Student-Worker's Job Satisfaction and Retention in On-Campus Hotel: An Interpretative Inquiry Case

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Abstract
The study attempted to identify factors that influenced a student employee's decision to continue employment with an on-campus lodging facility applying a rarely used interpretative inquiry approach. The researchers chronicled the experiences and views of a college student at such a facility. The result of the case study indicated that the student employee had unique motivators that if implemented could influence decisions to continue employment with on-campus lodging facilities.
Keywords: student employee, retention, job satisfaction, qualitative research, hotels

Introduction
Hospitality industry has been notorious for high employee turnover rates (Carbery, Garavan, O'Brien, & McDonnell, 2003). This has made employee retention an area of concern for industry managers, especially for those who operate hotels and restaurants on university and college campuses. Although these hotels and restaurants typically have no problems extending or replacing their workforce, they experience problems of a different kind.

Firstly, campus hotels and restaurants are usually non-profit organizations and, therefore, often suffer from restricted university guidelines and budget limitations. Secondly, these entities are usually heavily dependent on student workers, who are often considered "unreliable," not working for the same organization for long periods of time as they keep graduating. Also, their schedule and class load vary from semester to semester. Thirdly, it is far more expensive to replace experienced student workers than to retain them (Boles, Ross, & Johnson, 1995). Lost productivity, organizational knowledge, and the expense of finding, hiring, and training new staff are only some of the costs associated with high employee turnover, making their retention important to the efficiency of these hospitality entities.

Hence, understanding student employees' experiences and motivations could lead to the development of more effective retention policies (Milman, 2002). In spite of the abundance of employee motivation literature, there is lack of knowledge about what motivates student workers. Therefore, the goal of this study was to provide a unique

perspective into experiences and motivations of student workers employed hotels. Another goal was to apply a qualitative, interpretive approach, not commonly used in hospitality literature. Consequently, the authors deviated from the traditional quantitative ontology and epistemology and chronicled the experiences of a student-employee at an on-campus lodging facility, while identifying the factors that influenced the subject's decision to continue or discontinue employment.

This study is noteworthy for two main reasons. First, it provides hospitality professionals with useful insights about factors that influence the retention of student workers. It should be noted that by providing a single participant's frame of reference on working in a hotel, the study yields findings that cannot be generalized to the entire student worker population, but instead may be transferable to contexts similar to those described (Hellström, 2008; Walsh, 2003).

Second, and equally important, the study is one of few in hospitality to use the qualitative "interpretivist" approach. It is a commonly held view that quantitative and qualitative approaches (methodologies) are just variations in techniques within the same assumptive framework, to reach the same goal and solve the same problems (Smith & Heshusius, 1986). This is not true (Putnam, 1981). *Quantitative* approach stems from positivism, which has a *realist* orientation and is based on the idea of an independently existing social reality that can be described as it really is (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Consequently, objectivity and generalizability are sought after goals (Smith, & Heshusius, 1986). In contrast, the *qualitative* interpretive tradition is based on the *idealist* outlook and takes the position that social reality is mind-dependent. Therefore, from a qualitative perspective, complete objectivity in research cannot be achieved because any inquiry cannot be value-free or free from people's point-of- views, interests, and purposes (Putnam, 1981). As a result, the ultimate goal of qualitative inquiries is to better understand of a phenomenon through a "single" perspective (Hellström, 2008).

A major criticism of interpretative inquiries is the small sample size and, hence, the inability to generalize results to larger populations. However, objectivity and generalizability are viewed as unachievable from ontological and epistemological foundations of qualitative methodology (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Smith, & Heshusius, 1986). Sample size becomes irrelevant because the purpose of interpretative inquiries is to understand participants' own frames of reference and worldviews, rather than to test hypothesis on a large sample (Hellström, 2008). Qualitative samples are evaluated based on the ability to provide important and rich information, not because they are representative of a larger group (Walsh, 2003).

Consequently, as an alternative to the notion of generalizability, qualitative methodology emphasizes "*transferability*," the extent to which readers can use/transfer described experiences of the phenomenon to their settings based on the depth and vividness of the descriptions (Sale et al., 2002). It is important to mention that only readers decide whether findings are transferable or not. Through the provided descriptions the reader can extract from the story useful elements that could be applied to their reality (Hellström, 2008).

