

How do Ethnic Minority Foodservice Workers Perceive Employee Well-Being? An Exploratory Study

Bingjie Liu-Lastres^{a*} and Han Wen^b

^aDepartment of Tourism, Event and Sport Management, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, Indianapolis, USA; ^bDepartment of Hospitality & Tourism Management, University of North Texas, Denton, USA.

*Corresponding Author

Bingjie Liu-Lastres, bliulas@iu.edu, Department of Tourism, Event and Sport Management, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, Indianapolis, USA

This is the author's manuscript of the work published in final edited form as:

Liu-Lastres, B., & Wen, H. (2021). How do ethnic minority foodservice workers perceive employee well-being? An exploratory study. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 46, 376–383. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhtm.2021.01.013>

How do Ethnic Minority Foodservice Workers Perceive Employee Well-Being? An Exploratory Study

Ethnic minority workers play an essential role in the hospitality workforce, especially in the foodservice industry. Yet, very few studies have focused on this population and explored their needs and work motivations in-depth. Guided by the self-determination theory, the purpose of this study was to examine how ethnic minority foodservice workers perceive employee well-being and to investigate the effects of employee well-being on their workplace outcomes. This study first interviewed twenty managers and then conducted a national survey comprising 407 responses from ethnic minority employees. The results revealed the following four dimensions of ethnic minority workers' perceived employee well-being: workplace experience, workplace happiness, creativity and knowledge, and self-actualization. Employee well-being is also found positively related to the sample's organizational commitment and turnover intentions. Based on the findings, this study provided both theoretical and practical implications.

Keywords: ethnic minority; employee well-being; self-determination theory; turnover intentions; foodservice; organizational commitment.

Introduction

Ethnic minority workers play a significant role in the contemporary hospitality workforce. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) indicates that ethnic minority workers, such as Hispanic/Latinos and African Americans, account for more than one-fifth of all hospitality employees. The foodservice industry, including restaurants, catering, cafeterias, is an essential component of the hospitality industry. It hires nearly 15 million employees, and around 36% of them are ethnic minorities (Multicultural Foodservice and Hospitality Alliance [MFHA], 2015; National Restaurant Association [NRA], 2020). One of the recent industry reports shows that foodservice companies with a diverse working environment are more likely to generate an enhanced sense of empowerment and satisfaction among employees, which leads to a better performance than their competitors (NRA, 2019).

Despite the importance of diversity, researchers found that ethnic minorities only represent 20% of salaried management positions and 6% of the middle or senior management-level positions in the hospitality industry (Jackson & DeFranco, 2005; Nickson, 2013). Notably, the negative impacts of job stress are more substantial on them than their white counterparts, which can oftentimes negatively affect their work performance, job satisfaction, and retention (Bloudoff-Indelicato, 2016). A high turnover rate for managers typically results in increasing costs, extra efforts of continuously recruiting and training staff, and difficulties of ensuring service quality and sustaining organizational commitment. The situation can get even more complicated, given the current circumstances involving the public's consistent attempts in advancing rights and justice during a pandemic.

The key to managing a healthy and sustainable workforce in the hospitality industry requires an employee-centered approach (Huong et al., 2016; Lee-Ross, 2005). Employee well-being offers a unique perspective into understanding employees' needs,

attitudes, and motivations (Baptiste, 2008; Uysal et al., 2020). Enhanced employee well-being leads to higher productivity; it can connect the employee with the organization, which is further manifested as a stronger sense of organizational commitment and a less likelihood to quit (DiPietro et al., 2019; Panaccio & Vandenberghe, 2009). For many potential employees, especially top talents, employee-wellbeing is more than a fancy term, and it has become a significant factor affecting their decisions of choosing employers (Bolden-Barrett, 2019).

The purpose of this study was (1) to explore how ethnic minority foodservice workers perceive employee well-being and (2) to investigate how employee well-being affects their job performance, organizational commitment, and turnover intentions. This study's findings contribute to the existing literature by illustrating the perceptions and effects of employee well-being among the ethnic minority workforces. This study also offers practical implications on how to enhance employee well-being for different populations.

Literature Review

Research on Ethnic Minority Workers in the Hospitality Industry

The workforce in the foodservice industry is diverse by nature, as ethnic minorities account for 40% of the restaurant managers and supervisors, as well as 60% of the chefs (NRA, 2010). Racial and ethnic diversity in the workplace is essential because a diverse work environment often leads to positive organizational performance (NRA, 2019). However, managers in foodservice, like their counterparts in other sectors, are increasingly challenged with creating an inclusive and welcoming working environment. Studies found that more than a quarter of ethnic minority foodservice workers have been passed over on promotion because of their ethnic background (The

Aspen Institute, 2012). Research also shows that being a minority could significantly affect one's workplace experience, as they are more likely to feel isolated, excluded, and even disconnected (Finderler et al., 2007). These exclusion experiences greatly affect their feeling at work, which directly relates to employee well-being, and further impacts their job satisfaction, organizational commitment, as well as retention intentions (Ensher et al., 2002; Seligman, 2004). Despite its importance, most existing studies in hospitality management have focused on either ethnic minority entrepreneurs (Altinay, 2010; Pechlaner et al., 2012) or ethnic minority college students in hospitality programs (Cothran and Combirnk, 1999; Wen and Madera, 2013). There has been a lack of research focusing on ethnic minority workers in the foodservice industry, primarily how they evaluate the quality of their work-life and the effects of their working experiences on various workplace outcomes.

