1-7-2019

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Repository Citation

Shum, C., Ghosh, A., Gatling, A. R. (2019). Prosocial Rule-Breaking to Help Coworker: Nature, Causes, and Effect on Service Performance. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 79 100-109. Elsevier. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2019.01.001>

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Prosocial rule-breaking to help coworker: Nature, causes, and effect on service performance

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We examine the nature, antecedents, and service performance consequence of employees' prosocial rule-breaking behaviors with a motive to help coworkers (PSBC) in two studies. Using a qualitative exploratory study with a sample of 80 hospitality workers, we showed the prevalence of PSBC in the hospitality industry, which includes four unique forms. Next, we examined the causes and effect of PSBC by drawing on the social cognitive theory. We proposed that coworkers PSBC and employees' moral courage interactively predict employee PSBC, which has a negative effect on service performance. We tested the hypotheses using a time-lagged survey study with a sample of 149 hospitality workers. Results from path analysis supported our predictions. They also showed that the relationship between coworker PSBC and employee PSBC was stronger when employees' moral courage was high. The findings provide theoretical and practical implication on managing employees' rule-breaking behaviors in hospitality settings.

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1. Introduction

Employees' rule-breaking behaviors are common and costly in the hospitality industry: almost 75% of U.S. employees admit to rule-breaking such as theft, fraud, and absenteeism (Jiang, Chen, Sun, & Yang, 2017); 95% of all U.S. companies are challenged with employees' rule-breaking (Henle, Giacalone, & Jurkiewicz, 2005). The U.S. Chamber of Commerce estimated that 75% of employees steal at least once at work (Shulman, 2005), which costed the restaurant industry \$3 to \$6 billion (Garber & Walkup, 2004). Because of the cost of rule-breaking, hospitality researchers generally study rule-breaking as a self-interested and deviant behavior (e.g., Gillard, Chen, & Lv, 2018; Walczak & Reuter, 2004; Tian, Zhang, & Zou, 2014). While these studies provide useful implications on how to control and reduce deviant rule-breaking, they are based on an assumption that prosocial employees do not break rules. However, recent management literature showed that employees can break rules out of prosocial motives to help coworkers (Dahling, Chau, Mayer & Gregory, 2012; Morrison, 2006). Yet, prosocial rule-breaking to help coworkers (PSBC) – which is defined as employees' behaviors that violate organizational rules, standards and regulations with an intention to support people they are working with (Morrison, 2006) – remains unknown to hospitality management.

The lack of examination of PSBC – which includes behaviors such as covering up for coworkers' mistakes, misappropriating company resources to aid coworkers, and releasing confidential information to coworkers (Morrison, 2006) – in the hospitality industry is surprising because the intensive and relational nature of the hospitality workplace would lead us to believe its commonality. Specifically, hospitality employees face unique challenges, such as long working hours, excessive workload, lack of proper mentorship, slow promotions, and customer mistreatments (Kuruüzüm, Anafarta, & Irmak, 2008; Praefder, 2017; Sarabakhsh, Carson, &

Lindgren, 1989). These job demands not only increase employees' beliefs that they have to break rules to do their jobs (Dahling et al., 2012), they also foster workplace friendship and coworker support (Susskind, Kacmar, & Borchgrevink, 2007; Tews, Michel, & Ellingson, 2013; Tews, Michel, & Allen, 2014). While workplace friendship can stimulate prosocial behaviors (Ma & Qu, 2011), it can distract employees from their tasks and can confuse employees in their roles as organizational members and that as friends (Pillemer & Rothbard, in press). Since organizational rules and standards can be in conflict with being supportive to coworkers (Raub, 2008), the nature of hospitality jobs provides provocation for employees to break rules with prosocial motives to help their coworkers. Although there is a plethora of research on deviant rule-breaking, deviant and prosocial rule-breaking are different (Dahling et al., 2012; Morrison, 2006). As such, a lack of studies on PSBC impairs our ability to understand the nature, causes, and effects of a significant portion of costly rule-breaking behaviors in the hospitality industry.

The first objective of this study is to address this gap and to understand the nature of PSBC in the hospitality context. We seek to understand the occurrence and nature of hospitality employee PSBC. The relational nature of the industry (where coworkers continually help and support each other) and the high job demands in hospitality job imply that prosocial rule-breaking should not be aberrant (cf. Dahling et al., 2012; Morrison, 2006). By exploring the nature of hospitality employees' PSBC, we can better differentiate the similarities and differences of PSBC and deviant rule-breaking behaviors.

Our second objective is to contribute to the knowledge on how to change employee PSBC. Despite recent interest in PSBC, research on its antecedents has been fairly limited. With deviant and prosocial rule-breaking related weakly (Dahling et al., 2012) and caused by different antecedents (e.g., Morrison, 2006), our knowledge on deviant rule-breaking cannot be effectively

applied to the controlling of hospitality employees' PSBC. Drawing from the social cognitive theory, we investigate the joint effects of social modelling (embodied in coworker's PSBC) and employees' personal moral preference (embodied in employees' moral courage) on employee PSBC. Coworker PSBC, defined as the extent to which coworkers are engaging in PSBC, represents the customary codes of PSBC in the organization and influences the perceived desirability and social approval of the behaviors (Dahling et al., 2012; Morrison, 2006). Moral courage is the internal agency that balances risk-taking and moral decision making (Hannah, Avolio, & May, 2011; Osswald, Greitemeyer, Fischer & Frey, 2010) and can affect ones' beliefs in unethical and prosocial behaviors (cf. Hannah, Avolio, & Walumbwa, 2011). Considering the demanding nature of hospitality jobs, we further hypothesize that employees' moral courage moderates the relationship between coworker PSBC and employee PSBC.