Being a qualitative interpretative inquiry, the current study *does not pursue generalizability* and, thus, might not be useful for straightforward prediction of future behavior. Nevertheless, it presents a discussion of factors affecting student employees'

motivation and retention. The main objective is to provide insights into student employees' psyche and behavior. Such information may help managers who operate in similar conditions in identifying alternative behavioral models and designing retention programs for such group of workers (Hunt, 1989).

Theoretical Underpinnings

Job Satisfaction and Employee Retention
Studies conducted in the hospitality industry have highlighted both the magnitude and high costs of turnover (Alonso & O'Neill, 2009; Carbery, et al., 2003; Hinkin & Tracey, 2000; Pizam & Thornburg, 2000). Alonso and O'Neill (2009) identified turnover and staffing related problems as some of the top challenges experienced by small hospitality businesses, particularly the ones employing students. The current study looked at the turnover issue amongst student employees and attempted to address this gap.

There have been a number of factors identified in previous scholarly studies to be influencers of employee retention. One of such factors was job satisfaction (Spector, 1997). Job satisfaction as defined by Price (2001) is a global feeling or a group of related attitudes about various aspects of a job. The global approach to understanding job satisfaction was often used by researchers when overall employee attitude was of interest, while the facet approach was used when researchers wanted to explore the parts of the job that produced satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

Generally, job satisfaction depends on two separate but interconnected factors: needs fulfillment and stimuli. Conrad et al. (1985) suggest that academics who approach job satisfaction from the perspective of need fulfillment often use Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory as their premise. Maslow (1954) states that human needs could be categorized into five distinct levels: physiological, safety, belongingness, love, esteem, and self-actualization. According to Maslow (1954), once the first level of needs is satisfied it would no longer motivate employees and influence job satisfaction. Instead, satisfying the next level of needs becomes the motivating factor and determinant of job satisfaction. Psychologists who emphasize cognitive processes over underlying needs have criticized Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Nevertheless, attitudinal perspectives being the dominant feature in job satisfaction research (Spector, 1997).

Herzberg (1959) and Matzler at al. (2004), examined job satisfaction from the view of a response to stimuli. Herzberg (1959), one of the founding theorists of job satisfaction, proposed the two-factor theory of job satisfaction and suggested that satisfaction and dissatisfaction were caused by different and often unrelated stimuli. According to Herzberg (1959), intrinsic factors are job 'satisfiers' and include achievement, recognition, the work itself, and responsibility. Meanwhile, extrinsic, or 'hygiene' factors, are the job 'dissatisfiers' and include company policy, administration, supervision, salary, interpersonal relations, and working conditions.

More recent development of Herzberg's theory, positive psychology, examines intrinsic motivation more closely (Sachau, 2007). Positive psychology research identifies strong links between job satisfaction and activities that require mental challenge as well as such factors as clear goals, immediate feedback, and job enrichment (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). Additionally, it was reported that satisfaction was positively correlated with high

levels of engagement, opportunities for recognition, meaningful job, close relationships, psychological growth, and professional development (Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002).

Spector (1997) reports a connection between employee's job satisfaction and their tenure with the organization. Based on the review of the most popular job satisfaction instruments, Spector (1997) summarizes the following facets of job satisfaction contributing to employee retention: appreciation, communication, co-workers, fringe benefits, job conditions, nature of the work itself, the nature of the organization itself, an organization's policies and procedures, pay, personal growth, promotion opportunities, recognition, security, and supervision.

The Main Determinants of Employee Retention

Job satisfaction, although a key element of employee retention is not a sufficient condition (Kyndt, Dochy, Michielsen, & Moeyaert, 2009). Retention is mediated by two inversely related attitudes: affective commitment and intention to quit (Guerrero & Herrbach, 2009). Interestingly, affective commitment is connected to job satisfaction. Corporate culture is another factor scholars identify as influencing employment tenure. According to findings from several studies, establishments with open corporate culture that have such characteristics as fun, trust, concern for and appreciation of constituents, facilitating autonomy, encouraging innovative thinking, and with its mission and goals clearly communicated are more likely to experience lower employee turnover rates than those with opposite corporate cultures (Guerrero & Herrbach, 2009; Kyndt et al., 2009; Moncarz et al., 2009; Samuel & Chipunza, 2009; Spector, 1997). Moncarz et al. (2009) propose that well understood rewards, such as recognition, incentives and compensation have positive effects on employee retention in lodging settings.