Employee Well-Being in Hospitality and Tourism

Well-being research stems from the early 1970s and aims at capturing the social health aspects of individuals. Subjective well-being is holistic by nature and covers “a broad category of phenomena that includes people's emotional responses, domain, satisfactions, and global judgments of satisfaction (Diener et al. 1999, p. 277).” The development of well-being research over the last few decades has expanded its scope to include communities and various social groups, such as the elders, people with disabilities, and the youth (Sirgy, 2019). Page and Vella-Brodick (2009) further contends that studying individuals' well-being requires context- and domain-specific measures. For most people, work is an essential part of their daily life, and therefore, the quality of work-life has a direct impact on their subjective well-being. Similarly, employee well-being, which refers to “the overall quality of an employee's experience

and functions at work (Grant et al., 2007, p. 51),” is distinctive from subjective well-being and needs an in-depth exploration.

Well-being research is gaining increasing popularity in the hospitality and tourism literature in the last ten years (Sirgy, 2019; Uysal et al., 2018). Uysal et al. (2016) summarized that this research stream can be classified into two groups: the first group mainly explored the positive impact of tourist experience on one’s overall well-being; and the second group examined the contribution of tourism development to the well-being of various stakeholders such as residents and visitors. There is also a small number of studies that examined the well-being of employees in hospitality and tourism establishments. These studies mainly investigated the effects of different management constructs on employee well-being, such as leadership style (Kara et al., 2013), corporate social responsibility (Bohdanowicz and Zientara. 2009), and workplace interactions (Dimotakis et al., 2011).

These studies also examined how employee well-being related to various personal factors, such as burnout (e.g., Kara et al., 2013), work engagement and commitment (e.g., Huertas-Valdivia et al., 2018), emotional labor (e.g., Shani et al., 2014), work-life balance (Hofmann, V., & Stokburger-Sauer, 2017), and psychological capital (Paek et al. 2015). One recent study conducted by DiPietro et al. (2019) found that during a transition period, both positive commitment and job satisfaction mediate the relationship between restaurant workers’ workplace well-being and turnover intentions.

This body of research has recorded various positive effects of employee well-being in hospitality. However, most studies have adopted a mixed-race sample and did not feature the population of ethnic minorities. Further, when measuring the concept of employee well-being, most studies are based upon a need-hierarchy approach, which

suggests that one's well-being will be enhanced when their various needs are satisfied (Sirgy, 2019). Conversely, VanDeVoorde et al. (2012) argued that employee well-being could be reflected through additional dimensions such as one's happiness, health, and relationships. However, these notions have not been featured in the current hospitality literature. Ulsay et al. (2015) recommended that, as the well-being research continues to grow, it becomes essential to develop valid and reliable measures to provide baseline data. Similarly, Page and Vella-Brodrick (2009) suggest that there is a need to use an integrative approach to develop domain-specific measures to "capture the subtleties, complexities, and variation of employees' cognitive and affective experience at work (p.444)."

Job Performance, Organizational Commitment, and Retention Intentions

Job performance, organizational commitment, and retention intentions, all of which are important workplace outcomes, have been frequently studied in business, human resource management, and hospitality management literature (Gordon and Adler, 2017; Prentice et al., 2018; Tsai et al., 2010). Job performance can be understood as "the quality and quantity accomplished by individuals or groups after fulfilling a task (Tsai et al., 2010, p. 4120)." It is an important indicator of organizational success and appears to be a persistent topic in both the organizational psychology and human resource management literature (Luthans et al., 2008; Wright and Coprenzo, 2000). Enhancing service performance is crucial for a hospitality business to achieve its objectives, sustain competitive advantages, and increase performance efficiency (Karatepe and Sokmen, 2006). Tracey et al. (2007) found that the job performance of front-line employees in restaurants is related to their age as well as job characteristics such as tenure (i.e., years of employment in the organization) and the stage of career. Chiang and Hsieh (2012) further suggested that hospitality employees' performance was related to organizational

factors such as psychological empowerment. Similarly, Li et al. (2012) noted that the consistency of human resource management practices in an organization was positively related to hospitality employees' job performance.

Undeniably, there is a close relationship between hospitality employees' job performance and the organization. Employees' attitude toward their organization is usually manifested through their sense of organizational commitment (Prentice et al., 2018, p.9). Although organizational commitment can be reflected through the dimensions of affective, continuance, and normative commitments, most studies have focused on affective commitment, as affective organizational commitment reflects how employees identify themselves with the organization (Meyer and Allen, 1991). The sense of affective commitment often results from employees' perceived fairness and determines their intentions to stay or leave (Hartmann, 2000; Luchak and Gallatly, 2007). The inverse relationship between affective organizational commitment and turnover intentions is also observed among hospitality employees, especially front-line workers (Kang et al., 2015).

There has been an increasing number of studies investigating the dynamics between employee well-being, job performance, organizational commitment, and turnover intentions. For instance, Wright and Coprenzano (2000) found that psychological well-being predicts job performance of service workers. Similarly, Brunetto et al. (2012) found that for the police workforce, a stronger sense of well-being leads to a higher level of organizational commitment, which, in turn, affects their turnover intentions. Tsai et al. (2010) found that organizational commitment mediates the relationships between job satisfaction and job performance. DiPietro et al. (2019) noted that both positive commitment and job satisfaction mediated the relationship between restaurant employees' workplace well-being and turnover intentions. However,

very few studies thus far have explored the group of ethnic minority foodservice workers regarding the connections mentioned above.

Self-Determination Theory

Self-determination theory (SDT) is a macro theory that explains people's motivations and choices by examining their "inherent growth tendencies and innate psychological needs" (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 68). The SDT focuses on the automatic aspect of motivation and suggests that individuals' intrinsic motivation is affected by three principal components (See Figure 1), including (1) autonomy, which focuses on the intrinsic motivation that derives from willingness and enjoyment; (2) competence, which deals with one's ability to mastering tasks and skills; and (3) relatedness, which relates to the sense of belonging and connections with others (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Gagne and Deci (2005) argued that SDT could be a useful approach to understand work motivation and to provide insights into optimizing organizational behaviour. Lam and Gurland (2008) also supported the utility of SDT in understanding work motivation, as they found that self-determined employees tend to be more committed to the organization and less likely to quit.

