

# Polychronicity and Intrinsic Motivation as Dispositional Determinants on Hotel Frontline Employees' Job Satisfaction: Do Control Variables Make a Difference?

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## Abstract

This empirical study aims to investigate the effect of polychronicity (POLY) and intrinsic motivation (INT) as dispositional antecedents on frontline employees' (FLEs) job satisfaction (JSAT) in hotel setting in North Cyprus. PLS method was used to analyze the hypothesized relationships. This paper presented an integrative model to test the aforementioned effects and relationships. The findings depicted that there was a positive significant relationship between INT and JSAT. On the other hand, the relationship between POLY and JSAT was not significant. Education as a control variable was found to be negatively related to FLEs' job satisfaction. Also, tenure was found to be positively related with job satisfaction. In the hospitality management literature, there is a paucity of empirical research conducted to examine the impact of POLY and INT on JSAT. Therefore, the current study provides implications for managers and lends further contributions to the related literature as well.

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*Keywords:* Frontline employees, Hotels, Polychronicity, Intrinsic motivation, North Cyprus, Job satisfaction

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## Introduction

In the hospitality industry, companies face human resource challenges, such as recruiting qualified employees, controlling a high turnover rates, and paying low wages (Dittman, 1999; Araslı & Daskin, 2012). Because the external value and service success of service firms depends on frontline employees' (FLEs) job satisfaction who engage in face-to-face interactions with customers and keeping these employees in organizations for a long period of time become one of the most critical issue in the service industry (Chebat et al., 2002; Karatepe & Uludag, 2007). Previous studies have indicated that job satisfaction is significantly related to customer focus,

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customer orientation (Hoffman & Ingram, 1992), and customer satisfaction (Spinelli & Canavos, 2000). Job satisfaction is defined as an employee's overall affective state resulting from an appraisal of all aspects of his or her job (Babin & Boles, 1998; Hartline & Ferrell, 1996). Satisfaction judgments capture the extent to which an employee feels pleased, happy, and rewarded, or displeased, unhappy, and exploited. Further, satisfied employees deliver the company's promise by creating a favorable image and striving to provide better services than their competitors (Malhotra & Mukherjee, 2004). Therefore, better service quality leads increased profitability because of an increase in the number of guests, length of stay, and money spent by guests who use hotel facilities and services (Davis, 2005).

This is more important for new developing tourism destinations like North Cyprus where the tourism and hospitality industry constitutes an essential part of the economy and a significant portion of the overall gross national product (Alipour & Kilic, 2005; Altinay et al., 2002). Though North Cyprus has comparative advantages of beautiful attractions and full potential of various types of tourism alternatives to its destination, it fails to attract the significant number of tourists. Because the recent studies have revealed that North Cyprus tourism has been facing serious managerial problems such as companies face human resource challenges, scarcity of organizational resources, and poor service quality (Alipour & Kilic, 2005; Arasli et al., 2006; Arasli & Karadal, 2009; Daskin, 2012; Daskin & Tezer, 2012; Kilic & Okumus, 2005).

In this regard, competitive organizations need to focus on hiring and retaining employees who are helpful, engaged, and cooperative, often beyond the call of duty. According to Amabile et al. (1994), intrinsically motivated behavior is self-initiated: someone undertakes an activity for its own sake. The activity-itself is interesting and results in feelings of accomplishment and self-fulfillment. Consistent with the Conservation of Resources theory, intrinsic motivation is one of the personal characteristics that may aid stress resistance (Hobfoll, 1989). The nature of the hospitality industry requires employees in frontline service jobs to engage in a number of tasks in challenging service encounters. This is not surprising, because FLEs are the face of a hospitality firm and are expected to deliver quality services to customers and deal with customer requests and problems successfully (Karatepe & Kilic, 2007). Under these circumstances, it seems that hospitality managers need to acquire and retain a pool of frontline employees who can display meticulous efforts for accomplishing various tasks (Cetinel et al., 2009). FLEs remain underpaid, undertrained, and overworked (Arasli et al., 2006; Daskin, 2011; Daskin & Tezer, 2012; Karatepe & Sokmen, 2006). Specifically, this is the reality of hotel sector in developing countries like North Cyprus, employment of intrinsically-motivated and polychronic individuals may play a significant role in this process. Also, there is a paucity of empirical research on these employee characteristics in the hotel industry. With this realization, the need for this research is accentuated by prominent characteristics (intrinsic motivation and polychronicity) of FLEs due to their boundary-spanning roles in hotel organizations.