Hiring and promotion practices also influence retention. Hiring the right people for the right job affects employee retention (Rodriguez, 2009). Moncarz et al. (2009) report that the use of psychological assessments for candidate screening has a positive influence on employee retention. The availability of promotional opportunities also has a positive effect on employee tenure with a company (Spector, 1997).

Several researchers such as Samuel and Chipunza (2009), Moncarz et al. (2009) and Rodriguez (2009) all recognize a connection between training and employee retention. Moncarz et al. (2009) state that hotels with buddy/mentor programs reporte lower employee turnover levels. Rodriqez (2009), whose study focused on the company IKON in Puerto Rico, suggests that skill development within the company is essential to employee retention. Samuel and Chipunza (2009), whose work was conducted within the public and private sector companies in South Africa, suggest that job security has a significant influence on employee retention.

A number of intrinsic determinants of employee retention were identified in recent academic publications. Kyndt et al. (2009) mentions three of such determinants: the constituents' perception of leadership skills, seniority and level of readiness, and initiative towards learning. Challenging and interesting work can also improve employee retention according to Samuel and Chipunza (2009).

Spencer and Steers (1980) take a different approach and suggest that performance ratings can significantly moderate the relationship between job satisfaction and turnover. These researchers further suggest that job satisfaction has a greater influence on retention

for low performers than for high performers. Also, work that is too challenging can have an opposite, more adverse effect on employee retention (Spencer & Steers, 1980).

As it was stated above, there are multiple factors linked to employee retention and not linked to job satisfaction. However, in most instances cited, job satisfaction determinants are the influencers of employee retention. Consequently, the main question of the current inquiry was to identify to what extent the same would be true for student workers in hospitality businesses. The primary objective of the study was to gain a deeper insight into factors contributing to student employee retention.

Methodology

Analytic approach and methods

A qualitative interpretative approach was employed in the current study. This particular method was used for two reasons. First, can provide a better insight into one's motivations and allows obtaining in-depth information illustrating different dimensions of individuals' behavior (Hellström, 2008). Second, interpretative qualitative methodology has been underrepresented in hospitality research and calls for more studies in that area have been raised in the last decade. (Vila et al., 2012; Walsh, 2003).

The data was collected through a series of semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with the participant (which is referred to throughout the remaining text as 'Kate') and non-participant observations of the subject in the work environment. All the interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. Observations were noted in field notes. Data collection occurred in both on-site (naturalistic) and off-site (artificial) settings.

The first interview focused on topics that revealed the subject's personality, background, and the environment in which she lived and worked, such as her personal and academic background, training obtained for the current position, professional experience, and her typical routine at work. The second and the third interviews addressed the subject's professional expectations and behaviors, memorable events at work, and her feelings and perceptions of the work environment.

Subject and Settings

For this project only one subject was closely observed and interviewed, which complied well with the qualitative interpretive philosophy (Hellström, 2008; Walsh, 2003). The subject selection was based on two criteria: being a current student and having a minimum of two years work experience with an on-campus lodging entity. Such criteria seemed relevant for the study. A student who stayed with a hotel for such extensive period of time was assumed to have substantial insights on the matter of retention; especially considering a typical turnover rate in hospitality industry was 150% per year (Woods, 1996). The subject, Kate, was a 20 years old female from Midwest of the United States.

The site selection for this study was guided by two factors: convenience and the primary investigator's personal experience with the organization. The hotel in question was the only university-owned lodging operation in that town. Plus, some familiarity with the facility allowed better understanding of the setting, its rules, regulations, and their major power figures.

Reliability and Validity

To ensure the study's validity and reliability the transcripts were reviewed by the subject and the coding reviewed by a content expert. The results were also triangulated with observations and previous literature on the subject area (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Results

"The pay is not good, but it has its advantages"

An attempt was made to identify the factors that evoked Kate's job satisfaction and dissatisfaction. She was asked to identify things that made her happy and satisfied at work. She responded by describing her involvement in the hiring and training process at The Orchids Hotel (a fictitious name given for the hotel where she worked on campus). She stated:

"When I was training one of the girls who works with us now, she started in May, she was the first girl that I got to interview. Laura, my boss, started letting me doing interviews, something that I really wanted, something to put in my resume. And because I work with students so closely it would be nice to know who we would hire. It was my first interview and she did wonderful and made my first interview experience so easy because she was so good. And we hired her and I started training her. Well, I trained a lot of people before, but I never got any feedback. And she said that I was the best trainer that she had ever had. I did not only tell her to do this and that, but also explained why we did so. And I felt really good."

