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ABSTRACT

Although the importance of workplace fun in hospitality organizations has been emphasized by scholars, discussion of the mechanism of a workplace fun climate in collectivistic cultural contexts is still rare in current literature. Therefore, based on a collectivistic perspective, this study aims to examine the effects of a three-component fun climate at work (socializing with coworkers, celebrating at work, and global fun at work) on employee deep acting and work-family conflict. A total of 389 usable survey responses were collected from full-time hotel employees in China. The results of this study reveal that socializing with coworkers and celebrating at work enhance global fun at work. Moreover, global fun at work significantly reduces employees' work-family conflict and strengthens their deep acting at work. Findings of this study not only contribute to knowledge of understanding workplace fun climate in hospitality literature but also offer valuable practical implications to the hospitality industry.

1. Introduction

Nowadays, the COVID-19 pandemic arises global attentions to take care of mental status of frontline employees who work under stress and risk to serve customers (Pfefferbaum and North, 2020). Former hospitality literature has long been focused on a series of negative aspects of employee emotion, such as burnout and stress (Cheng and O-Yang, 2018; Mansour and Tremblay, 2016; Zhao and Ghiselli, 2016), revealing a significant need for improving psychological working environments for employees. Because happy employees create happy customers in the service-profit chain (Brislin, 1970; Hogreve et al., 2017), it has become a trend for scholars to emphasize employee positive psychology, which has recently focused on the issue of workplace fun climate and the power of fun in creating an energized and effective work environment (Michel et al., 2019; Tews et al., 2015, 2013; Tsaur et al., 2019). Climate in a workplace refers to employees’ shared perceptions of organizational events, procedures, and practices (Patterson et al., 2005). McDowell (2004) defined fun climate at work as a type of organizational climate that supports fun at work. Michel et al. (2019) further explained that fun in the workplace is “characterized as aspects or features of the work environment that have the potential to promote positive emotional reactions such as enjoyment, amusement, and lighthearted pleasure in individuals” (p. 99).

Former studies have proved the effectiveness of fun climate at work in creating various benefits in the workplace, such as interpersonal trust, creativity, job satisfaction, informal learning, low turnover intention, and employee engagement (Michel et al., 2019; Plester and Hutchison, 2016; Tews et al., 2014, 2017; Tews et al., 2013; Tsaur et al., 2019). Successful business stories based on incorporating fun climate at work into organizational culture and internal communication can be found in several well-known companies, such as Southwest Airlines, Marriott, Walt Disney, IBM, and Google (Karl et al., 2005; Michel et al., 2019). Since Tews et al. (2014) has argued that fun climate at work is a broad construct and that each type of fun differs, to gain a deep understanding of workplace fun climate, a multiple-component concept of fun climate at work should be used. Therefore, this study uses three components of fun climate developed and validated by McDowell (2004), which includes (1) socializing with coworkers, (2) celebrating at work, and (3) global fun at work.

However, employees in different culture may display fun in different approaches (Hu, 1944). Since fun climate at workplace is a social concept (McDowell, 2004), how fun climate works in individualism may not be the same as in collectivism. Additionally, most fun-related employee studies were conducted in individualism (Karl et al., 2005;
McDowell, 2004; Tews et al., 2014, 2017), resulting in a knowledge gap of the mechanism of fun climate in collectivism. With the global expansion of international hotel firms in China, empirical studies of employee psychology should also be extended to the collectivistic cultural context to enrich our knowledge of key issues and support successful cross-cultural management at international companies in the service industry (Hsu and Huang, 2016; King et al., 2013). Since a fun climate at work is experienced by employees mainly through interpersonal interactions (Tews et al., 2014), in a collectivistic context, it is worth applying the theoretical support from collectivism to explain the mechanism and outcomes of fun climate at work.

Michel et al. (2019) summarized the previous literature on workplace fun climate and pointed out its significant outcomes regarding short-term and long-term benefits at work. However, there is limited knowledge explaining the effects of a fun climate at work on employees’ work and family domains. Although a fun climate at work promotes spending time socializing and celebrating with colleagues at work and outside of work (McDowell, 2004), it implies a significant reduction of time and resources for employees to spend with their families. In fact, a series of studies have proven that employees in collectivistic cultures may experience more severe dilemmas in balancing work and family (Billing et al., 2014; Vaziri et al., 2019), especially employees who are working parents (Lu et al., 2009). Hence, to clarify the outcomes of fun climate at work and family domains in collectivistic culture, this study selects work-family conflict (family domain) and employee deep acting (work domain) as outcomes of Chinese hotel employees’ fun climate at work.

