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ENHANCING EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IN FUN ACTIVITIES

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ABSTRACT

The present study examines factors that impact employee engagement in fun activities among a sample of 173 individuals working in the hospitality industry in the U.S. Specifically, this research examines the impact of personality characteristics and features of the work environment on employee engagement in fun activities. The results demonstrated that perceived organizational support, group cohesion, and positive affectivity positively impacted employee engagement in fun activities, while negative affectivity negatively impacted employee engagement in fun activities. This research highlights that factors beyond fun activities themselves have a significant impact on employee engagement.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Although today's work environment is aggressive and competitive, many well-known companies have incorporated fun into their workplace cultures. Southwest Airlines, one of the first companies to wholly adopt fun, still believes in its importance today (Milliman, Ferguson, Trickett, & Condemi, 1999). For example, Southwest Airlines seeks out employees who exhibit positive, bubbly attitudes and have a knack for witty banter (Martin, 2015). Recently, Southwest Airlines is praised in the press for its quirky fun in the workplace anecdotes, such as a baggage handler who plays the ukulele as passengers pick up their bags (Robertson, 2018). Another company well-known for fun in the workplace is Pike Place Fish Market in Seattle, Washington. Pike Place Fish Market has created a series of training programs centered around its *Fish!* Philosophy that focuses on fun as a key ingredient to promote employee morale and high-quality customer relationships (Lundin, Paul, & Christensen, 2003). Employees at this world-famous landmark make a spectacle of their work by throwing the fish around the market and allowing customers to try their hand at flinging the fish themselves (Clarridge, 2018). In addition, fun in the workplace at Zappos, an online retailer for footwear, is a key ingredient for fostering high levels of employee engagement (Hazelton, 2014). The physical workspace at Zappos is unparalleled to other companies. Employees have themed cubicles and host parties and parades during company tours (Twitchell, 2009). Zappos' encouragement of employees to have fun and express their individuality has earned them the recognition of *Fortune* Magazine's top 25 companies in the "100 Best Companies to Work For" (Perschel, 2010).

On an academic front, a growing body of research has demonstrated that fun does lead to favorable outcomes. Fun in the workplace has been shown to create a work environment that is both attractive to prospective employees (Tews, Michel, & Bartlett, 2012) and crucial to the satisfaction of current employees (Tews, Michel, & Stafford, 2013; Milman & Dickson, 2013). Furthermore, fun in the workplace positively relates to coworker interactions (Tews, Michel, & Allen, 2014). Several studies have also found a relationship between workplace fun and employee organizational commitment (Pryor, Singleton, Taneja, & Humphreys, 2010; McDowell, 2004) and organizational citizenship behavior (Fluegge-Woolf, 2014; Choi et al., 2013). In addition, fun in the workplace has been shown to mitigate negative workplace outcomes. Healthcare workers who experience fun while at work are less likely to report feelings of emotional exhaustion typically associated with their high-stress industry (Karl & Peluchette, 2006a; Karl, Peluchette, & Harland, 2007). Fun in the workplace has been shown to reduce turnover intentions (Becker & Tews, 2016). On the whole, the existing body of research to date has shown to have a positive relationship between workplace fun and a number of employee outcomes.

Despite research demonstrating that fun has favorable outcomes, it is not without its critics. In particular, fun activities, an aspect of fun in the workplace, are the most controversial (Fleming, 2005). For example, Redman and Mathews (2002) has demonstrated that fun activities have led to resistance from employees. They observed that while fun activities were adapted by corporate and management with the prospects of employees wholeheartedly engaging in fun at work, employees noted that they often feigned interest or did the “bare minimum” until they were allowed to return to their work responsibilities. Similarly, Fleming (2005) studied multiple fun activities at an Australian call center. Employees disliked the company-sponsored fun

activities, describing it as an experience that felt artificial. In addition, some of the features of fun activities, such as dress codes, divided employees into social cliques. The results of these studies demonstrate a need for further research regarding the value and implementation of fun activities at work.

The fundamental premise of the present study is that fun activities may be engaging and have value for employees. However, the success of fun activities may be contingent upon factors beyond the fun activities themselves. To examine this notion, the present study will examine the impact of personality characteristics and features of the work environment on employee engagement in fun activities. The personality characteristics to be examined will include positive and negative affectivity. Regarding features of the work environment, this study will focus on several factors, including perceived organizational support, interactional justice, group cohesion, and role overload. The present study will test these relationships with a sample of employees working in the hospitality industry. Given that the hospitality industry is believed to be a fun and engaging place to work (Becker & Tews, 2016), research is warranted to determine how fun activities can be engaging for employees.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Several scholars have provided definitions of fun in the workplace. Ford, McLaughlin, and Newstrom (2003) define fun in workplace as a “work environment that intentionally encourages, initiates, and supports a variety of enjoyable and pleasurable activities” (p. 22). Fluegge (2008) defined it as “any social, interpersonal, or task activities at work of a playful or humorous nature which provide an individual with amusement, enjoyment, or pleasure” (p. 15). McDowell (2004) argues that fun in the workplace includes activities that are “not specifically related to the job that are amusing, enjoyable or playful” (p. 9). Most recently, Michel, Tews, and Allen (2018) provide a definition for fun in the workplace as “characteristics or features of the work environment of a social, playful, and humorous nature, which have to potential to trigger positive feelings of enjoyment, amusement, and lighthearted pleasure in individuals” (p. 2). It should be emphasized that fun in the workplace is a feature of the work environment. That is, fun in the workplace reflects aspects of the workplace intended to promote enjoyment, amusement, and pleasure. In this respect, fun in the workplace is different than the experienced emotion of fun. Fun the emotion, or “having fun,” is the experience of positive affect. Positive affect is a state of high energy and pleasurable engagement (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988). While fun in the workplace may impact positive affect, these two constructs are not the same.

