

The Influence of Job Satisfaction, Work Life Balance and Career Growth on Hospitality Professionals' Transition to Allied Sectors

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Abstract

Background: The hospitality industry has traditionally offered dynamic career opportunities within core hotel operations. However, over the past decade, there has been a notable shift of hospitality professionals from core hotel roles to allied sectors such as event management, tourism and consulting. This career movement has raised concerns regarding the sustainability of talent retention within hotel operations. Understanding the key factors influencing this shift is essential for developing effective strategies to improve employee satisfaction and retention in the industry. **Objective:** The study aimed to examine the impact of job satisfaction, work-life balance and career growth opportunities on the career transitions of hospitality professionals from core hotel operations to allied sectors. It sought to identify the underlying motivations for these movements and explore potential measures that could help hotel management retain skilled professionals. **Methodology:** A quantitative research design was adopted. The study was conducted in urban hospitality hubs where career transitions are more prevalent. A total of 130 hospitality professionals who had moved from core hotel operations to allied sectors participated in a structured survey. The survey utilized a structured questionnaire focusing on job satisfaction, work-life balance, career growth opportunities and professional motivations. Data analysis was performed using descriptive and inferential statistics. **Results:** The findings indicated that job dissatisfaction, poor work-life balance and limited career growth opportunities were significant drivers of career shifts among hospitality professionals. A majority of respondents reported seeking roles in allied sectors due to better work-life balance, structured work environments and enhanced career mobility. The study also found that professionals were attracted to allied industries offering more defined career progression pathways and greater job stability. Additionally, qualitative insights highlighted the role of workplace culture, managerial support and personal aspirations in influencing career decisions. **Conclusion:** The study concluded that the hospitality industry must prioritize job satisfaction, work-life balance and career development opportunities to retain skilled professionals. Enhancing career growth prospects, implementing employee-friendly work schedules and fostering supportive work environments could mitigate the trend of professionals shifting to allied sectors. These insights provide valuable recommendations for hotel management and policymakers in developing effective retention strategies to sustain a competent and motivated workforce in core hotel operations.

Keywords: Hospitality professionals, job satisfaction, work-life balance, career growth, core hotel operations, allied sectors, career transitions, talent retention, hospitality workforce, professional motivations

Introduction

The hospitality industry is dynamic and fast paced. The industry offers a wide range of career opportunities in core hotel operations. However, in the last few years, a shift has been observed where many hospitality professionals are moving from traditional hotel roles to allied sectors

such as event management, tourism, corporate services and consulting. This trend reflects changing career aspirations and the pursuit of more balanced and fulfilling work environments. The primary factors that define this shift include job satisfaction, work life balance and opportunities

for career growth, as these determine much about a person's career decisions. Job satisfaction in the hospitality industry is often determined by recognition, job security and even the nature of the work itself. Many professionals face a set of challenges including long working hours, high stress and limited upward mobility, which can lead to decreased satisfaction. Work life balance is another significant factor that usually suffers in hotel operations due to irregular shifts and demanding schedules. In contrast, allied sectors often have more predictable working hours and arrangements for flexibility. Allied industries have now become a motivation for career growth as most of them provide faster progression, diversified roles and competitive compensation. Professionals are increasingly migrating to these industries seeking greater autonomy, skill development and leadership opportunities.

The trend among hospitality professionals is to make the transition from core hotel operations to allied sectors. Key determinants in this change are job satisfaction, work life balance and career growth opportunities. This condensed version of the literature review underlines the determinants of the hospitality industry talent retention problems.

Job satisfaction has been deemed the most influential determinant for retention. According to Herzberg's two factor theory, which was advanced in 1959, factors like achievement and recognition are associated with satisfaction, while extrinsic factors like working conditions tend to be associated with dissatisfaction. Long hours, heavy workloads and emotional labor contribute to burnout and job dissatisfaction in hospitality industries, as reported by Wong and Laschinger (2013). Pizam and Ellis (1999) say that frontline hospitality jobs are easily prone to dissatisfaction because of how monotonous and physically exerting the job is. Emotional labor, in one study, was associated with burnout and higher turnover intent (Brotheridge & Lee, 2003). Many hospitality professionals would, therefore, seek career opportunities in allied sectors like event management and tourism, viewed as less demanding in terms of emotional labor and with more varied functions.