Netemeyer et al. (1996) defined work-family conflict (WFC) as “a form of inter-role conflict in which the general demands of, time devoted to, and strain created by the job interfere with performing family-related responsibilities” (p. 401). This study argues that global fun at work could help employees gain positive psychological resources (Tsaur et al., 2019), resulting in employees’ perception of less WFC. Employee deep acting refers to employees’ attempts to modify their own felt emotions so that a genuine emotional display can be delivered to customers during service interactions (Groth et al., 2009). This study proposes that global fun at work creates a fun atmosphere in which employees work, offering employees a natural emotional flow to deeply capture customers’ desired delight and relaxation in services. Taken together, focusing on a collectivistic context, the purpose of this study is to propose and examine a mechanism of Chinese hotel employees’ fun climate at work and to clarify its outcomes of WFC and employee deep acting.

2. Literature review

2.1. Collectivism as the theoretical foundation

Hofstede (1984) explained that a collectivist society is highly integrated and that individuals in such a society belong to one or more close ingroups (e.g., extended family, organization, and tribe). While employees in an individualistic society value a job well done as a personal goal, employees in a collectivist society place more emphasis on whether or not achievements are recognized by others (Hofstede, 1984). Through examining the relationships between national cultural patterns and quality of life, Hofstede (1984) found that employees in collectivistic nations have a tendency to perceive the level of quality of life through experiences of collectivistic core elements (e.g., groups bind together and mutually obligate individuals). Triandis et al. (1988) summarized that collectivism is associated with collective coping in unpleasant life events, emphasis on harmony within ingroups, and actions that benefit ingroups. Wagner III (1995) further found that collectivism significantly strengthens cooperation in groups. The above literature (Hofstede and Bond, 1984; Triandis et al., 1988; Wagner III, 1995) reveals the significant function of collectivistic values in motivating employees in collectivistic cultures to engage in workplace social activities related to fun climate.

Following “groups bind together” and “groups mutually oblige individuals” as the core elements of collectivism (Oyserman et al., 2002), former studies have clarified collectivistic patterns of individuals’ attitudes and behaviors within the family and work domains (Brewer and Chen, 2007; Hui, 1988; Hui and Triandis, 1986; Oyserman et al., 2002). Hui and Triandis (1986) asserted that collectivism could be reflected in individuals’ behavioral tendencies to share material and nonmaterial (such as effort and time) resources, share outcomes, and feel the effects of others’ lives in their ingroups. Hui (1988) then identified that individualism could be reflected in individuals’ willingness to support the interests and success of their family members (spouse and parent), as well as the tendency to return a favor or help colleagues at work. With the collectivistic locus of obligation to perform group duty, support group welfare, and follow group norms (Brewer and Chen, 2007), things could become complex when facing the need to spend limited resources on both family and work obligations (Oyserman et al., 2002). Focusing on fun climate at work in a collectivistic cultural context, this study takes fun climate at work as a means for increasing employees’ psychological capital and mental resources (Tsaur et al., 2019), which may help employees reduce their perceived WFC and increase their deep acting for their customers at work.

Taken together, collectivistic concepts could serve as the theoretical foundation to explain Chinese hotel employees’ information processing and interpersonal interactions in the workplace (Brewer and Chen, 2007; Oyserman et al., 2002). Based on collectivism, this study proposes effects of fun climate at work on work-family conflict and employee deep acting in the following sections.

2.2. Fun climate at work

Schneider (1975) defined organizational climate as molar perceptions employees have of their workplace. Molar perceptions, as articulated by Schneider (1975), have “a psychological unity being based on actual or inferred events, practices and procedures that occur in the daily life of a system” (p. 473). Schneider et al. (2013) pointed out that to help employees achieve performance goals and display the desired attitudes and behaviors, organizations should strategically create multiple focused climates (e.g., climates for safety and ethics). Following former studies on fun and service employees (Choi et al., 2013; Plester and Hutchison, 2016; Tews et al., 2015, 2014; Tews et al., 2017, 2013; Tsaur et al., 2019), this study focuses on fun climate at work.