Kate really enjoyed being empowered to make hiring decisions and train new employees. This finding also corresponds with the field data. During one observation Kate was working with two co-workers. All three were engaged in helping different customers, performing varying tasks while maintaining a constant interaction amongst each other. Kate was the most experienced of the lot, so they asked her for advice, mostly technical, such as how to use the computers and the communication device to contact the maintenance staff. Kate was very prompt and enthusiastic with answers and seemed to enjoy being needed and appreciated by her co-workers. Therefore, job empowerment and the ability to help through involvement in training can be named among the factors facilitating job satisfaction for the participant and be used as a motivating factor.

This finding is supported by previous empirical studies which conclud that factors such as job empowerment and job enrichment can result in satisfaction and improve employee retention (Hinshaw et al., 1987; Simons & Enz, 1995). More interestingly, the involvement in the training process and empowerment did not automatically lead to job satisfaction for the participant. Only when those concepts were combined with an opportunity for getting feedback, Kate experienced job satisfaction.

Therefore, it can be concluded that presence of some conditions may not be sufficient for experiencing job satisfaction. Sometimes those conditions do not work unless they are combined with some sort of a catalyst. For example, getting feedback on how the training was performed served as a catalyst for job empowerment and the ability to help to become job satisfiers for the participant.

Opportunities to build up a résumé and get diverse experiences were very important to Kate. Because most organizations prefer to hire employees with professional experience and a wide range of skills, students seek and appreciate such opportunities. As a Hotel, Restaurant, and Institution Management (HRIM) major, obtaining practical field experience and being exposed to various responsibilities were important to her and kept her employed with the hotel. Kate stated:

> *"If I was not an HRIM student, I probably would not stay. I know that they give me a lot of responsibilities and it is good on my resume. Even though it is not a formal full service hotel, but they give me a lot more opportunities than I would have in any other hotel. I know a lot of other people at hotels and they did not interview employees and do not do a lot of training. I have been lucky in that aspect."*

Such a motivator might not be appreciated by non-students, or by more experienced full-time employees working in the industry for several years, but for current students experience can be a powerful stimulus. Often times experience is the most critical factor for hiring. Most of the hospitality employers look for employees with experience and diverse skills because it means less training, which requires time and money, two things that are frequently scarce in hospitality operations. That is why student employees seek gaining experience and broadening their skills as it improves their chances for getting hired and enhances opportunities for career growth.

During the observations and on several occasions during the interviews, Kate clearly stated that she liked helping people and perceived it to be her primary role at work:

> *"You just feel really good when you help somebody out. Someone comes to the desk and they have no idea where something is on campus or something is not working in the room, when you help them out they are so grateful and that makes me feel good."*

Another factor Kate identified that she liked about her job was the unpredictable nature of work at the hotel, constantly interacting with people, that continuous element of surprise:

> *"You are always hit by surprise; it's never the same. You always get different types of customers. I like meeting new people, whether it's customers, actually more of my co-workers. It's rare when I do not get along with someone, so most of the time I become friends with them."*

One of the unexpected factors Kate identified as an advantage of working at a hotel on campus was the opportunity to do homework assignments while at work. This statement could be shocking to some practitioners as the traditional work environment often deem such behavior as unprofessional. At work, an employee is expected to perform only work-related activities. It was, therefore, a controversial statement that needed further elaboration. Kate stated:

> *"I think at this type of situation it is OK. Almost all people who work in the building are students and other people realize that. You are in the Student Union. And on top of this job you have classes. No one looks down upon it as long as you know that customer goes first and if there is a customer you give 100 % attention to him or her. It's only when you have extra time, you do your homework."*

At first, such a position could be difficult to accept, but a significant motivator for student employees, of course, if approached cautiously and reasonably by management. Allowing student employees to use downtime to do homework would not only help them deal with their class load issues, but could prove empowering as they would have to determine how to manage their time responsibly at work.