Against this backdrop, this empirical study aims to investigate the effect of polychronicity (POLY) and intrinsic motivation (INT) as dispositional antecedents on frontline employees' (FLEs) job satisfaction (JSAT) in hotel setting in North Cyprus. The current study provides implications for managers and lends further contributions to the related literature as well.

## **Conceptual model and research hypotheses**

The present study develops and tests a model that sheds light on the impact of polychronicity and intrinsic motivation as antecedents on FLEs' job satisfaction (see figure 1).

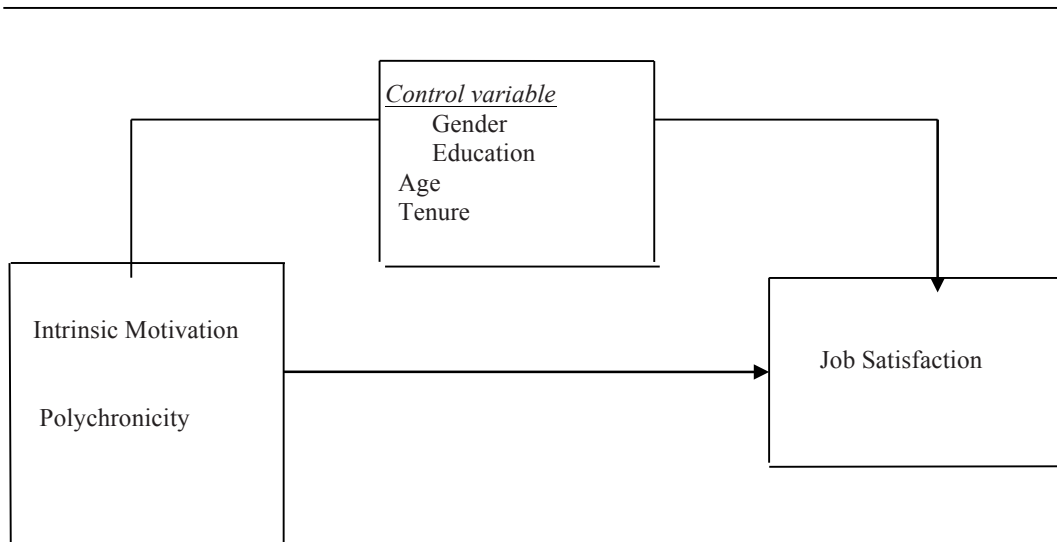


Figure 1. Conceptual model of job satisfaction

In the next section, the current study presents the specific hypotheses that guide the study. Then, the study discusses the research method and findings. The study concludes with the implications of the results and directions for future research.

### ***The effect of intrinsic motivation on job satisfaction***

Intrinsic motivation refers to an individual's 'feeling of challenge or competence derived from performing a job' (Keaveney, 1992: 151). Among various types of motivation, intrinsic motivation has been noted as having a large effect on employee attitudes (Deci & Ryan, 2004). Specifically, Lu (1999) reported that intrinsic motivation (feelings of accomplishment and self-fulfillment) exerted a significant positive effect on the job satisfaction of working adults. Low et al. (2001) also found that intrinsic motivation was positively associated with the job satisfaction of salespeople. Empirical evidence from the hospitality management literatures reveals that intrinsically motivated employees demonstrate desirable outcomes such as heightened job satisfaction (Karatepe & Uludag, 2007). Further, conceptual evidence indicates that intrinsically-motivated employees are innovative and high performers in the workplace (Miller, 2002). Gagne and Deci (2005) suggested that employees with high intrinsic motivation were more involved in their jobs and demonstrated greater goal attainment than those who were less intrinsically motivated. Based on the aforementioned discussion, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 1:* Intrinsic motivation is positively related to job satisfaction.