Fun climate at work is a type of organizational climate that supports fun at work (McDowell, 2004). McDowell (2004) explained that “a climate for fun would conceptually refer to employee perceptions of the practices and behaviors that get rewarded and supported with regard to fun in the workplace” (p. 31). Both scholars and managers have claimed that workplace fun climate has become a means of integrated management for improving performance (Tews et al., 2015). The previous literature on workplace fun climate could be summarized into the following three categories. First, some scholars focus on the outcomes of fun climate and its theoretical and practical implications (Michel et al., 2019; Tews et al., 2017; Tsaur et al., 2019). Second, some researchers argue that fun climate is a multidimensional construct and analyze the effects of different fun types in the work domain (Tews et al., 2014, 2013). Third, some researchers examine the impacts of individual personality, fun activities and attitudes toward fun (Choi et al., 2013).

Following former fun-climate literature (McDowell, 2004; Tews et al., 2014, 2013; Tsaur et al., 2019), this study takes workplace fun climate at work as a multi-dimensional concept. McDowell (2004) established measures for fun climate at work incorporating four components: personal freedom, socializing with coworkers, celebrating at work, and global fun at work. Personal freedom refers to the flexibility and autonomy that occurs when employees are encouraged and allowed to participate in a fun atmosphere at work, socializing with coworkers refers to friendly social interactions with coworkers, celebrating at work refers to special events and social gatherings in a workplace, and global
fun at work refers to employees’ overall evaluation regarding the extent of the fun climate in a workplace (McDowell, 2004; Tews et al., 2013). This study does not apply the fun climate component of personal freedom because employees in a collectivistic cultural setting are normally not encouraged and not allowed to express personal freedom (Brewer and Chen, 2007). Moreover, different from the original work of McDowell (2004), which proposed all components as parallel relationships, this study proposes socializing with coworkers and celebrating at work as the antecedents of global fun at work because employees’ overall evaluation of fun climate should be based on their perceptions and experience of socializing and celebrating events in a workplace. Such approach of conceptualization follows former employee positive psychology literature by arguing positive workplace activities and experiences as the antecedents of overall evaluation of a positive psychological construct, such employee subjective well-being (Lin et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2020). Hence, the following two hypotheses are proposed:

**H1.** Socializing with coworkers is positively related to global fun at work.

**H2.** Celebrating at work is positively related to global fun at work.

### 2.3. Global fun at work and work-family conflict (WFC)

Employees must deal with responsibilities, expectations, and commitments for both their work roles (e.g., work productivity, task reliability, and service responsibilities) and family roles (e.g., spouse support, earning money, and household responsibilities) (Ling and Poweli, 2001). WFC happens when employees’ participation in the work role causes conflict for them in performing family-related responsibilities (Netemeyer et al., 1996), especially when employees are trying to achieve satisfactory or even perfect levels in both roles (Ling and Poweli, 2001). Employees in collectivistic cultures normally perceive more severe WFC than those in individualistic cultures (Billing et al., 2014; Ling and Poweli, 2001; Vaziri et al., 2019) due to their concerns over and frequent acceptance of criticism and comments from others about their imperfection in family roles. Netemeyer et al. (1996) classified conflict in WFC into time-based conflict and strain-based conflict. Time-based conflict in WFC refers to the reduction of time for family-related responsibilities due to work (Netemeyer et al., 1996). Time-based conflict is a commonly faced type of conflict for hotel employees because they always have to sacrifice time for family gatherings during weekends and holidays (Mansour and Tremblay, 2016; Qu and Zhao, 2012; Zhao and Mattila, 2013). Strain-based conflict in WFC occurs when the strain created in the work role interferes in the family role. Such conflict makes service employees feel emotionally tired because they have to hold back or hide their personal, authentic emotional expression (Zhao and Ghiselli, 2016).

This study proposes that employees’ overall perception of a fun climate at work could help them reduce WFC based on the following reasons. First, psychological capital earned through fun climate can help employees face WFC. Positive emotions gained from a fun climate at work represent an increase of employees’ psychological capital (Tsaur et al., 2019). The more psychological capital an employee has, the better the employee is able to navigate negative emotions in WFC. Second, a fun climate at work brings social support within a social network. In a collectivistic context, employees who experience fun climate have chances to share and exchange work and family experiences. The common dilemma of WFC shared and understood within a social network could be considered a ritual for collective healing, making each employee feel socially supported and helping them realize that they are not the only one combatting WFC. Third, a fun climate at work provides informal learning to overcome WFC. Fun climate offers opportunities for employees to encounter experiences and information not shared during work hours, making it a perfect channel for informal learning (Tews et al., 2017). Junior employees and interns may learn insights from senior employees about practical personal strategies to reduce WFC. Fourth, family-friendly plans in fun climate could directly reduce WFC. Some activities and events in fun climate could be planned that welcome employees to bring their families, strengthening family members’ understanding of and support for employees’ work. The study by Hammer et al. (2005) also found that employees’ WFC can be reduced through a family-friendly workplace. Thus, we hypothesize:

