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Original Research Article

Why do employees break rules? Understanding organizational rule-breaking behaviors in hospitality

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ABSTRACT

This study explores employees' organizational rule-breaking behaviors in the hospitality industry. Unlike the majority of hospitality literature which suggest rule-breakers are deviant, a growing stream of management research suggested that intentions behind rule-breaking behaviors among organizational employees include self-interest, to increase work efficiency, to help a subordinate or a coworker, and to provide good customer service. Our study extends the research on rule-breaking not only by studying the intentions of hospitality employee rule-breaking behaviors, but also by exploring the types of rules broken and the possible consequences of such behaviors. Eighty hospitality workers studying at a public university in the U.S. were surveyed in a qualitative study. We transcribed, coded and analyzed the emerging themes in the qualitative data. Results show that while intentions of hospitality employees' rule-breaking behaviors are consistent with existing management studies from other industries, the unique nature of the hospitality workforce shapes the nature of rule-breaking behaviors. We also showed that the consequences are different for the four types of rule-breaking behaviors. This study yields important implications on how hospitality organizations should manage employees' rule-breaking behaviors.

1. Introduction

> "The first rule on breaking a rule is to know everything about the rule." – Nuno Roque

Organizational rules constrain employees' behaviors in the workplace (Derfler-Rozin et al., 2016). Hospitality employees are no exception – they are expected to follow numerous organization rules, including but not limited to safety/hygiene rules, technology policies, employee's code of conduct, and countless guest service standard operating procedures. These organizational rules are designed to shield the organization and its employees, by ensuring the organization remain in compliance with the law, protecting the organization reputation, and keeping employees and guests safe (Pendleton, 2016). However, employees' organizational rule-breaking behaviors – defined as employee's behaviors that violate formal workplace rules, regulations, and standards (Desai, 2010) – are prevalent (Fox and Spector, 1999; Bennett and Robinson, 2000). In the hospitality industry, employees have been found to break rules with sabotage behaviors (Lee and Ok, 2014), substance abuse (Hight and Park, 2018), and stealing (Poulston, 2008a). Because of its negative consequences (Bennett and Robinson, 2000), researchers generally focus on organizational rule-breaking behaviors with an unethical deviant motive (Gino et al., 2011). Assuming all employees break rules with unethical deviant motives, researchers recommend the use of moral-reasoning training to reduce rule-breaking behaviors (Poulston, 2008b).

Despite the usefulness of this approach to stop deviant rule-breaking behaviors, not all employees break rules with deviant motives (Dahling et al., 2012; Morrison, 2006). Organizational researchers showed that employees can break rules out of prosocial motives to help coworkers, to improve work efficiency, and to improve guest service (Dahling et al., 2012; Morrison, 2006). Prosocial rule-breaking constitutes 60% of rule-breaking in a variety of industries (entrainment, telecommunication, health care, education, etc.) (Morrison, 2006). However, much less is known about the intentions of hospitality employees' rule-breaking. Specifically, considered that hospitality industry is labor intensive, focuses on intangible service, features with high job demand, and requires a high level of teamwork (Pizam and Shani, 2009), findings from other industries (e.g., Morrison, 2006) may not be generalizable to hospitality employees, who may be more inclined to break organizational rules to counter these challenges in their daily operation. This suggests that hospitality employees may break rules for additional

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unidentified intentions and calls for exploration of the intentions behind hospitality employees' rule-breaking. Not only would such studies be extending the knowledge of hospitality employees' rule-breaking, it can improve hospitality managers' ability to control rule-breaking. For example, once managers understand the common intentions behinds rule-breaking, they may avoid the use of moral-reasoning training, which is effective to reduce deviant rule-breaking but counterproductive to the reduction of prosocial rule-breaking behaviors (cf. Hannah et al., 2011).

Moreover, we were unaware of any studies that explore the type of rules broken by hospitality employees. While studies that examine specific types of rule-breaking, such as stealing (Poulston, 2008a), substance abuse (Belhassen and Shani, 2013; Kitterlin et al., 2015), and service sabotage (Bloisi and Hoel, 2008; Lee and Ok, 2014), contributes to our knowledge on these rule-breaking behaviors, they cannot provide a big picture on different types of rules that are being broken in the hospitality workforce. In essence, it undermines researchers' ability to examine the type of rule-breaking that is most relevant to the industry. Given the dynamic nature of the hospitality industry, rules and rule-breaking behaviors are not static. In extreme cases, it is possible that researchers can examine a certain type of rule-breaking that is obsolete or seldom occurs in the industry while missing a predominant type of rule-breaking. It calls for a study that explores the types of rules hospitality employees break.