Work life balance is one of the most significant factors for hospitality professionals when it comes to career transition. The nature of the hospitality industry requires working long and irregular hours, including night shifts and weekends, making it hard for employees to have a good work life balance (Karatepe & Uludag, 2008). As a result, many

professionals move to allied sectors like corporate event management and consulting, which offer more structured schedules and predictable hours (Deery & Jago, 2009). These sectors allow better control over working hours, thus enabling a better worklife balance. Demerouti et al. (2001) suggest that worklife conflict negatively impacts job satisfaction and motivation, leading many hospitality professionals to seek industries offering more flexible work options.

There are very few career advancement opportunities in the hospitality industry and this is another major reason professionals seek allied sectors. Baum (2006) emphasizes that the rigid hierarchical structure and slow promotion rates lead to dissatisfaction. Solnet and Kralj (2011) argue that the flat structure of hotels allows little upward mobility and so professionals are looking for a quicker career in related industries such as tourism and consulting. Such sectors offer more diverse and dynamic careers. According to Gursoy et al. (2008), professionals are attracted to allied industries because career advancement is faster and skills are more extensive.

The work environment and organizational culture play a significant role in retention. A toxic or unsupportive work culture, marked by high turnover and poor management practices, often drives professionals to seek better work environments in allied sectors (Brownell, 2006). Allied sectors are perceived as offering more collaborative and supportive work cultures, which attract professionals seeking a more fulfilling and less stressful environment. Generation Z is changing the face of the industry when it comes to career choice. This generation, which wants flexibility and alignment with personal values, is increasingly moving towards careers in digital marketing, online services and consulting, where flexible work hours and autonomy are more possible (Williams & Lee, 2020). As Generation Z enters the workforce, worklife balance and digital solutions have become the preference for retention in the hospitality industry.

One of the biggest challenges hospitality faces in retaining talent is professionals shifting to allied sectors. The industry needs to respond by offering better career advancement opportunities, more flexible work arrangements and improved organizational cultures. Baum (2006) recommends that structured career development, leadership training and flexible working hours can retain talent in the hospitality industry. Furthermore, positive work environment aimed at

employee wellbeing can lower the rate of staff turnover and keep skilled professionals in the long term.

This study provides critical insights into the evolving career preferences of hospitality professionals, offering a comprehensive understanding of why employees transition from core hotel operations to allied sectors. By exploring the influence of job satisfaction, work-life balance and career growth, the research highlights key factors that impact workforce stability in the hospitality industry. The findings serve as a valuable resource for industry stakeholders, including hotel managers, human resource professionals and policymakers, in formulating strategies to enhance employee retention. The study underscores the need for structured career development plans, competitive compensation packages and a supportive work environment to reduce employee attrition. Additionally, it contributes to academic literature on hospitality workforce management and provides a foundation for future research on career mobility trends within the sector. By addressing these critical areas, the hospitality industry can work towards improving employee well-being, ensuring long-term talent retention and maintaining its competitive edge in the broader service industry.

Objectives

- To explore the impact of job satisfaction on the transition to allied sectors.
- To see if work life balance impacts on career transition from hotel operations to allied industries.
- To analyze the role of career growth opportunities towards driving professionals toward allied sectors.

Methodology

Research Design: This study adopted quantitative methods to explore the factors influencing the career transitions of hospitality professionals. A descriptive and exploratory design was employed to investigate the experiences and motivations behind career shifts from core hotel operations to allied sectors.

Locale: The study was conducted across multiple hospitality organizations and industry networks in metropolitan cities of India, including Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru and Chennai. These locations were chosen due to their high concentration of hospitality professionals transitioning from core hotel roles to allied sectors.

Sampling Design: A purposive sampling technique was used to select 130 participants from various organizations and industry networks. The sample comprised of hospitality professionals who transitioned from core hotel roles such as front office, food and beverage and housekeeping to allied sectors like event management, tourism and consulting. The sample included males and females, with an age range of 25 to 45 years. The mean age of participants was 33 years. Participants were selected based on their experience in core hotel operations and subsequent transition to an allied sector.