**H3.** Global fun at work is negatively related to work-family conflict.

### 2.4. Global fun at work and employee deep acting

While surface acting (faking in bad faith) requires employees to manage their observable service expressions with customers, deep acting (faking in good faith) further requires employees to manage their underlying felt emotion (Becker and Cropanzano, 2015; Grandey, 2000, 2003). To perform deep acting well, service employees must practice cognitive changes to actually feel the emotion of their customers and internalize the mandated emotion (Grandey, 2000; Mesmer-Magnus et al., 2012). Based on meta-analytic results using 109 studies, Mesmer-Magnus et al. (2012) summarized that “although deep acting requires some initial exertion of energy to change one’s underlying emotions, once felt emotions are revised, the desired emotions can be continually displayed without the additional exertion of energy” (p. 37). The study by Xanthopoulou et al. (2018) further shows that while deep acting can help employees improve work-related flow and reduce work exhaustion, surface acting can significantly damage work-related flow and cause work exhaustion. Because the job characteristics in the hotel industry require employees to display positive emotions and warm hospitality to customers (Zhao and Ghiselli, 2016), this study chooses to focus on employee deep acting.

This study proposes that employees’ perceived global fun at work can assist in their deep acting for the following reasons. First, fun climate creates job satisfaction, which motivates employees to perform deep acting as social exchange. The whole mechanism of cultural values in a collectivistic context is based on social exchange (Hwang, 1987). When employees enjoy fun and perceive love from their employer and colleagues, they are more willing to invest in resources to perform better at work (Wang et al., 2019). Second, in accordance with the concept of congruent emotional states (Mesmer-Magnus et al., 2012), a fun atmosphere experienced at a workplace is the same as what customers want to experience in hospitality service settings. When hotel employees enjoy a fun climate in their own workplace, they can easily perceive customers’ desire for a fun atmosphere and naturally deliver fun to customers. Third, through team-level emotional contagion in fun climate (Grandey, 2003), employees gain both social and emotional support from colleagues to perform deep acting. Support from colleagues gained through fun climate is also an informal learning opportunity for employees to absorb personal successful stories about deep acting from senior employees (Tews et al., 2017). Therefore, we propose the following:

**H4.** Global fun at work is positively related to employee deep acting.

### 2.5. The overall research framework

Fig. 1 shows the research framework of this study. As justified above, within three components of fun climate at work from McDowell (2004), this study proposes socializing with coworkers and celebrating at work as the two antecedents of global fun at work, aligning with recent management literature to propose an overall evaluation of a positive employee mental status as the outcome of multiple work experiences (Lin et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2020). To demonstrate the influences of fun climate in employees’ work and family domains, this study further proposes its effects on supporting deep acting and reducing WFC. Based on former literature (Choi et al., 2013; Yang et al., 2020), tenure in the current department and monthly income are added as control variables.
The three components of fun climate at work were each measured by a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). All the scale items used in this study were rated using a five-point Likert scale. These measurements were conducted to be associated with the two outcomes in our model. Testing these two outcomes could strengthen the reasons why fun climate is important in workplace as well as why managers should make efforts on building fun climate.

3. Method

3.1. Sampling and data collection

This study used survey questionnaires for data collection with convenience sampling to select participating employees at seven case hotels. The research settings were six five-star hotels and one four-star hotel in China, and the research population was full-time employees at these seven sample hotels. All sampled hotels were operated as franchised hotels. These sampled hotels are based on the researchers’ private friendship in the hotel industry. With the assistance of human resource (HR) managers at these case hotels, the research team distributed survey questionnaires in person to their employees. The HR managers announced our data collection plan to their employees. Employees who were willing to participate took the survey with our research team without monitoring from their supervisors and managers. No personal identification information was requested to be provided in our survey. An envelope was provided with each questionnaire for participants to seal their completed survey by themselves. The research team distributed 470 survey questionnaires to the six five-star hotels and 100 survey questionnaires to the four-star hotel, for a total of 570 distributed survey questionnaires. No statistical differences of means and standard deviations of used constructs and demographic variables were found between samples collected from the six five-star hotels and the four-star hotel. After incomplete responses were deleted, 389 usable responses were retained for data analysis, resulting in a usable response rate of 68.25% (389 out of 570).