Fun in the workplace is multidimensional. The dimensions of fun present in the work environment worth noting are global fun, fun activities, coworker socializing, manager support for fun, personal freedoms, and fun job responsibilities. Global fun is the evaluation of an organization’s fun work climate (McDowell, 2004). Fun activities are planned and organized by the company in an effort to promote positive emotions in employees such as games and contests,

awards, company-provided food and drink, and casual dress days (Ford et al., 2003). Coworker socializing includes friendly social interactions among coworkers (McDowell 2004). Manager support for fun relates to management's encouragement for employees to have fun on the job (Tews, Michel, & Allen, 2014). Similarly, personal freedoms relate to the company's permission to have fun at work (McDowell, 2004). Finally, fun job responsibilities include work tasks that are both productive and enjoyable to the employee. It should be noted, however, that fun job responsibilities are not as central to fun in the workplace as the other dimensions (Tews et al. 2018).

McDowell (2004) and Fluegge (2008) examined the impact of the dimensions of fun on employee performance and outcomes. McDowell (2004) developed a framework of fun in the workplace which included the dimensions of coworker socializing, fun activities, personal freedoms, and global fun. In a sample of oil company employees, McDowell (2004) found a significant positive relationship between fun in the workplace and job satisfaction as well as an adverse impact on turnover intentions. Using the same framework, Fluegge (2008) used a sample of undergraduate students to examine the relationship between fun in the workplace and multiple performance outcomes. Fluegge (2008) demonstrated a positive relationship between fun in the workplace and task performance, creative performance, and organizational citizenship behaviors. In both studies, the results were aggregated into an overall measure. While these two studies initiate the argument that fun is influential in the workplace, they did not determine which aspects of fun were most impactful.

Other researchers have focused on the impact of experienced fun on the work environment. Experienced fun is the employee's evaluation of the existence of fun in their workplace (Karl & Peluchette, 2006a). Karl et al. (2005) focused on the impact that experienced

fun has on employee attitudes and behaviors. They found in a sample across three sectors of the workforce that there was a positive relationship between experienced fun and coworker trust. In a study of health care workers, Karl and Peluchette (2006a) found a negative relationship between experienced fun and emotional exhaustion and a positive relationship between experienced fun and job satisfaction. Finally, Karl and Peluchette (2006b) found that experienced fun was positively related to job satisfaction, more so in employees who placed a high value on fun in the workplace, suggesting that experiencing fun in the workplace promotes positive emotions that can be carried into other aspects of the workplace.

Some research has focused specifically on the impact of fun activities on the work environment. In early fun literature, Ford et al. (2003) surveyed 572 human resource managers to collect data on fun practices used in their workplace and examined which activities were most favored. The most commonly used categories of activities were recognition of personal milestones, social events, and public celebrations of personal achievements. The least popular items included friendly competition among coworkers, opportunities for personal development, and entertainment. In addition, the human resource managers were asked their opinions on the advantages of implementing fun activities into their company. The greatest advantages include attracting new talent, increased communications among employees, and organizational commitment.

Most recently, Chan (2010) developed a useable typology of workplace fun activities. The qualitative case study with grounded theory approach identified four “S”s of workplace fun, including staff-oriented workplace fun, supervisor-oriented workplace fun, social-oriented workplace fun, and strategy-oriented workplace fun. Staff-oriented workplace fun involves activities which create fun work for employees, such as celebrating milestones. Supervisor-

oriented workplace fun involves activities created by an employee's immediate supervisor, such as outings with supervisors. Social-oriented workplace fun involves social gatherings and organizational events, such as organization picnics. Strategy-oriented workplace fun involves management practices implemented to support workplace fun, such as casual dress days. Chan argues that the presence of these fun factors improves employee well-being and retention.

Several studies examine the influence multiple dimensions of fun in the workplace have on employee attraction and retention. In the context of applicant attraction, Tews, Michel, and Bartlett (2012) found that fun in the workplace was a stronger predictor of applicant attraction than compensation and opportunities for advancement with a sample of undergraduate job seekers. In addition, the study demonstrated that coworker socializing and fun job responsibilities were stronger predictors of applicant attraction than fun activities. Tews, Michel, and Stafford (2013) examined the effects of fun in the workplace on performance and turnover with restaurant servers. They found that fun activities were positively related to performance and manager support for fun was negatively related to turnover. However, manager support for fun also had an adverse impact on performance, suggesting that manager support for fun may lead to leniency. In another study regarding turnover, Tews et al. (2014) surveyed another group of servers and found that coworker socializing and manager support for fun had an adverse effect on turnover.