The third objective of this study is to understand the effect of PSBC on employee service performance as the latter can impact customer satisfaction and loyalty (e.g., Han, Kim & Hyun, 2011; Liao & Chuang, 2004). Unlike other prosocial motives related to efficiency and customer service, PSBC does not intend to improve organizational effectiveness (Morrison, 2006; Dahling et al., 2012). Despite its potential to improve workplace relationships (Morrison, 2006), PSBC is a type of organizational rule-breaking. By testing the effect of PSBC on employee service performance, our study provides practical implications to hospitality organization on whether they should encourage (or stop) PSBC.

In addressing our research objectives, this study contributes to the field of hospitality employees' rule-breaking behaviors and service performance simultaneously. First, considering the importance of both prosocial support (e.g., Guchait, Paşamehmetoğlu, & Lanza-Abbott, 2015; Susskind, Kacmar, & Borchgrevink 2007) and rules (e.g., Bourrier, 2005; Brower &

1 Abolafia, 1997; Mladenka, 1978; Susskind et al., 2007) on delivery of good service, this study
 2 investigates the nature PSBC in the hospitality industry. It extends current research on rule-
 3 breaking by emphasizing the intentions behind rule-breaking. Second, we enrich the PSBC
 4 literature by extending social and personal antecedents to PSBC. Using social cognitive theory
 5 (Bandura, 1991a, 1991b, 2001), we investigate the joint effects of both coworker PSBC and
 6 moral courage on employees' PSBC. It adds to the rule-breaking literature by highlighting
 7 additional antecedents that can be used to control rule-breaking. Third, this research adds to the
 8 literature on service performance by understanding the effect of PSBC on service performance.
 9 Our study highlights a potential dark side of prosocial helping when employees break
 10 organizational rules. Figure 1 summarizes our proposed theoretical model.

Figure 1. Proposed model

12 **2. Prosocial rule-breaking to help coworkers (PSBC)**

13 Having employees helping each other is vital in the hospitality industry because of its
 14 positive effects on employee outcomes (Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008; Loi, Ao, & Xu, 2014) and
 15 service outcomes (Guchait et al., 2015; Susskind et al., 2007). However, some helping behaviors
 16 can be unconstitutional – some employees break organizational rules in the process of helping
 17 coworkers in work and nonwork domains (Dahling et al., 2012; Morrison, 2006). As such,

organizational researchers have started to investigate the nature, causes and effects of prosocial rule-breaking behaviors with an intention to help coworkers (PSBC, Bryant, Davis, Hancock, & Vardaman, 2010; Dahling et al., 2012; Morrison, 2006). Related to the nature of PSBC, both Morrison (2006) and Dahling and colleagues (2012) showed the distinction between PSBC and deviant rule-breaking with the former characterized as “concern and compassion” (Morrison, 2006, p. 13) and the latter as “selfish.” Morrison’s (2006) qualitative study provides examples of PSBC behaviors including overrating a coworker in performance appraisal, releasing confidential information to help coworkers, and breaking standard operating procedures related to work schedule and bonus pay.

PSBC and deviant rule-breaking also differ in antecedents. For example, unlike deviant rule-breaking, PSBC is positively related to agreeableness, empathy (Morrison, 2006), proactive personality (Morrison, 2006), and self-esteem (Vardaman, Gondo, & Allen, 2014). Existing studies identified some individual personality, job characteristics, and social factors that can be related to employee PSBC. Employees who are low in conscientiousness (Dahling et al., 2012), low in neuroticism (Vardaman et al., 2014), and high in risk-taking propensity (Morrison, 2006; Vardaman et al., 2014) are more likely to engage in PSBC. Jobs with high job demand (Dahling et al., 2012), job autonomy (Huang, Lu, & Wang, 2014; Morrison, 2006; Vardaman et al., 2014), and job meaningfulness (Morrison, 2006) stimulate PSBC. Related to situational antecedents, employee PSBC is higher when their coworkers break similar rules (Dahling et al., 2012; Morrison, 2006), when their leaders are transformational (Huang, Lu, & Wang, 2014), or when they are working in an instrumental and caring ethical climate (Vardaman et al., 2014). These antecedents suggest that practices that are effective in controlling deviant rule-breaking may not be effective at controlling PSBC.

Despite the difference in motive and antecedents, PSBC can be similar to deviant rule-breaking behaviors as it can hurt the organization (Bryant et al., 2010). Although PSBC may lead to certain favorable outcomes such as enhanced relation-oriented behavior among employees through the mediating role of trust (Xiaoguang & Jizu, 2015), engaging in PSBC hurts the employee's performance ratings (Dahling et al., 2012). For example, restaurant employees breaking safety rules can face organization sanctions (e.g., write-up, termination) (Walczak & Reuter, 2004). Followers are more likely to perceive a high level of injustice and psychological contract violation when their managers engage in PSBC (Bryant et al., 2010), resulting in reduced perceived organizational support, reduced job satisfaction and increased mistrust of management (Bryant et al., 2010). Moreover, covering up for a coworkers' misconduct may threaten the organization's reputation (Coombs, 2007) and threaten public welfare (e.g., food poisoning, disease outbreak) (Walczak & Reuter, 2004).

3. Exploratory Study: Method and Results

Since existing hospitality studies did not take the rule-breaking motives into account, the occurrence and the nature of these potentially harmful employee PSBC remains unknown. Thus, we used a structured qualitative study to explore the nature of PSBC in the hospitality context. We invited 145 undergraduate and graduate students with a minimum of 6 months working experience in the hospitality industry enrolled in a southwestern U.S. university to participate in this study. A total of 80 respondents participated (Response rate = 55%). The average hospitality work experience was 1.97 years ($SD = 0.63$). Respondents were asked, "have you broken a rule, policy, or procedure with a purpose to help your coworker?". Next, they were asked to describe the situations, the rule involved, and the consequences of the rule-breaking behaviors. The participants worked in a variety of hospitality segments (casino, gaming, cruise, airline, hotel,

resort) with an average tenure of 1.8 years at their current job. They had an average age of 23.6 years old ($SD = 8.24$) and 69% of them were female.

