

The Effect of Gender Difference on Turnover of Hotel's Employees in China

Yun Yang and Jiannan Li

Abstract Gender equality is a national policy to promote social development in China in 1995, but gender discrimination still exists in vocational context. This paper studies the gender difference in hotels in mainland China. A survey was carried out with a structured questionnaire to gather career information from a sample of 1,436 employees working in four hotels. The data were then analyzed using a range of descriptive and evaluative techniques. Results show that hotel hires much more females than males owing to its service functions; a number of positions are traditionally perceived as male job and accordingly excluded from female consideration, including engineering department and security department. Married females and males usually choose to remain in service work, but unmarried staffs are inclined to leave. These findings have implications on employment for individuals and organizations.

Keywords Gender difference · Actual turnover · Star hotels

1 Introduction

Since the middle of the twentieth century, the process of gender equality has made significant progress. In 1964, the United States formulated the Fair Bill of Right, followed by Anti-Discrimination Act and other related legislations formulated by other developed countries. These legislations have aimed to protect rights and

Y. Yang (✉) · J. Li

School of Tourism Management, Center for Tourism Planning and Research,
Sun Yat-Sen University, Guangzhou, China
e-mail: yangyunzs@163.com

J. Li

e-mail: lijianandd2011@163.com

development opportunities of women and other disadvantaged groups (Guo 2011). In 1995, China put the Equality of Men and Women as a basic state policy to promote social development, demonstrating that the importance of female human resources in economical and social development has been increasingly prominent. Especially, with the rapid development of the service industry nowadays, a large number of women enter into service and other tertiary industry by virtue of gender advantages, which further increase the female overall employment rate. However, the gender inequality of labor market in employment and wage aspects begins to appear (Huang and Fan 2011). Therefore, the effect of gender discrimination in Chinese professional context on employee behavior deserves further study.

The hotel belongs to labor-intensive industries, thus human resource is one of the core competitiveness. It is beneficial for hotels to retain skilled employees who can provide for customers satisfied quality and service. However, the turnover rate of hotel employees is generally higher at present, which is the important problem troubling the hotel managers. Globally, the turnover rate in the hotel is estimated to range from 60 to 300 % annually, which is far higher than the 34.7 % annual turnover rate reported in the manufacturing industry (Walker and Miller 2010; Jersey et al. 2007). At the organizational level, there is strong evidence that both business and subliminal effects of high turnover include replacement and recruitment costs and regular guests expect to recognize people and are likely to follow favorite staff to another organization (Deery and Iverson 1996; Manley 1996). Therefore, this paper will select hotels, which are characterized with abundant female human resources, as the research object to study the influence of employees' gender difference on turnover.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Gender Difference in the Hotel

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, gender difference becomes an important research field in management science, attracting wide attention of scholars. As to gender discrimination, the current scholars mainly discuss about whether gender inequality exists or not in the workplace and what is reason for existence; the influence of females and gender proportion on the enterprise performance (Hellerstein et al. 2002; Hinkin and Tracey 2000); gender difference of leadership style; the comparison of the male and female entrepreneurs; career development of female employees (Yang 2011; Morrisson and Jutting 2005), etc. On the basis of gender discrimination, economic model put forward by the economic community, foreign scholars find that gender discrimination still exists in the workplace through a large number of empirical researches from the perspectives of employment opportunity, recruitment process, promotion opportunity, salary reward, career development prospect, the perception of working environment, etc. In a study on gender discrimination of the Turkey and the British bank industry, Özbilgin and Woodward (2004) found that corporation values, human resources policies, and corporation

culture determine the staff evaluation and there are obvious gender difference for top management in salary, benefit, and opportunities of hot positions. Besides, they argued that the social institution had significant effect on gender inequality. In a study on retail corporations in British, Lane (2005) found out that with the customer relationship management became more and more popular, strategic management of retail corporations had changed from the traditional control executed by the sales managers on the basis of income to closer control built between sales, corporations, and managers on the basis of behaviors. In the transformation process, performance of female sales managers was significantly better than that of males.

In mainland China, scholars have found that female workers are more engaged in lower technology, responsibility, status, and income occupations, such as health care, cultural entertainment, retail, and catering industry; the proportion of women workers is relatively lower in higher technology, responsibility, status, and income occupations, and even it is decreasing in relative to males (Hu 2006; Li 2005; Yang 2008).