Additionally, Tews and colleagues have conducted research focusing on those same dimensions of fun in the workplace as a means to maintain a positive work atmosphere through job embeddedness and learning. Tews, Michel, Xu, and Drost (2015) conducted a job embeddedness study that focused on fun activities, coworker socializing, manager support for fun, and fun job responsibilities. Among a sample of 234 working Millennials, the results

demonstrated that fun job responsibilities were most strongly related to embeddedness, followed by manager support for fun, coworker socializing, and fun activities. Finally, Tews, Michel, and Noe (2017) tested the impact of fun activities and manager support for fun on the different dimensions of informal learning. In a sample of restaurant managers, the results demonstrated that fun activities were positively related to learning from others and learning from non-interpersonal sources; while manager support for fun was positively related to learning from oneself. Core self-evaluations, defined as one's belief of their overall self-worth, was found to negatively moderate the relationship between fun activities and learning from oneself, suggesting that the fun activities may not benefit all individuals.

In some qualitative research, fun in the workplace is held in a positive light, particularly in managerial applications. In their critical review, Owler, Morrison, and Plester (2010) highlight the value of promoting fun at work. The authors argue three points supported by the literature: (1) fun is the same for everyone, (2) fun is beneficial to the work environment, and (3) fun in the workplace is easy to implement. While fun is a generally new concept to the business world and is still evolving, Owler et al., (2010) argued that successful fun in the workplace initiatives are those that are inclusive to all. Fun is found to be beneficial to the work environment because of the positive outcomes that result from fun. Employee engagement and retention are two notable benefits in the work environment that Owler et al. (2010) claim is supported by fun in the workplace efforts. Finally, they suggest that fun in the workplace is easy to implement. For example, incorporating tasks that are intrinsically motivating may promote positive emotions in employees. The challenge lies in allowing the fun to emerge organically.

Other qualitative works have viewed fun in the workplace from a more critical perspective. Fleming (2005) illustrated through multiple in-depth interviews with employees in a

call center how lines are blurred between work and nonwork activities. When employers advocated for a more flexible workplace culture, it was received with cynicism among employees. Employees felt that the non-work activities such as theme days and organized games were childish and condescending. Likewise, Redman and Mathews (2002) suggest that fun is not universal to all employees. The case study follows a hardware retail company and interviews employees from the operational level up to senior management. Customer service was claimed to be a guiding principle of the company, but there was a disconnect between management and employees on how customer service impacted the employee experience. While management felt that embracing a fun culture would create a positive atmosphere for both shoppers and employees, in reality the employees grew disconnected to the idea of service. Employees mentioned that the fun culture felt so forced that it had an adverse effect on their morale and eagerness to serve shoppers.

Several conclusions can be drawn about fun in the workplace based on the previous literature. Overall, the quantitative research focusing on fun in the workplace points to a favorable relationship between fun in the workplace and employee attitudes and behaviors, while its effects on performance and retention is mixed. Deconstructing fun in the workplace into multiple dimensions has allowed scholars to gain insight into which aspects of fun are most valued by employees. For example, coworker socializing and manager support for fun have often surpassed fun activities as stronger predictors of important outcomes. In contrast, qualitative studies have given mixed responses regarding fun in the workplace. The primary shortfall is that there may be a disconnect between employers and employees about what constitutes as fun in the workplace. The challenge lies in selecting the most appropriate dimension that employees will accept and enjoy.

Moving forward, there is much more to explore with respect to employee engagement in fun activities. One area to investigate further is factors that impact fun in the workplace. Namely, individual differences may impact the extent to which employees immerse themselves in fun. There is also a lack of research dedicated to the relationship between characteristics of the work environment and employee engagement in fun activities. The purpose of implementing fun activities in the workplace is to create an outlet for employees to relax and enjoy themselves. If fun activities do not appropriately match the needs and desires of the majority of employees in a company, there is a greater likelihood that employees will disengage in fun. Thus, fun activities will fail to achieve their desired impact.

Chapter 3

The Present Study

Despite a fair amount of descriptive research on fun activities and qualitative studies on fun in the workplace, there has been a limited amount of quantitative research addressing factors that impact employee engagement in fun. Toward this end, the present study examines personality characteristics and features of the work environment. This research will look at two personality characteristics: positive and negative affectivity. Regarding features of the work environment, this study will focus on perceived organizational support, interactional justice, group cohesion, and role overload.