Of the 80 participants, 48 (60%) stated that they broke an organizational rule, a policy, or a procedure. Supporting the prevalence of PSBC in the hospitality industry, 17 participants (21% of all participants; 35% of all rule-breakers) said they broke rules to help a coworker. Table 1 lists the qualitative results. Supporting our earlier claims that prosocial supportive behaviors can be in conflict with organizational rules, one respondent stated: “I would have wanted to help no matter where it came from”. Moreover, participants suggested that other coworkers can influence the engagement of PSBC (e.g., “some other coworkers encouraged me to take out stuff”). We identified four different forms of PSBC, including “violate standard operating procedure of company” ($n = 7$, e.g., “I allowed a subordinate to work from a remote location in another state.”), “coverup for coworker misconduct” ($n = 5$, e.g., “One of my coworkers was 10 mins late, I check him in on time.”), “stealing company resources for coworker” ($n = 3$, e.g., “I made a drink for my coworker”) and “helping busy coworkers” ($n = 2$, “I clocked in about 15 minutes early so that I could help my coworkers handle the rush”). While some PSBC were related to tasks (e.g., “use her opera code to teach her how to check in and out and settle bill for guests.”) others were not task-specific (“Giving cans of beer or a bottle of wine for their future consumption”). Although 6 participants suggested that there were negative consequences for engaging in PSBC, including deteriorating their service performance, 9 of the 17 participants (53%) said that they were not punished by the organization for engaging in PSBC. For example, one respondent who reported “I used my hands to put a piece of chicken on a waffle” to “help my fellow food runners because we were really busy” admitted that “I could have possibly had cross-contaminated the chicken.” It also “set a bad example” for other employees.

Table 1.**Qualitative Results on Prosocial Rule-breaking to Help Coworkers**

Industry	Example Given	Rationale Given	Outcomes
Violate standard operating procedure of company (n = 7)			
Restaurant/ Food and beverage	"I used my hands to put a piece of chicken on a waffle"	"I helped my fellow food runner because we were really busy, and we didn't have time to put gloves on"	"I could have possibly had cross-contaminated the chicken."
Gaming/ Casino	"As a supervisor, per policy, anytime there was an issue with a customer, we were supposed to bring it to our acting manager first and were not allowed to directly confront the customer with a threat, such as "That is your warning, the next time you will be asked to leave." My employees faced constant sexual harassment, which I don't feel was properly dealt with by upper-level management. When my employees faced harassing comments, instead of raising this up with the manager first, I would directly warn the customer and if their behavior continued, they would be asked to leave."	Help coworkers	"I was warned to bring matters up with management in the future before I say anything to a customer. I never received a written warning, or anything more severe than a comment."
Meeting and event management	"My coworker wanted to leave a girls camp where we were supervising girls to get 'real meal'. She didn't want to go alone. We left the campground and went into town."	"I felt it would build a good relationship with a new coworker. I felt it would help her to open up. I felt that in the long run better would come from it."	"Turns out, no one cared. Most everyone took a 'personal moment' during the week for one reason or another. The 'personal moment' my coworker and I took together that week turned into a very beneficial friendship for the organization later."
Hotel/ Lodging/ Resort	"I use her opera code to teach her how to check in and out and settle the bill for guests."	Help coworkers	Not any negative influence
Hotel/ Lodging/ Resort	"I change the off days"	Help coworkers	Nothing wrong.
Gaming/ Casino	"I allowed a subordinate (co-worker) to work from a remote location in another state. The company did not have a remote working policy. She had a severe illness in her family which required her to spend an extended period in the other state."	Help coworkers	None. She continued to work remotely for two months.

Coverup for coworker misconduct (n = 5)

Restaurant/ Food and beverage	“In my previous job, when I worked as a host, I was in charge of timing the bussers in. One of my co-workers was 10 mins late, I check him in on time”	“He was suffering from family issues at the time. I felt really bad for him, so I timed him in on time although he arrived 10 minutes late”	“He did come in late again after that because he thought I would time him in on time anyway. It set a bad example for other bussers and hosts”
Restaurant/ Food and beverage	“When I was working at a fast food restaurant, my coworker was running late, and she wanted me to clock in for her”	“I did not think anyone would find out, and she would have gotten to work anyway. The manager was not there, and roll call is not taken. It was a coworker that worked the same shift as me”	“The outcome for the organization was that it has to pay the employees for hours she did not actually work, which was unfair to the other employees”
Hotel/ Lodging/ Resort	“When I lied about what they said”	“Just to show my co-worker some kindness”	None
Restaurant/ Food and beverage	“My coworker lied about an incident with a guest and in order to not have her get in trouble I continued the lie”	“I did not want my coworker to get in trouble and I felt extremely bad that she had gone through this incident”	“We were on a strict watch out for false bills, always asking for managers approval even if it was extremely busy.”
Others	“One of my coworkers was running late because she had to drop her kids off, so I clocked in for her”	“She was a single parent and I wanted to help her out.”	“She got written up for lying on her timesheet”

Stealing company resources for a coworker (n = 3)

Park/Recreation	“At one time, one of my coworkers needed an outdoor event space for their birthday party. We were able to not charge him for space, as this permit included alcohol consumption and the reserved space”	“After asking my manager, I did this task, because not only did we not have any events going on that weekend, but the staff was able to have a place to celebrate their occasion. Also, since it was an outdoor space with very few people, no staff needed to work”	None
Cruise/ Airline	“Giving cans of beer or a bottle of wine for their future consumption”	“It was quite common practice when I first joined. (Even some other coworkers encouraged me to take out stuff.)”	Company lost money
Restaurant/ Food and beverage	“I made a drink for my coworker”	“Because I want to be friendly around my peers”	None

Helping busy coworkers (n = 2)

Restaurant/ Food and beverage	“They were behind on the fries, so I pulled their basket early, so they could get orders of to customers”	“I was trying to help get orders off because wait times were climbing, and I didn't want upset customers and I knew pulling a basket a little under a minute early wouldn't be the worse idea”	No consequence.
Restaurant/ Food and beverage	“One job required me to clock into work at a maximum of 7 minutes before my shift was scheduled to begin. I tended to arrive early on most days. I worked in a restaurant and one day I came in and the restaurant was very busy, and it was obvious the staff needed help. I clocked in about 15 minutes early so that I could help my coworkers handle the rush.”	“To help my coworkers handle the rush and get through the shift comfortably. I knew that in the situation I would have wanted help no matter where it came from”	“My coworkers were very thankful that I clocked in early to help them out in their time of distress. The organization was less than happy with my actions. I got scolded for breaking the rules even though it benefited both the guests and my coworkers.”