[Insert Figure 1 Here]

When applying the SDT to understanding employee motivation and performance, Gagen and Deci (2005) contended that the autonomous work motivation usually results in many benefits, such as well-being, organizational commitment, and job satisfaction. These propositions align well with the scope of this study, which focuses on the employee well-being of a specific population, namely, the ethnic minority foodservice workers. The utilization of SDT as the leading theoretical framework can offer critical lenses to examine the concept of employee well-being. In doing so, this study can advance our understanding of ethnic minorities' needs and

preferences and provide implications on how to improve their well-being and increase the quality of their work life.

Accordingly, this study tried to address the following research questions:

- How do ethnic minority food service workers perceive employee well-being?
- How does employee well-being affect ethnic minority food service workers' job performance, organizational commitment, and turnover intentions?

Methodology

Research Design

This study consists of two phases. In phase I, individual interviews were conducted with twenty employees in the foodservice industry. Ten of them hold manager-level positions, while the other ten of them are front-line employees (Table 1). A snowball sampling method was used to recruit the participants. The interviewees were asked to provide insights regarding (1) their definition of employee well-being, and (2) the potential impact of employee well-being on various workplace outcomes such as job performance, organizational commitment, and retention intentions. The interviews were recorded and then transcribed by a professional company. Thematic coding analyses were conducted where the themes were identified, compared, and discussed among the research team.

The primary findings of the interviews showed that the foodservice employees' interpretations of employee well-being are mostly consistent with SDT, which focuses on their internal feelings, enthusiasm, as well as to what extent their personal needs are satisfied. Specifically, the interviewees mentioned various types of needs, such as self-

actualization and esteems, as well as financial and economic needs, all of which have been mentioned in the previous literature (e.g., Kara et al., 2013). The findings revealed three additional themes, including (1) overall working experience, (2) work-life balance, and (3) workplace happiness. Lastly, as expected, respondents have stated the positive effects of employee well-being on workplace outcomes, such as increasing productivity, a stronger desire to be successful, and a more substantial commitment to the organization.

Based on the interview findings and the related literature, this study developed a self-administered survey instrument and tested it through a national survey launched in Phase II. The sample was collected through a paid online panel. To be qualified, the potential participants must meet the following criteria: (1) at least 18 years old, (2) have worked in the U.S. foodservice industry for at least one year, and (3) belong to at least one of the ethnic minority groups. A pilot test was conducted where 79 qualified individuals have filled out the questionnaire. Based on the feedback, the findings of the pilot test, and expert reviews, the survey was then distributed to the online panel. The final sample includes responses from a total of 411 individuals who are ethnic minorities and have worked in the foodservice industry for more than one year.

Data Analysis

The first goal was to develop a scale to measure employee well-being among ethnic minority employees in the foodservice industry. This study generated an initial pool of 21 items. These items were identified from the hospitality management literature (e.g., Kara et al., 2013), human resource management literature (e.g., Fisher, 2010; Van De Voorde et al., 2012), and the findings of the interviews in the preliminary study. All items were measured using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from “1 = Strongly Disagree” to “7 = Strongly Agree.” An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted through

SPSS 25.0 using the responses collected in the pilot test (N=79). The validity of the scale was then tested by running a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) through AMOS 26.0, with the final study (N= 411).

The second objective of the study was to test the effects of employee well-being on job performance, organizational commitment, and turnover intentions. This study conducted a series of hierarchical multiple regression analyses. Each job outcome variable (i.e., job performance, organizational commitment turnover intention) was treated as the dependent variable, respectively. Individual variables such as participants' demographic characteristics and job characteristics were entered as control variables in the first step. Each dimension of employee well-being was entered in the second step as independent variables.

Measurements

To measure job performance, the participants were asked to rate their performance as compared with their peers based on a 4-point ranking scale from "1= top 25%" to "4= bottom 25%" (Adapted from Luthans et al., 2008). Most respondents (n=268, 65%) believed that their job performance was above the average level among their peers. This variable was then transferred to a binary scale where 1= above-average performance, and 0 = below average. To measure their affective organizational commitment, the following three items were used: (1) I feel emotionally attached to this organization; (2) this organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me; and (3) I do feel a strong sense of belonging to my organization ($M_{\text{AffectiveCommitment}} = 4.61$, $SD = 1.73$, Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.92$) (Adapted from Allen and Meyer, 1996). To measure their turnover intentions, the participants were asked to indicated (1) the likelihood to leave their current job within a 6- and 12-month timeframe, (2) the likelihood to leave the position within the next year, and (3) the likelihood to search for another job within the next year (Adapted

from Kang et al., 2015). All of these four items were measured on a scale from “1 = Very Unlikely” to “7= Extremely Likely” ($M_{\text{TurnoverIntention}} = 3.36$, $SD = 1.78$, Cronbach’s $\alpha = .87$).

To measure individual characteristics, two types of information were collected. The first one involves demographic variables, such as age, gender, educational background, marital status, ethnicity, and the number of children. The second set of questions relates to the participants’ job characteristics, such as their years of experience in the current organization, the type of position (e.g., hourly vs. salaried; full-time vs. part-time), the department where they work (e.g., kitchen, service staff, supervising staff), the type of organization (e.g., full-service restaurants, limited-service restaurants, intuitional foodservice), and whether they have participated in any wellness programs offered by their organization.