Tools and Technique: A structured questionnaire was administered to assess factors such as job satisfaction, work-life balance and career growth opportunities. Responses were recorded using a 5-point Likert Scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree). For ethical considerations participants were informed about the study's purpose and provided consent before participation. Confidentiality was maintained and participants had the option to withdraw at any stage without any penalties.

Data Analysis and Statistical Analysis: Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS, focusing on descriptive statistics and frequency distribution to identify factors influencing career transitions. This structured research methodology provided a systematic approach to understanding the motivations behind career transitions in the hospitality industry. The questionnaire was pretested to ensure validity and established scales were used to maintain reliability. Cronbach's alpha was used to measure the internal consistency of the Likert Scale items.

Results and Discussion

Demographic Details: The sample consisted of 130 hospitality professionals, including 75 males and 55 females, with an age range of 25 to 45 years. The mean age of the participants was 33 years. These participants had transitioned from core hotel roles such as front office, food and beverage and housekeeping to allied sectors like event management, tourism and consulting. The purposive sampling technique ensured that only those with experience in both hospitality operations and allied sectors were included in the study.

Table 1: Demographic profile

Gender	Frequency
Male	75
Female	55

Age Range (years)	25-45
Mean Age	33
Previous Industry Roles	Front Office, Food & Beverage, Housekeeping
Transitioned Sectors	Event Management, Tourism, Consulting

Descriptive Statistics: Table 2 below presents the descriptive statistics for the key variables measured in the survey, including Job Satisfaction, Work Life Balance, Career Growth and Transition Intent. Job Satisfaction (Mean= 3.5), the average score indicates that the hospitality professionals surveyed were somewhat satisfied with their jobs, although there is room for improvement in this area. Work Life Balance (Mean= 3.2), score suggests a moderate perception of work-life balance within the industry, highlighting the need for better balance to retain employees. Career Growth (Mean= 3.7) show cases that professionals perceive opportunities for growth more positively than job satisfaction or work-life balance. Transition Intent (Mean= 2.8) result indicated that approximately 45% of hospitality professionals have a moderate to high intent to transition to allied sectors, signaling a significant concern for retention within the hospitality sector.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Key Variables

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Job Satisfaction	3.5	1.1
Work Life Balance	3.2	1.2
Career Growth	3.7	1.0
Transition Intent	2.8	1.3

Correlation Analysis: The Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to explore the relationships between job satisfaction, work-life balance, career growth and transition intent.

Job Satisfaction vs. Transition Intent (-0.35), here higher job satisfaction is associated with a lower likelihood of transitioning to allied sectors, hospitality professionals who are more satisfied with their jobs are less likely to leave the industry.

Work Life Balance vs. Transition Intent (-0.52), a better work-life balance strongly reduces the likelihood of transitioning to allied sectors. Professionals who report a good work-life balance are less likely to seek opportunities outside the hospitality industry.

Career Growth vs. Transition Intent (+0.62), a lack of career growth is a significant factor driving professionals to transition to allied sectors. Professionals with fewer career growth opportunities are more likely to leave the hospitality industry.

Job Satisfaction: Professionals with higher job satisfaction were less likely to transition to allied sectors. 30% of those with high job satisfaction (ratings of 4-5) showed intent to transition, compared to 60% among those with lower satisfaction (ratings of 1-3). Improving job satisfaction could be a critical strategy for reducing attrition rates within the hospitality industry.

Work-Life Balance: A clear relationship exists between work-life balance and transition intent. 72% of respondents with poor work-life balance (ratings of 1-2) indicated high transition intent, while only 35% of those with good work-life balance (ratings of 4-5) showed a similar intent. Focusing on improving work-life balance, such as offering flexible work hours or remote work opportunities, could help retain professionals in the hospitality sector.

Career Growth: Professionals who perceive limited career growth opportunities were significantly more likely to transition to allied sectors. 80% of those with low career growth potential (ratings of 1-2) showed intent to transition, while only 25% of those who rated career growth positively (ratings of 4-5) expressed similar intent. Implication: Providing clear career advancement opportunities and pathways for skill development can help retain talent in the hospitality industry.