3.2. Measurement

All the scale items used in this study were rated using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The three components of fun climate at work were each measured by five items adopted from McDowell (2004). Employee deep acting was measured via a three-item scale established by Groth et al. (2009). WFC was measured by four items originally developed by Netemeyer et al. (1996). Since all the scale items were originally established in English, the research team conducted back-translation following Brislin (1970) to translate all items into Chinese, and then the Chinese items were translated back into English for validation. Through the back-translation method (Brislin, 1970), we ensure that the used translated Chinese items can fully reflect meanings of the original English items. Before official data collection began, seven Chinese hospitality experts were invited to provide comments on revising Chinese wordings of the scale items and formatting of the survey. These Chinese hospitality experts offered comments on polishing the Chinese wordings, making the survey easier to be understood by Chinese employees. The survey also collects participants’ background information, including sex, age, department type, tenure in the current department, marital status, highest level of education, and monthly income.

Common method variance (CMV) is the variances attributed to the measurement model rather than to the measured constructs (Podsakoff et al., 2003). To reduce CMV, this study applied two procedural remedies suggested by Podsakoff et al. (2003). First, the research team used psychological separation by dividing the whole survey into different sections. Through psychological separation in survey design, respondents’ chances to mentally connect relationships among scale cross-sections can be reduced (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Second, the readability of scale items was improved to reduce common method biases. Podsakoff et al. (2003) pointed out that issues such as vague concepts, item social desirability, and item ambiguity can be solved by improving scale items. As mentioned above, seven hospitality experts were invited to improve wordings of the items. A pilot test with 59 participants who were Chinese hospitality employees was later conducted before official survey distribution to seek comments on item revision. Third, following the procedure suggested by Andersson and Bateman (1997), we also applied post-hoc statistical remedies. Harman’s one-factor analysis was performed by including all indicators and fixing the number of factors extracted to 1 with no rotation. The factor generated explained only 31.37% of the total variance, much lower than the 50% threshold, which suggests that CMV is not a major concern. Fourth, both age and sex were taken as marker variables to detect CMV (Simmering et al., 2014). Results from this detection showed that no unreasonable correlations were found between marker variables and our constructs, reducing the concern of CMV in this study.

3.3. Data analysis

Both SPSS 19.0 and Mplus 7.0 were applied for data analysis in this study. SPSS 19.0 was used to perform descriptive statistics procedures and to rest the reliability and validity of the measures. Mplus 7.0 was used to conduct confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation modeling (SEM). Proposed hypotheses were tested with the results of SEM.
4. Results

4.1. Profile of participants

The profile of the 389 usable responses is shown in Table 1. A total of 55.01% of the participants were female. In terms of age, 67.35% were aged from 21 to 30, and 20.31% were aged from 31 to 40. Regarding marital status, 55.78% were single, and 28.53% were married with children. For highest level of education, 34.96% had an associate degree. In monthly income, 36.76% earned RMB 2500-3500, and 32.39% earned RMB 1500-2500. In terms of tenure in the current department, 42.93% had worked in their current department for 1 year or less, 12.08% for 2-3 years, and 8.73% for 3-4 years. All participants were full-time hotel employees who work in departments that require frequent service contacts with customers, such as food and beverage departments to serve customers at hotel restaurants or marketing and sales departments to serve customers’ event-planning needs. In terms of department, 37.79% worked in front office, 28.28% worked in food and beverage, 24.42% worked in housekeeping, and 9.51% worked in marketing and sales. The profile of participants is very close to former hospitality literature sampling employees at four- and five-star hotels in China (Cheung et al., 2014; Yao et al., 2019), demonstrating representativeness of samples collected in this study.

