>I am able to modify what my job objectives are.</p> <p>My job limits me to do another job.</p> <p>I have no control over the sequencing of my work activities.</p>	Price (2001)

	I do not have any control over time at which I stop working for the day.	
Physical work environment (8 items)	<p>Temperature in my workspace.</p> <p>Air quality in my workspace.</p> <p>Noise level in my workspace.</p> <p>Amount of light in my workspace.</p> <p>Distribution of light in my workspace.</p> <p>Building overall (e.g.: access and exit, location of stair, toilet, etc.)</p> <p>Workspace cleanliness at each start of the day.</p> <p>Equipment and tools maintenance.</p>	Thayer et al., (2010) and Young and Corsun (2010).
Job dissatisfaction (5 items)	<p>I feel fairly-well satisfied with my present job.</p> <p>I definitely like my work.</p> <p>My job is pretty interesting.</p> <p>I find real enjoyment in my work.</p> <p>Most days I am enthusiastic about my work.</p>	Kim et al., (2005)
Job burnout- Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) used widely especially in service sector to measure three dimension of burnout consisting 22 items	<p><i>Emotional exhaustion</i></p> <p>I feel emotionally drained from my work.</p> <p>I feel used up at the end of the workday.</p> <p>I feel fatigued when i get up in the morning and have to face another day on the job.</p> <p>Working with people all day is really emotionally strain for me.</p> <p>I feel burned out from my work.</p> <p>I feel frustrated with my job.</p> <p>I'm working too hard in my job.</p> <p>Working with people directly puts too much stress on me.</p> <p>I feel like I'm at the end of the rope.</p> <p><i>Depersonalization</i></p> <p>I treat some co-workers as if they were impersonal 'objects'.</p> <p>I've become more callous toward people since I took this job.</p> <p>I worry that this job is hardening me emotionally.</p> <p>I don't really care what happens to some co-workers.</p>	Lammers et al., (2013).

	<p>I think co-workers are blaming me for some of their problems.</p> <p><i>Personal accomplishment</i></p> <p>I can easily understand how co-workers feel about things.</p> <p>I deal very effectively with co-worker's problems.</p> <p>I can positively influence my colleague through my work.</p> <p>I feel very energetic.</p> <p>I can easily create a relaxed atmosphere with co-workers.</p> <p>I feel exhilarated after working closely with co-workers.</p> <p>I have accomplished many worthwhile things in this job.</p> <p>In my work, I deal with emotional problems very calmly.</p>	
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Conclusions

Based on literature review, revealed that empirical research on predictors towards job burnout among hotel kitchen staff remains unexplored. Therefore, empirical study need to be carried out based on the conceptual framework proposed. The finding will provide information on work physical environment and work environment that can contribute to stress condition among hotel kitchen staff and seeking improvement at managerial side. The result may also capable on helping HR department to forecast job burnout as well as factors related to early manifestation of it hence appropriate strategies can be developed to combat job burnout and enhance employee and organization wellness.

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