Understanding the consequences of rule-breaking behaviors is important because of its ambidextrous nature in the hospitality industry. Despite certain prosocial behaviors of frontline employees, such as extra-role customer service, can be beneficial to hospitality firms (Bettencourt and Brown, 1997), rule-breaking behaviors, even if it is prosocial in nature, disturb organizational stability (Goodsell, 2000) and hurt service consistency (Mladenka, 1978). However, it is unclear about how rule-breakers perceive the outcomes of their actions, and how organizations treat the rule-breakers. Both of which can be interesting as it can be related to the likelihood of reoccurrence – employees are less likely to break rules when they think it is bad for them while hurting the organizations and the guests.

To address these questions, the purpose of this study is to examine the intentions, nature, and consequences of rule-breaking behaviors in the hospitality industry. The study addresses four important questions: (1) What are the intentions behinds hospitality employee's rule-breaking behaviors? (2) What types of rules are being violated? (3) What are the effects of rule-breaking on guest service and organizational performance? and (4) What is the penalty for rule-breaking with different intentions? This study can yield implications on how hospitality employers can tackle employees' rule-breaking behaviors effectively. To address the aforementioned questions, we used a qualitative approach and survey 80 hospitality employees on the nature, intentions, and perceived consequences of their organizational rule-breaking behaviors.

2. Literature review

2.1. Intentions behind rule-breaking behaviors

Rule-breaking is common in both hospitality (Lee and Ok, 2014; Hight and Park, 2018; Poulston, 2008a) and other industries (Fox and Spector, 1999; Bennett and Robinson, 2000). Employees at multiple levels throughout organizational hierarchy break rules (Breslin and Wood, 2016). However, top-level managers' rule-breaking behaviors are favored but frontline employees' rule-breaking behaviors are unfavored and discouraged (Fleming, 2016). As a result, most of the hospitality literature focused on frontline employees' rule-breaking as a type of deviant behavior (e.g., Hight and Park, 2018; Lee and Ok, 2014; Poulston, 2008a). Accordingly, research shows that employees break rules because of unfavorable personality (e.g., low conscientiousness, low agreeableness, and low emotional stability (Berry et al., 2007), stress (e.g., Robinson and Bennett, 1995), unethical leaders (Gatling et al., 2017), and tension between competing formal and informal rules (Breslin and Wood, 2016).

In addition to deviant rule-breaking, there is a growing stream of management research showing that employees can break rules out of prosocial intentions (e.g., Morrison, 2006). Morrison (2006) and Dahling et al. (2012) identified three prosocial motives behind rule-breaking behaviors: (1) to increase organizational or work efficiency; (2) to provide better customer service, and (3) to help a subordinate or a coworker. Unlike deviant rule-breaking behaviors, employees engage in prosocial rule-breaking behaviors even when they are agreeable (Curtis, 2013), proactive (Morrison, 2006), and empathic (Morrison, 2006). Employees break rules prosocially when they are working for transformational leaders (Huang et al., 2014) and in organizations with an ethical climate (Vardaman et al., 2014). The differential antecedents suggest that deviant and prosocial rule-breaking are not the same.

Unfortunately, prosocial rule-breaking behaviors have been overlooked in the hospitality context. Curtis (2013) was the only exception we are aware of. She established that there is a moderate propensity for prosocial rule-breaking among restaurant frontline employees. However, Curtis (2013) studied prosocial rule-breaking exclusively with an intention to help customers. Thus, the prospect of prosocial rule-breaking to increase efficiency and to help coworkers was completely overlooked in hospitality literature. Considered the fact that hospitality job features with high job demands and teamwork (Pizam and Shani, 2009), hospitality employees not only would break organizational rules out of these two prosocial intentions, but also may have additional unidentified intentions. To better control hospitality employee's rule-breaking behaviors, one must understand why they do so. As such, the most pressing question is:

RQ1: What are the intentions behind hospitality employee organizational rule-breaking behaviors?

