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The Influence of Family-friendly Policy on Employee Engagement: A Case Study of the Hotel Industry in Southern Thailand

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Abstract

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The hotel industry is known for the problem of high employee turnover. This problem seems to increase year by year with technology advancement that has placed greater demands on employees and created a thin line between work and family time. This has led to employees trying to balance between work and family responsibilities. Therefore, (FFPs) on employee Thailand. The study hotels in Southern hereafter,

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self-administered questionnaires were developed and distributed to full-time employees who are currently working at the operational level. Three factors of FFPs were identified in the study namely: work flexible policy, leave policy, and dependent care policy. Multiple employee engagement. Results revealed that FFPs positively influence employee engagement in the hotel industry. Out of the three factors of FFPs, the strongest factor that influences employee engagement is work flexibility policy. Therefore, organizations should be aware

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Keywords: Family-friendly policy (FFPS), Employee engagement, Hotel industry

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Introduction

One of the most critical management issues in the hospitality industry is retaining talented employees (Walsh & Taylor, 2007). Employee turnover is the key HR issue
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turnover rate are not publicly available, the high turnover rate is still widely recognized (Yuwanond, 2013). This number tends to constantly increase year by year. It becomes costly for organizations in various aspects, including direct and indirect costs, such as reduced productivity, and lower employee morale (Mobley, 1982). Such high rate of turnover does not only affect employee morale and productivity negatively, but it also causes an indirect revenue reduction and fall in profitability of the organization.

In order to reduce employees' turnover intention and to increase their productivity, the strategy called employee engagement is applied into human resource management (Leiter & Bakker, 2010). Various past literature, conducted by researchers and practitioners, has completely agreed that employee engagement is extremely beneficial for both employees and organizations in numerous perspectives. Slatten and Mehmetoglu (2011) pointed out that engaged employees can enhance firm's competitive advantage and it is associated with higher revenue growth, which is normally above the industry average (Coffman & Gonzalez-Molina, 2011). In this case, employee engagement is undoubtedly beneficial for businesses.

In terms of employees' needs, a recent dynamic change of the workforce, including a higher number of dual-career couples and working mothers who have young children as their dependents, has lifted the likelihood of increasing household roles and responsibilities of both male and female employees (Allen, 2001). Nowadays, the work-family conflict has been a serious challenge in many countries (Lai-ching & Kam-wah, 2012). Moreover, in the broader picture, the proportion of female employees has also increased (Poelmans, Chinchilla, & Cardona, 2003); thus, there are needs of balancing between work and life roles (Allen, 2001). This event causes the adoption of family-friendly policies (FFPs) in organization to become a vital issue (Moon & Roh, 2010). Although the past literature has provided evidence that FFPs have an impact towards several positive factors, a limitation of literature about FFPs and employee engagement was found, especially in the service industry where women are majority of employees. Moreover, most of the relevant literatures were conducted in a Western context. Due to the importance of employees in hospitality industry's point of view, and an increasing need of FFPs from employees' perspective, it is critical for hospitality businesses to examine whether these policies influence their employee engagement since, as

mentioned above, employees are their vital resources. Therefore, this study examined the influence of FFPs on employee engagement with a focus on large-sized hotels. Large-sized hotel is appropriate for this study because they often have a clear structure of HR policies than the medium and small-sized hotels. Thus the study started by surveying the current situation of FFPs in large-sized hotels and thereafter examined the impact of FFPs on employee engagement.

Purpose

The research studies the influence of FFPs on employee engagement. This research on influence of FFPs on employee engagement was therefore conducted in the hospitality industry which is one of the fastest growing industries in the world and in Thailand with increasing number of tourists each year. The hospitality industry, particularly hotels also battle with high employee turnover which reduces employees' morale and increases costs for employers.

The benefit of this study

The results of this study can benefit both practitioners and researchers. First, hotels can rely on the results of this study to effectively plan their FFPs to better serve their employees' need. Additionally, once employees are aware of the importance of FFPs which in turn leads them to feel engaged with their organization, employees are less likely to quit. Second, this study examined the current FFPs which large-sized hotels in Thailand provided to their employees, and its impact toward employee engagement. Thus, the study contributed to the literature about FFPs in Thailand by providing empirical results for further use in future studies.

