

Women's career advancement in hotels: the mediating role of organizational commitment

Women's
career
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in hotels

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Abstract

Purpose – This study aims to uncover women's career advancement (CA) in the hospitality industry, by examining the influence of female employees' career expectation (CE) and work–family balance (WFB). It also investigated the extent to which organizational commitment (OC) mediates the relationships among women's CE, WFB and CA.

Design/methodology/approach – A questionnaire was used to collect data. The data were collected from 525 hotel female employees in China. A structural equation model was conducted with all of the data to test the relationships between the constructs. The individual measurement model was tested using the exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis. A structural model was estimated using analysis of moment structures to test all the hypotheses.

Findings – The results showed that women's CE and WFB positively influenced their OC and CA. Women's organizational commitment also positively influenced their CA. The results also confirmed that the indirect effect of CE and WFB on CA was mediated by OC.

Originality/value – This study examines how the CE and work–family relationships of female employees in the hospitality industry affect their OC and their CA. The results help female employees to overcome the glass ceiling effect and achieve greater career success. This study seeks to expand the research on the CA of female hotel employees by identifying the factors that influence their CA.

Keywords Career expectation, Life balance, Organizational commitment, Career women, Career development, Organizational psychology

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

As valuable human resource assets, employees have been crucial to the organizational success in the hospitality industry. Evidence suggests that over a half of employees are women in the hospitality and tourism industry (Fan, 2011) and it continues to increase. According to China Labor Statistical Yearbook (2018), 55.54% of hotel employees are women; yet, fewer are senior managers (only 17.1% in 2014; Wang *et al.*, 2020). It might be because women have to play their traditional family role and accompanied, persisting



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expectations, which are women being responsible for family care and well-being (Costa *et al.*, 2017; Zhao *et al.*, 2019). Meanwhile, given the emphasis of gender equality in China, Chinese women managers rarely blame their work domain or reduce their time investment in jobs (Zhao *et al.*, 2019). However, the fact is that many women are working in the lower level of hospitality jobs and they struggle to be promoted to higher management positions (Catalyst, 2015). This unfair situation called for further research to study the influences of gender on career development in the hospitality industry (Kausar and Tlais, 2011).

From the employer perspective, many hotels are facing a problem that talented women are more likely to leave because hotel jobs involve longer working hours, frequent business trips and getting harder to take care of families (Karatepe and Uludag, 2008). Hotels' retention and development programs/workshops have been receiving unsatisfactory results, leading to the women brain drain (Groschl and Arcot, 2014). Therefore, it is worth examining women's career development and advancement in the hospitality industry. How to convince women to stay and progress through the hotel is a question to be answered. Existing studies have primarily focused on women's career development in Western countries and some Asian areas (Li and Wang Leung, 2001; Choi and Park, 2014; Saadin *et al.*, 2016). Considering the recent rapid development of the hospitality industry in the special social and economic context of China, this study is aimed to uncover women's career advancement (CA) in the hospitality industry, by examining the influence of women's career expectation (CE) and work-family balance (WFB). It also investigated the extent to which organizational commitment (OC) mediates the relationships among women's CE, WFB and CA. Study results not only are advisory for women working at hotels to help overcome the glass ceiling effect and progress and advance through their careers but also provided critical implications for hotels how to retain and motivate female employees for the organizational sustainability purpose. The results also fill in a gap in the literature on hotel women's CA in China by identifying its influencing factors.

Literature review

Gender stereotypes in the hospitality organizations

The gender theory suggests that, instead of being naturally sex-based, women and men are socially constructed because of many differences in deeply embodied social practices (Guenther *et al.*, 2018). Hospitality and tourism are a highly gendered industry, where there is a strong segregation of occupations and a prevalence of men in top-level management positions (Baum, 2015; Baum *et al.*, 2016). Although gender equality was raised by social movements, legislation and organizational regulations and academic research studies (Morgan and Pritchard, 2018), little effort has been made to correct the male domination of higher positions and marginalization of women in hospitality industry (Gebbs *et al.*, 2019). Women's CA in tourism are invisible (Costa *et al.*, 2017). Relevant barriers include imposed barriers and personal priorities, and even workplace and societal barriers (Boone *et al.*, 2013; Mooney and Ryan, 2009). For example, the existence of male culture in organizations, coupled with certain organizing practices can explain the lack of women at the top managerial positions (Mooney and Ryan, 2009).

Recently, employees are expected to an unencumbered worker, who is completely dedicated to working without family-related responsibilities (Acker, 2012). A male worker can perfectly fit into this expectation because his life is work-centered and his wife takes care of family. Therefore, from this perspective, the concept of work is implicitly gendered. The traditional gender role divisions and gendered social reproductive roles influence employees' availability (Heilman *et al.*, 2015) and thus reinforce gendered stereotypes in the workplace.