Another factor that Kate liked about her job and identified as something that made her stay with the hotel was the laid-back, rather relaxed atmosphere and casual dress code. In one of the interviews she stated her position on the matter this way:

> *"In lots of other hotel jobs you would not be able to do your homework. All*
> *blazers, skirts, and high heels. You just stand up for the majority of your shift.*
> *The Gateway is the most prestigious hotel…but I'd prefer this, the pay is not*
> *that good but it has its advantages. I can do my homework and I do not have*
> *to wear heels all the time and we can sit down."*

However, why would a dress code be an issue for a student employee? It was all about freedom. Student employees are primarily young adults and hence most are a part of the Generation Ys, persons between 14 and 29 years of age. This group often appreciates and likes freedom in all its manifestations. Any type of restrictions would not be welcomed and, hence, could negatively impact their level of job satisfaction.

To reiterate, the aspects Kate liked about her on-campus hotel job, which could serve as motivators or satisfiers for student-employees, were:

- job empowerment and enrichment opportunities
- being in a position to help others
- the unpredictable, interactive nature of the job
- the chance to expand her résumé
- the non-constraining, laid-back work environment
- the possibilities to do homework while at work .

These results support Simmons and Enz (1995) who state that one of the most important factors for hotel employees is opportunities for advancement and development. Boles et al. (1995) also suggest that realistic job enrichment, workspace characteristics, and socialization practices contribute to job satisfaction and employee retention. Similarly, Milman (2002) suggests that for hourly paid employees working in the hospitality industry, sense of fulfillment with regard to current job, working environment, flexible working hours, and interaction with people from different backgrounds are the most important factors.

However, none of the authors mentioned above examined the student employees' population. That is why addressing such aspects as building up a resume, variety of responsibilities, and opportunity to do homework at work might be of some particular interest to managers motivating students working in hospitality settings.

Disappointment and Frustration: It Is All About Management
When asked about the things she did not like about her job, sources of dissatisfaction, first, Kate named "not having control" over situation. When asked for clarification, she gave an example of what happened to her a couple of days prior to the interview. During her shift, all the elevators in the building were broken and a guest in a wheelchair could not get to his room for several hours. In an attempt to minimize the

inconvenience, Kate contacted all the departments involved in the repair process. She tried to interact with the stranded guest, so he did not feel unattended, but she still felt frustrated and helpless:

> "I did feel really bad. It was out of my control. We did what we could but still… and I tried to talk to the guy while he was waiting. I don't like when, for example, an air conditioner is broken and you are full and you cannot do anything about that. And they do not allow us to give discounts or things like that. A lot of hotels empower their employees to do that. And we cannot do that, all we can do is to say here is our manager's card, please call them and figure out some ways for your inconvenience."

For Kate not having control over the situation involved lack of authority to take corrective actions, such as to provide some sort of atonement to guests. She did not like the fact that she had to refer guests to management to resolve their problems. In that situation her dissatisfaction seemed to be caused by her superiors who did not trust student employees to take the necessary corrective action. It was expected that the student employees would keep guests happy; however, they were not given the authority to do so.

The management trust issue also came up when Kate was describing her interactions with her boss:

> "Sometimes when I get here and Laura is still here, it really irritates me. She talks all the time and she says the same things over and over again. And I have been here for a long time. I do not need to be lectured about that. I know how to do my job."

Overpatronizing usually occurs in situations when managers do not trust or believe that employees can do their jobs properly. This type of management can negatively affect employee retention. Milman (2002) suggests that employees are more inclined to be committed to organizations where they experience trust, respect, and organizational support.

On several occasions during the interviews and observations, Kate complained about scheduling issues and identified them as some of the reasons why students keep quitting:

> "The hours bother people. You tell them that they have to work a night shift and they just keep complaining about it. I do not mind to be a full-time person and work every night from 3 to10. I would have no problem with that. Or every morning, or every day, no problem either. But not a fixed schedule thing and everyone has to do graveyard… it just gets to you."

The work schedule of the student employees at The Orchids was inconsistent. Students had difficulties planning ahead because they never knew their schedule for the next two weeks. Most students working at the hotel had heavy class loads, for undergraduates between 15-18 credits (or 5-6 classes) per semester. Therefore, like other students, Kate had to constantly try to find a balance between studying and working. For her and her co-workers, it was important to be able to plan ahead and to do so they needed fixed or semi-fixed work schedules.

The interview data also revealed that management attitude toward subordinates can be a significant source of dissatisfaction for student employees. Kate believed that

management took advantage of students, their part-time status and cared little about student employees.