Supporting our earlier claims, these the qualitative results suggested that the forms of rule-breaking behaviors were similar and related to deviant rule-breaking behaviors (e.g., stealing, violation of food safety rules) examined in existing hospitality literature. However, the intentions were different. Unlike the assumption of “prosocial employees do not break rules”, our results suggested that some rule-breakers’ motives are prosocial (to help coworker). Moreover, over half of the prosocial rule-breakers were not penalized. The qualitative results suggested that coworker can motivate employees to engage in PSBC. Overall, this exploratory study details the nature of PSBC in the hospitality industry. It shows that PSBC is different from deviant rule-breaking and indicates a need to better understand this construct.

4. Theoretical background and hypotheses

4.1 Social Cognitive Theory of Self-regulation

Despite the usefulness of the explorative study to show the nature of PSBC, it did not (a) test the antecedents of – or potential ways to control – PSBC, and (b) examine the effect of PSBC on service performance – an outcome that is essential to hospitality businesses (e.g., Han et al., 2011). Our qualitative results suggest that coworkers could coerce fellow employees from engaging in PSBC. Thus, we draw on the social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1991a, 1991b) to examine the role of social influence (embodied in coworker PSBC) and personal preference (embodied in moral courage) in impacting employees’ engagement in PSBC.

Similar to its precedent theory (social learning theory: Bandura, 1978), social cognitive theory examines how people learn and model behaviors from other people (i.e., role models). It suggests that people replicate the actions of the role models based on the role models’ outcomes (Bandura, 1991a, 1991b, 2001). Observing a role model can also prompt the viewer to engage in

behavior they already learned (Bandura, 1991a, 1991b, 2001). In other words, people are more likely to engage in a behavior when they see others are being rewarded – and not being punished – for it. In addition, social cognitive theory explicitly suggested that people’s beliefs in their ability to succeed play a role in the process of behavioral modeling (Bandura, 1989, 1991, 2001). Simply stated, while role models show whether a behavior is desirable, personal beliefs shape whether it can be done. People are more likely to engage in actions that they believe they can succeed in and that result in positive outcomes.

Researchers have used social cognitive theory as a conceptual framework for explaining the influence of coworkers on employees’ behaviors (e.g., Lemoine, Parsons, Charles, & Kansara, 2015). Although the demanding nature of hospitality jobs can push employees to believe that PSBC is necessary, PSBC can yield unintended negative consequences, such as lower performance ratings (Dahling et al., 2012). Therefore, employees need to rely on both social cues from their coworkers (i.e., coworker PSBC) and their internal moral belief (i.e., moral courage) to determine if engaging in PSBC is warranted.

4.2 Social modeling: Coworker PSBC and Employee PSBC

Coworkers are vital parts of the work environment (Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008). Employees look to coworkers to understand the social environment and to deal with uncertainty (Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008) at work. Social factors influence behaviors carrying undesirable social consequences (Chekroun & Brauer, 2002). By offering information and providing support for some activities, coworkers influence employee behaviors – employees are more likely to model coworkers’ behaviors when they see coworkers engage in this behavior and get positive outcomes (Bandura, 1989; Hergenhahn & Olson, 1997).

Since engaging in PSBC can result in organizational sanctions (cf. Dahling et al., 2012) and because it is unethical (cf. Vardaman., 2014), employees rely on coworkers to assess the immediate outcomes of PSBC (cf. Kram & Isbella, 1985). This enables employees to learn the expectations of the organization – having coworkers engaging in PSBC in the past makes this type of rule-breaking socially acceptable (Dahling et.al, 2012). This reduces the perceived risk of PSBC and increases the likelihood of an employee to break rules through reinforcement. Supporting the above arguments, Dahling and colleagues (2012) and Morrison (2006) found that individuals who were informed that a coworker had engaged in PSBC were more likely to engage in PSBC themselves. Formally, we propose:

H1. Coworker PSBC is positively associated with employee PSBC.

4.3 Personal beliefs: Employee Moral Courage and Employee PSBC

While having coworkers engaging in PSBC makes this act more desirable, a person's internal moral beliefs shape his/ her moral actions. Employees' moral courage – defined as a tendency to “enforce societal and ethical norms without considering one's own social costs” (Greitemeyer, Osswald, Fischer, & Frey, 2007, p. 115) – provides employees with the inner agency to promote moral actions as defined by social norms (Hannah & Avolio, 2010; Sekerka, Bagozzi, & Charnigo, 2009). Morally courageous people take moral actions even when they know there are risks associated with those actions (Hannah, Avolio, & May, 2011).

Employees with low moral courage are more likely to engage in PSBC because they are unwilling to take the risk associated with moral actions. Given the high demand in hospitality jobs, employees with low moral courage may be concerned whether they can do their jobs without “bending the rules” to help each other (cf. Dahling et al., 2012). On the other hand,

employees with high moral courage have high virtue (Hannah, Avolio, & May, 2011; Hannah, Avolio, & Walumbwa, 2011; Sekerka et al., 2009). They make habitual judgments regarding their own actions based on moral rules and social norms (Kidder, 2005; May, Luth & Schwoerer, 2014). Since formal organizational rules represent the organizational standards of appropriate behaviors (Derfler-Rozin, Moore & Staats, 2016; Desai, 2010), morally courageous employees avoid violating those prescribed rules (Baumert, Halmburger, & Schmitt, 2013; Kidder, 2005). The person's internalized moral standards promote self-regulation and prohibit morally courageous employees from engaging in PSBC. In line with this logic, research consistently showed that employees with high moral courage refrain from unethical behaviors (Sekerka et al., 2009). Accordingly, we theorize that:

H2. Employee moral courage is negatively associated with employee PSBC.