Further evidence suggests that women's promotion in hospitality and tourism are influenced by the way how the society views them (Campos-Soria *et al.*, 2011), which highlights how gender roles and managerial discourse are related. A study on gender-typing in the Spanish hospitality industry showed masculine characteristics are rated as more important than feminine characteristics for the managerial positions (Cuadrado *et al.*, 2015). Another study in Portugal suggested that emotionality is a managerial characteristic associated with women and femininity and has been progressively incorporated into managerial discourse; however, gender roles and femininity related to their caring roles continued influencing their career and promotion (Costa *et al.*, 2017). The concept of gender in this study is not only constructed biologically but also importantly perceived socially (Guenther *et al.*, 2018). Given that gender-based stereotypes toward women in CA are deeply rooted in China, our study is important to examine women's CA and address the influences of gender stereotypes in the workplace.

Defining organizational commitment

OC refers to employees' responsibilities and obligations to an organization. It is primarily considered as an attitude or behavioral tendency derived from the recognition of the organizational goals in occupational psychology (Becker, 1960). Employees' commitment to an organization is not only related to their recognition of an organization but also related to their recognition of the specific occupation they pursue within the organization (Bedeian *et al.*, 1991). The employees, who are more concerned about their own career, showed a greater OC, compared with those with a lower level of career commitment (Chang, 1999). Li (2011) found that Taiwanese employees had different work values from mainland employees. Taiwanese employees' work values were inversely proportional to their OC, whereas the OC and job involvement of mainland employees were positively correlated with their work values. Shang (2013) confirmed that the career values and the OC of employees in high-star hotels of Hunan province were significantly related. Based on the literature, it was concluded that high-star hotels offered good opportunities for promotion and the degree of CE at hotel services affected hotel employees' emotional commitment, value commitment and retention commitment. In addition, the lower employees' turnover rate reduced the cost of labor.

CE and WFB are the independent constructs of this study. The CE refers to real and attainable aims, as well as career goals that an employee intends to achieve (Metz *et al.*, 2009). The influencing factors of the CE were examined, including personal interests, hobbies, family background (Schoon and Parsons, 2002), education level, race/ethnicity (Cook *et al.*, 1996) and gender (Metz *et al.*, 2009). The employees' CE have effects on OC (Robinson and Morrison, 2000). When an employee was more committed to the organization, this person's CE might be satisfied (Rigotti *et al.*, 2009). In addition, a higher level of personal commitment to the career may lead to a greater CE. Therefore, when the CE of employees with a high level of commitment is met by the organization, they are more motivated than those with a lower level of OC (Shang, 2013). Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1. CE has a positive effect on organizational commitment.

WFB is another important construct in this study, which leads to two outcomes: OC (O'Neill *et al.*, 2009) and job satisfaction (Cegarra-Leiva *et al.*, 2012). Evidence suggested that employees would further recognize their company's values and may increase their commitment to the organization when the organization supports their employees to achieve WFB (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002). On the other side, the work-family conflict and emotional exhaustion negatively influence front-line hotel employees' job satisfaction, emotional OC and turnover intention (Karatepe and Uludag, 2007).

Evidence suggests that the work-family conflict leads to the strained labor relations, the reduced job satisfaction, the poor organizational performance, and thus results in a lower OC and higher turnover intention among employees (Eby *et al.*, 2005). Employees with the work-family conflict were more likely to leave their organization (Karatepe and Baddar, 2006). The work-family conflict also negatively influenced hotel staffs' performance, whereas the work-life balance was positively correlated with job satisfaction and OC (Karatepe and Kilic, 2007; Carlson *et al.*, 2009).

However, it became difficult for women to balance work and family without the support from their employers (Choi and Park, 2014). Peng (2014) confirmed that women's work-family conflict directly resulted in a decrease in their OC and also led to their turnover intention. In light of the preceding findings, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2. WFB has a positive effect on OC.

Construction of career advancement

CA is a common form of career development, which enables employees to produce better performance. Peng (2011) defined CA as the promotion of management or professional positions in the organization, which means CA includes the promotion of management positions and professional titles. CA is a system career path to meet employees' goals and organizational needs (Kwah *et al.*, 2012). As this study focuses on the discussion of the CA of women, CA can be defined not only on the level of title promotion, also refers to their ability can be expected for career development prospects and opportunities. To meet the long-term needs, the system and measures are taken to promote effectively development through the way of system. This can enhance their capabilities to improve the professional level, professional competition and upgrade the possibility of career mode.