4.2. The measurement model

Table 2 shows the correlation table, and Table 3 shows the measurement model results. The CFA results indicated an acceptable fit of the measurement model ($\chi^2 = 582.44$, $df = 220$, $p < .000$; RMSEA = .06; SRMR = .05; CFI = .93; TLI = .92). Cronbach’s alphas of all constructs ranged from .82 to .93, and the CR of all constructs ranged from .88 to .95, showing acceptable scale reliability. Furthermore, the AVE values ranged from .59 to .79 of each construct, and all the constructs’ square roots of AVE were higher than their correlation with other constructs, indicating acceptable scale validity. Additionally, factor loadings of all constructs ranged from .41 to .91 ($p < .01$). Taken together, the used five constructs all had adequate reliability and validity, supporting the follow-up step of performing SEM.

4.3. The structural model

SEM results are visualized in Fig. 2 and summarized in Table 4. The fit indices and chi-square statistics of the structural model were acceptable ($\chi^2 = 645.32$, $df = 266$, $p < .000$; RMSEA = .06; SRMR = .05; CFI = .93; TLI = .92). Two control variables, tenure in the current department and monthly income, were not significantly related to employee deep acting and employees’ WFC. As proposed, socializing with coworkers (H1, $\beta = .27$, $p < .001$) and celebrating at work (H2, $\beta = .55$, $p < .001$) were significantly and positively related to global fun at work, supporting the argument of this study that the former two fun climate components are the antecedents of the component of global fun at work. The results also supported the proposed outcomes in both the family and work domains. Global fun at work significantly reduced employees’ WFC (H3, $\beta = -.23$, $p < .001$), showing the important role of a fun climate in helping employees overcome family conflicts caused by work. Moreover, global fun at work significantly enhanced employee deep acting (H4, $\beta = .18$, $p < .01$), demonstrating the practical value of a fun climate in supporting Chinese hotel employees’ quality service interaction with customers.

5. Discussion

This study proposed a theoretical model for the effects of fun climate at work on WFC and employees’ deep acting, and empirically tested the model in a collectivist-orientation culture. The findings of the study support that socializing with coworkers and celebrating at work are antecedents for global fun at work. More importantly, the global fun climate can effectively reduce employees’ perceived WFC and improve their deep acting at work, which is required by the service-intensive nature of hospitality organizations. Our findings have several important theoretical implications for fun climate, employee performance and positive psychology literature, particularly in hospitality contexts. The study also incorporated a cultural perspective, which helped enhance the cross-cultural validity of relevant theories.

5.1. Theoretical implications

First of all, this study highlights the application of a collectivist perspective on explaining the mechanism of fun climate at work and the effects on employees’ family and work domains. Such theoretical application recalls Hsu and Huang (2016) on understanding and interpreting cultural values for improving management and decision makings on cross-cultural settings and international chain brands in the hospitality industry. Previous studies in workplace fun and fun climate at work were mostly completed in individualistic contexts, and their proposed hypotheses were justified from an individualistic perspective (Karl et al., 2005; McDowell, 2004; Tews et al., 2014, 2017). This study demonstrates that a good understanding of collectivist culture and values provides good reasons for interpreting workplace fun climate, as an individualism-originated concept, to be implemented and promoted in hospitality organizations in other cultural settings.

The study contributed to the theoretical advancement of workplace fun climate studies by proposing and validating the inter-relationship among three components of fun climate in organizations. Differing from previous researchers suggesting parallel relationships among different components (e.g., McDowell, 2004), our findings revealed more complicated inter-relationships among the three components. Specifically, socializing with coworkers and celebrating at work served as
Table 2
Correlation table.

| Construct                              | Mean | S.D.  | 1    | 2    | 3    | 4    | 5    | Square root of AVE |
|----------------------------------------|------|-------|------|------|------|------|------|---------------------|
| 1. Socializing with coworkers          | 4.04 | .56   | .82  | .73  | .62***| .88  | .77  | .92                 |
| 2. Celebrating at work                 | 3.96 | .69   | .62***| .93  | .73  | .88  | .82  | .92                 |
| 3. Global fun at work                  | 4.15 | .69   | .60** | .91  | .73  | .92  | .89  | .82                 |
| 4. Work-family conflict                | 2.79 | .84   | -.10* | -.08 | -.18***| .91  | .85  | .82                 |
| 5. Employee deep acting                | 3.75 | .73   | .22***| .18***| .22***| .01  | .85  | .88                 |

Note: * = p < .05, ** = p < .01, *** = p < .001; Cronbach’s alpha of each construct is in the diagonal.