3.4 Moderating Role of Employee Moral Courage on Coworker PSBC – Employee PSBC linkage

While organizational rules represent the organizational standards of appropriate behaviors (e.g., Desai, 2010), the definition of moral actions also depends on social norms (Haidt, 2001). According to social cognitive theory, personal beliefs and social influences jointly determine the person's behaviors (Bandura, 1991a, 1991b, 2001). As such, employees high in moral courage engage in socially acceptable behaviors to fulfill their drive to engage in moral actions (Greitemeyer et al., 2007). Considered the ambidextrous nature of PSBC (that it is both a prosocial action and rule-breaking behavior), employees rely on social norms (embodied in coworker PSBC) to inform the morality of the PSBC. With social norms being powerful influencers in determining what constitutes a moral action (Bandura, 1991b), employees with high moral courage – who are motivated to take moral actions – are more likely to be influenced by these social norms. When coworker PSBC is high, social norms suggest that PSBC is a good

moral action (Dahling et al., 2012). This compels employees with high moral courage to break the rules to help their coworkers regardless of the risk (e.g., potential organizational sanctions). On the other hand, when coworker PSBC is low, social norms suggest that PSBC can be an immoral action. As such, morally courageous employees do not engage in PSBC, even if there is an associated risk (e.g., hurting coworker relations). As such, we argued that there is a strong positive relationship between coworker PSBC and employee PSBC when employees' moral courage is high. In other words, morally courageous employees are more likely to be affected by the social norms and engage in PSBC as exhibited by their coworker PSBC.

However, employees with low moral courage avoid risk in moral actions (Hannah, Avolio, & May, 2011). They lack the necessary psychological resources to withstand any external pressure to behave unethically (Hannah, Avolio, & Walumbwa, 2011; Sekerka et al, 2009). With high job demands, (Kuruüzüm et al., 2008; Sarabakhsh et al., 1989), hospitality employees with low moral courage would engage in unethical behaviors to avoid the risk of failing the job. Since PSBC "is an adaptive response to workplace demand" (p. 27), employees with low moral courage are inclined to engage in PSBC even without coworker showing desirableness (Dahling et al., 2012). Thus, employees with low moral courage are more likely to engage in PSBC, regardless of the level of coworker PSBC. Formally, we hypothesize:

H3. Employee moral courage moderates the relationship between coworker PSBC and employee PSBC such that the relationship is stronger when moral courage is high.

3.5 Employee PSBC and Service Performance

As suggested above, even well-intentioned rule-breaking behaviors may lead to destructive consequences for the organization and the employees (Dahling et al., 2012).

Management establishes rules and regulations as controlling mechanisms that are designed to guide the behavior of employees under the assumption that following these rules is necessary for effective performance (Brower & Abolafia, 1997; Derfler-Rozin et al., 2016; Goodsell, 2000; Mills, Murgatroyd & Marshall, 1993). Rules ensure consistency in decision making (Derfler-Rozin et al., 2016) and direct frontline employees' efforts in "the pursuit of organizational goals" (Brower & Abolafia, 1997, p. 322). Rules and standards are also necessary for consistent (Mladenka, 1978) and high-quality service (Susskind et al., 2007). Regardless of the intention behind PSBC, breaking rules impairs the functionality of rules and reduces the organizational capability to control service performance (cf. Susskind et al., 2007). For example, covering up for a coworker's absenteeism can hinder a managers' ability to arrange appropriate manpower for high-quality service. Similarly, stealing company resource would jeopardize service performance by removing the service-related resource. With decreased manpower and resources, PSBC impedes service consistency (cf. Mladenka, 1978), which is essential in high-quality service performance (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988).

Moreover, engaging in PSBC indicates that the employees are prioritizing coworkers' needs over guests' needs. Workplace friendship and supportive behaviors can distract employees from their task and compromise work-related goals (e.g., Pillemer & Rothbard, 2018). For instance, breaking organizational rules and procedures to help coworker (e.g., clock in early, changing off days) can prevent employees from taking needed time off from the work. As discussed above, the decision to engage in PSBC requires employees to understand social norms and personal preference regarding behaviors. As a result, engaging in PSBC exhausts the focal employee's limited resource and impairs the employee's ability to work on assigned tasks (Sonnentag, 2003) – including service performance.

Social cognitive theory suggests that engaging in PSBC can be the start of a slippery slope of broader performance issues. Bandura (1991a, 1991b) suggests that even though there may be a latent preference for higher moral action, social influences and the outcomes of an action result in an internal reorganization of moral definitions. Social cognitive theory suggests that over time individuals continue to weigh the immediate and long-term consequences of immoral actions, based on social realities. As demonstrated by our explorative study, only half of the employees who exhibit PSBC are punished by the organization. The lack of penalty for PSBC may mislead employees to believe rule-breaking as acceptable in the organization. In other words, repetitive prosocial rule-breaking can make employees insensitive to the moral concerns related to violating organizational rules (Welsh, Ordóñez; Snyder, & Christian, 2015; Balch & Armstrong, 2010), which develop over time into a regularity of rule-breaking (Bandura, 1999). Subsequently, employees who engage in PSBC may be less concern about service-related rules and less motivated to deliver superior service performance. Although the relationship between PSBC and service performance has not been tested, research has provided initial evidence of the potentially harmful nature of PSBC. For example, Dahling et. al (2012) showed that PSBC has a negative relationship with task performance. Therefore, we propose:

H4. Employee PSBC is negatively related to service performance.