Literature Review

Family-friendly Policies

There is no single and well-accepted definition of FFPs. It is sometimes referred to as employee-friendly policy or work-family practice. In general, it is the policy that supports employees who face the issue of balancing growing demands of work and family in the current dynamic environment. Poelmans, Chinchilla, and Cardona (2003) claimed that the adoption level of FFPs is the result from three factors which are sizes of the organization, the proportion of female employees, and the tightness of labor market. There are evidences stating that FFPs has positive impact on several desirable factors such as organizational commitment and job retention (Grover & Crooker, 1995), reduced turnover intention (Bae & Goodman, 2014), productivity (Bashir & Ramay, 2008), well-being (Voydanoff, 2005), and job satisfaction (Sak, 2006).

Components of Family-Friendly Policy

Overall, the sets of FFPs are altered by studies as there is no universally accepted set of family policies (Bae & Goodman, 2014). According to Cayer (2003), FFPs consist of flexible work, dependent care, employee assistance, legal assistance, and others. In this study, it only firstly focuses on policies that fall within three main categories that represent the most common definition of FFPs which are 1) dependent care benefits 2) leave benefits and 3) work flexibility (Schwartz, 1994). All three components were then confirmed by the in-depth interviews with the HR manager in this study that there were components of FFPs the organizations currently provide to employees. All three components are explained in the following section.

1. Dependent Care Benefits

The dependent care benefits include all benefits provided by organizations to help employees in terms of the responsibilities for their dependent care. However, this benefit is not limited to only employees' children, but also their dependent relatives, by which includes older parents (Schwartz, 1994). This set of policies provides support in various forms to help members of the organization to work without being distracted by the concern for the absence of dependents (Glass & Estes, 1997).

Generally, dependent care benefits is considered as one of the most important components of FFPs by countries across the world (Schwartz, 1994). For the sub-components of dependent care benefits, it varies by organizations. It can range from on-site/near-site center for children, elder care resource, childcare care resource and referral, to vouchers, dependent care assistance plans, emergency program, and subsidized childcare costs. This type of benefit has been studied and found that it mostly associates with on turnover intention, yet the results are different. Apart from a turnover rate, it is also studied with other factors, such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

2. Leave Benefits

Leave benefits are the benefits that allow employees to take time off from work for various reasons. According to Leave Benefits (2017), the payment (whether paid, unpaid, or partially paid) relies on an agreement between the employer and employees. More specifically, there are three main leave benefits provided by the Labor Protection Act in Thailand which are annual leave, sick leave, and maternity leave (Basic Law: Labor Protection, 2017). Because of increasing demand of leave policies, many countries have started to apply this benefit into their formal FFPs. Leave benefits have been studied and the result showed that it had a positive impact on turnover intention and work-family conflict yet none on organizational commitment (Bolzendahl & Olafsdottir, 2008).

3. Work Flexibility

According to Schwartz (1994), the work flexibility allows employees partially control in organizing their work schedules. Generally, there are two fundamental concepts of this benefit which are restructuring and reducing time. Likewise, work flexibility is different from organization to organization. Work flexibility is demonstrated in different policies like part-time work, flextime, flexplace, job-sharing, and telework. Regarding past studies of work flexibility and other variables, the result is mixed. Wang, Lawler, and Shi (2011) revealed that work flexibility-related FFPs is positively associated with organizational commitment. However, the other research stated that there was no sign of significant effects of work-flexibility policy on either organizational commitment or work-family conflict (Wang & Walumbwa, 2007).

Employee Engagement

Employee engagement is defined as “the unique harnessing of organization members’ selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances” (Kahn, 1990, p.694). To extent of its impact, employee engagement has great influence on performance and productivity of employees. According to Leiter and Bakker (2010), employees who have a strong sense of employee engagement usually perform the assigned tasks beyond their roles. Along with great performance, fully engaged employees also show strong effort in their work by which the effort results in the sense of enjoyment, not the obligation (Bakker, Schaufeli, Leiter, & Taris, 2008). In other words, employees are driven with enthusiasm not the forcing pressure by a supervisor employer or organization.