2.2 Turnover in the Hotel

Turnover in the hospitality sector has been the focus of many researches (Wasmuth and Davis 1983; Hogan 1992; Hinkin and Tracey 2000; Simons and Hinkin 2001). Because the employee turnover is strongly associated with decreased profits (Simons and Hinkin 2001), many researches have sought to uncover causes and provide solutions to hospitality employee turnover (Wood and Macaulay 1989; Hogan 1992; Poulston 2005). Empirical evidences show that individual variables, which highlight the qualities of an individual itself during his work life tenure in an organization, are related to the turnover rate of an organization (Kazi et al. 2011), but these researches center on turnover intentions instead of actual turnover. Although studies on turnover have shown that turnover intention is the best immediate predictor of voluntary turnover (Griffeth et al. 2000; Lambert et al. 2001; Price 2001), turnover intentions do not lead to actual turnover. So this paper wants to study the influence of gender difference on actual turnover in mainland China.

3 Hypothesis and Design

3.1 Hypothesis About Gender Difference in the Hotel

The gender inequality of employment is against principles of justice, openness and fairness in market economy, which gives rise to foreign researchers' concerns. Employers' discrimination theory and human capital theory are main theories to explain gender discrimination in vocational situation.

Employers' discrimination theory holds that the gender inequality in labor market includes professional discrimination and wage discrimination. Professional discrimination means under the same conditions, females cannot find the same

level occupations and more likely to be hired in the positions requiring lower individual actual ability. Wage discrimination means males and females engaged in the same job cannot enjoy the same wage, welfare, and promotion treatment.

Human capital theory argues that the difference of labor income depends on the investment of human capital. Owing to historical and social gender discrimination behaviors exist, females receive less education opportunities than males, leading to their involvement of cultural knowledge and skills is less than males, and thus their competitiveness is absolutely weaker than males in the labor market. As we know that work experience and professional transformation is one of the main ways of human capital increment, female human capital increment, which suffers difficulty, is exactly result of less opportunities of professional mobility and transformation. Besides, female human capital increment is influenced by childbearing, caring for children, balancing work and family, etc. Therefore, females are mostly located in positions acquiring lower skills. Tharenou et al. (1994) argued that females had less human capital reservation in education and work experience which displayed lower wages level and the limited promotion space encountered by females in reality.

In accordance with the employer discrimination theory and human capital theory, this paper put forward the following hypothesis.

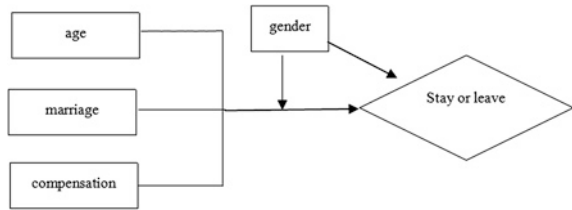
Hypothesis 1: Females account for high proportion in low-income jobs, compared with high-income positions;

Hypothesis 2: Engaged in the same jobs, females have lower salary than males.

3.2 Hypothesis About Relationship of Gender Difference and Actual Turnover in the Hotel

Discrete choice models, including the initiated choice (turnover choice) models and the passive choice (under objective pressure) models, are suitable to predict the voluntary turnover (Hong et al. 2007). Discrete choice models, which are not only based on the characteristics of choosers (individual performance) but also the attributes of each alternative, are used to predict choices of alternatives between turnover and retention. Kim and Arbel (1998) applied the logit model to predict merger target selection for a hospitality company, and claimed that the logit model can be used as a supplementary decision-supporting tool. Turnover is usually influenced by work and non-work factors, but researches about turnover have primarily concentrated on work-related variables, such as job performance, organizational commitment (Mobley 1982; Hong et al. 2007). Compensation refers to all forms of tangible and intangible benefits that a hotel provides to his employees for rendering their service. Compensation can be used to express job performance. Numerous studies have addressed the impact of employee compensation, rewards and recognition on turnover, and retention in hospitality firms (Cho et al. 2006; Milman 2003; Milman and Ricci 2004; Walsh and Taylor 2007). The variables which are composed of non-work influences on turnover are age, number of dependent children, and race/ethnicity (Levinson 1978; Sparrow 2000). In mainland China, the traditional family division of labor pattern, “men’s work centers around outside,

Fig. 1 Research structure of voluntary turnover



women’s work centers around the home,” needs females to shoulder the family life and keep work stability.