Results

Sample Profile

The final sample includes a total of 411 valid responses. The results of the descriptive analyses showed that 69.3% of the sample were female, and 30.2% of them were male. The main age groups were 26-35 (31.5%), and 36-45 (25.6%). Around half (49.6%) of the respondents were African American, followed by Hispanic (23.6%), Asian (17.0%), and others, such as Native American (5.2%), mixed-race (2.0%), and Native Hawaiian (1.7%). About half of the sample (50.1%) were single, and 41.6% of them were either married (30.5%) or in a domestic partnership (11.1%). Less than half (43.2%) of them have no children. Around three out of tenth (31.7%) of the sample had some college education, and less than one fifth (18.4%) of them had a bachelor’s degree.

In terms of work experience, 39.3% of the sample have worked in the field for more than ten years, and 32.9% of them have worked in the industry between 1-5 years. Most of them are employed full-time (65.4%).

EFA and CFA Testing Results

The first goal of the study was to explore the underlying dimensions of employee well-being by developing and testing a measurement scale. Following the suggestion provided by Worthington and Whittaker (2006), this study took two steps to develop the scale. First, this study conducted exploratory factor analyses (EFA) using the responses collected from the pilot test. The sample size was deemed adequate given that the value of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure is above 0.80 (Bartlett test of sphericity $\chi^2 = 1321.13$, $p < 0.01$; Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure = 0.842), and that the participant-per-item ratio is above 4:1 (Worthington & Whittaker, 2006). When conducting the EFA, the principal axis factoring with promax rotation was applied. An iterative process was also used to eliminate items that had a factor loading below 0.60, cross-loading on multiple factors, and low commonalities below 0.30 (Hair et al., 2009).

A total of four factors were extracted from 17 items, accounting for 63.4% of the total variance (Table 2). The four dimensions were labeled as: (1) Workplace Experience ($\alpha = 0.92$), (2) Workplace Happiness ($\alpha = 0.96$) (3) Creativity and Knowledge ($\alpha = 0.89$), and (4) Self-Actualization ($\alpha = 0.77$). Cronbach's alpha values for these four factors were all above the acceptance level of 0.70 (Worthington & Whittaker, 2006).

[Insert Table 1 Here]

CFA was then conducted to test the validity of the scale. The assumptions of multivariate normality and linearity were evaluated through SPSS 25.0. The final sample size was 411, without any missing data. The results of the preliminary tests

showed that two items (i.e., “I feel physically safe at work”; “I have enough time away from work to enjoy other things at life”) have factor loadings lower than 0.60, and thus, were removed from the scale. The results indicated a good model fit (RMSEA = 0.046, CFI = 0.986, GFI = 0.955). The final measurement scale resulting from the CFA analyses as well as the standardized parameter estimates are provided in Table 2. The composite reliability (CR) value ranges from 0.828 to 0.953, all of which are greater than the acceptance level of 0.60 (Bagozzi & Kimmel, 1995). The values of the average variance extracted (AVE) also exceeded the suggested cut-off value of 0.05 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). All factor loadings in the model are statistically significant ($p < 0.01$) and exceeded the recommended value of 0.7 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Lastly, the square roots of all AVEs were calculated, resulting in values higher than the corresponding factors’ correlations values with other factors, suggesting a good discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

[Insert Table 2 Here]

Effects of Employee Well-Being on Job Outcomes

Lastly, this study investigated the effects of different dimensions of employee well-being on job performance, organizational commitment, and retention intentions. A series of multiple regression analyses were performed, and the results are presented in Table 4. The first model, which treated job performance as the dependent variable, was not statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 31.833$, $p = 0.191$). The results, however, suggested that participants who have associate degrees were more likely to rate their job performance higher than those who hold high-school degrees (Wald = 5.325, $p = 0.021$). Self-actualization was also found positively related to job performance (Wald = 4.170, $p = 0.041$).

The second model, which used organizational commitment as the dependent variable, was statistically significant and explained 56.2% of the variance of the dependent variable ($F(17, 410) = 5.044, p < 0.01, R^2 = 0.562$). Three dimensions of employee well-being, including workplace experience ($\beta = 0.345, p < 0.01$), creativity and knowledge ($\beta = 0.172, p = 0.002$), and self-actualization ($\beta = 0.239, p < 0.01$), were significant predictors of the outcome variable. In addition to the direct relationships, it is noted that at the first step, individual' participation in wellness programs ($\beta = .0924, p = 0.004$) was positively related to their organizational commitment, but the relationship became insignificant in the second step when employee well-being constructs were added ($\beta = 0.030, p = 0.424$). The results of correlation tests showed that foodservice employees' participation in wellness programs were related to their workplace experience ($r = 0.299, p < 0.01$), workplace happiness ($r = 0.128, p = 0.009$), creativity and knowledge ($r = 0.293, p < 0.01$), and self-actualization ($r = 0.235, p < .001$). Collectively, the results here suggest that the relationship between one's participation in the wellness program and affective organizational commitment was fully mediated by employee well-being.

The third model, which used turnover intentions as the dependent variable, was statistically significant and was able to explain 25.5% of the variance of the dependent variable ($F(17, 410) = 7.911, p < 0.01, R^2 = 0.255$). Age ($\beta = -0.158, p = 0.003$), marital status ($\beta_{\text{married/dr}} = -0.113, p = 0.033$), year of employment ($\beta_{\text{less than 1 year}} = 0.138, p = 0.023$), and workplace experience ($\beta = -0.386, p < 0.001$) were related to the outcome variable. More specifically, the older the participants were, the less likely they would leave their position. Respondents who are either married or in a domestic relationship were also less likely to quit. In contrast, participants who are new to their organization

were more likely to quit than those who have been in the organization for more than ten years. Participants who enjoyed their working experience more are more willing to stay.