As an early attempt to understand the women's role in the leadership position, several influencing factors were identified at some levels, such as individual, interpersonal and organizational (Ragins and Sundstrom, 1989). The individual-level factors included individual resources, such as achievement orientation, career aspirations and the interpersonal-level factors primarily referred to proactive partnerships. The organizational factors focused on the organization support (Ramli *et al.*, 2016). Individual, interpersonal and organizational factors all together contribute to a person's CA (Xiao, 2010). As Shang (2013) indicated, the organizational citizenship behaviors of hotel employees were significantly influenced by their value, effort and retention commitment.

From the employees' perspective, the CA is considered as an investment in an organization, which might keep employees in a good condition for long time (Karen, 2001). The career development opportunities allow employees to learn and grow on the jobs (Asiedu-Appiah *et al.*, 2013). Given that the CA training provided by the employer is aimed to improve the employee performance and thus enhance positive atmosphere and job satisfaction (Walia and Bajaj, 2012), a logical positive correlation might exist between CA and job satisfaction (Shani and Divyapriya, 2013), as well as between OC and job satisfaction (Asrar and Rizwan, 2017). Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3. OC has a positive effect on CA.

O'Brien (1996) found that employees' CE was positively correlated with the CA. Their expectations and values also influenced the career goals (Liu *et al.*, 2019). Individuals who have a higher level of CE were more likely to have greater career achievements. Ng *et al.* (2010)

suggested that millennials had a high level of CE and thus wanted to further develop their careers. Millennials had realistic expectations of their first job after graduation, and desired for good employers and working environment. In this sense, the work-life balance became a job expectation, not just a need from the family perspective. In addition, evidence suggested that almost all female managers expressed their willingness and commitment to work hard for an excellent performance, which was a key factor positively influencing the CA and being consistent across different countries, such as the USA, India and China (Peus *et al.*, 2015). As for the studies of women's CA in the hotel sector in China, Lin (2011) demonstrated that gender influenced the career development, which was not evident in the early or intermediate stages of a career path. However, as a woman's career developed, gender played an increasing role in a woman's career path. One influencing factor in the hotel industry might be the personal CE (Fan, 2011). Therefore, *H4* is proposed:

H4. CE has a positive effect on CA.

Work-life balance contributed to women's CA (Patwardhan *et al.*, 2016), whereas work-family conflict hindered women's career development (Zhao *et al.*, 2019). Thus, how to balance work and family has become an important factor for women to advance their careers in the hotel industry (Knutson and Schmidgall, 1999). Boone *et al.* (2013) recognized that to achieve the work-life balance was a strategy to cope with constraints in their CA. Hoobler *et al.* (2009) also suggested that at least women needed a good work-family relationship which was beneficial for potential opportunities of CA. Saadin *et al.* (2016) confirmed a significant relationship between women's work-life balance and their CA. Work overload may bring more stress to women, who still have the same workload in their families (Zhao *et al.*, 2019). When senior female managers realize that their work has influenced family life, they are more likely to choose the family side, instead of pay raise and promotion opportunities (Sudha and Karthikeyan, 2014; Drenzo *et al.*, 2015). Women would benefit from multiple organizational support, which leads to the longevity outcomes of employees' affective commitment (David *et al.*, 2019). This is also beneficial for women to achieve the WFB and their CA opportunities (Mooney and Ryan, 2009). Thus, the fifth hypothesis is proposed:

H5. WFB has a positive effect on CA.

The mediating role of the OC

According to Baron and Kenny (1986) and Judd and Kenny (1981), the necessary conditions to become a mediating variable included:

- (1) The independent variables must have a significant effect on the dependent variables.
- (2) The independent variables significantly affect the intermediary variables.
- (3) The mediating variables significantly affect the dependent variables.

Kenny *et al.* (1998) further stipulated that only the Conditions (2) and (3) were necessary to determine the mediating effect. If the Conditions (2) and (3) were combined, the overall conclusions of the model can be inferred (Rose *et al.*, 2004).

Evidence has confirmed the direct effects of:

- the CE and the WFB on the CA (Peus *et al.*, 2015; Sudha and Karthikeyan, 2014; Saadin *et al.*, 2016);
- the CE and the WFB on the OC (Shang, 2013; Choi and Park, 2014); and
- the OC on the CA (Asrar and Rizwan, 2017).



To further investigate the influencing mechanisms of the OC, the mediating role of the OC should be examined because the OC not only directly affects a person’s CA but also is an intermediary variable of relating to the CE, WFB and CA.