2.2. Types of rules broken

As the intentions behind rule-breaking behaviors change, the nature and the types of rules broken may become different. Employee deviance is voluntary behaviors that violate organizational norms and threaten the organization's and its members' well-being (Robinson and Bennett, 1995). Hospitality researchers studied two major facets of deviant rule-breaking behaviors. First, interpersonal deviance breaks interpersonal norms. Directed at specific individuals in the organization, interpersonal deviance can include rude and aggressive behaviors toward subordinates (Lyu et al., 2016), guests (Bavik and Bavik, 2015), and coworkers (Jung and Yoon, 2012). Second, organizational deviance is rule-breaking behaviors that are directed against the organization. It breaks formal organizational rules and regulation and includes actions such as stealing (Poulston, 2008a), shirking (Kincaid et al., 2008), deliberate lateness and absence (Chia and Chu, 2017), substance abuse (Giousmpasoglou et al., 2018; Hight and Park, 2018), and misappropriation of company property (Lee and Ok, 2014). Both interpersonal and organizational deviance violate crucial 'black-and-white' rules: rules that are commonly agreed on and that represent global moral values (e.g., not causing harm to another person, no cheating, no stealing, etc.).

On the other hand, prosocial rule-breaking to help coworkers are considered as "flexible" adaption of rules (Martin et al., 2013, p. 564; Morrison, 2006). This includes the examples of covering coworker's duty on a busy day (Martin et al., 2013), or being flexible with pay, work, and vacation schedule (Morrison, 2006). Additionally, Morrison (2006) provided the example of concert hall managers letting their guest relations staff come inside to warm up during cold days. Admittedly, these behaviors violate organizational norms and standard operation procedures. Unlike deviant rule-breaking behaviors, the severity of prosocial rule-breaking behaviors is debatable. These rules are

only local norms and procedures that apply to some, but not all, organizations. Some prosocial rule-breaking behaviors are even considered as fulfilling standards of humanity and care.

Similarly, prosocial rule-breaking to increase work efficiency relates to breaking bureaucratic rules (Dahling et al., 2012; Martin et al., 2013; Morrison, 2006). It includes behaviors such as skipping non-life-threating safety procedures (Martin et al., 2013) and violating chain-of-command (Morrison, 2006). Morrison (2006) used examples of employees using personal resources at work and avoiding bureaucratic standard operation procedures to illustrate prosocial rule-breaking to increase work efficiency. Similar to prosocial rule-breaking behaviors to help coworkers, rules broken to increase work efficiency are related to relatively minor – sometimes considered as redundant – organization-specific procedures.

Related to prosocial rule-breaking to promote guest service, Martin et al. (2013) and Morrison (2006) suggest that some employees may break guest service guideline and service operation procedures to help customers. They provided examples of casino hosts provided extra-service to gamblers by ordering drinks on behalf of the guests (Martin et al., 2013); and customer service representative expedited an order without following approval procedures (Morrison, 2006). In addition, it includes behaviors such as giving an unauthorized refund, delivery, and service (Morrison, 2006). In the hospitality context, Curtis (2013) illustrates prosocial rule-breaking to promote guest service using a scenario of employees' accepting expired coupons. All of these violated rules are service operational procedures that are unique to some organizations.

The above literature implies that rule-breaking intentions can be related to the type of rules broken: while deviant rule-breakers break major formal rules in a corruptive manner (e.g., stealing, harassment, sabotage), prosocial rule-breakers break minor and sometimes controversial procedures and guidelines that are unique to the organizations. Indeed, given the intangible nature of service (Ottenbacher and Gnoth, 2005), hospitality organizations sometimes need employees to depart from routine rules and procedures to handle real-time guest requests (Secchi et al., 2016) and develop innovation (Ottenbacher and Gnoth, 2005). This indicates a need for hospitality managers to understand the type of rule-breaking so that they can differentiate "serious" rule-breaking from "tolerable" rule-breaking. Thus, we explore a potential relationship between the types of rules broken and underlying intentions by asking:

RQ2: What are the types of rules broken for rule-breaking with different intentions?