### ***The effect of polychronicity on job satisfaction***

Polychronicity refers to “the extent to which people in a culture: (1) prefer to be engaged in two or more tasks or events simultaneously; and (2) believe their preference is the best way to do things” (Bluedorn et al., 1999, p. 207). Polychronic individuals prefer to be involved in several tasks in a given period of time, while monochronic individuals prefer to complete a single task at a time before taking on another task (Conte & Gintoft, 2005). There have been only a few studies attempting to investigate the relationship between polychronicity and job satisfaction. Arndt et al. (2006) conducted an empirical study using 313 retail employees to examine the relationship between polychronicity and job satisfaction. They found that front-line employees with a polychronic-orientation had a direct and positive effect in predicting job satisfaction. In particular, employees in a service organization such as a hotel are not only constantly faced with uncertain and unpredictable situations such as irate customers and special requests (Bitner et al., 1990), but are also expected to work more quickly within a limited time. Similarly, Jang and George (2012) reported a positive relationship between polychronicity and job satisfaction for a sample of hotel employees. Thus, the following hypothesis was proposed.

*Hypothesis 2:* Polychronicity is positively related to job satisfaction.

## **Methodology**

### ***Sample and data collection***

The most recent tourism statistics of North Cyprus reveal that there are fifteen 3-, six 4-, and fifteen 5-star hotels in North Cyprus. Although these hotels constitute 25% of all the accommodation establishments in North Cyprus, they have bed capacity of 13,495 beds which accounts for 69% of total bed capacity nation-wide (North Cyprus Tourism & Planning Office, 2012). The sample in this study consisted of FLEs (e.g., front desk agents, room attendants, food servers, and concierges) in 3-, 4-, and 5-star hotels in North Cyprus. All these 36 hotels were contacted to ascertain the population size of frontline employees (including supervisors) and obtain permission for administering the survey, but only 30 hotel establishments were included in the survey. This provides an overall 83% sampling ratio among 3-, 4-, and 5-star hotels. According to the participant hotels, nearly half of the total employees, between 45% and 55%, work in frontline positions.

Before making any attempt to collect data from the participant hotels, the research team contacted an executive manager of a particular hotel that they have personal relations to pilot-test the questionnaire with 10 FLEs. Following the pilot-study, the researchers decided not to make any changes on the original questionnaire either in terms of format or the content. Moreover, the research team distributed the questionnaires personally to 500 FLEs who were willing to participate in this research. When the questionnaires were collected from those hotels, it was found out that 319 of them in total were returned, but 2 were unusable due to substantial amount

of missing data. In this research, the total number of usable questionnaires was 317 and the response rate was calculated to be 63.4%.

### ***Questionnaire development and measures***

Several sources from the literature were used in preparing the questionnaire for the present research. The questions of the survey were initially prepared in English and then translated to Turkish using the back-translation method (McGorry, 2000). The survey instrument used in the current study was composed of two parts. The first part consisted of 13 questions that related to INT, POLY, and JSAT. Based on an extensive literature review, measurements for the related constructs were adopted from existing measures.

All measures used a 5-point Likert-type scale that ranged from ‘5’ = ‘strongly agree’ to ‘1’ ‘strongly disagree’. The second part of the survey was composed of four demographic questions: age, gender, education, and organizational tenure. Age, education, and tenure were measured using a 5-point scale. Gender was coded as dichotomous variables (0=male and 1=female).

A 4-item scale developed by Low et al. (2001) was used to measure INT. Sample item from this scale is “When I perform my job well, it contributes to my personal growth and development”. Prior research studies demonstrated that this item scale has satisfactory psychometric properties (Karatepe & Uludag, 2007). POLY was measured using four items derived from Bluedorn et al. (1999a). A sample item from this scale is “I believe people should try to do many things at once”. Also, previous research studies depicted that this measurement had adequate internal consistency (Arndt et al., 2006; Jang & George, 2012). A five-item scale developed by Babin and Boles (1998) was used to measure JSAT. A sample item from this scale is “My job is very worthwhile”. Prior research studies demonstrated that this item scale has satisfactory psychometric properties (Arasli et al., 2006).

### ***Procedure***

Partial Least Squares (PLS) was used to analyze the data in this study. The PLS method is used to examine the significance of the relationships of research constructs. PLS can be used for models with either reflective, formative, or both types of indicators (Fornell & Bookstein, 1982). Further, PLS estimates all path coefficients and structural models simultaneously (Chin, 1998). Finally, average variance extracted (AVE) was utilized to assess convergent validity and reliability was measured in terms of composite reliability.