[Insert Table 3 Here]

Discussions

Ethnic minority workers are vulnerable to work-related psychological stress than others (Frederick et al., 2017). This study explored how ethnic minority workers in the foodservice industry perceive employee well-being and how employee well-being affects their job outcomes. This study first confirmed the multi-dimensional nature of employee well-being and underscored the significance of a personal approach to defining employee-wellbeing. This is highly consistent with the central propositions of SDT, which largely concentrate on people's intrinsic motivation, their enjoyment with the experiences, and their strong desire to succeed and perform certain behaviors. The identified underlying dimensions, such as workplace experiences, knowledge and creativity, workplace happiness, and self-actualization, all echo the key domains of SDT (i.e., competence, autonomy, and relatedness).

The first and probably the most critical dimension of employee well-being identified in this study is workplace experience. This is a concept that has been frequently mentioned in the business literature, suggesting that the essence of employee well-being lies in one's affective states and overall experience at work (Dimotakis et al., 2011; Grant et al., 2007). A closer examination of the items under this construct reveals that one's assessment of their work experience can be broken down into job security, fair compensation, job satisfaction, professional development, as well as the maintenance of a good work-life balance.

This study also found that satisfying one's creativity and knowledge needs and self-actualization needs are essential in enhancing employee well-being. This notion is

largely consistent with the SDT, which highlights the connection between one's competence and self-determination (reference). Knowledge and creativity are often tied to each other because knowledge is fundamental in enhancing one's creativity and vice versa. Both of them play significant roles in determining one's intrinsic work motivations (Osterloh & Frey, 2000). Further, the satisfaction of self-actualization needs refers to the extent an organization makes the most use of their employees' talents and skills. In other words, ethnic minority workers value the opportunity to work, because it allows them to grow, meet their full potential, and become successful. In fact, as one of the higher-level needs, self-actualization needs are built upon the satisfaction of cognitive needs, such as knowledge and creativity needs (Maslow, 1971).

Workplace happiness is another underlying dimension of employee well-being. As the notion "a happy workforce is a productive workforce" is getting more and more popular, workplace happiness has become an important research topic in the field of human resource management and organizational behavior (Fisher, 2010; Joo & Lee, 2017; Spicer & Cederstrom, 2015). Erdogan et al. (2012) suggested that workplace happiness is a predictor of job satisfaction. However, this study showed that workplace happiness acts as an affective dimension of employee well-being, rather than an antecedent. This notion not only provides clarification on the relationship between these two concepts, but also suggests new approaches to conceptualize and operationalize employee well-being.

The second objective of this study is to measure how employee well-being affects various job outcomes among ethnic minority workers in the foodservice industry. Even though there is a positive relationship between self-actualization and job performance, the findings of this study showed that the effect of employee well-being on one's job performance is not significant. This is different from previous studies (e.g.,

Tracey et al., 2007; Wright & Coprenzano 2000), which found that hospitality employees' job performance is related to their age, tenure, job stage, as well as the sense of well-being. The discrepancies could be explained by the uniqueness of the population in this study, all of which are ethnic minorities. Future studies are needed to explore this topic further.

Furthermore, this study noted the positive relationship between employee well-being and organizational commitment, which stays aligned with the findings of previous studies in hospitality management (e.g., Kara et al., 2013). This study also suggested that employee well-being mediated the relationship between the sample's participation in company-provided wellness programs and organizational commitment. This means that individuals who have participated in wellness programs tended to score higher on employee well-being, which, in turn, leads to a higher level of affective commitment to their organizations. This echoes the findings of human resource management literature and highlights the necessity of offering organizational support and allocating resources to ethnic minority workers (Chiang & Hsieh, 2012; Finderler et al., 2007).

Lastly, this study examined the effect of employee well-being on the sample's turnover intentions. This study noted that employees' turnover intentions are related to their age, marital status, and tenure. Particularly, those who are older and married/in a domestic relationship are less likely to quit, while those who have been in the company/organization for less than a year are more likely to leave. When it comes to employee well-being, this study noticed the inverse relationship between workplace experience and turnover intentions. Similar to what was found in a previous study (Brown et al., 2015), employees tend to associate high-quality workplace experience with appropriate work conditions, fair compensation, and an excellent work-life balance.

Conclusions

The foodservice industry has created many job opportunities in the U.S., evolved at a fast pace, and is expected to bounce back quickly even amidst a pandemic. Ethnic minority workers play a critical role in the workforce of the foodservice industry. This study utilized an employee-centered approach, examined their sense of employee well-being, and identified factors that affected their perception of employee well-being.

Theoretical Implications

From a theoretical perspective, this study confirmed the pragmatic utility of SDT in this study context and developed and tested measurements specific to employee well-being. The scale developed and proposed in the current study is thorough and innovative as it identified underlying dimensions of workplace experiences, knowledge and creativity, workplace happiness, and self-actualization. The scales can serve as useful tools for future studies about employee wellbeing, and also encourages the exploration and verification of this scales in different contexts within the hospitality industry.

Additionally, this study explored the impacts of employee well-being on ethnic minority employees' job performance, organizational commitment, and turnover intentions. As expected, employees who possess a stronger sense of well-being at work are more likely to commit to their organization and less likely to leave. A critical element in creating such connections involves their workplace experience, including the working environment, relationships, and work-life balance.