Literature in the past indicated that employee engagement shows positive impacts on following variables; career satisfaction (Koyuncu, Burker, & Fiksenbaum, 2006), job satisfaction (Macey & Schneider, 2008), burnout and other health issues (Hallberg & Schaufeli, 2006),and organizational commitment and organizational loyalty (Salanova, Agut, & Peiro, 2005).

Social Exchange Theory (SET)

The linkage between FFPs and employee engagement can be explained theoretically with the SET. Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005) explained that a social exchange relationship occurs when an employer takes care of their members for their effective work behaviors and positive attitudes. There are broad definitions of social exchange theory. It rationalizes by the framework that the support of both social and material exchanges is important for human interactions. Gullekson, Griffeth, Vancouver,

Kovner, and Cohen (2014) used this to describe the incentives used to encourage employees of the organization. Two possible reasons making employees positively engage with organizations are the perception of benefits as evidence of well-being caring and perception of treatment as the norm of reciprocity. However, social exchange theory can be disadvantageous when presenting the poor environment among employees in the organization. It may result in anger, frustration, disappointment (Morrison & Robinson, 1997), lowered emotional bond, and organizational commitment (Robinson, 1996)

However, Richman, Civian, Shannon, Jeffrey Hill, and Brennan (2008) and A Better Balance (2013) have claimed that perceived supportive work-life policies, also known to be FFPs are related to greater employee engagement. Therefore, it is assumed that FFPs would show a positive effect on employee engagement like it does to other mentioned variables. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed;

H₁: Family-friendly policy positively influences employee engagement in the Thai hotel industry.

H1a: Dependent care policy positively influences employee engagement in the Thai hotel industry

H1b: Leave policy positively influences employee engagement in the Thai hotel industry

H1c: Work flexibility policy positively influences employee engagement in the Thai hotel industry

Research Method

It has been suggested that researchers use qualitative and quantitative data together in order to gain a thorough understanding of research questions (Creswell, 2014). Thus, this study used both qualitative and quantitative method known as a mixed method to gain a comprehensive understanding of FFPs. In-depth interviews of HR managers from 26 participating large-sized hotels was used to develop a FFPs questionnaire for quantitative study. The interviews focused on the current situations of FFPs each hotel provided to employees. The results of the interviews were analyzed and used as items in the questionnaire to collect data from employees. Employee engagement scale retrieved from the work of Schaufeli and Bakker (2003). The number of full-time employees at the operational level from 26 participating large- sized hotels is approximately 4000 people. The sample size for hotel employees was determined based on Krejcie and Morgan (1970)'s table. Thus, the minimum sample size required for this study is 384 full-time employees. To be certain that the determined sample size would be reached, the study decided to distribute 600 questionnaires to all 26 participating hotels and 506 questionnaires were returned but 18 questionnaires were

discarded due to incomplete information. Therefore, 488 completed questionnaires, exceeding the determined sample size, were analyzed for this study. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was used to identify how many dimensions of construct are explained by a set of items in a scale. The Cronbach's alpha test of reliability showed that all the variables are reliable. The Cronbach's alpha for dependent care policy, leave policy, work flexibility policy, and employee engagement were 0.75, 0.83, 0.86, and 0.89 respectively. After testing the linearity, normality, no multicollinearity, and homoscedasticity assumptions of multiple regressions, regression analysis was performed to examine the impact of FFPs on employee engagement.

Data analysis and results

Majority of the respondents are female (74%) while 26% of the respondents are male. In terms of level of education, majority (64.5%) of the respondents have bachelor's degree followed by 27.7% of respondents which have high vocational certificate. 32.6% of the respondents are married with dependents while 31.6% of the respondents are single. Almost half of the respondents have work experience between 3 – 5 years (46.9%). Most of the respondents (69.3%) earn monthly salary between 10,000 – 19,999 baht. The minimum working hours per week of the respondents is 48 hours while the maximum working hours is 62 hours. The youngest of the respondents is 22 years old while the oldest is 51 years old.