2.3. Consequences of rule-breaking behaviors

Despite their intent, both deviant and prosocial rule-breaking behaviors break organizational rules which are designed to deliver safety, hygiene, and consistent service (e.g., Derfler-Rozin et al., 2016; Goodsell, 2000; Mladenka, 1978). Studies showed that prosocial rule-breaking behaviors in non-hospitality organizations have unintended negative employee outcomes such as deteriorated task performance (Dahling et al., 2012), reduced job satisfaction, and increased mistrust in management (Bryant et al., 2010). Similarly, deviant behaviors, whether it involves sexual harassment, vandalism, rumor spreading, corporate sabotage or otherwise, are unauthorized organizational behaviors that can have negative consequences like financial harm (Appelbaum et al., 2007) and deteriorated performance (Dunlop and Lee, 2004) for the organization. These deviant rule-breaking behaviors seriously damage organizations (Harper, 1990; Murphy, 1993). This suggests that all rule-breaking behavior (including prosocial behavior) result in negative consequences. Thus, all rule breakers (including prosocial rule breakers) are penalized (Podsakoff et al., 2010).

As the nature of the rule-breaking changes, the level of negative consequences must be considered. As discussed above, deviant rule-breaking involves major rules and regulation, while prosocial rule-breaking relate to minor procedures and guidelines. While deviant rule-breaking only benefits the rule-breakers, the intended beneficiaries can be helped from prosocial rule-breaking. Prosocial rule-breaking behaviors with an intention to help coworkers, to increase work efficiency, and to promote guest services may even improve coworker relationship (cf. Halbesleben and Wheeler, 2015), reduce cost (cf. Sadikoglu and Zehir, 2010), and improve guest satisfaction (cf. Ambrose et al., 2015). As a result, it is possible that deviant rule-breaking can cause more harm to the organization than prosocial rule-breaking.

Given the difference in rule-breaking severity, managers can be more considerate toward prosocial rule-breaking than deviant rule-breaking. Indeed, Martin et al. (2013) suggested that organizations have different intensity of rule enforcement. As hospitality industry is highly relational (Lucas, 2002), management appreciates stronger social bonds between coworkers (Cleveland et al., 2007) and reward helping behaviors (Allen and Rush, 1998). Thus, managers may be less likely to punish employees for breaking organizational rules that help other employees. Supervisors may choose to ignore employees' prosocial rule-breaking behaviors with a motive to increase work efficiency if those behaviors save time and effort in the operating process and do not result in unintended negative consequences (cf. Martin et al., 2013). Considering the customer-focused nature of hospitality industry (Kandampully, 2006), employees may receive appreciation from their managers if they defy organizational rules to increase customer satisfaction (cf. Pina e Cunha et al., 2009).

Due to the service-oriented, relational, demanding, and labor-intensive nature of hospitality industry (Pizam and Shani, 2009), employees are expected to go an extra mile to serve guests and build stronger bonds with coworkers. This indicates that while rule-breaking behaviors can have negative consequences regardless of the intentions, hospitality managers may be less inclined to punish prosocial rule-breakers than deviant rule-breakers. At the same time, rule-breaking hurts service consistent (Mladenka, 1978), which is essential to the perception of high-quality service (Parasuraman et al., 1988). The conflicting nature of hospitality employee's rule-breaking suggests that hospitality managers may unknowingly encourage behaviors that impair service quality. Since exploring the perceived consequences of actions (on the organizations and on the rule-breakers) helps prohibiting the spread of rule-breaking (Akers et al., 1979), we ask:

RQ3: What are the consequences of rule-breaking with different intentions on a) organizational and guests' outcomes and b) employees' punishment?

3. Method

3.1. Research design and participants

Given that the exploration of rule-breaking behaviors can be highly sensitive in nature, a qualitative approach is more appropriate to address our research questions (cf. Figueroa-Domecq et al., 2015). A qualitative approach enabled the researchers to gain a rich understanding particularly of an intricate social phenomenon in contemporary events (Yin, 2003). However, the sensitivity of the topic can lead to socially desirable responses in one-on-one face-to-face interviews (Kwortnik, 2003). To avoid social desirability bias and to understand the complex phenomenon, we used a structured non-numerical questionnaire which we incorporated one close-ended (i.e. yes-no) questions and five open-ended questions (see Walsh, 2003, for a review of qualitative research methods).