Practical Implications

When translating these findings into practical implications, this study devotes itself to an understudied population --- ethnic minority foodservice workers. The significance of ethnic minority workers is not only indicated through the numbers, but also their loyalty (Ghiselli et al., 2001). To boost their performance and to increase the

commitment, managers should prioritize a personal approach and pay attention to employee well-being. Various foodservice organizations can start with company wellness programs, as participation in these programs directly contributes to an enhanced sense of employee well-being. Company wellness programs can take place in a wide variety of formats, ranging from gym memberships, health coaching, newsletter, to employee assistance programs focusing on mental health and emotional issues. Although it is widely believed that company wellness programs can improve employees' overall health, these programs remain controversial due to their steadily increasing costs (Gordon and Adler, 2017). The findings of this study, however, justify the benefits of having these programs. Developing and promoting company wellness programs can directly improve employee well-being, which results in more committed and loyal employees, especially among ethnic minorities.

In addition, a special focus could be laid on enhancing the workplace experience of ethnic minority employees. Results of this current study revealed that foodservice employees assessed their over workplace experience based on their perceived job security, fair compensation, job satisfaction, professional development, and work-life balance. Foodservice organizations could use these components as the baseline to form organizational strategies and develop programs to improve workplace experience based on compensation, benefits, work-life balance, as well as the opportunity for future professional and career development.

Lastly, it is also imperative to satisfy ethnic minority employees' needs for knowledge and creativity as well as self-actualization, both of which would make them grow and thrive. Previous studies suggested that an individual's well-being will be enhanced when their various needs, such as the lower level needs on Maslow's hierarchy of needs, are satisfied (Sirgy, 2019). The results of the current study were

calling for foodservice operators' attentions on this higher-level need – self-actualization. Mentoring program, which features open conversations between managerial level employees and front-line employees, may be helpful in guiding front-line employees to achieve their value in the organization.

Limitations and Future Research

This study is not without limitations. First, the study heavily relies on self-reported data, while some variables such as performance could be operated in terms of supervisor evaluation. Therefore, future studies can incorporate additional objective measurements. Second, this study used a paid online panel to recruit participants. Although efficient, the generalizability of the findings may be affected. Thus, future studies can use a random sampling method or stratification method to recruit participants. Third, this study only focused on ethnic minorities, and therefore, the findings may not apply to the entire foodservice workforce. Future studies can expand this study to include Caucasian employees and make a comparison between the well-being of ethnic and non-ethnic employees. Additionally, the current study was conducted in the U.S. that results may not be generalizable to foodservice employees in other countries.

References

- Allen, N. J., & Meyer, J. P. (1996). Affective, continuance, and normative commitment to the organization: An examination of construct validity. *Journal of vocational behavior*, 49(3), 252-276.
- Altinay, L. (2010). Market orientation of small ethnic minority-owned hospitality firms. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 29(1), 148-156.
- Baptiste, N. R. (2008). Tightening the link between employee wellbeing at work and performance. *Management decision*.
- Bolden-Barrett. (2019). "CEOs say employee well-being is a growing priority." Available at <https://www.hrdiver.com/news/ceos-say-employee-well-being-is-a-growing-priority/564440/>
- Brown, E. A., Thomas, N. J., & Bosselman, R. H. (2015). Are they leaving or staying: A qualitative analysis of turnover issues for Generation Y hospitality employees with a hospitality education. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 46, 130-137.
- Brunetto, Y., Teo, S. T., Shacklock, K., & Farr-Wharton, R. (2012). Emotional intelligence, job satisfaction, well-being and engagement: explaining organisational commitment and turnover intentions in policing. *Human Resource Management Journal*, 22(4), 428-441.
- Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2015). *Hispanics and Latinos in industries and occupations*. Retrieved from <https://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2015/hispanics-and-latinos-in-industries-and-occupations.htm>
- Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2019). "Food and Beverage Serving and Related Workers." Available at <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/food-preparation-and-serving/food-and-beverage-serving-and-related-workers.htm>

- Bloudoff-Indelicato (2016). How Work Stress Hits Minorities and Less Educated Workers the Hardest. Available at <https://www.gsb.stanford.edu/insights/how-work-stress-hits-minorities-less-educated-workers-hardest>
- Bohdanowicz, P., & Zientara, P. (2009). Hotel companies' contribution to improving the quality of life of local communities and the well-being of their employees. *Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 9(2), 147-158
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.
- Chartered Institute of Personal and Development. (2016). Moving the Employee Well-Being Research Agenda Forward. Available at https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/moving-employee-well-being-agenda-forward_2016_tcm18-15556.pdf
- Chiang, C. F., & Hsieh, T. S. (2012). The impacts of perceived organizational support and psychological empowerment on job performance: The mediating effects of organizational citizenship behavior. *International journal of hospitality management*, 31(1), 180-190.
- Cothran, C. C., & Combrink, T. E. (1999). Attitudes of minority adolescents toward hospitality industry careers. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 18(2), 143-158.
- Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative and mixed methods approaches*. London and Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- DeVellis, R. F. (2016). *Scale development: Theory and applications* (Vol. 26). Sage publications.
- Diener, E., Suh, E. M., Lucas, R. E., & Smith, H. L. (1999). Subjective well-being: Three decades of progress. *Psychological bulletin*, 125(2), 276.