> *"Sometimes I feel like that management or administration does not really care. I believe they think that we are replaceable. The new person gets hired so easily that it became a mentality."*

No employee likes to feel insignificant or being taken advantage of. Commitment from employees can only be expected in a situation when managers are loyal and genuinely interested in their subordinates (Woods & Macauly, 1989). Perceived organizational support strongly influence employee commitment to an organization (Susskind, Borchgrevink, Kacmar, & Brymer, 2000).

The observations noted showed that in this particular context, the distance between top management and student employees was so wide that managers did not know their subordinates by name and vice versa. Failure on the part of management to know their employees' names could give student employees the impression that they did not care and could therefore result in their lack of commitment to the job and organization.

The absence of management's commitment not only affects student employees' loyalty, but also deteriorates the quality of customer service. Kate puts it this way:

> *"I think if they would focus on employees, employee retention, students would stay here for three or more years. Can you imagine the level of customer service that we would provide! People would be asking questions and we would not be like 'oh, I do not know I just started.' You would have people who always know what is going on, would be more committed to your job. But honestly, they do not focus on that."*

Some researchers also indicate that the front-line manager is the key to better customer service and retaining employees (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999).

The next block of dissatisfiers identified by the respondent in the interviews can be grouped under the umbrella of work conditions. These work conditions include both the physical and emotional aspects. Physical aspects include such things as "not being caged up", "a place to rest, a table to eat and a microwave", something that is not "gross". Also something that would allow some personal space "a personal mail box", "a place for a coat and to put your things."

The emotional aspect includes an environment where "every employee gets along with others," where the relationships are friendly and "teamwork is there". Simons and Enz (1995) suggest that hotel employees do not want their bosses to express sympathetic personal help (to be their parents, their buddies, or psychotherapists), what they want is good working conditions, which include a safe and clean work environment in which good relationships prevail. The data collected supports that view. As mentioned above, Kate also did not like to get sympathetic personal help from her boss (she did not like to be overpatronized), but would be very interested in a better physical and emotional work environment.

The last disappointing factors identified by Kate were not having established goals or getting any recognition for a job well done. She was disappointed that management neither defined nor communicated organizational goals and, therefore, questioned the possibility of student employees accepting and being committed to something of which

they were unclear. She also believed that management did not encourage or positively reinforced required student employees work-related behaviors:

> *"We do not get enough of it here. If you do a great job you might get a thank you, but there is no guarantee. There isn't really here any positive reinforcement."*

These findings correspond with the path-goal theory, which states that in order to motivate employees and obtain their commitment, managers must establish specific and measurable goals and explain how employees can attain those (Woods, 2006). Managers should also establish a positive reinforcement mechanism that would match employees' needs with the rewards if the desired goals are attained (Hunsaker, 2005).

CONCLUSION

The study examined factors that influenced a student employee of an on-campus lodging facility to retain his/her job. More specifically, it attempted to identify factors could make students satisfied or dissatisfied with their job. Though, as it was mentioned previously, the findings of this study have limited generalizability and some may argue that Kate's perspective may not be applicable to their situation, other hospitality practitioners may find her perspective relevant and "transferable" to their environments (Hellström, 2008). Students hold a sizable share of part-time jobs in hospitality industry and tend to have high level of turnover. Retaining this segment is often a challenge for hospitality practitioners (Milman, 2002). As Walsh and Taylor (2007) state money alone does not motivate young generation, and managers seek ways to motivate and retain employees. Therefore, additional knowledge obtained from this interpretative inquiry can help managers understand their student subordinates better and, hence, make them better equipped to create motivation strategies that would have the greatest impact on this target group.

The data showed that students indeed represent a special workforce category. Some of their work expectations and needs were similar to those of other employee groups, such as performance feedback, well-defined job responsibilities, sense of fulfillment, recognition and rewards, and relationship with management. Sense of fulfillment and development opportunities appear to be a particularly strong motivational tools as it was also reported in other similar studies (Tansky, & Cohen, 2001; Tracey & Hinkin, 2006; Walsh & Taylor, 2007).

However, there were characteristics that clearly differentiated students from other employees. Consequently, hospitality managers should take note that student employees have special needs that, if satisfied, could lead to their job satisfaction and retentions. These needs include: the opportunity to do homework at work, a fixed work schedule; extended responsibilities, and a relaxed atmosphere with casual dress code. Those motivational factors should be further investigated in future studies, as an interpretive inquiry does not provide generalizable data. Therefore, an empirical investigation should address this limitation and look into engaging a broader population of student employees. Additionally, future studies should include managers and subordinates for cross-analysis.

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