To ensure sufficient contents to be analyzed, we follow Saunders and Townsend's (2016) recommendation to target 60 interviews. Specifically, Saunders and Townsend (2016) found that qualitative studies used a median of 32.5 participants in their review of 798 organization and workplace qualitative studies. They recommended a norm of using

15 – 60 participants for qualitative studies. Even though rule-breaking behaviors can happen at both frontline and managerial level, we are particularly interested in frontline employee's rule-breaking behaviors because of two reasons. First, hospitality organizations depend on frontline employees to understand guest's needs and provide superior service (He et al., 2011), making their rule-breaking more impactful on guest satisfaction (Leo and Russell-Bennett, 2012). Second, unlike managerial rule-breaking behaviors, researchers are more inclined to assume frontline employees' rule-breaking as "negative" and "deviant" (Fleming, 2016), making the study of the intentions behind frontline employee's rule-breaking more interesting.

Thus, we recruited a convenience sample of working adults by inviting students who were studying in hospitality in a southwestern US university, with at least 6 months of hospitality industry working experience, to participate in the study. A six-month working experience criterion was set to ensure participants understood organizational rules and had relevant experience in the field. A total of 145 invitations were sent out to potential participants. Five participants did not fulfill the requirement of a minimum of 6 months working experience. Among the 140 potential qualified participants, 80 surveys were returned, resulting in a response rate of 57%.

Due to the sensitive nature of the research inquiry (i.e., organizational rule-breaking, which may result in organizational sanction), the sampling procedural were designed to solicit an honest response from a generalizable sample. First, participants were ensured of confidentiality and anonymity at the beginning of the survey (Rasinski et al., 2005). Second, sampling in a university setting that was not affiliated with a particular organization allowed for a nonpartisan environment for gathering honest responses from the participants. As the research team was not associated with a specific organization, respondents were not in fear of reprimands. They were more likely to tell the truth, which reduced demand bias (Wheeler et al., 2014). Third, to ensure high generalizability, recruiting participants from a general hospitality program ensured a fair representation of employee from various hospitality industry segments with different demographics and experiences.

This sampling method allowed us to sample frontline employees across different jobs within hospitality industry segments. Specifically, 44% of participants worked in restaurant/food & beverage sector, 21% of the participants worked in hotel/lodging/resort, 14% worked in meetings/events management, 6% worked in gaming/casino, 4% worked in retails, 3% worked in golf/park/recreation and 6% in other hospitality sectors. In terms of job level, 86% participants worked in frontline positions (e.g. server, cashier, line-cook, busboy, etc.) and 14% worked in supervisory positions (e.g. senior director, floor supervisor, etc.). Additionally, the sample was heterogeneous in term of age, gender, and hospitality working experience. The average age of the participants was 23.6 years old (SD = 8.24), with 69% of them being female. They had an average industry tenure of 1.8 years (SD = 0.7).

3.2. Data collection procedure

After the filter question on hospitality working experience and questions on demographic information, participants were asked a closed-end (i.e., yes-no) question of "Have you ever broken a rule, policy, or procedure that was supposed to be followed at your current or previous workplace?" For participants who answered yes, they were asked to recall the situation where they broke an organizational rule. Following Morrison's (2006) approach, we asked participants to report the nature, intentions and consequences of the rule-breaking behavior in four open-ended questions, including (i) "What was the rule/regulation/standard operation procedure involved in the incident?", (ii) "Why did you engage in the rule-breaking behavior?", (iii) "What was the consequence for the organization/guests/other coworkers?", (iv) "What was the consequence for yourself? Were you punished?" Although the recalling approach can lead to inaccuracy due to a fading memory of the incident (Ritchie et al., 2006), this approach allowed us to capture the whole rule-breaking incident, where the participants were aware of the consequences and were less influenced by emotions (cf. Bower and Cohen, 2014). This questioning approach generates detailed descriptions of an incident from the participant's perspective (Gremler, 2004) and has been used by Leo and Russell-Bennett (2012) to study customer-oriented rule-breaking behavior among frontline employees in the service industry.