EFA which is a process used to validate a scale and to determine which items belong together as part of the same scale measuring the same factor or construct (Fabrigar & Wegener, 2011) was conducted. The items of the FFPs questionnaire loaded up on three factors namely work flexibility policy, leave policy, and dependent care policy. Every item of the questionnaire that loaded on more than one factor or have low communality were deleted from the questionnaire. As a result, work flexibility policy scale has 6 items, leave policy has 6 items and dependent care policy has 3 items. The items of employee engagement fully loaded up on one factor with only one item deleted due to low communality, making the scale has 7 items. The variables were also tested for multicollinearity with the VIF and Tolerance test and variables satisfied the requirement for no multicollinearity. To understand the relationship between FFPs and employee engagement, the results of both the Pearson correlation and multiple regression analysis are presented in the tables below.

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Table 1

Pearson Correlation of Measured Variables

Variables	1	2	3	4
1. Work flexibility policy	1			
	-0.63***			
	-0.22***			
4. Employee engagement	0.14**			

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Note: *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

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Table 1
Pearson Correlation of Measured Variables (continued)

Work flexibility policy	0.55	0.15	1.22	0.42	0.57
Leave policy					
Dependent care policy	0.04*	1.90	1.47	0.41	
R ²	0.08				
F	14.61***				

* $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.001$.

To investigate the influence of the FFPs on employee engagement in large-sized hotels multiple regression analysis was conducted with work flexibility policy, leave policy, and dependent care policy as the independent variables and employee engagement as the dependent variable. The result revealed that all the independent variables positively influence employee engagement. The strongest predictor of employee engagement in the model is work flexibility policy with regression coefficient of $\beta = 0.35$ ($p < 0.001$). Leave policy predicts employee engagement at $\beta = 0.33$ ($p < 0.001$). The least predictor of employee engagement in the model is dependent care policy at $\beta = 0.04$ ($p < 0.05$).

Conclusion and Discussion

Using a mixed method, the research has been able to identify three factors of FFPs and to examine the influence of FFPs on employee engagement. The result from

the multiple regression analysis revealed that work flexibility policy has a significant positive influence on the level of employee engagement. This is consistent with the result of Richman et al. (2008) conducted in the US on employees of large-sized organizations. They found that perceived flexibility, formal workplace flexibility, and occasional workplace flexibility lead to improvement in the level of employee engagement and longer retention. This is because when employees have the partial control on their work schedule, it gives them a level of autonomy which is one of the job characteristics that can motivate employees (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). Work flexibility will also allow employees to plan other aspects of their life better and reduce work-life or work-family conflict.

Leave policy has a positive and significant influence on employee engagement. Whereas Mulvaney (2014) found out that the effect of leave programs or time off was not a significant influencer of positive employee attitude like employee's job self-efficacy, this study found that leave policy is a significant predictor of employee engagement. This is because leave policies allow the employees to take time off work and can reduced work stress and can increase productivity of employees (Kim, 2001). There are different types of leave, but they all produce a positive attitude in employees. For instance, Glass and Riley (1998) found that maternity leave policies had a positive impact on employee turnover intention. Employees are more likely to be happy and engaged in a job that provides adequate leave time than the job that does not provide enough leave time. The improved leave policy is seen when the employers not only provide the statutory leave but others like family leave (Brady & Elms, 2005).

The dependent care policy has a positive and significant influence on employee engagement. This is consistent with the findings of Lee and Hong (2011) who found that childcare subsidies have significant effect on job retention. While the focus for Lee and Hong (2011) is on an aspect of dependent care policy which is childcare subsidies, this present study is inclusive of other aspect of dependent care policy like the elder care. The result suggested that when employers provide various dependent care policies it leads to higher level of employee engagement. This is because employees are happy with the work that assist them to lessen their role in taking care of their dependent or makes the role easier while still doing their job in the organization. Employees will be more committed to the organization based on social exchange theory and this will lead to several other positive attitudes from the employees towards their job. In conclusion, all the three aspects of FFPs have significant effect on employee engagement and the hypothesis is accepted.