In accordance with the studies of former researchers, this paper put forward the following hypothesis:

- Hypothesis 3: Employee salary has a significant negative influence on employee actual turnover;
- Hypothesis 4: The turnover rate of males is significantly different from that of females;
- Hypothesis 5: The turnover rate of married females is significantly lower than that of unmarried females;
- Hypothesis 6: The turnover rate of married males is nonsignificantly different from that of unmarried males;

The following Fig. 1 is research structure of voluntary turnover, which displays that age, marriage, compensation, and gender have direct effect on turnover or retention, furthermore, gender is a moderator between age, marriage, compensation, and turnover or retention.

3.3 Study Design

The hotel industry in Guangdong Province is prosperous, with 954 star hotels ranking the first in China and the management level and economic benefit of hotels being also located in the national front row. Data were collected from employees in four five-star hotels in Guangdong Province. Employees were asked to fill in a questionnaire composed of four parts as follows, (1) Questions on demographic characteristics of employees, including the gender, age, education background, marital status, birthplace, etc.; (2) Questions on job characteristics of employees, including department, position level, work tenure, current position tenure, etc.; (3) Questions on salary and welfare of employees, including base pay, accumulation funds, pension, etc.; (4) Questions on actual turnover of employees (whether leave the hotel or stay in late December 2011).

A total of 2,200 questionnaires were distributed from June 2011 to November 2011. Among the 2,003 returned questionnaires, incomplete questionnaires and questionnaires filled by interns were excluded. There were 1,436 valid questionnaires which accounted for 61.2 % of 2,003 returned questionnaires.

Department characteristics of samples are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Department characteristics of samples

Department	Sample size	Proportion	Male		Female		On-the-job employees number	Male proportion of department (%)
			Sample size	Proportion of department (%)	Sample size	Proportion of department (%)		
Security	117	8.1	115	98.3	2	1.7	50	98
Finance	68	4.7	18	26.5	50	73.5	44	22.7
Purchase	15	1.1	11	73.3	4	26.7	9	55.6
Food and beverage	628	43.7	353	56.2	275	43.8	249	48.2
Assistant manager	6	0.4	3	50.0	3	50.0	4	50.0
Development	18	1.3	10	55.6	8	44.4	5	60.0
Rooms division	197	13.7	33	16.8	164	83.2	108	15.7
Engineering	101	7.0	96	95	5	5	55	90.9
Front office	162	11.3	66	40.7	96	59.3	57	42.1
Human resources	40	2.8	14	35	26	65	21	14.3
Sales	36	2.5	12	33.3	24	66.7	25	24
Laundry	25	1.7	8	32	17	68	22	31.8
Executive office	20	1.4	11	55.0	9	45	16	56.3
Null	3	0.2	2	66.7	1	33.3	2	50.0
Total	1,436	100.0	752	52.4	684	47.6	667	45.9

4 Result

4.1 Females Dominant in the Hotel, Male Turnover Rate Higher Than Females'

The hotel industry provides intangible service primarily. Female employees pay more attention to others' feelings, have strong communication skill, and are good listeners, thus more easily communicating with other staffs and customers (Yang 2008). Consequently, the proportion of females engaged in hotel work is higher. It is showed on Table 1 that in this research, there were 752 males and 684 females among 1,436 hotel employees investigated, however, by the end of December 2011, there were 306 males and 361 females among 667 on-the-job hotel employees, namely, during half a year, turnover rate of male employees was 59.3 , while that of female employees was 47.2 %, indicating that male employment rate is higher in Chinese hotel industry. Although managers in Chinese hotel industry generally realized that reducing turnover rate employees could save labor costs and keep the same quality of service, staff turnover rate is still very high and male turnover rate is higher than females'.

4.2 Internal Positions of the Hotel Divided into Male Positions and Female Positions

With gender discrimination in professional context being influenced by the social gender culture, management positions of hotels in China are divided into male positions and female positions. Females are usually not engaged in male positions or some positions where they are required to manage many more male employees, such as security department, kitchen and engineering department. No matter general managers, female managers or male managers, all of them think security department and engineering department are male positions, not suitable for females (Yang 2011), therefore, few females are engaged in such positions. In this research, females engaged in such positions are mostly responsible for organizing internal materials and passing on messages. However, room division, marketing department, human resources department, front office department, finance department, and food and beverage department are considered to be more suitable for females and be best career paths for females. So, more female employees are engaged in such departments.