- Diener, E., & Seligman, M. E. (2004). Beyond money: Toward an economy of well-being. *Psychological science in the public interest*, 5(1), 1-31.
- Dimotakis, N., Scott, B. A., & Koopman, J. (2011). An experience sampling investigation of workplace interactions, affective states, and employee well-being. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 32(4), 572-588
- Ensher, E. A., Grant-Vallone, E. J., & Marelich, W. D. (2002). Effects of perceived attitudinal and demographic similarity on protégés' support and satisfaction gained from their mentoring relationships. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 32(7), 1407-1430.
- Erdogan, B., Bauer, T. N., Truxillo, D. M., & Mansfield, L. R. (2012). Whistle while you work: A review of the life satisfaction literature. *Journal of management*, 38(4), 1038-1083.
- Findler, L., Wind, L. H., & Barak, M. E. M. (2007). The challenge of workforce management in a global society: Modeling the relationship between diversity, inclusion, organizational culture, and employee well-being, job satisfaction and organizational commitment. *Administration in Social Work*, 31(3), 63-94
- Fisher, C. D. (2010). Happiness at work. *International journal of management reviews*, 12(4), 384-412.
- Fornell, C., & Larcker, D. F. (1981). Structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error: Algebra and statistics.
- Ghiselli, R. F., La Lopa, J. M., & Bai, B. (2001). Job satisfaction, life satisfaction, and turnover intent: Among food-service managers. *Cornell hotel and restaurant administration quarterly*, 42(2), 28-37.

- Grant, A. M., Christianson, M. K., & Price, R. H. (2007). Happiness, health, or relationships? Managerial practices and employee well-being tradeoffs. *Academy of management perspectives*, 21(3), 51-63.
- Gordon, S., & Adler, H. (2017). Employee perceptions of well-being and organizational wellness offerings: A study of line-level employees in select-service hotels. *Journal of Human Resources in Hospitality & Tourism*, 16(3), 308-330.
- Hartmann, L. C. (2000). Organizational commitment: A multi method scale analysis and test of effects. *International Journal of Organizational Analysis* (1993-2002), 8(1).
- Huong, L., Zheng, C., & Fujimoto, Y. (2016). Inclusion, organisational justice and employee well-being. *International Journal of Manpower*.
- Hofmann, V., & Stokburger-Sauer, N. E. (2017). The impact of emotional labor on employees' work-life balance perception and commitment: A study in the hospitality industry. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 65, 47-58.
- Huertas-Valdivia, I., Llorens-Montes, F. J., & Ruiz-Moreno, A. (2018). Achieving engagement among hospitality employees: A serial mediation model. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*.
- Jackson, F. H., & DeFranco, A. L. (2005). *Turnover and diversity in the lodging industry*. American Hotel & Lodging Educational Foundation.
- Joo and Lee, 2017
- Kang, H. J., Gatling, A., & Kim, J. (2015). The impact of supervisory support on organizational commitment, career satisfaction, and turnover intention for hospitality frontline employees. *Journal of Human Resources in Hospitality & Tourism*, 14(1), 68-89.

- Kara, D., Uysal, M., Sirgy, M. J., & Lee, G. (2013). The effects of leadership style on employee well-being in hospitality. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 34, 9-18.
- Lee-Ross, D. (2005). Perceived job characteristics and internal work motivation. *Journal of management development*.
- Luchak, A. A., & Gellatly, I. R. (2007). A comparison of linear and nonlinear relations between organizational commitment and work outcomes. *Journal of applied psychology*, 92(3), 786.
- Luthans, F., Norman, S. M., Avolio, B. J., & Avey, J. B. (2008). Supportive climate and organizational success: The mediating role of psychological capital. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 29(2), 219-238.
- Maslow, Abraham H. (1971). *The farther reaches of human nature*. New York: The Viking Press.
- National Restaurant Association (2018). National Statistics. Available at <https://restaurant.org/research/restaurant-statistics/restaurant-industry-facts-at-a-glance>
- National Restaurant Association. (2020). Restaurant industry facts at a glance. Retrieved from <https://restaurant.org/research/restaurant-statistics/restaurant-industry-facts-at-a-glance>
- Nickson, D. (2013). *Human resource management for hospitality, tourism and events*. Routledge.
- Osterloh, M., & Frey, B. S. (2000). Motivation, knowledge transfer, and organizational forms. *Organization science*, 11(5), 538-550.
- Page, K. M., & Vella-Brodrick, D. A. (2009). The ‘what’, ‘why’ and ‘how’ of employee well-being: A new model. *Social indicators research*, 90(3), 441-458.

- Paek, S., Schuckert, M., Kim, T. T., & Lee, G. (2015). Why is hospitality employees' psychological capital important? The effects of psychological capital on work engagement and employee morale. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 50, 9-26.
- Panaccio, A., & Vandenberghe, C. (2009). Perceived organizational support, organizational commitment and psychological well-being: A longitudinal study. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 75(2), 224-236.
- Pechlaner, H., Lee, T., Crotts, J., Dal Bò, G., & Volgger, M. (2012). What makes tourism an attractive industry for new minority entrepreneurs: results from an exploratory qualitative study. *Tourism Review*.
- Principal Financial, 2016. Annual Report. Available at http://www.annualreports.com/HostedData/AnnualReportArchive/p/NASDAQ_PFG_2016.pdf
- Prentice, C., Ma, E., & Wong, I. A. (2019). Performance driven outcomes—the case of frontline employees in the hospitality sector. *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management*, 28(1), 101-123.
- Sirgy, M. J. (2012). The psychology of quality of life: Hedonic well-being, life satisfaction, and eudaimonia (Vol. 50). Springer Science & Business Media.
- Sirgy, M.J (2019). Promoting quality-of-life and well-being research in hospitality and tourism. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 36(1), 1-13.
- Tracey, J. B., Sturman, M. C., & Tews, M. J. (2007). Ability versus personality: Factors that predict employee job performance. *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, 48(3), 313-322.