Table 3
Measurement model results.

| Construct and measurement item | Mean | S.D.  | Factor Loading | CR   | AVE  |
|--------------------------------|------|-------|----------------|------|------|
| Socializing with Coworkers     | 4.04 | .56   | .88            | .59  |      |
| 1. My colleagues and I share each other’s stories | 3.80 | .85 | .58*** |      |      |
| 2. I have good friendships with my colleagues | 4.23 | .67 | .69*** |      |      |
| 3. I share my personal life with my colleagues | 3.93 | .76 | .71*** |      |      |
| 4. My colleagues and I joke around with each other | 4.08 | .70 | .76*** |      |      |
| 5. I sometimes share food with my colleagues | 4.17 | .69 | .71*** |      |      |
| Celebrating at Work            | 3.96 | .69   | .91            | .67  |      |
| 1. We always celebrate work achievements together | 4.15 | .74 | .74*** |      |      |
| 2. After tasks, my colleagues always eat together | 4.11 | .80 | .71*** |      |      |
| 3. We always celebrate birthdays for our colleagues | 3.75 | .92 | .77*** |      |      |
| 4. We always have parties to recognize accomplishments | 3.95 | .82 | .83*** |      |      |
| 5. We always celebrate festivals together | 3.84 | .91 | .77*** |      |      |
| Global Fun at Work             | 4.15 | .69   | .95            | .79  |      |
| 1. I think my department is a fun place to work | 4.18 | .77 | .87*** |      |      |
| 2. The overall climate of my department is fun | 4.16 | .79 | .90*** |      |      |
| 3. Most colleagues here have fun at work | 4.10 | .77 | .84*** |      |      |
| 4. Overall, I think our working atmosphere is fun | 4.16 | .78 | .85*** |      |      |
| 5. Our managers encourage employees having fun at work. | 4.17 | .80 | .74*** |      |      |
| Work-Family Conflict           | 2.79 | .84   | .93            | .73  |      |
| 1. The demands of my work interfere with my home and family life | 2.70 | .97 | .41*** |      |      |
| 2. The amount of time my job takes up makes it difficult to fulfill family responsibilities | 2.69 | .96 | .86*** |      |      |
| 3. Things I want to do at home do not get done because of the demands my job puts on me | 2.72 | .95 | .87*** |      |      |
| 4. My job produces strain that makes it difficult to fulfill family duties | 2.63 | .99 | .87*** |      |      |
| 5. Due to work-related duties, I have to make changes to my plans for family activities | 3.20 | 1.03 | .67*** |      |      |
| Employee Deep Acting          | 3.75 | .73   | .91            | .78  |      |
| 1. I tried to actually experience the emotions I had to show to the customer | 3.72 | .81 | .75*** |      |      |
| 2. I worked hard to feel the emotions that I needed to show to this customer | 3.81 | .81 | .91*** |      |      |
| 3. I made a strong effort to actually feel the emotions that I needed to display toward this customer | 3.72 | .87 | .79*** |      |      |

Note: CR = composite reliability; AVE = average variance extracted; *** = p < .001; antecedents for global fun at work, and there is a moderate positive correlation between the two antecedents. Clarifying dimensional structure of constructs are valuable efforts necessary advancement of theories (e.g., Gelfand et al., 2017). We believe this finding has enriched existing literature on the workplace fun climate dimensions (e.g., McDowell, 2004; Tews et al., 2014, 2013), contributing to a more thorough understanding on the inter-relationships among different components of the workplace fun climate. Our finding is also encouraging because it indicates that fun climate can be built via more tangible efforts, namely socializing with coworkers and celebrating at work. Therefore, the study also has important managerial implications for organizations aiming to create fun climate, which are discussed further in the following section.

On the other hand, most research on workplace fun climate outcomes focused on the work domain (e.g., Becker and Tews, 2016; Tsaur et al., 2019) and there is a lack of research on the effects of a fun climate on employees’ work and family domains (Michel et al., 2019). Our study filled in this literature gap and found that workplace fun climate helped reduce work-family conflict and enhance service employees’ deep-acting at work, both are important predictors for employee well-being and turnover (e.g., Bovair et al., 2003; Ryan et al., 2015; Grandey and Melloy, 2017). Hospitality organizations are challenged by high employee turnover (Ma and Qu, 2011), due to the unique nature of hospitality jobs such as long and irregular hours, low levels of pay and high requirements on employee’s emotions displayed at work (Hinkin and Tracey, 2010). The study confirms the importance role that workplace climate plays, which may serve as a promising strategy to retain hospitality employees.