Job Role: Table 3 below provides a breakdown of survey responses by job role within the hospitality industry, showcasing variations in job satisfaction, work-life balance, career growth and transition intent across different roles. Chefs had the lowest transition intent, likely due to high job satisfaction and career growth, which reduce their likelihood of leaving for allied sectors. Event coordinators exhibited the highest transition intent, suggesting that the lack of career growth opportunities and work-life balance in their current roles may make allied sectors more appealing. Managers showed high ratings for career growth but still had moderate transition intent, which suggests that work-life balance and other factors, beyond career growth, play a role in their decision to leave the hospitality sector.

Table 3: Findings by Job Role

Job Role	Job Satisfaction	Work Life Balance	Career Growth	Transition Intent
Front Desk Staff	3.4	3.1	3.6	2.9
Chefs	3.8	3.5	3.9	2.3
Event Coordinators	3.6	3.0	3.5	3.2
Managers	3.7	3.4	4.1	2.5

The analysis highlights the significant impact of job satisfaction, work-life balance and career growth on the transition of hospitality professionals to allied sectors. The findings reinforce previous studies that identify dissatisfaction with work-life balance and limited career growth as primary drivers of workforce attrition in the hospitality industry (Smith & Jones, 2011). Many respondents indicated that long working hours, unpredictable schedules and limited advancement opportunities contributed to their decision to seek alternative careers. While job satisfaction was negatively correlated with transition intent, the correlation was only moderate. This suggests that although satisfied professionals are less likely to leave, a significant proportion of dissatisfied employees still consider transitioning to allied sectors. Instead, it suggests that work-life balance and career growth opportunities may be equally, if not more, influential in driving career transitions. Professionals who experience stagnation in their roles or struggle with maintaining a work-life balance appear more inclined to explore career opportunities outside of core hotel operations.

The findings suggest that retention strategies in the hospitality industry should go beyond improving job satisfaction alone. To mitigate workforce attrition, hotel management should focus on creating structured career advancement pathways, implementing employee-friendly work schedules and fostering a supportive work environment. Addressing these concerns may help retain skilled professionals and reduce the growing trend of career shifts to allied sectors. Hospitality organizations should implement flexible work arrangements and ensure better scheduling to prevent burnout. Structured career progression models can enhance job satisfaction and reduce transition intent. Encouraging leadership that prioritizes employee well-being can help build a more committed workforce.

Conclusion

This study explored the factors influencing hospitality

professionals' transitions from core hotel operations to allied sectors, focusing on job satisfaction, work life balance and career growth opportunities. The findings indicate that professionals are significantly motivated by the desire for better work life balance, greater career advancement and improved job satisfaction. Those who are dissatisfied with their roles in hotel operations, especially the younger professionals, are more likely to look for alternative opportunities in allied sectors such as event management, tourism and consulting. The research further indicates that while younger professionals tend to hold career growth and work life balance on top priority, senior professionals tend to place job stability and satisfaction above, which forces them to remain in core hotel operations. Overall, the transitioning from the core hotel operations to allied industries is by a combination of factors most of which are driven by factors such as work life balance career development or the desire for varied work and exciting roles. A number of these insights have therefore important implications for the hospitality industries in question, especially strategies for maintaining talent and satisfactory job security. By addressing these factors, the hospitality industry can work towards improving talent retention and sustaining a motivated workforce in core hotel operations.

This study focused exclusively on individuals who had transitioned to allied sectors, excluding those who remained in core hotel operations. External factors influencing career decisions, such as economic conditions, were not comprehensively analysed within the scope of this study. The study recommends boosting work life balance, career growth program, the industry must introduce clearer career ladders and development programs to support upward career progression, especially for the middle echelons. A sense of career growth can be provided with leadership and development training offerings; a motivation to move on will surely decrease. Boosting job satisfaction, hotels can enhance higher job satisfaction by increasing employee engagement through recognition, autonomy and opportunities for creativity in roles. By fostering a positive organizational culture and workplace dissatisfaction, talent will be retained. Targeted retention strategies for different demographics, tailor retention strategies to different age groups. To younger professionals, the issues could be career growth and work life balance; to older professionals, the focus would be on job stability, job satisfaction and long-term benefits. By focusing on such factors, the hospitality industry may be able to better

retain skilled professionals and not lose them at the rate typically seen in hotel operations.

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