## **Results**

### ***Descriptive statistics***

The majority of respondents, 59.6%, in this study were male and 40.4% were female. Nearly three-quarters of the respondents also tended to be reasonably younger, under 34 years old, such that, they were spread across all age groups with 32.2% between the ages of 18 and 25, 39.4% between the ages of 26 and 33, 20.5% between the ages of 34 and 41, 6.0% between the ages of 42 and 49, and 1.9% of the respondents were 50 years or older. Education level of the respondents was 26.8% primary and secondary school graduates, 71.9% undergraduate and vocational school degrees, and 1.3% had master degrees. The years of service of respondents

were 33.9% between 1-3 years, 37.8% between 4-7 years, 18.6% between 8-11 years, 6.9% between 12-15 years, and 2.8% more than 15 years.

### ***Measurement model***

Due to the self-report nature of the survey, common method variance is identified as a potential issue. All of the self-report items were entered into a principal components factor analysis with varimax rotation. According to this test, if a single factor emerges or one factor accounts for more than 50% of the variance in the variables, common method variance is present (Podsakoff, et al., 2003). Our analysis showed that no general factor was present. Also, any highly correlated variables are evidence of common method bias – usually results in extremely high correlations ( $r > .90$ ) (Bagozzi et al., 1991). There was not highly correlated variables in the current study as well.

The adequacy of the measurement model was also evaluated based on reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Using the statistical software, reliabilities of the scales were assessed after the normality test. The composite reliability measures for the components were above the cutoff point of .70, which indicates that items are free from random error and internal consistency was adequate (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Also, the factor loadings for each variable were calculated using confirmatory factor analysis and all items loaded on respective constructs, except for one polychronicity item, since its loading was not adequate. Factor loadings were greater than .60, which suggests satisfactory convergent validity. Additionally, average variances extracted (AVE) for all study variables were above the minimum threshold of .50 (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Chin, 1998; Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

The items corresponding to each construct were summed and averaged to obtain a composite score that represents that construct. Because no correlation coefficient was above 0.90, the results indicate that all constructs were distinct variables that represent different constructs (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Additionally, measures are also considered to have adequate discriminant validity when the square root of the average variance extracted, computed for each construct, is larger than the correlation between the construct and any other construct in the proposed model (Chin, 1998; Fornell & Larcker, 1981). All diagonal values were above the inter-construct correlations, thus yielded adequate discriminant validity.

### ***Structural model results and hypotheses testing***

To analyze the hypothesized relationships, a PLS method was used. A bootstrapping technique (with 500 resamples) was applied to compute the  $t$ -statistics and test for path significance (Chin, 1998). Table 4 portrays the path coefficients, their significance, and the  $R^2$  values of endogenous variables. The path coefficients shows the strengths of the relationships between the independent and dependent variables while the  $R^2$  value measures the predictive power of a model for the dependent variables.

Hypothesis 1 stated that intrinsic motivation has a significant positive relationship with FLEs' job satisfaction. Path analysis indicated that the path from INT to JSAT was significant and positive. Hypothesis 1 was therefore supported. Hypothesis 2 suggested that polychronicity is positively related to FLEs' job satisfaction. Path analysis indicated that the path from POLY to JSAT was not significant. In this case, Hypothesis 2 was rejected.



INT and POLY jointly explained 28% of the variance in JSAT. When control variables were included in the model, the explained variance became 29%. This means that the control variables improved the explained variance by 1%. However, only education and job tenure had a statistically significant effect on JSAT. As indicated in table 1, FLEs having longer tenure reported higher levels of satisfaction and employees having higher level education reported lower levels of satisfaction.

Table 1. PLS structural model results

Control variables and hypothesized relationships	Path coefficients	t-values	Supported/Not supported
<b>(I) Impact on job satisfaction</b>			
Gender	0.02	1.03	Not applicable
Age	0.04	1.45	Not applicable
Education	-0.12	-3.11*	Applicable
Job tenure	0.08	2.20*	Applicable
H1 INT → JSAT	0.21	4.79*	Supported
H2 POLY → JSAT	0.06	1.88	Not Supported
$R^2$ before the inclusion of control variables = 28%			
$R^2$ after the inclusions of control variables = 29%			

\*Age, education, and tenure were measured using 5-point scales. Higher scores indicate older age, more educated, and longer tenure. Gender was coded as a binary variable (0 = male and 1= female). INT=intrinsic motivation, POLY=polychronicity, JSAT= job satisfaction.