5.2. Practical implications

People are intrinsically seeking joy and feeling fun at work matters for employees’ overall well-being, and engagement at work (Ford et al., 2005). The findings have several implications for hospitality leaders. First of all, the study found that workplace fun climate significantly reduced employees’ WFC and increased deep acting, which can be used as a promising strategy to enhance employee service performance and retention. The nature of hospitality jobs determines the industry faces high levels of employee turnover (Hinkin and Tracey, 2010) and it is hard to change aspects of the jobs such as long and irregular hours and intensive customer interactions. However, building a fun climate is feasible and can make positive impacts on employees’ performance and retention (Tews et al., 2013). If employees are having fun at work, the values and quality of experiences delivered to customer are more likely to be positively influenced (Ford et al., 2005). Therefore, hospitality organizations should recognize the importance of workplace fun climate and support the creation of it. Specifically, hospitality leaders and managers should set the agenda to make fun climate an explicit corporate purpose. To strengthen and integrate its inclusion agenda with workplace fun climate building efforts and make sure employees feel heard, recognized, and acknowledged during the process (Liu, 2019), and eventually are willing to stay with the organization.

Second, an encouraging finding of the study is that fun work climate can be nurtured and both socializing with coworkers and celebrating events at work positively contribute to global fun at work. Hospitality organizations should set the stage for the creation of workplace fun
climate. Fun activities that foster social interactions should be organized (Tsaur et al., 2019) within work teams and cross different departments. Birthday parties and competition events are also good ways creating fun at work. Regular team meetings and social hours are also excellent occasions for employees to connect with each other. Orientations and training activities should also be designed with ample opportunities for employees to know the work and the place, but also to get to know the people. Corporate’s achievements, individual’s success and personal milestones should be celebrated. Acknowledging individual achievements and cheering for each other the success-fun celebration-success cycle (Liu, 2019). It is worth noting that due to the irregular work hours in hotels, managers should keep inclusion in mind when organizing these activities and do not leave disadvantaged groups of employees (e.g. working mothers with young kids) behind.

Lastly, the findings of the study also have implications on organizational structure and workplace design. A flatter organizational structure would be more helpful in facilitating social interactions among team members than a hierarchical structure (Perry-Smith, 2006). Many organizations have seized the advantage of open-designed workspace to facilitate smooth communications and social interactions among team members. Organizations such as Google and Flight Center have been creatively designing their workplace to add fun elements (Akorode, 2018).

5.3. Limitations and suggestions for future research

A few limitations of the present study should be noted. First, the study used a cross-sectional research design, which may raise concern about CMV. We performed both a priori and post-hoc treatments to address this issue, and our data suggested that our proposed factor structure fit better than the one-factor model. Second, the study did not include moderating variables. Given differences in social norms and role expectations for sex differences in Asia, male and female employees may have different levels of face concern, and they may perceive socializing with coworkers and celebration at work differently. Additionally, family responsibilities would make it difficult for female employees to fully involve themselves in these activities, leading to different levels of perceived fun climate at work. Therefore, future research could test whether sex differences exists in the proposed relationships. Other moderators, such as position levels, may also influence the proposed relationships given the high level of power distance in Asian countries.

Third, culture-related constructs in collectivism, such as guanxi and rejing (Wang et al., 2008; Xin and Pearce, 1996; Zhang and Giff, 2019), have not yet been studied with fun climate at work. Future research should investigate the effects of these collectivistic constructs within the research theme of workplace fun climate. Fourth, this study did not include personal freedom, one fun climate component from McDowell (2004), into our research model. The reason was because personal freedom is normally discouraged in collectivism (Brewer and Chen, 2007). But, since personal freedom has been considered and valued by younger generations (Choi et al., 2013; Yang et al., 2020), future studies are encouraged to add personal freedom in studying workplace fun climate. Fifth, this study only sample hotel employees from five-star and four-star hotels in China. To gain more insights about employee fun climate in collectivism, future studies are recommended to also sample employees working at one-star to three-star hotels. To the best of our understanding, most properties of one-star to three-star hotels in China are independent hotels operated as family-owned. Working at a family-owned independent hotel, employees’ psychological boundary between the family and work domain may be weaker than working at five-star and four-star hotels, revealing in potential differences on the mechanism and outcomes of workplace fun climate.

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