4. Main Study: Method

4.1 Sample and data collection procedure

The purpose of the main study is to test the proposed theoretical model in Figure 1. We invited 300 students enrolled in five undergraduate hospitality organization behavior/ human resource management classes at a southwestern U.S. university to participated in this three-wave

survey study in exchange for a total of 20 extra credit points (3%). Two-hundred and thirteen students were qualified (i.e. currently working in the hospitality industry for more than or equal to 20 hours per week) and agreed to participate in the study. Excluding missing data, 149 were valid and were used in the analysis (representing a response rate of 50%). Demographic information indicated that 32% of the respondents were male, and their average age was 23.01 years old ($SD = 4.39$). The average work experience of the respondents was 51.08 months ($SD = 46.09$). They had an average tenure of 14.13 months ($SD = 16.41$) at their current job. Regarding their employment sector, 20.8% worked in hotel/ lodging, 41.7% worked in food and beverage/restaurants, 3.6% worked in gaming, 7.8% worked in events/convention, 12.5% worked in retails and 13.5% worked in other hospitality sectors. Majority of the participants (77.4%) were working at the front-line level and 11.5% in leadership roles (8.4% were supervisors, 2.6% were managers and 0.5% were directors/executives).

4.2 Measures

To avoid common source bias, we used a three-wave time-lagged survey. Participants accessed their dispositional characteristics, moral courage and their coworkers' PSBC at Time 1. Two weeks later (Time 2), participants rated their own PSBC. Four weeks later (Time 3), participants reported their service performance. All study measures were assessed on a five-point Likert scale, with 1 representing "strongly disagree" and 5 representing "strongly agree".

Participants rated their own moral courage at Time 1 using Hannah and Avolio's (2010) four-item scale. A sample item states "I will confront a leader if he/she commits an unethical act" ($\alpha = .79$). Participants rated the extent to which their coworker engage in PSBC in Time 1 and the extent to which they would break organizational rules to help coworkers at Time 2 on Dahling and colleagues' (2012) four-item PSBC scale. An example includes "I break

organizational rules if my coworkers need help with their duties.” ($\alpha_{\text{coworker PSBC}} = .90$; $\alpha_{\text{employee PSBC}} = .95$). Employees reported their own service performance using Liao and Chuang’s (2004) seven-item scale. A sample item was “I am friendly to customers.” ($\alpha = .94$). We controlled for employee age, gender, and job tenure as these demographic variables may be related to both moral courage (Bronstein, Fox, Kamon, & Knolls, 2007) and PSBC (Dahling et al., 2012).

4.3 Confirmatory Factor analyses

We conducted confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to assess the factor structure of the studied variables. As shown in Table 2, the hypothesized four-factor model (i.e., moral courage, coworker PSBC, PSBC and service performance) demonstrated an acceptable fit to the data ($\chi^2 = 270.91$, $df = 146$, $p \leq .01$, $RMSEA = .08$, $SRMR = .05$, $CFI = .94$). In addition, this baseline model was found to be superior when compared to other two alternative models: 1) where items on employee PSBC and coworker PSBC were loaded on one factor ($\chi^2 = 516.28$, $df = 149$, $p \leq .01$); and 2) where moral courage and employee PSBC were combined as one factor ($\chi^2 = 455.42$, $df = 149$, $p \leq .01$). The results support the distinctiveness of the variables.

Table 2

Results of the confirmatory factor analysis.

Model	χ^2	p	df	RMSEA	SRMR	CFI	TLI
The baseline model (four-factor model)	270.91	$p \leq .01$	146	0.08	0.05	0.94	0.93
Three-factor model: CPSBC and PSBC were combined into one factor	516.28	$p \leq .01$	149	0.13	0.08	0.83	0.80
Three-factor model: moral courage and PSBC were combined into one factor	455.42	$p \leq .01$	149	0.12	0.10	0.86	0.84

$N = 149$; TLI is the Tucker-Lewis index, CFI the comparative fit index; and RMSEA the root-mean-square error of approximation.

5. Results

Table 3.

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations.

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. age	23.01	4.39							
2. gender	0.32	0.47	.09						
3. job tenure	14.13	16.41	.18 *	.14 †					
4. coworker PSBC	2.36	0.79	.11	.20 *	.07	(.79) *			
5. moral courage	3.61	0.70	-.05	.09	.17 *	-.18 *	(.90)		
6. PSBC	2.37	0.88	.08	.18 *	.03	.54 **	-.21 *	(.95)	
7. Service performance	4.12	0.64	-.05	-.20 *	.11	-.16 †	.18 *	-.22 **	(.94)

N =149 (listwise deletion) † $p \leq .1$, * $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$ (two-tailed)

Table 3 shows means, standard deviations and covariances for studied variables. Coworker PSBC was positively related to employee PSBC ($r = .54, p \leq .01$). Moral courage was negatively correlated to PSBC ($r = -.21, p \leq .05$). Also, PSBC was negatively related to service performance ($r = -.22, p \leq .01$). These results provided initial support to the hypotheses.

Hypotheses were tested using path-analysis in Mplus 7.3 (Muthén and Muthén, 2015). Table 4 shows the path-analysis results. Supporting Hypothesis 1, the relationship between coworker PSBC and employee PSBC were positively related ($\beta = .56, p \leq .01$). The results further supported Hypothesis 2 with a negative relationship between moral courage and PSBC ($\beta = -.19, p \leq .05$). The results suggested that employees are more likely to engage in PSBC when they have low moral courage; they are also more likely to engage in PSBC when they work with coworkers who are engaging in PSBC.

Table 4.