Positive Affectivity and Negative Affectivity

This research will assess the relationship between personality characteristics and engagement in fun activities. Specifically, this research will examine two dimensions of trait personality - positive and negative affectivity. High positive affectivity is associated with positive feeling states such as enthusiasm, pleasure, and mental alertness (Watson, Clark, & Carey, 1998) while low positive affectivity is related to feelings of apathy and sluggishness. High negative affectivity is associated with negative feeling states such as anxiety, nervousness, and subjective distress (Watson & Clark, 1984) while low negative affectivity is related to feelings of calmness and relaxation (Watson & Clark, 1988). Previous research has focused on the impact that positive affectivity and negative affectivity have on workplace outcomes. In Connolly and Viswesvaran's (2000) meta-analysis, they found that positive affectivity is positively related to job satisfaction. Kaplan, Bradley, Luchman, and Haynes, (2009) demonstrated that positive affectivity was highly predictive of organizational citizenship behavior, while negative affectivity had an inverse relationship. In addition, positive affectivity

and negative affectivity are stronger predictors of subjectively-rated performance, rather than objectively-related performance. Williams and Shiaw (1999) found that positive affectivity significantly influenced employee's intentions to perform acts of organizational citizenship.

It is argued that positive affectivity may be related to higher levels of employee engagement in fun activities for several reasons. One, individuals higher in positive affectivity are often more outgoing and social (Watson & Clark, 1988). They tend to have higher levels of energy and seek out others who are generally happy (Lehr, 1982; Veenhoven, 1998), more extraverted (Costa & McCrae, 1980), and have a "zest for life" (Watson & Clark, 1988). As fun activities are social by their very nature, those higher in positive affectivity are more likely to engage in fun activities because it is a natural extension of their personality (George, 1990). Individuals higher in positive affectivity are likely to use fun activities as a way to be social and interact with coworkers, thus, naturally engaging in fun activities. Two, those higher in positive affectivity may generally view engagement in fun activities more favorably. Previous research has shown that when people are in better moods, they will view things more positively (Rafaeli & Worline, 2001; Staw, Sutton, & Pelled, 1994). Thus, those higher in positive affectivity may see fun activities to be more beneficial. Three, following that employees who "feel good, do good," employees higher in positive affectivity may be more willing to engage in fun activities. When employees are in a good mood, they are more likely to engage in voluntary citizenship behaviors (Isen & Baron, 1991). As fun activities are often not a formal requirement of the job, employees higher in positive affectivity may be more likely to engage in fun activities. Therefore, I propose that positive affectivity will positively impact employee engagement in fun activities.

H1: Positive affectivity will positively impact engagement in fun activities.

With respect to negative affectivity, it is argued that higher levels of negative affectivity will negatively impact employee engagement in fun activities for three key reasons. For one, individuals who are higher in negative affectivity are less likely to engage in fun activities because engaging in fun activities is not congruent with their personality. As those higher in negative affectivity are more likely to be in bad moods and fun activities are often focused on positive moods, employees high in negative affectivity may generally be less willing to participate and engage in fun activities. Two, individuals higher in negative affectivity are more likely to exhibit negative behaviors. For example, Kaplan et al. (2009) found that those higher in negative affectivity are more likely to engage in withdrawal behaviors such as absenteeism and voluntary turnover. In this regard, those higher in negative affectivity may be less likely to immerse themselves in a fun activity. Three, those higher in negative affectivity may perceive fun activities as a stressor because they embody new experiences and unknown outcomes and they may be disruptive to an individual's routine (Brief and Weiss, 2002). Those higher in negative affectivity may worry about succeeding in those novel situations and fear that they may appear foolish, therefore they may withdraw from fully engaging in fun activities.

H2: Negative affectivity will negatively impact engagement in fun activities.

Perceived Organizational Support

Perceived organizational support, which is defined as an employee's perception concerning the extent to which an organization values their contributions and well-being (Kurtessis, Eisenberger, Ford, Buffardi, Stewart, & Adis, 2017), is a key variable that may impact employee engagement in fun activities. A wide variety of studies show that perceived organizational support is positively related many workplace outcomes, including greater work attendance, (Eisenberger et al., 1986) job performance, (Eisenberger, Fasolo & Davis-LaMastro,

1990) employee engagement (Cherubin, 2012) and reduced levels of turnover (Allen, Shore, & Griffeth, 2003). With respect to interpersonal behaviors, Shore and Wayne (1993) found that perceived organizational support was a better predictor of organizational citizenship behaviors than affective commitment or continuance commitment. Employees who feel that they receive support from their company are more likely to reciprocate support by “going the extra mile” and engaging in citizenship behaviors.

Perceived organizational support may positively impact employee engagement in fun activities for a number of reasons. One, perceived organizational support may positively impact employee engagement in fun activities by enhancing organizational commitment. When employees believe their organization values their work and well-being, they are more likely to be committed to the organization. When employees are more committed, they may be more apt to engage in fun activities out of feelings of loyalty and obligation. Two, perceived organizational support may reduce employee cynicism by creating an emotional bond to the organization. When employees foster an emotional bond to their organization, they may be more willing to contribute to its success and be involved. Therefore, when an organization offers fun activities for its employees, the employees may be more willing to go “all in” and reap the benefits fun activities provide.