- The Aspen Institute. (2012). The restaurant workforce in the United States. Retrieved from <http://www.aspenwsi.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/The-Restaurant-Workforce-in-the-United-States.pdf>
- Tsai, M. C., Cheng, C. C., & Chang, Y. Y. (2010). Drivers of hospitality industry employees' job satisfaction, organizational commitment and job performance. *African Journal of Business Management*, 4(18), 4118.
- Wright, T. A., & Cropanzano, R. (2000). Psychological well-being and job satisfaction as predictors of job performance. *Journal of occupational health psychology*, 5(1), 84.
- Uysal, M., Sirgy, M. J., Woo, E., & Kim, H. L. (2016). Quality of life (QOL) and well-being research in tourism. *Tourism Management*, 53, 244-261.
- Uysal, M., Sirgy, M. J., & Kruger, S. (Eds.). (2018). *Managing Quality of Life in Tourism and Hospitality*. CABI.
- Uysal M., Sirgy, M.J., & Kim. H. (2020). Well-being research in the service industries. *The Service Industries Journal*, 40 (1-2), 1-5.
- Van De Voorde, K., Paauwe, J., & Van Veldhoven, M. (2012). Employee well-being and the HRM–organizational performance relationship: a review of quantitative studies. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 14(4), 391-407.
- Wen, H., & Madera, J. M. (2013). Perceptions of hospitality careers among ethnic minority students. *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education*, 13, 161-167.
- Wright, T. A., & Cropanzano, R. (2000). Psychological well-being and job satisfaction as predictors of job performance. *Journal of occupational health psychology*, 5(1), 84.

Worthington, R. L., & Whittaker, T. A. (2006). Scale development research: A content analysis and recommendations for best practices. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 34(6), 806-838.

Acknowledgment

This research was funded by the Society for Hospitality and Foodservice Management Foundation (SHFMF). The financial support is mainly used for data collection.

Table 1 EFA Results

	Component			
	F1	F2	F3	F4
Factor 1. Workplace Experience				
I am satisfied with my overall experience at work.	.844			
I maintain a good work-life balance.	.801			
I feel appreciated at work.	.765			
This job allows me to sharpen my professional skills.	.758			
My job does well for my family.	.746			
I am satisfied with what I am getting paid for my work.	.739			
I feel that my job is secure for life.	.683			
I feel physical safe at work.	.674			
I have enough time away from work to enjoy other things at life,	.625			
Factor 2. Workplace Happiness				
I feel happy at work.		.965		
I feel happy in my current organization.		.935		
I feel happy at my job.		.915		
Factor 3. Creativity and Knowledge				
There is a lot creativity involved in my job.			.910	
My job helps me develop my creativity outside of work			.784	
I feel I am always learning new things that help do my job better.			.776	
Factor 4. Self-Actualization				
I feel that I am realizing my potential as an expert in my line of work.				.912
I feel that my job allows me to realize my full potential.				.727
Eigenvalue	10.27	2.00	1.31	1.00
Cronbach's alpha value	.913	.958	.888	.770

Table 2. CFA Results

Factor/Items	CR	AVE	Factor Loading	Mean	SD
Factor 1. Workplace Experience	.904	.574		4.86	1.398
I am satisfied with my overall experience at work.			.81	5.20	1.612
I maintain a good work-life balance.			.72	5.37	1.493
I feel appreciated at work.			.81	4.86	1.747
This job allows me to sharpen my professional skills.			.75	5.04	1.659
My job does well for my family.			.75	4.81	1.835
I am satisfied with what I am getting paid for my work.			.73	4.46	1.934
I feel that my job is secure for life.			.73	4.27	1.996
Factor 2. Workplace Happiness	.953	.871		5.07	1.701
I feel happy at work.			.95	5.11	1.776
I feel happy in my current organization.			.94	5.09	1.751
I feel happy at my job.			.91	5.01	1.815
Factor 3. Creativity and Knowledge	.875	.662		4.72	1.540
There is a lot creativity involved in my job.			.82	4.53	1.785
My job helps me develop my creativity outside of work			.84	4.47	1.868
I feel I am always learning new things that help do my job better.			.78	5.14	1.593
Factor 4. Self-Actualization	.828	.701		4.834	1.599
I feel that I am realizing my potential as an expert in my line of work.			.80	5.02	1.604
I feel that my job allows me to realize my full potential.			.88	4.64	1.858
CR = Composite Reliability, AVE = Average Variance Extracted,					

Table 3. Multiple Regression Analysis Results

Independent Variables	Model 1.		Model 2.		Model 3.	
	Job Performance		Organizational Commitment		Turnover Intentions	
	Wald	p	β	p	β	p
Control Variables						
<i>Individual characteristics</i>						
Age	1.391	.238	-.074	-1.858	-.158	.003*
Gender	.817	.366	-.074	-1.858	.010	.844
Education	5.420	.067				
Associate Degree	5.325	.021*	.004	.924	-.033	.581
B.S. and above	1.505	.220	.018	.665	.056	.351
Marital Status	1.206	.547				
Married/Domestic Relationships	.852	.356	.045	.260	-.113	.033*
Widowed/Divorced	.174	.677	-.040	.281	.026	.603
Number of Children	.287	.866				
1-2	.144	.705	.059	.143	.002	.974
More than 2	.000	.999	.041	.301	-.050	.333
<i>Job Characteristics</i>						
Years of employment	1.425	.700				
Less than 1 year	.230	.631	-.091	.062	.148	.023*
1-5 years	.391	.532	-.053	.312	.091	.189
5-10 years	.026	.872	-.018	.725	.084	.220
Position type (1= full-time)	.295	.587	.007	.846	.061	.226
Participation in wellness programs	.087	.769	-.030	.424	-.038	.444
<i>Employee Well-Being</i>						
Workplace Experience	.551	.458	.345	<.01**	-.386	<.001**
Workplace Happiness	.502	.479	.057	.177	.050	.377

Figure 1. Self-Determination Theory