3.3. Coding and data analysis

We analyzed our qualitative data using thematic analysis. Miles and Huberman (1994) suggested a three-stage qualitative data analysis process, which includes familiarization, coding, and categorization. First, to enhance the readability of the transcripts, we reviewed all responses to check for grammar, typos and other minor errors. Industry segments where the rule-breaking incident occurs were coded. Second, both primary and secondary investigators – who were familiar with relevant rule-breaking research – read and re-read the responses to question ii (i.e., "why did you engage in the rule-breaking behavior") numerous times to come up with initial themes of rule-breaking intentions. Considering the unique nature of the hospitality workplace, we did not limit ourselves to the four intentions. Morrison (2006) identified and explored for similar and different intentions. Third, we read each participant's responses and manually categorized the data into the themes (i.e., intentions) emerged in Step 2. Specifically, the primary researcher first coded the data. Then, the secondary researcher read the data together with the primary investigator's coding. All disagreements were discussed between primary and secondary researcher to ensure the accuracy of the final coding. Such manual approach allows us to accurately classify the responses by being closely and intimately involved with the data (Jones et al., 2012). These three steps allow us to code the rule-breaking intentions.

Next, we coded the type of rule-broken for each intention category in the fourth step. We differentiated the types of rules broken using participants' responses to question i (i.e., "What was the rule/regulation/standard operation procedure involved in the incident?") without presetting any category. Specifically, the primary researcher first read each case under the same intentions and group cases based on similarity of the type of rules broken. Then, the categories (i.e., the types of rules) were named and exemplars were included to define the type of rules. Finally, the primary and secondary researchers re-read each case together to see if they fit into the existing category. No change was made at this point.

In the fifth step, we coded the effect of rule-breaking behaviors on rule-breakers and organizations. The researcher first read the participants' response related to the outcomes and code the perceived consequences for the organization. Cases which participants stated there was a negative, no, and positive impact on the organizations and guests were coded as −1, 0, and 1, respectively. Finally, we coded the outcomes for the rule-breakers. Participants faced negative consequence (i.e., penalty), no consequence and positive consequence (i.e., rewards) were coded as −1, 0 and 1 respectively.

To verify the validity of the coding, we recruited a research assistant to independently code the data using the above-mentioned Step 2 to Step 5. This research assistant had 3 years of managerial experience in the hospitality industry and was not involved in the data collection process. Next, we calculated inter-rater agreement (IRA) and inter-rater reliability (IRR) among multiple coders using R_{wg}, ICC_1, and ICC_2, (LeBreton et al., 2003; LeBreton and Senter, 2008). The two set of coding yielded high interrater agreement ($R_{wg\ [intention]}$ = .84; $R_{wg\ [type\ of\ rule\ broken]}$ = .53, $R_{wg\ [consequences\ for\ employees]}$ = .85, $R_{wg\ [consequences\ for\ organization]}$ = .76) and good interrater reliability (intention: ICC_1 = .71, ICC_2 = .83; types of rules broken: ICC_1 = .33, ICC_2 = .50;,consequences for employee: ICC_1 = .75, ICC_2 = .86; consequences for organization: ICC_1 = .61, ICC_2 = .76). Given the validity of the coding, we proceeded with the coding results from the primary

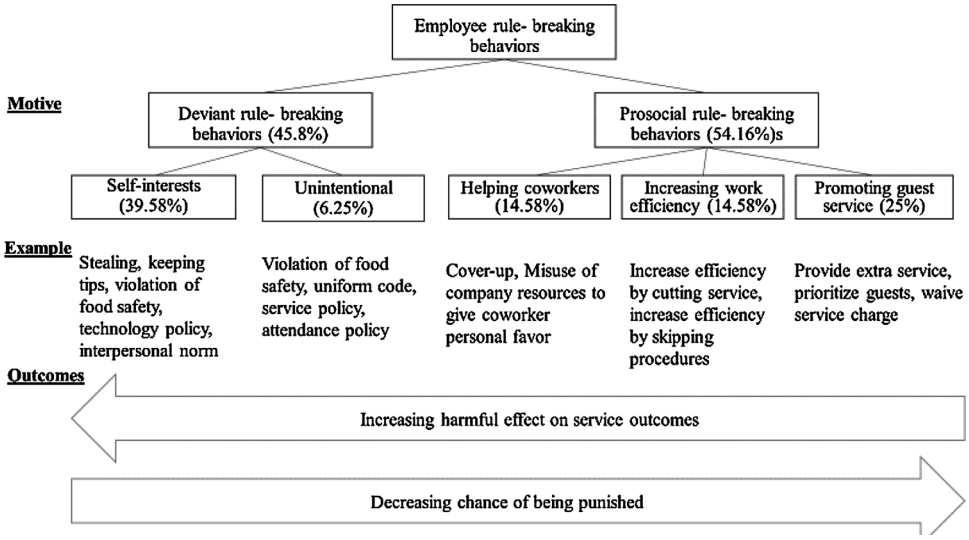

Fig. 1. Typology of employee's rule-breaking behaviors in hospitality organizations.