H3: Perceived organizational support will positively impact employee engagement in fun activities.

Interactional Justice

Interactional justice is another feature of the workplace which may positively relate to employee engagement in fun activities. Interactional justice is defined as the way in which management (or those controlling rewards and resources) behaves towards the recipient of

justice (Cohen-Carash & Spector, 2001) and involves treating individuals with dignity and providing clear justifications or explanations (Cropanzano, Prehar, & Chen, 2002). When interactional justice is high, employees feel as though their supervisors treat them with dignity and respect. When interactional justice is low, employees feel as though their supervisors do not respond to employee concerns or demonstrate empathy (Skarlicki & Folger, 1997). Interactional justice has been positively related to several employee behaviors including work engagement (Agarwal, 2014), organizational citizenship (Moorman et al., 1991), and trust (Ambrose & Schminke, 2003). Furthermore, several studies have found interactional justice to be negatively related to counterproductive workplace behaviors such as employee retaliation (Skarlicki & Folger, 1997), workplace deviance (Henle, 2005), and workplace incivility (Cortina, Magley, Williams, & Langhout, 2001).

The relationship between interactional justice and engagement in fun activities draws on the theoretical arguments supporting the relationship between interactional justice and organizational citizenship behaviors. Moorman et al. (1991) argues that interactional justice relates to organizational citizenship behaviors because they are discretionary and rely on personal control. Changes in employees' perceptions of interactional justice could easily trigger a change in their willingness to engage in organizational citizenship behaviors. In a similar respect, employee engagement in fun activities share the same characteristics of organizational citizenship behaviors. Engagement in fun activities are typically not a formal requirement of the job and also rely on personal control. Therefore, interactional justice may be positively related to employee engagement in fun activities.

H4: Interactional justice will positively impact employee engagement in fun activities.

Group Cohesion

Group cohesion may also have a significant impact on employee engagement in fun activities. Specifically, group cohesion is defined as a group's state of sticking together, based on interpersonal likings, social bonds, and a shared group identity among the group members (Han et al., 2015). Previous research has demonstrated that group cohesion has a favorable impact in the workplace. For example, Kidwell, Mossholder, and Bennett (1997), examined the extent to which group cohesion is associated with increased organizational citizenship behaviors. The study argued that group cohesion is critical to social exchanges among coworkers. In a sample of employees from the service sector, the results demonstrated that group cohesion was positively related to extra-role behaviors such as courtesy and helping. If coworkers identify with one another in the group, they are much more likely to display positive emotions and feelings. Similarly, group cohesion may increase employees' willingness to engage in fun activities because of increased feelings of trust, courtesy, and empathy. The purpose of fun activities at work is to generate positive moods in employees. If employees are already in positive moods because of their coworkers, fun activities will only sustain those good moods. Employees may enjoy being around their coworkers and participating in fun activities if they already share a strong emotional bond with one another. Based on these arguments, it is hypothesized:

H5: Group cohesion will positively impact employee engagement in fun activities.

Role Overload

Finally, role overload may reduce the extent to which employees engage in fun activities. Employees experience role overload when they have too many roles to fulfill simultaneously (Baruch et al., 1986). As a result, constraints of time or lack of resources may compromise the employee's ability to complete the task to the best of their ability (Schaubroeck, Cotton, &

Jennings, 1989). These additional responsibilities can derive from one or multiple sources, such as expectations from supervisor or other coworkers. Previous research suggests that role overload negatively impacts employees' job attitudes and overall job satisfaction (Jensen, Patel, & Messersmith, 2013; Jones, Chonko, Rangarajan, & Roberts, 2007). Additionally, role overload has been found to impact occupational stress (Shultz, Wang, & Olson, 2010).

Role overload may negatively impact employee engagement in fun activities as a result of stress. Employees experiencing role overload may view fun activities as a stressor. For employees experiencing role overload, fun activities may seem nonessential and an interference to productivity. If they are required to participate in a fun activity and still have work to complete, their mind will likely be preoccupied with work, reducing engagement in fun activities. Although the goal of fun activities may be to reduce employee stress, it may inadvertently be an added stressor. Therefore, role overload may mitigate employee engagement in fun activities.

H6: Role overload will negatively impact employee engagement in fun activities.

Table 1
Table of Hypotheses

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1. Positive affectivity will positively impact employee engagement in fun activities.
 2. Negative affectivity will negatively impact employee engagement in fun activities.
 3. Perceived organizational support will positively impact employee engagement in fun activities.
 4. Interactional justice will positively impact employee engagement in fun activities.
 5. Group cohesion will positively impact employee engagement in fun activities.
 6. Role overload will negatively impact employee engagement in fun activities.
-

Chapter 4

Methodology

Sample and Procedure

The sample for this research includes 173 individuals working in the hospitality industry in the U.S. The individuals were surveyed using Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk). The survey was framed to potential participants as a survey about individuals' experience at work with no mention of engagement in fun activities to help eliminate selection bias. The data were collected through *Qualtrics* online surveys. In this sample, the average age of the respondents was 32.6 years old ($SD = 10.2$). Ninety-three of the respondents were in supervisory positions, and the remaining 80 were in non-supervisory positions. Forty-eight percent of the respondents were female. Seventy-three percent of the respondents were Caucasian.