\* The t-values demonstrate a statistically significant relationship at the 0.05 level or better. The other t-values without any asterisks are insignificant.

## Conclusion

### Discussion

This study developed and tested a model by using a sample of frontline employees in North Cyprus as its setting to investigate the impacts of POLY and INT on FLEs' JSAT. While the relationship between INT and JSAT was significant, on the other hand, the relationship between POLY and JSAT was not significant.

The findings concerning the effects of intrinsic motivation on job satisfaction was concordant with the study hypothesis and previous research (e.g., Karatepe & Uludag, 2007; Low et al., 2001). These findings depicts that intrinsically motivated FLEs are more satisfied with their jobs.

Contrary to expectations, polychronicity was not found to be a predictor of job satisfaction. This finding is not consistent with previous research by Jang and George (2012) and Arndt et al. (2006). Although there is sound theoretical reason why polychronicity should predict job satisfaction, the current empirical evidence indicates otherwise. The argument for why these constructs should relate to one another stems from the idea that individuals who prefer to multitask and believe multitasking is the best way to complete a task (i.e., polychronic) should

be more comfortable, satisfied, and less stressed when in an environment that requires them to multitask (Kaufman et al., 1991). For polychronics, the level of satisfaction was proposed to mitigate (and for monochronics, exacerbate) the anxiety provoked by a multitasking situation that, by its nature, is stimulating and challenging. The lack of a significant relationship between these two constructs suggests that this logic may not hold.

### ***Managerial implications***

Practically, this paper provides useful guidelines to implement effective management practices and improve organizational outcomes. The current study shows that today intrinsic motivational factors are as important as the external motivational factors while in the past mostly external factors dominated. This depends on the changes occurring in the environment and that a new generation is entering the workplace, but in the end both are needed to motivate individuals. The present study revealed that intrinsic motivation enhances FLEs' job satisfaction. Bryan et al. (2006) and Kiger (2006) explain that managers need to hire the right person that is most suitable for a certain job, value its employees and support them in making contributions to the organizations and always try to create a motivated work force. Motivated employees do not only create a good working environment, they also make noteworthy contributions to the organization.

We derive several practical implications from our study. First, cultivating intrinsic motivation is an enduring process that enhances employee satisfaction. In apparent recognition of these findings, managers should establish reasonable standards for quality service delivery, establish trust among staff, offer career opportunities, and, where necessary, delegate authority to enhance FLEs' intrinsic motivation, which will also increase extra-role customer service behaviors and thus organizational performance. also managers should make their employees feel like business partners and use empowerment in order to make the workforce and the surrounding environment into a place where employees feel good as well as creating a work where from employees feel good inside.

Managers should consider creating a pool of intrinsically motivated candidates by offering career opportunities to their prospective employees. Because, there are limited resources in hotel organizations of North Cyprus, this makes intrinsically motivated FLEs more reasonable human resource. For intrinsic motivation, not the reward but the behavior itself is important. According to Amabile et al. (1994), intrinsically motivated behavior is self-initiated: someone undertakes an activity for its own sake. The activity-itself is interesting and results in feelings of accomplishment and self-fulfillment. Someone might go to work because he or she likes to learn new things regarding to the job, for instance.

The aforementioned implications are critical for hospitality firms in North Cyprus, because service employees are unable to deliver value-added service quality to gain a competitive performance advantage, if this is even more the case when managers do not establish and maintain a work environment where employees can cope with difficulties that are associated with stressful and demanding situations.

### ***Limitations and future research directions***

Though this study expands our knowledge base, applicable prospects for further research remain. As a first limitation, the cross-sectional design of the current study does not permit to make



causal inferences. Future studies that would conduct longitudinal designs would be helpful in establishing causal relationships. The study lacked an in-depth qualitative dimension. Future studies could use in-depth interviews as an alternative approach to provide richer insights into the antecedents and outcomes associated with organizational citizenship behaviors. To cross-validate our findings and broaden the scope for further generalizations, replication studies among other samples of frontline employees in North Cyprus are needed. The current study used only one service setting (hotels) to test the hypothesized relationships. Future studies could test these relationships in different service settings such as travel agents, airlines, and restaurants.

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