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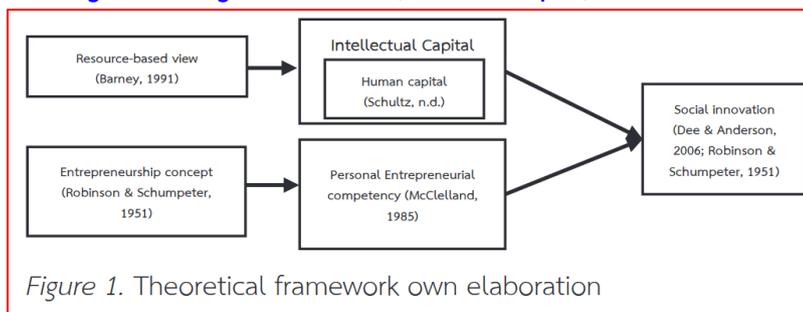
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วัตถุประสงค์งานวิจัย

1. เพื่อเปรียบเทียบความตั้งใจในการซื้อบริการห้องพักโรงแรมโดยจองผ่านทางเว็บไซต์ธุรกิจตัวแทนการท่องเที่ยวจำแนกตามปัจจัยทางประชากรศาสตร์
2. เพื่อศึกษาความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างปัจจัยด้านคุณภาพเว็บไซต์กับความตั้งใจซื้อบริการของห้องพักโรงแรมโดยจองผ่านทางเว็บไซต์ธุรกิจตัวแทนการท่องเที่ยว

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3. เครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการรวบรวมข้อมูล

การวิจัยครั้งนี้ใช้แบบสอบถามเป็นเครื่องมือในการรวบรวมข้อมูล ซึ่งผู้วิจัยได้นำแบบสอบถามไปทดสอบความเที่ยงตรง และความน่าเชื่อถือของแบบสอบถามก่อนเก็บรวบรวมข้อมูล ดังนี้

3.1 นำแบบสอบถามไปหาความเที่ยงตรง (Validity) โดยนำแบบสอบถามเสนออาจารย์ที่ปรึกษา เพื่อตรวจสอบโครงสร้างและความถูกต้องตามเนื้อหา (Content Validity) แก้ไขปรับปรุงให้ชัดเจน สมบูรณ์ และครอบคลุมตรงตามวัตถุประสงค์ของการวิจัย ทั้งก่อนและหลังการนำไปทดลองใช้ (Pilot-study)

3.2 นำแบบสอบถามที่ปรับปรุงแล้วไปทดลองใช้จำนวน 30 ตัวอย่าง เพื่อวิเคราะห์หาค่าความเชื่อถือได้ด้วยวิธีทดสอบแบบ Cronbach's alpha Coefficient พบว่า แบบสอบถามมีความน่าเชื่อถืออยู่ในระดับปานกลางถึงสูง สัมประสิทธิ์ครอนบัคอัลฟา: ปัจจัยคุณภาพของข้อมูล 0.744 ปัจจัยความไว้วางใจ

3. In case of putting in the content in the same paragraph, use (1) (2) (3) ... for example;

Cheung, Lee, and Rabiohn (2008) พบว่า คุณภาพของข้อความควรได้รับการกระตุ้นให้แก่ผู้บริโภคเกิดความตั้งใจซื้อในเชิงบวก โดยข้อมูลที่มีคุณภาพประกอบด้วย 4 องค์ประกอบ ดังนี้ (1) ความถูกต้องของข้อมูล (2) ความเกี่ยวข้องของข้อมูล (3) ข้อมูลเป็นปัจจุบันทันสมัย และ (4) ความครบถ้วนสมบูรณ์ของข้อมูล ผู้วิจัยจึงสรุปได้ว่า คุณภาพของข้อมูลที่ครบองค์ประกอบเป็นปัจจัยสำคัญที่มีผลต่อความตั้งใจซื้อของผู้บริโภค

*** Removing vertical grid lines choosing only horizontal lines ***

1. Click icon 