Table 2
Demographic Profile of Respondents

Gender	<i>Percentage</i>	
Male	52%	
Female	48%	
Ethnicity		
African American/Black	13%	
Asian/Pacific Islander	3%	
Caucasian/White	73%	
East Indian	1%	
Hispanic/Latino	8%	
Native American/American Indian	4%	
Other	2%	
Age	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
	32.6	10.2

Measures

Each of the focal variables in this study was measured with a multi-item scale, where the responses to the individual items were averaged to create an overall scale. Unless otherwise noted, respondents rated the extent to which they agreed with the various scale items using a five-point response scale with anchors ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*. The full listing of scale items is presented in the Appendix.

Engagement in fun activities. Four items were developed for this study to measure engagement in fun activities. Sample items included: *I enjoy participating in fun activities at work* and *I have a good time participating in fun activities at work* ($\alpha = .92$).

Positive affectivity and negative affectivity. Watson and Clark's (1999) scale was used to measure positive affectivity and negative affectivity with ten items each. The respondents reported the extent to which the description generally describes themselves using a five-point scale ranging from 1 = *very slightly or not at all* to 5 = *extremely*. Sample positive affectivity items included: *active*, *enthusiastic*, and *determined* ($\alpha = .90$). Sample negative affectivity items included: *afraid*, *distressed* and *nervous* ($\alpha = .92$).

Perceived organizational support. Perceived organizational support was measured using five of the six-item scale from the short form of the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (Eisenberger et al., 1986). The reverse coded item *My organization shows very little concern for me* was not included because it lowered the overall reliability of the scale significantly. Sample items included: *My organization values my contribution to its well-being* and *My organization really cares about my well-being* ($\alpha = .85$).

Interactional justice. The four-item interactional justice scale was based on Moorman's (1991) measure. Sample items included: *My supervisor considers my viewpoint* and *My supervisor treats me with kindness and consideration* ($\alpha = .88$).

Group cohesion. Five items were used to measure group cohesion drawn from Han et al.'s (2016) measure of group cohesion. Sample items included: *My coworkers pitch in to help each other out* and *My coworkers tend to get along with each other* ($\alpha = .85$).

Role overload. Bacharach, Bamberger, and Conley's (1990) three-item scale was used to measure role overload. The reverse coded item *I feel like I have a lot of time on my hands* was not included because it lowered the reliability of the scale significantly. Thus, the remaining two items were used to create the overall scale. Sample items included: *I don't have time to finish my job* and *I'm rushed in doing my job* ($\alpha = .43$).

Data Analysis

Multiple regression was used to assess the influence of the independent variables engagement in fun activities. The independent variables were entered into the regression in three blocks, resulting in three models. Model 1 included three demographic variables: age, ethnicity, and gender. Model 2 included the addition of positive affectivity and negative affectivity. Model 3 included the additional workplace environment variables: perceived organizational support, interactional justice, group cohesion, and role overload.

Chapter 5

Results

Table 1 provides the descriptive statistics and correlations among the study variables. Table 2 presents the regression results predicting engagement in fun activities. The main entries in the regression tables are standardized regression coefficients (β). The overall R^2 statistics were .02, .21, and .47 in Models 1-3 respectively. The ΔR^2 of .19 from Model 1 to Model 2 was significant ($F\Delta = 19.73, p < .01$), and the ΔR^2 of .26 from Model 2 to Model 3 was significant ($F\Delta = 20.27, p < .01$).

Hypothesis 1, which proposed that positive affectivity will positively impact employee engagement in fun activities, was supported. The standardized regression coefficients of .40 in Model 2 and .19 in Model 3 were significant at the .01 level.

Hypothesis 2, which proposed that negative affectivity will negatively impact employee engagement in fun activities, was partially supported. The standardized regression coefficient of -.17 in Model 2 was significant at the .05 level, However in Model 3 the regression coefficient of -.05 was non-significant.

Hypothesis 3, which proposed that perceived organizational support will positively impact employee engagement in fun activities, was supported. The standardized regression coefficient of .22 in Model 3 was significant at the .01 level.

Hypothesis 4, which proposed interactional justice will negatively impact employee engagement in fun activities, was not supported. The standardized regression coefficient of .10 in Model 3 was non-significant.