The OC includes affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment (Meyer *et al.*, 2002). Normative commitment plays a moderating role in an employee’s expectations toward the organization, job retention, career development and promotion (Hu and Shi, 2004). A person with a higher level of the OC is more likely to stay in the organization and have the opportunities for CA. When more employees received support from their employers, their CE were more likely to be met, which led to an increasing OC and positively influenced their work performance and career development (Cho and Johanson, 2008). In addition, Namasivayam and Zhao (2007) suggested that the work-family conflict negatively influenced their loyalty to the organization and resulted in a decrease in their affective commitment and continuance commitment for hotel staffs, which all significantly affected their CA. In this sense, the OC played an intermediary role between the WFB and the CA. Evidence has suggested that OC played a moderating role in work-family conflict for women, and thus good organizational atmosphere and flexible working hours were strategies to help employees to achieve a WFB, which increased employees’ retention and helped their career development (Blomme *et al.*, 2010).

This study measured the indirect effect of the CE and/or the WFB and the CA via the mediating role of the OC. It is assumed that the OC played an intermediary role between the CE and/or the WFB and CA. The following hypotheses are proposed:

- H6. CE has a positive and indirect effect on CA through the intermediary role of OC.
- H7. WFB has a positive and indirect effect on CA through the intermediary role of OC.

This study is aimed to identify the determinants of CA in the hotel industry. Our conceptual framework for women’s CA in the hotel industry included four constructs: CE, work-life balance, OC and CA (Figure 1). CE and WFB are considered as exogenous variables that are positively related to OC and CA, while OC and CA are endogenous variables. OC not only positively influences CA but also serves as an intermediary variable to adjust the relationship between CE, WFB and CA.

Research methods

Data collection

A questionnaire draft was provided to seven scholars and hotel managers for the content validity (i.e. four hospitality management professors, one general manager and two HR

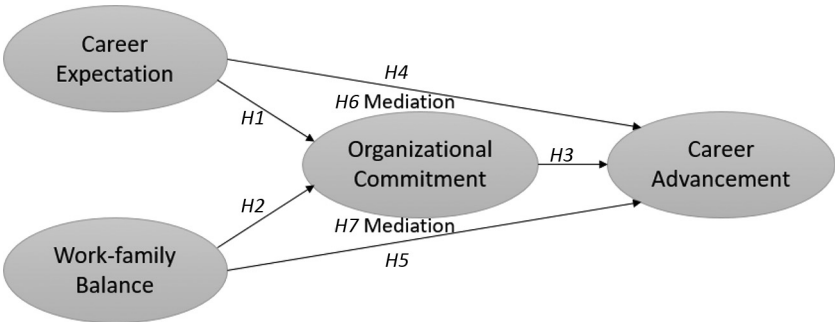


Figure 1. Proposed conceptual framework



managers), which had good feedback on its representativeness and validity. A pilot test was conducted in two provinces of China from July to September in 2018 to evaluate the length, clarity, reliability and validity of the scales. Results from the pilot test showed that good quality of the questionnaire and also suggested change to make, including clarifying unclear wording, addressing comments from participants in the pilot study.

The survey included questions on CE, WFB, OC and CA. The CE scale was developed based on [Liu et al. \(2019\)](#) and [Wu and Li \(2001\)](#). The WFB scale was based on [Wong and Ko \(2009\)](#). The OC scale was based on [Meyer and Allen's \(1997\)](#) OC scale and [Zhang et al.'s \(2002\)](#) revised scale, which have examined the OC of hotel female employees. Finally, the CA scale was based on [Patwardhan et al. \(2016\)](#). All of the items were measured using a seven-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

The data collection was conducted in mainland China. Participants were female employees who worked in three stars, four stars or five stars hotels in China. First, researchers obtained the consent of the human resource department at these hotels. Then, the paper-based questionnaires were distributed to their women employees who are voluntary to participate. These participants accessed a consent page at the beginning of the survey, which described their anonymity of participation and the study purpose for research only. Third, the participants were asked to fill in the survey during their non-working hours and put their complete questionnaires in a sealed envelope. Researchers gathered all the completed surveys on site. AS the surveys were administered in Chinese, all the survey items were translated from English into Chinese using the conventional back-translation technique in this manuscript ([Brislin, 1970](#)). This study surveyed 600 women employees and 525 valid questionnaires were obtained (response rate: 87.5%).

Data analysis

In the present research, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and, for testing the structural model, analysis of moment structures (AMOS) program were used. To test the research model, two-step approach by [Anderson and Gerbing \(1988\)](#) was followed. The individual measurement model was tested using the exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and CFA. The EFA with varimax rotation was considered as appropriate to be the first step to simplify the interpretation of the identified factors and to determine the major constructs in the data ([Field, 2005](#)). The postulated relationship between the observed items and the latent constructs was tested using CFA, which was used to check the goodness of fit of the measurement scales and to test their psychometric properties. CFA enhances the results of traditional techniques (e.g. Cronbach's alpha) by testing the unidimensionality of a scale and, refining the factorial structure found in the exploratory analysis to ensure the unidimensionality.

Composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) were calculated for the latent constructs. The CR coefficients should be greater than 0.7 and the AVE values should be greater than 0.5 ([Hair et al., 2006](#)). In addition, Cronbach's alpha values were calculated, which should be above 0.7 ([Nunnally, 1978](#)). The scale validity was analyzed by focusing on content validity, convergent validity and discriminant validity. The content validity is assumed to be correct when the scale is constructed according to [Hair et al. \(2009\)](#). The convergent validity is accepted when the *t-values* associated with each factor loading is significant at the 0.05 level. The larger the factor loading compared with its standard error, the stronger the evidence that there is a relationship between the observed indicator and its latent variable ([Bollen, 1989](#)). Discriminant validity is established when the AVE value for each construct was greater than the squared correlation coefficients for the corresponding inter-construct correlations ([Kline, 2005](#)). Finally, a structural equation model was conducted with all of the data to test the relationships between the constructs.

Results

Participants' profile

Of the 525 respondents, over 72% were between 23 and 44 years old and over 56% were married. Over two thirds (69%) of the respondents had a college degree or higher, indicating that most respondents were well educated. The majority of respondents (76%) were supervisors or below and about 61% had on average more than 4 years of work experience in the hotel industry. Among the hotels surveyed, most (71.05%) were five star hotels, 19.24% were four star hotels and 9.71% were three star hotels (Table 1).

Measurement model

During the assessment of the measurement model, some items were removed from the analysis due to the low factor loadings. After removing those items, the measurement model was finalized. As shown in Table 2, all item loadings in the final measurement model exceeded the minimum cut off point of 0.40 (Hair et al., 2014), thus internal consistency was achieved. Cronbach's alpha exceeded 0.70, the minimum reliability standard recommended by Nunnally (1978). In terms of convergent validity, all CR values were above the minimum cut off point of 0.70 and all AVE values met the minimum criteria of 0.50 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Thus, the

Socio-demographic Indicators	N	(%)
Age (n = 525)		
18–22 years old	93	17.7
23–33 years old	247	47.1
34–44 years old	133	25.3
45–55 years old	52	9.9
Marital status (n = 525)		
Single	226	43.05
Married	299	56.95
Education level (n = 525)		
High school graduate or less	50	9.5
Some college	112	21.3
Two-year college degree	195	37.1
Four-year college degree or above	168	32.0
Working year (n = 525)		
6 months-1 year	86	16.4
1-3 years	114	21.7
4-6 years	102	19.4
7-10 years	85	16.2
Over 10 years	138	26.3
Position level (n = 525)		
General Manager	10	1.9
Department Manager	116	22.1
Supervisor	128	24.4
Captain	61	11.6
Attendant	210	40.0
Hotel type (n = 525)		
Three stars	51	9.71
Four stars	101	19.24
Five stars	373	71.05

Table 1.
Participants' profile
(n = 525)

					Women's career advancement in hotels
Construct	Factor loading	α	CR	AVE	
CE		0.82			
<i>Factor 1: career rewards</i>		0.88	0.89	0.73	
I expect a good salary for my job	0.87				
I expect good job benefits	0.91				
I expect high job stability	0.84				
<i>Factor 2: career development</i>		0.74	0.78	0.50	
I expect to work in a famous, medium or large hotel above four stars	0.71				
I expect a challenging job	0.82				
I expect to work in a hotel which is in the first and second tier cities	0.67				
I expect to obtain the ability to work at higher levels through training and learning	0.77				
WFB		0.85			
<i>Factor 1: time support</i>		0.87	0.87	0.60	
I can schedule my preferred days off supported by my team	0.63				
I have enough time after work to carry out personal matters	0.80				
I have enough time for my family and friends	0.90				
I have personal discretion over my and starting and finishing times	0.72				
I fell happy when I have quality time for my family life	0.91				
<i>Factor 2: work support</i>		0.79	0.80	0.50	
My co-workers are supportive when I talk about personal or family issues that affect my work	0.83				
My supervisor is understanding when I talk about personal or family issues that affect my work	0.79				
I look forward to being with the people I work with each day	0.56				
I work very smoothly to handover to the next shift because of a good management system	0.69				
I find it easy to concentrate at work because of family support	0.70				
OC		0.96	0.96	0.64	
I am willing to put in much effort to help this organization be successful	0.76				
I talk up this organization to my friends as a great organization to work for	0.81				
I feel very little loyalty to this organization	0.83				
I would accept almost any type of job assignment to keep working for this organization	0.83				
I find that my values and the organization's values are very similar	0.72				
I am proud to tell others that I am part of this organization	0.78				
I could just as well be working for a different organization as long as the type of work were similar	0.83				
This organization really inspires the very best in me in the way of job performance	0.83				
It would take very little change in my present circumstances to cause me to leave this organization	0.83				
I am extremely glad that I chose this organization to work for	0.83				
	0.81				
(continued)					Table 2. Result of measurement model