and secondary investigators.

4. Results

The purpose of the research study is to investigate hospitality employees' organizational rule-breaking behaviors with a primary focus on the intentions behind their behaviors. Among the 80 respondents, 48 of them (60%) stated that they broke an organizational rule, a policy, or a procedure. The findings were categorized into five broad themes, namely: (1) self-interested deviant rule-breaking, (2) unintentional deviant rule-breaking (3) prosocial rule-breaking to help coworkers, (4) prosocial rule-breaking to increase work efficiency, and (5) prosocial rule-breaking to promote guest services. Although the nature of rule-breaking may differ from Morrison's (2006) findings, the three prosocial intentions underlying organizational rule-breaking behaviors were consistent with Morrison's (2006) and Dahling et al. (2012) studies. We combined the discussion of rule-breaking behaviors in all hospitality industry segments as the patterns of rule-breaking in this study did not differ by hospitality industry segments. Fig. 1 presents the nature and outcomes of rule-breaking behaviors. For simplicity, we only included examples of responses. The full qualitative data is available upon request.

4.1. Self-interested deviant rule-breaking behaviors

4.1.1. Intention

When respondents explained the rationales behind their rule-breaking, 19 responses (i.e., 39.58% of all rule-breakers) were in line with existing studies on deviant behaviors (e.g., Hight and Park, 2018; Lee and Ok, 2014; Poulston, 2008a). These deviant rule-breaking behaviors involve breaking organizational rules for personal advantages, such as seeking vengeance, enjoying personal convenience, and taking organizational properties for personal use. Participants knowingly broke the rules out of self-interest and calculated reasons. For example,

> "I disrespected my boss and did not do what she asked of me (because) I did not like my boss and I thought she was being rude to me."

> "I worked there full-time and we didn't really get much in benefits. I also knew that my friends would go in and spend a lot of money."

> "I did not follow protocol to use employee bathrooms … The bathroom that was for customers was extremely closer than the employee bathroom."

4.1.2. Nature

Deviant employees broke various rules within their organizations. We classified seven major forms of deviant rule-breaking behaviors:

> ***Keeping the tips (n = 2)*** – "I earned a reward for completing several tasks, but I failed to report the tasks or the reward. I awarded myself."

> ***Stealing (n = 2)*** – "I was a key holder for the restaurant/bar that I worked at. One night I took a friend to the bar and we had drinks this was after the bar was closed and the owner was nowhere near the business."

> ***Violation of food safety (n = 1)*** – "On one occasion I took out a cup hot off the employees dining room without a lid. Basically, in the company I work, no-one is allowed to take any drinks out of the dining-room if the cups do not have a lid. This rule is posted right before exiting the room. The company takes safety rules very seriously".

> ***Violation of technology policy (n = 4)*** – "There was a 'no-cellphone policy' at my job and I brought my cell phone to work and was charging it with the company charger."

> ***Violation of interpersonal norm (n = 1)*** – "A major company rule is that we respect all employees regardless of ranking. I disrespected my boss and did not do what she asked of me."

> ***Violation of attendance policy (n = 5)*** – "I was working Graveyard Shift for the First time at a front desk position, and we are not allowed to sleep on the job even if there are no guests, however, I decided to take a nap in the back room because I could not stay awake."

> ***Violation of service policy (n = 4)*** – "I did not follow protocol to use employee bathrooms and instead used the bathroom that was closest, which was also a bathroom for customers. Employees must only use employee bathrooms."

> "Not sending a response to an e-mail in 24 h."

4.1.3. Outcomes

Majority of the respondents reported that deviant rule-breaking behaviors could have a substantial detrimental consequence to the guests and the organization. They also stated that they and their coworkers could face serious penalties if they got caught.