4.3 Female Salary Generally Lowers than Males' and Females Accounting for Higher Proportion in Low-Income Job Positions

Job position level of the hotel has been usually set for grassroots employees, technicians, the first-line managers, middle managers, and top managers from lower level to higher level, and salary also sequentially increases in accordance

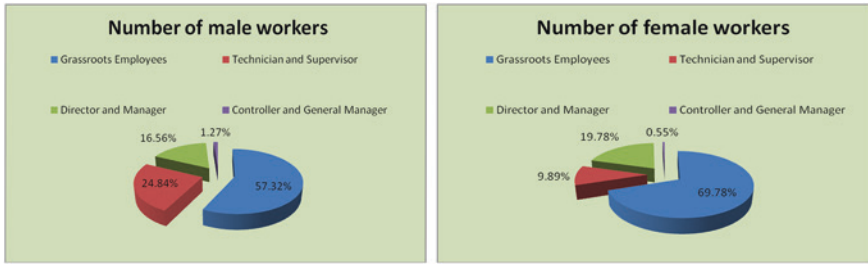


Fig. 2 The number of male and female hotel workers in different position level

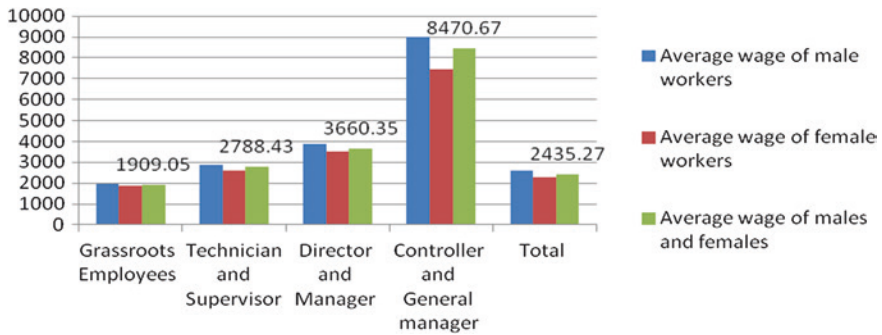


Fig. 3 Average monthly wage of male and female hotel workers

with job position level. Figure 2 reflects that almost 70 % of female employees are engaged in all kinds of grassroots waiter work, far higher than proportion of male employees. Additionally, salary earned from all kinds of grassroots waiter work is obviously lower than other positions. Therefore, females account for higher proportion in low-income job positions, that is, hypothesis 1 is established. Figure 3 reflects that average monthly wage of males is obviously higher than that of females, which are 2,592.9 and 2,299.29 yuan respectively, and male average monthly wage is higher than females’ in every position level. Besides, ANOVA indicates that gender shows significant difference in monthly wage ($F = 6.663$, $Sig. < 0.010$). As a result, female salary is generally lower than males’.

4.4 Male and Female Salary not Showing Significant Difference in the Same Job Position

Basically, there does not exist wage discrimination in Chinese hotel industry, with male and female salary not showing significant difference in the same job position. Table 2 reflects that staff salary of different departments is significantly different, but that of the same department does not, that is, hypothesis 2 is not established.

Table 2 Average wage of male and female workers in different departments (Unit: Yuan)

Department	Security	Finance	Purchase	Food and beverage	Front office	Development	Room division
Average wage of on-the-job males	2,188.22	2,702.00	2,618.80	2,678.63	2,130.00	8,556.00	1,903.24
Average wage of on-the-job females	2,200.00	2,397.81	2,081.00	2,120.98	2,512.25	11,400	2,136.84
Male average wage including leaving ones	1,794.24	2,328.33	3,057.82	1,946.00	1,590.33	3,993.80	1,724.84
Female average wage including leaving ones	1,775.00	2,047.87	2,081.00	1,783.95	1,940.32	4,505.50	1,738.22
Department		Engineering	Human resource	Executive office	Assistant manager	Marketing	Laundry
Average wage of on-the-job males		2,732.96	3,784.33	2,471.11	2,655.00	2,991.20	2,685.67
Average wage of on-the-job females		3,174.00	2,274.44	3,166.86	2,983.00	2,753.21	1,736.00
Male average wage including leaving ones		2,205.48	2,439.26	2,460.91	2,733.33	2,696.45	2,556.29
Female average wage including leaving ones		3,174.00	2,047.44	2,663.11	2,455.33	2,648.79	1,661.18

Through the interview to human resource managers, it is found that the salary difference between male employees and female employees in same department mainly depends on seniority, education degree, skills, and job performance. In addition, comparing average wage of on-the-job employees with that of leaving employees, Table 2 finds that leaving employees are significantly influenced by salary factors, with average wage of most departments rising significantly after part of employees having left. Through the interview to employees, it is found that many employees consider wage level as a scale measuring their own value—the higher the hotel pays for their salary, the more their contribution to the hotel is recognized.