Construct	Factor loading	α	CR	AVE
There's not too much to be gained by sticking with this organization indefinitely				
It is difficult to agree with this organization's policies on important matters relating to employees	0.82			
I really care about the fate of this organization	0.83			
For me, this is the best of all possible organizations for which to work	0.84			
Deciding to work for this organization was a definite mistake on my Part	0.83			
CA		0.89		
<i>Factor 1: institutional guarantee</i>		0.91	0.91	0.63
Hotel has not stereotypes against women	0.74			
Hotel has no inherent gender bias in recruitment and promotion	0.80			
The hotel's gender equality policy can be effectively implemented	0.81			
Hotel has adequate labor and non-discrimination laws	0.85			
Hotel has flexible work solutions	0.76			
Management is not viewed as a man's job	0.80			
<i>Factor 2: measure guarantee</i>		0.76	0.75	0.51
Hotel has leadership training for women	0.86			
Hotel has equality policies and programs	0.81			
Men are encouraged to take leave for family responsibilities	0.63			

Table 2. Note: $p < 0.001$

measurement model was found to be satisfactory and provided sufficient evidence in terms of reliability, convergent validity and discriminant validity.

The overall measurement model was verified, after testing the fit and construct validity of each measurement model. The entire sample ($N = 525$) was used to test the overall measurement model. The goodness of fit indices ($\chi^2 = 2,388.58$, $df = 763$, $\chi^2/df = 3.13$, CFI = 0.90, GFI = 0.81, RMSEA = 0.06) all indicated a fairly good fit between the model and the data. As shown in Table 3, the reliability of each construct ranged from 0.82 to 0.96, with all values exceeding 0.70. All factor loadings were statistically significant, ranging from 0.61 to 0.91 (i.e. all greater than 0.50). The AVE value for each construct exceeded 0.50 and was generally greater than the squared correlation. Therefore, both convergent validity and discriminant validity were satisfactory.

Structural model

A structural model was estimated using the AMOS software package to test all the hypotheses. The goodness of fit statistics showed that the model reasonably fit the current data. The RMSEA value for the hypothesized model was 0.06, representing a good degree of precision (MacCallum *et al.*, 1996). Figure 2 shows the final structural model with direct path results. As shown in Table 4, the value of the path coefficients and significance level indicated that the structural paths were both positive and significant, thus all direct positive relationships were supported.

The bootstrapping algorithm was used in this study to verify the mediating role of OC on relationship between CE and/or WFB and CA (Taylor *et al.*, 2008). The stepwise regression

method was then used to verify the analysis. If the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable becomes non-significant after adding the mediating variable, the mediating effect is complete. Otherwise, it is partially mediated (Baron and Kenny, 1986). The results of the analysis of the mediating role of OC supported the hypotheses (Table 5). All of the indirect effect coefficients were positive and significant ($p < 0.05$), supporting *H6* and *H7*.

Discussions

Research findings support all hypotheses explicitly. This study proposed a conceptual framework to uncover women's CA in the hospitality industry, by examining the influence of women's CE and WFB. It also investigated the extent to which OC mediates the relationships among women's CE, WFB and CA. Seven hypotheses were tested and results

Construct	CE	WFB	OC	CA
CE	1			
WFB	0.47 (0.21)	1		
OC	0.35 (0.11)	0.67 (0.45)	1	
CA	0.40 (0.16)	0.79 (0.62)	0.80 (0.63)	1
Reliability	0.82	0.85	0.96	0.89
AVE	0.61	0.63	0.62	0.70
MEAN	6.20	4.89	5.10	5.13
SD	0.83	1.05	1.31	1.15