Path Analysis Results

Predictors \ Outcomes	Employee PSBC			Service performance		
	Estimate	S.E.		Estimate	S.E.	
Intercepts	2.26	.32	**	4.59	.29	**
Age	.00	.01		-.01	.01	
Gender	.15	.13		-.25	.11	*
Job tenure	.00	.00		.01	.00	†
Coworker PSBC ^a	.56	.08	**			
Moral courage ^a	-.19	.09	*			
Moral courage * Coworker PSBC	.16	.08	*			
Employee PSBC				-.14	.06	*
Residual Variances	.52	.06	**	.36	.04	**

N = 149 (listwise deletion) † $p \leq .1$, * $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$ (two-tailed)

^a Variables are mean-centered

1 Hypothesis 3 states that moral courage moderates the relationship between coworker
2 PSBC and employee PSBC. Table 4 shows that the interaction of coworker PSBC and moral
3 courage significantly predicted employee PSBC ($\beta = .16, p \leq .05$). Following the procedure
4 recommended by Cohen, Cohen, West, and Aiken (2003), we plotted the interaction effect at the
5 conditional values of moral courage and coworker PSBC (plus and minus 1 SD of the 2
6 variables). Supporting the main effect and the moderating effect of moral courage, the interaction
7 plot (Figure 2) showed that the intercept and the slope of the two lines (low moral courage and
8 high moral courage) were different. Specifically, the line of low moral courage (dotted line) was
9 higher than that of high moral courage (straight line) illustrating a strong main effect of moral
10 courage. Moreover, the slope of the line of high moral courage (straight line) was “steeper” than
11 the slope of the line of low moral courage (dotted line) illustrating a moderating effect of moral
12 courage. We conducted a simple slope test to test the simple relationship between coworker
13 PSBC and employee PSBC at conditional values (plus and minus 1 SD) of moral courage.

Supporting Hypothesis 3, the relationship between coworker PSBC and employee PSBC was stronger when employee moral courage was high (simple slope = .68, $p \leq .01$) than when it was low (simple slope = .45, $p \leq .01$; slope difference = .23, $p \leq .05$).

Figure 2. The moderating role of employee moral courage

Results in Table 4 also provide support to Hypothesis 4, which suggests a negative relationship between employee PSBC and service performance ($\beta = -.14$, $p \leq .05$). Although we did not hypothesize a mediating relationship, our proposed model suggested that employee PSBC mediates (a) the relationship between coworker PSBC and employee service performance, (b) the relationship between moral courage and employee service performance, and (c) the interaction effect of coworker PSBC and moral courage on employee service performance. We tested the significance of these indirect effects using the parametric bootstrapping technique to re-create the confident interval (CI) of the coefficients. In line with our expectation, employee PSBC mediated (a) the coworker PSBC – employee service performance relationship (indirect effect = $-.08$, 90% CI = $[-.14, -.03]$), (b) the employee moral courage – employee service performance relationship (indirect effect = $.03$, 90% CI = $[.00, .06]$), and (c) the coworker PSBC $\times$ employee moral courage – employee service performance relationship (indirect effect = $-.02$, 90% CI = $[-.05, -.00]$). Overall, the proposed model in Figure 1 was supported.

6. Discussion

In this research, we used a qualitative study and a time-lagged survey study to examine the nature, causes, and service-outcome of employee prosocial rule-breaking with a motive to help coworkers (PSBC) in the hospitality context. We found that employee PSBC is common in the hospitality industry and that it can have four different forms. Drawing on social cognitive theory, we examined the antecedents and service-related outcome of coworker PSBC. The survey results suggested that coworker PSBC and employee moral courage were related to employee PSBC. Moreover, the relationship between coworker PSBC and employee PSBC was stronger when employee moral courage was high. Results also showed that employee PSBC was negatively related to service performance.

6.1 Theoretical implications

From a theoretical perspective, this study makes some unique contributions to the existing literature. First, although hospitality researchers have examined rule-breaking behaviors in the service context (e.g., Gillard et al., 2018; Tian et al., 2014; Walczak & Reuter, 2004), few studies have examined prosocial rule-breaking behaviors like PSBC in the hospitality industry. However, deviant and PSBC are only weakly related to each other (Dahling et al., 2012) and can be related to different antecedents (Dahling et al., 2012; Morrison, 2006). The lack of PSBC research undermines managers' ability to control some employees' rule-breaking behaviors. Indeed, our qualitative study showed that 35% of rule-breaking can originate from a prosocial motive to help coworkers. Unfortunately, as indicated in our qualitative result, management may turn a blind eye to these rule-breaking behaviors and not punish these rule-breakers because of their prosocial intent. In sum, our study highlights an important but overlooked area of employees' rule-breaking.

Using social cognitive theory, we identified ways to control PSBC. We joined Morrison (2006) and Dahling et al. (2012) by arguing that coworker PSBC - a social factor - is positively related to PSBC. More importantly, we go beyond the current research on PSBC, which heavily focuses on situational and dispositional antecedents (Dahling et al., 2012; Morrison, 2006; Huang et al., 2014), by showing that PSBC can be influenced by moral courage – a personal characteristic that can be trained. The results support the argument that PSBC can be controlled at a personal level. Our study underlines the strong influence that moral courage to reduce employee PSBC. Our study also extends current research on PSBC (e.g., Dahling et al., 2012; Morrison, 2006) by showing that moral courage can enhance the relationship between coworker PSBC and employee PSBC. It highlights the conditions (i.e. high employee moral courage) under which social influence is particularly important.

Moreover, we established that PSBC hurts employees' service performance. As hospitality is a customer-focused industry, employee service performance influences overall organizational performance (Han et al., 2011; Liao & Chuang, 2004). By establishing that PSBC can be bad for service performance, our study also sheds light on research on hospitality employee's helping behaviors (Guchait et al., 2015; Susskind et al., 2007) by highlighting the importance of differentiating PSBC from (rule-abounded) helping behaviors.

6.2 Practical implications

From a practical point of view, this study makes valuable contributions to the field of hospitality management. Employee service performance is related to customer satisfaction (e.g., Han et al., 2011; Liao & Chuang, 2004), and is crucial for hospitality organizations' financial performance (e.g., Chi & Gursoy, 2009). Our qualitative results showed that management may be reluctant to penalize prosocial rule-breaking. However, our survey results show that PSBC is

bad for service performance. Our survey results further showed that PSBC can spread from coworkers to employees, which enhances its negative effect on service performance. Accordingly, we recommend organizations to prohibit PSBC using a three-step approach. First, organizations should emphasize the importance of rules and create an organizational culture of strict rule adherence. Leaders, as role-models, should act according to the standards and policies of the company. It educates employees the importance of rules and stop them from breaking any rules even with prosocial motives.