Table 3
Descriptive Statistics and Correlations among Primary Study Variables

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Age	32.60	10.17	—									
2. Ethnicity	.74	.44	.10	—								
3. Gender	.48	.50	.06	.07	—							
4. Positive Affectivity	3.52	.82	.05	-.21**	-.05	—						
5. Negative Affectivity	1.90	.85	-.07	.09	-.08	-.10	—					
6. Perceived Organizational Support	3.64	.85	.05	-.07	-.03	.45**	-.23**	—				
7. Interactional Justice	3.76	.98	.09	-.10	-.10	.35**	-.26**	.69**	—			
8. Group Cohesion	3.88	.79	-.03	-.07	-.02	.25**	-.17*	.46**	.54**	—		
9. Role Overload	2.60	1.20	-.01	.08	-.05	-.14	.46**	-.24**	-.17*	-.14	—	
10. Engagement	3.72	.97	-.11	-.03	.07	.39**	-.20*	.53**	.50**	.57**	-.16*	—

Note. Main table entries are standardized regression coefficients. Ethnicity: 1 = Caucasian and 0 = other groups. Gender: 1 = female and 0 = male. $n = 173$. Significance levels for coefficients reflect one-tailed tests. * $p < .05$
** $p < .01$

Table 4
Results of Regression Analyses Predicting Engagement in Fun Activities

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Age	-.11	-.16*	-.14*
Ethnicity	-.02	.08	.07
Gender	.08	.08	.10
Positive Affectivity	—	.40**	.19**
Negative Affectivity	—	-.17*	-.05
Perceived Organizational Support	—	—	.22**
Interactional Justice	—	—	.10
Group Cohesion	—	—	.36**
Role Overload	—	—	.01
R^2	.02	.21	.47
F	1.02	8.64**	16.05**
ΔR^2	—	.19	.26
$F\Delta$	—	19.73**	20.27**

Note. Main table entries are standardized regression coefficients. Gender: 1 = female and 0 = male. $n = 173$. Ethnicity: 1 = Caucasian and 0 = other groups. Significance levels for coefficients reflect one-tailed tests. * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

Hypothesis 5, which proposed that group cohesion will positively impact engagement in fun activities, was supported. The standardized regression coefficient of .36 in Model 3 was significant at the .01 level.

Hypothesis 6, which proposed that role overload will negatively impact engagement in fun activities, was not supported. The standardized regression coefficient of .01 in Model 3 was non-significant.

Chapter 6

Discussion

While fun activities are commonplace in many organizations, employees may find it difficult to engage in such endeavors. The purpose of this study was to examine how personality characteristics and features of the work environment can help promote employee engagement in fun activities. Specifically, this research examined the extent to which positive affectivity, negative affectivity, perceived organizational support, interactional justice, group cohesion, and role overload are related to employee engagement in fun activities. While several qualitative studies have observed that employees may find difficulty in genuinely enjoying fun activities (Fleming, 2005), there has been little research focusing on features that impact employee engagement in fun activities. Given the lack of research in this area, the present study contributes to the wider body of research in fun in the workplace.

One key finding from this study is that both positive affectivity and negative affectivity were significantly related to engagement. Positive affectivity was positively related to engagement, whereby employees who are more outgoing and social tend to immerse themselves in fun activities. Positive affectivity is a trait that is highly predictive of organizational citizenship behaviors (Kaplan et al., 2009). Thus, those higher in positive affectivity may have a stronger willingness to engage in fun activities. In contrast, negative affectivity was negatively related to engagement, whereby employees who are higher in negative affectivity may typically be in a bad mood, which would be incompatible for engaging in fun. For individuals high in negative affectivity, fun activities may be a stressor and a hindrance of their daily routine. These findings suggest that personality characteristics are a strong predictor of employee engagement in fun activities. Ultimately, employees' willingness to engage in fun activities may be a

reflection of their personality. It is also important to note that positive affectivity is more strongly related to engagement than negative affectivity. That said, those higher in positive affectivity tend to have a more positive outlook on life, therefore are more receptive to new adventures such as fun activities.

Regarding features of the work environment, two variables in this study were significantly related to engagement in fun activities. The variable that was most strongly related was group cohesion. Group cohesion is critical to social exchanges among coworkers (Kidwell et al., 1997). The idea of shared group identity increases feelings of trust and empathy among group members. Employees who create social bonds with coworkers and feel as though they are a part of a group may be more willing to engage in fun activities. Positive moods may trigger a willingness to engage in fun activities. Second, perceived organizational support was also found to have a positive relationship with engagement in fun activities. A key reason why perceived organizational support may matter in the context of engagement in fun activities is its relationship with organizational commitment. Employees who feel supported by their organization may be more willing to reciprocate support. This could mean showing their support by participating in fun activities held by the organization. In turn, participating in events may create a stronger bond between the employee and the organization. These results signal the importance for organizations to value the contributions and well-being of their employees.

Counter to expectations, two features of the work environment were not significant predictors of engagement in fun activities. Specifically, interactional justice and role overload were not significant predictors in the regression equation. On one hand, these variables may be simply be unrelated factors of the work environment regarding employee engagement levels in fun activities. It should be noted, however, that both interactional justice and role overload

exhibited significant bivariate correlations with engagement in fun activities. Thus, while interactional justice and role overload matter independently once other variables are considered, their effect diminishes.