4.5 Marital Status Influencing Significantly Employee Turnover

This study assumes that the state S_i , for each employee observation, appears absolute certainty in the turnover prediction models. Thus, let $S_i = 1$, when an employee has left the hotel, in contrast, let $S_i = 0$, when an employee remains in the hotel. The logit is $P = -2.109 + 0.001 \text{ wage} + (-0.668) \text{ gender} (1) + (-0.646) \text{ married} (1)$. In addition to salary, gender and marital status have significant effect on employees actual turnover (Table 3). Given that job-hopping will cause unstable family income, and lead to build interpersonal relationship more difficultly, married employees are more willing to be stable and even if not very satisfied with their work, they will not easily choose job-hopping. Unmarried employees are inclined to freedom, do not want to be engaged in dull service job with big workload, and have lower turnover costs, which cause the higher turnover rate. Therefore, hypothesis 3, hypothesis 4, and hypothesis 5 are established, however, hypothesis 6 is not. Hosmer and Lemeshow Test (Table 4) indicates that the fitting degree of the model are not so

Table 3 Variables in the equation

		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95 % C.I. for EXP(B)	
		–	–	–	–	–	–	Lower	Upper
Step 1a	Wage	0.001	0.000	140.900	1	0.000	1.001	1.001	1.001
	Marry	–	–	10.968	2	0.004	–	–	–
	Married	–0.646	0.722	0.801	1	0.371	0.524	0.127	2.158
	Divorce	–0.028	0.705	0.002	1	0.969	0.973	0.244	3.876
	Age	0.015	0.009	2.654	1	0.103	1.015	0.997	1.034
	Gender	–0.668	0.125	28.631	1	0.000	0.513	0.402	0.655
	Constant	–2.109	0.811	6.763	1	0.009	0.121	–	–

Table 4 Hosmer and Lemeshow test

Step	Chi-square	df	Sig.
1	104.003	8	0.000

ideal. Except for wage, gender, marriage and age, the influences of other factors such as job characteristics, job satisfaction and organization commitment degree should also be considered.

5 Conclusion and Discussion

Along with formulation and implementation of “the Equality of Men and Women,” and implementation of “People-oriented Business Philosophy” in China, the development of female human resources has attracted more and more attention; however, female career development in the enterprises is still confronted with barriers. This paper has select hotels, which are characterized with abundant female human resources, as the research object to study female employment characteristics in the hotel industry. The results of the study show that female salary is generally lower than males’ and females account for higher proportion in low-income job positions; some departments in the hotel industry, like the engineering department and security department, are considered to be male positions which only the males are competent of and are basically excluded from female consideration; married staffs usually choose to remain in service work and their turnover rate is low; unmarried females and males are inclined to leave and male turnover rate is higher than females’. Difference between male and female salary is not significant in the same job position, thus the phenomenon of wage discrimination does not highlight. Professional discrimination, human capital theory, and the traditional gender role concept are main theories to explain professional difference of males and females.

In order to promote equality between men and women and encourage more females to enter management positions, on the one hand, we should change, “men’s work centers around outside, women’s work centers around the home,” the traditional family division of labor pattern, which can reduce female burden in the family life and provide them with more opportunities to display their potential ability. On the other hand, we should change professional discrimination. Learning from female employees in foreign hotel industry, women in China should be brave to be engaged in and manage engineering department, security department, etc. Society and enterprises should actively create a good cultural atmosphere and policy environment to promote female career development and to make effort to eliminate various human gender segregations.

In order to reduce unmarried staff turnover rate, it is essential to make rich the spare life of hotel organizations. Some interaction activities among employees, such as fellowship, sports competition, and team training, are not only beneficial to strengthen cohesive force and the sense of belonging of unmarried staff to the hotel organizations, but also to express the care for employees. Besides, perfect promotion mechanism could give more promotion opportunities to talented young people, which makes them aware that hard work could get superiors or leadership recognition so that they are more willing to stay and work for hotels.

Salary is a main factor to cause staff turnover, especially unmarried staff turnover of hotel industry. So the hotel should reform salary management, for example, the formulation of salary should be in accordance with employee performance and ability—if employees have better performance and strong ability to work, to service, and to deal with an emergency, their salary should be higher. Owing to unmarried employees are more concerned with material income like salary, basic salary setting of the hotel should refer to other industries to change the situation of obviously lower wage. Besides, learning from foreign hotel industry, first-class hotels in China should advocate tips system, making tip income as supplement of staff income, in order to encourage employees to provide satisfied service and improve their work sense of honor.

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