Second, managers should educate their prosocial rule-breakers. Instead of just disciplining or discharging employees who break rules, managers should understand the intentions behind the rule-breaking. They should educate their subordinates on the negative effects of PSBC and why prosocial rule-breaking is as bad as deviant rule-breaking. Such practices not only can reduce the influence of coworker PSBC but also can create an environment where employees are hesitant to break rules.

Third, managers can reduce PSBC by enhancing employees' moral courage. Our study showed that employees with low moral courage are more likely to engage in PSBC. Thus, employees with low moral courage are costly to organizations. Organizations can also educate their employees to be morally courageous by having training in business ethics (May et al., 2014). Additionally, managers can include validated measures of moral courage (e.g., Hannah & Avolio, 2010) in screening and selection. Results from the tests can be evaluated to determine the level of moral courage of potential employees and help managers in selecting employees that are better fit for the organization.

6.3. Limitations and future research

1 This research has some methodological strengths. First, we collected data using a mixed
2 method approach. The exploratory study used a qualitative approach to collect data on PSBC
3 nature. The main study used a quantitative approach to test the theoretical model. The use of both
4 methods enabled us to test the theoretical model and provide complementary evidence (Creswell
5 & Plano, 2003). Second, data in the main study was collected in three-time-point. Although we
6 can only provide indirect evidence of causality, the time-lagged design reduces the concerns of
7 common method bias (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003).

8 Nonetheless, the results should be interpreted together with limitations. First, we sampled
9 hospitality employees studying in a university. Although the current sampling method allowed us
10 to recruit participants from diverse hospitality sectors, participants were relatively young ($M_{age} =$
11 23.01 ; $SD = 4.39$) and were adapted to the U.S. culture. Most of the participants were working in
12 frontline positions. Therefore, the results might not be generalizable to managerial prosocial rule-
13 breaking behaviors (cf. Morrison, 2006) or other cultures (cf. Huang et al., 2014). We encourage
14 future research to replicate our findings with other hospitality samples. In particular, it would be
15 interesting to replicate the results in countries that are more rule obedient, such as Japan,
16 Germany, and Singapore (cf. Hofstede, 2003).

17 Moreover, the sample sizes for the studies were small – only 17 of the 80 participants in
18 the qualitative study admit engaging in PSBC, and only 149 of the 300 participants complete the
19 three-wave longitudinal study. This can be attributed to the sensitive nature of the topic in
20 organizational rule-breaking behavior. Participant recruitment was difficult for such sensitive
21 research topics as candidates might not feel comfortable answering questions on such behaviors
22 even though they were ensured of complete anonymity and confidentiality. Future studies may
23 extend may replicate our findings by partnering with organizations.

1 Second, service performance was self-rated, which may generate social desirability bias
2 (Arnold & Feldman, 1981). This reduced the variance in service performance and our power to
3 detect significant results. Although it was not a significant problem in this study, we recommend
4 future research to replicate our findings with objective measures – such as customer satisfaction
5 and financial performance– and correlate this measure with PSBC. Such an approach can provide
6 additional evidence on the effect of PSBC on hospitality establishment’s performance.

7 Third, unlike other studies that used a self-reported measure of PSBC (Dahling et al.,
8 2012), we asked participants to rate their coworker PSBC. Although this helps us to test our
9 theoretical model by ensuring that employees witnessed and were aware of their coworkers’ rule-
10 breaking behaviors, it was difficult for participants to understand the coworkers’ intentions.
11 Participants might misattribute a prosocial motive for the coworkers’ self-interested rule-
12 breaking behaviors. We encourage future study to conduct an experimental study and use
13 confederates to manipulate the level of different coworker rule-breaking behaviors. Not only can
14 such designs replicate our study, but it also allows researchers to test the participant’s ability to
15 accurately rate other’s rule-breaking intentions. Moreover, we also did not specify the targeted
16 coworkers in our survey and participants reported the general tendencies of their coworkers’
17 engagement in PSBC. However, coworkers can exert different influences. For example, the
18 influence of coworkers working in the same department is stronger than those who are working
19 in another department. Coworkers who are close to the focal employee are also more influential.
20 We recommend future studies to use a social network approach to understand the effect of
21 coworker PSBC on employee PSBC.

22 We encourage future research to extend our findings in a number of ways. Future
23 research can expand on this study by introducing elements that are specific to the hospitality

industry. We encourage them to focus on the job nature of PSBC in different hospitality sectors, such as hotels/lodging, restaurants, airlines, etc. Additionally, future research can investigate other antecedents to PSBC. For example, it would be interesting to test how job characteristics, rule-breaking sanctions, and leader rule-breaking behavior can be related to PSBC (cf. Morrison, 2006; Huang et al., 2014). Third, we encourage future research to investigate the effect of other prosocial rule-breaking behaviors on service performance. While employees engage in PSBC with a motive to help their coworkers, they may break organizational rules with other prosocial motives (Morrison, 2006; Dahling et al., 2012). It is likely that those rule-breaking behaviors with a motive to improve service can enhance, instead of hurting, customer service. Fourth, we recommend future research to extend our model and investigate the potential positive effect of PSBC in terms of better coworker relationship. Since coworker support is essential to service performance (Susskind et al., 2007), controlling for the effect of employees' helping to coworkers and employee-coworker relationship can better detangle the effect of PSBC on service performance.

7. Conclusion

Invoking the social cognitive theory, this study investigates the nature, causes, and service-outcome of employee PSBC. We found that high coworker PSBC and low moral courage interactively predict employee PSBC, which in turn hurts hospitality employee's service performance. We encourage more researchers to focus their attention on the impact of PSBC in the hospitality industry.

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