Practical Implications for Managers

The fundamental finding of this study is that fun may have value, but attention should be paid to employee personality characteristics and features of the work environment. There are several practical implications to provide to managers in the hospitality industry. One practical implication if an organization offers fun in the workplace is to hire individuals who are higher in positive affectivity. Such individuals are likely to engage in fun activities and exhibit extra-role behaviors (Kaplan et al., 2009). Considering the personality characteristics of existing employees is crucial in determining whether or not fun activities are beneficial to the work culture. Given that employees are more likely to be engaged in fun activities when perceived organizational support and group cohesion are high, managers should demonstrate a sound knowledge of the organization's culture before implementing fun activities. This could be done informally or in a more structured fashion, such as through an employee attitude survey. At the same time, fun activities may be used as a vehicle to help promote stronger perceived organizational support and group cohesion. When perceived organizational support and group cohesion are low, managers need to be aware that employees might not necessarily be whole-heartedly committed to fun activities in the beginning. However, over time, employee engagement may begin to improve as a result of participation in well-designed activities.

Limitations

The results of this study should be interpreted in the context of its limitations. One, data were collected at one point in time. Future studies that collect data at multiple points in time in

order to validate cause/effect relationships are merited. Two, selection bias is a potential threat with MTurk samples (Paolacci & Chandler, 2014). It should be noted, however, that this bias is unavoidable even in lab studies as participation is voluntary (Zhou & Fishback, 2016).

Additional research that collects data from another source would be valuable - such as employees from a single company - to validate this study's findings. Three, the respondents were employed only in the U.S. While the results may likely generalize to employees in other countries, future research should examine employee engagement in fun activities in other cultural contexts.

Future Research

In addition to addressing the limitations discussed above, several opportunities for future research are worth pursuing. One opportunity for future research would be to examine the impact of features of fun activities themselves on employee engagement in fun activities. Features such as time of day, whether the activity occurs onsite or offsite, and if the activity is voluntary or mandatory could impact engagement levels in fun activities. Another opportunity for research would be to assess engagement at different stages of fun activities using an experience sampling method. This research could focus on employee appraisals of their engagement in fun activities before, during, and after attending fun activities. Finally, measuring engagement by type of fun activity would be another avenue of research. Several studies have already examined employee perceptions of what activities are most favorable (Karl & Harland, 2005; Ford, McLaughlin, & Newstrom, 2005; Karl et al., 2005). However, minimal research is available considering employee willingness to engage in each type of fun activity. Although academic research has demonstrated that employee perceptions about fun in the workplace has been mixed, this study has demonstrated that the right kind of company culture can foster positive outcomes in employees. Despite the limitations, this study has provided a more nuanced perspective of the

role of fun in the workplace. Fun may have value, but it must be presented alongside an organization's commitment to employee well-being.

Conclusion

Workplace fun is celebrated by many well-known and successful companies and is likely adopted by countless others. While fun may have value, employees may not always be engaged in fun. The results of this study suggest that organizations can help increase the potential for employee engagement in fun activities by fostering an environment where employees feel valued, coworkers get along and help one another, and are aware of employees' individual differences. If organizations pay attention to elements of the workplace such as features of the work environment and individual differences in employees, fun may yield its intended benefits.

APPENDIX

Survey Scale Items

Engagement in Fun Activities

1. I enjoy participating in fun activities at work.
2. I have a good time participating in fun activities at work.
3. I look forward to fun activities at work.
4. After participating in fun activities, I generally feel that they are worthwhile.

(Response choices: 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree)

Perceived Organizational Support

1. My organization values my contribution to its well-being.
2. My organization strongly considers my goals and values.
3. My organization really cares about my well-being.
4. My organization is willing to help me when I need a special favor.
5. My organization shows very little concern for me.
6. My organization take pride in my accomplishments at work.

(Response choices: 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree)

Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa (1986).

Interactional Justice

1. My supervisor considers my viewpoint.
2. My supervisor is able to suppress personal biases.
3. My supervisor treats me with kindness and consideration.
4. My supervisor shows concern for my rights as an employee.

(Response choices: 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree)

Moorman, (1991)

Group Cohesion

1. My coworkers pitch in to help each other out.
2. My coworkers tend to get along with each other.
3. My coworkers take a personal interest with one another.
4. There is a lot of 'team spirit' among my coworkers.

5. I feel like I have a lot in common with my coworkers.

(Response choices: 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree)

Han, Kim, Kim, Jeong, & Jeong, (2016).

Role Overload

1. I don't have time to finish my job.
2. I'm rushed in doing my job.
3. I have a lot of free time on my hands.

(Response choices: 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree)

Bacharach, Bamberger, & Conley (1990).

Positive and Negative Affectivity

1. Afraid
2. Active
3. Jittery
4. Attentive
5. Determined
6. Nervous
7. Inspired
8. Ashamed
9. Alert
10. Irritable
11. Proud
12. Enthusiastic
13. Hostile
14. Scared
15. Guilty
16. Strong
17. Upset
18. Excited
19. Distressed
20. Interested

(Response choices: Please indicate the extent to which each description generally describes yourself. 1 = very slightly or not at all, 5 = extremely.)

Watson, & Clark, (1999).

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