Table 3.
Correlations (squared
correlation),
reliability, AVE
and mean

Note: All are significant at the 0.01 level

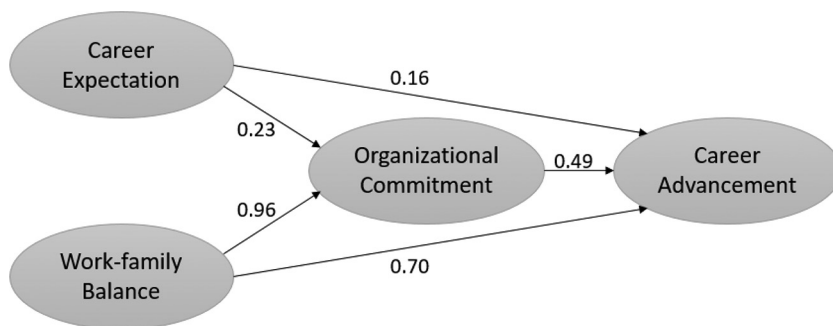


Figure 2.
Final structural
model with different
path results

Hypothesis/path	Coefficient	t-value	Result
<i>H1</i> : CE → OC	0.23	3.436***	Supported
<i>H2</i> : WFB → OC	0.96	8.506***	Supported
<i>H3</i> : OC → CA	0.49	6.478***	Supported
<i>H4</i> : CE → CA	0.16	2.471*	Supported
<i>H5</i> : WFB → CA	0.70	5.174***	Supported

Notes: * $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.001$

Table 4.
Path results for the
final structural model
(hypothesis testing)

were statistically significant. These causal relationships were as follows: CE and WFB had a positive and direct effect on OC and CA, while OC had a positive and direct effect on CA. OC also acts as an intermediary between CE, WFB and CA. The general internal consistency and construct validity of each potential variable indicated a reliable and effective measurement scale.

First, CE was shown to significantly influence OC and CA. Specifically, a one-point increase in CE leads to a 0.23% point increase in OC and a 0.16% point increase in CA. Our analysis resulted in two factors of CE. The factor of career development had more influences on OC, which indicated the importance of CE, such as women’s expectations of working location, career development and training opportunities. A good CE contributed to women’s OC. The other factor of career rewards can be an asset for employees, such as income increase, welfare availability and job sustainability. In addition, the results suggested that women with a higher level of CE had a slightly faster CA, which was consistent with previous evidence (Peus *et al.*, 2015). It is worth noting that after adding OC into the model, the factor of CE effectively contributed to women’s CA with an increased level of OC, which has provided primary evidence of a positive relationship between CE and OC.

Second, the WFB was found to significantly influence OC and CA. Specifically, a one-point increase in WFB leads to a 0.96% point increase in OC and a 0.70% point increase in CA. The results indicated that work-life balance is very important for women in the hospitality industry, not only because it reinforces women’s OC but also because it can contribute to their CA. Our analysis resulted in two factors of WFB. The first factor of time support was shown more important, which indicated the importance of time allocation between work and family. Examples included leaving work on time, having paid time off, enough free time with family and friends. The other factor of work support included moral encouragement and practical assistance, dealing with conflicts between work and family. Example included taking time off with colleagues, having vacation when necessary, complete understanding toward personal or family issues affecting my work. WFB is a result from coordinating between work and family (Sudha and Karthikeyan, 2014; Saadin *et al.*, 2016); however, for women it is an effort of coordination and balance of all aspects of lives. Some of our results was consistent with previous evidence (Peng, 2014). Women who achieved WFB were more likely to have a greater sense of belonging and loyalty to the organization. Development opportunities can help women continuously progress in their work and ultimately be promoted. Although previous evidence heavily looked at the work-family conflict, our study focused on the WFB and providing preliminary evidence that a WFB contributed to women’s OC and CA.

Moreover, the positive relationship revealed in this study between OC and CA was consistent with previous evidence (Shang, 2013), which emphasized the importance of

Table 5.
Analysis of the
direct and indirect
effects of the
mediating variable

Hypothesis/path	Estimates	Bootstrapping 5,000 times				<i>p</i>
		Bias-corrected		Percentile		
		95% CI		95% CI		
		Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper	
CE → OC → CA	0.11	0.04	0.23	0.04	0.22	**
WFB → OC → CA	0.47	0.27	0.73	0.25	0.70	**
CE → CA	0.16	0.03	0.32	0.03	0.32	*
WFB → CA	0.70	0.40	1.16	0.40	1.16	***

Notes: **p* < 0.05; ***p* < 0.01; ****p* < 0.001

improving women's OC that contributed to their CA. For an employer, the women's continuous commitment to the organization enhanced their loyalty and reduced turnover rate of women, which, in turn, was beneficial for women's career development and promotion (Namasivayam and Zhao, 2007). The accumulated working experiences in the hospitality industry was important to increase the chance of advancement (Asiedu-Appiah *et al.*, 2013). The results also suggested that women who were more active in involving in the organization culture and more loyal to the organization, were more likely to grow in their careers and have a greater chance of CA. In the hospitality industry, when woman agreed with a hotel's culture and value and believed in their choice of working for the hotel, the person demonstrated a stronger OC (Wang, 2012).

Finally, our results showed that OC not only influenced CA but also was an intermediary variable to adjust the relationship between CE, WFB and CA, which represented the first attempt on examining the mediating effect of OC. If the career management of women can be improved by organizing activities (such as meeting CE, providing time support or strengthening work support) so that they can focus on their careers, their career development level can be improved to help them achieve CA. Our study results provided critical information for both organizations (e.g. hotels) and individuals on the career management and development practices.

Conclusions

Theoretical and practical implications

This paper provided important insights on the subject of women's CA in the hotel industry of China. Study results made important theoretical contributions to the construct of OC by identifying its organizational and individual determinants. This study was an early empirical research to reveal individuals' CE and their WFB as important determinants of OC. Compared with CE, individuals' work-life balance played a greater role in OC and CA. This study also contributed to the literature of human resource management by revealing the mediating effect of OC. There was limited evidence on the mediating effect of OC, despite it is an important predictor of employees' career development (Eby *et al.*, 2003). Uncovering the intermediary role of OC provided a solution to the problem, emphasizing the importance of the "what to expect" and "how to balance" factors.

This study also contributed to the construct of CA. CE, WFB and OC directly affect CA. Meanwhile, OC can also mediate the relationship between CE, WFB and CA. This study proposes a new and comprehensive conceptual framework for understanding the determinants and outcomes of OC and, together with the findings, can serve as a basis for future research.

In practice, our results provided important implications to the hotel management, which might design better career management and development strategies, as well as offer corresponding programs/activities for their women employees. It is clearly management's responsibility to facilitate the career development of their women employees. The hotel management are encouraged to provide opportunities to facilitate women's CA. The employer may want to create guidelines for gender neutral recruitment and performance evaluation, which will help to address barriers women face in fully participating in the workplace and achieving their full potential. For example, the gender-identifying information should be removed from the application or resume of an applicant, which minimizes the risk of bias occurring against the applicant based on their gender. In addition, reasonable rules, regulations and development opportunities should be offered to women, including maternity leave policies, professional training courses and connection with

successful women managers to seek advice on career paths. From the hotel perspective, as WFB is found to be an expectation of employees, the hotel management needs to check their current policies and regulations to see whether they have addressed the expectation. Employers' support to women would encourage them to initiate an open conversation with the organization by providing immediate feedback, such as discussing their challenges, thoughts on improving work performance. It is very important for both women and their organization to have the communication channel and benefit each other. Women would benefit from organizational support to achieve a more desirable state of work. On the other side, organizations would also benefit from assisting women to address known challenges such as childcare, education assistance and support to maintain family ties (David *et al.*, 2019). These all together create a supportive working environment for women to seek WFB and contribute to a sustainable talent management system.

Moreover, study results provide career advice and guidance for women in the hospitality industry. The industry decides that a larger proportion of hotel employees are women (Baum *et al.*, 2016). Therefore, it is important for the hotel management to understand their women employees' career needs and design and offer activities and/or programs that contribute to women's OC and CA. Individuals in supportive environments would have a sense of belonging and enjoying working in hotels even at a lower position (Mooney *et al.*, 2016). The hotel management should well treat women employees and guarantee their paid time off to enhance OC. For example, the many aspects of CE and work-life balance identified in this study can be referenced by hotels, including offering good benefits and more time with families after work. From the employee perspective, women should identify their CEs, improve professional skills and make a strategic career plan.

Limitations and directions for future research

The first limitation relates to the sampling population of this study. Although data was collected from over 10 provinces and cities of China, they were primarily from the east coastal area, and there was limited evidence from other regions of China, which may lead to the sampling bias. Considering that hotels across different regions of China are at different development stages with various cultures and values, it is important to catch different perspectives of female employees in different regions of China. Despite that our participants varied in age, education, job status, working year and hotel star rating, female CA and position levels (from attendant to general manager), future studies should consider collecting data at different types of hotels in other regions of China and even other countries with a larger sample size. It is also encouraged to account for more variables in future research, such as motivations and incomes.

Second, the study population was restricted to hotel female employees in mainland China. Although the hospitality industry is female dominant, it is worth considering the gender differences in CA for hotel staffs in China. Given the situation that only a few women reach the top management positions (Cooke, 2005) and women are more willing to participate in training and invest in education than men (Skromme Granrose, 2007), it would be interesting to uncover factors that lead to fewer opportunities for CA for women. Future research may want to use mixed methods or qualitative critical approaches to find out answers which a survey is unable to answer.

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