> "If I would have been caught the policy states that, employees will

get discipline."

"I was suspended for 3 days, went on my work record."

"The coworker I was with got in trouble because she was not supposed to let me sleep (in my graveyard shift at a front desk position), but she did. I got fired from that job."

"Visitors … might get confused, annoyed when they found out there was no one in charge. They might even go further and leave a negative comment on our social media pages."

4.2. Unintentional deviant rule-breaking behaviors

4.2.1. Intention

Unlike Morrison's (2006) study, the results of the study suggest that not all deviant behaviors are self-interested in nature. Three participants (6.25%) indicated they broke rules unintentionally. They failed to remember the rules during their course of actions:

"I simply forgot to label it (a bin of sour cream)."

"I forgot (to clock-in, clock-out)."

"I did not mean to break the rule necessarily, I simply forgot (to wear polished shoes)."

4.2.2. Nature

Unintentional deviant rule-breaking could be distinguished into three forms:

Violation of uniform code (n = 1) – "Accidentally wore the wrong shoes to work. Before we were allowed to wear black tennis shoes, however, when the new look policy came out, it stated we could only wear "polished" shoes. I simply was in a rush one day and got called in, so I wore my black tennis shoes."

Violation of attendance policy (n = 1) – "The restaurant requires us to clock-in and clock-out. I forget to clock one day."

Violation of food safety (n = 1) – "I forgot to label a bin of sour cream. You must label and date everything that you put in the refrigerator."

4.2.3. Outcomes

Respondents reported that they either faced no consequence of their action or casual warning from their supervisors.

"I was not punished. I just a verbal warning. If I did it again, I would be punished."

"There is no punishment for me"

"A manager just simply spoke to me about my shoes and I got a verbal warning."

4.3. Prosocial rule-breaking to help coworkers

4.3.1. Intention

As studied by Morrison (2006) and Dahling et al. (2012), one of the concurrent themes that emerged as an intention behind employee rule-breaking behavior is to help their coworkers. Employees broke organizational rules so that they could help their subordinates or coworkers. Although we also noted a similar theme in our data, the number of cases was far less than those noted in Morrison's (2006) study. There were only seven participants (14.58% of all rule-breakers) denoting that they broke rules to help their coworkers:

"To help my coworkers handle the rush and get through the shift comfortably. I knew that in that situation I would have wanted help no matter where it came from."

"I engaged in the rule-breaking behavior because I felt that it was unfair to charge employees for hats when the organization did not participate in the principle prior and multiple people had already received free hats."

4.3.2. Nature

The seven cases of prosocial rule-breaking behavior to help their coworkers involved two different natures: to covering-up for coworkers and to give coworkers personal favors. Specifically:

Covering-up for coworkers (n = 5) – "One job required me to clock-in to work at a maximum of 7 min 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 min early so that I could help my coworkers handle the rush."

"Allowed a subordinate to work from home in another state."

Misusing company resources to give coworkers personal favors (n = 2) – "As a Uniform Room attendant, the rule was you have to charge each employee who forgets their hat. 25 dollars to replace the hat, even if the employee had a hat (but if they left it in their car, at their house, etc.). I did not charge for hats."

4.3.3. Outcome

Compared with deviant rule-breaking behaviors which have severe negative consequences, employees only faced modest consequences when they broke rules to help other employees in the workplace. They justified their rule-breaking behaviors as they believed the organization did not incur any substantial cost for their behaviors. Additionally, they felt that their coworkers acknowledged their actions.

"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. I was not actually punished, but I was given a stern talking to and a warning for my behavior."

"The organization lost an estimated $1.32 for the hat, and coworkers had to suffer a favoritism principle from me. There was no consequence (for me), and I was not punished."

4.4. Prosocial-rule-breaking to increase efficiency

4.4.1. Intention

Instances where the employees were trying to perform their job duties more efficiently were repeatedly mentioned by Morrison (2006) and Dahling et al. (2012). According to 7 employees interviewed (14.58% of all rule-breakers), the intention behind their rule-breaking behaviors was to increase efficiency. Participants broke rules to perform their responsibilities more efficiently. They stated:

"I was just trying to get burgers off and lower wait time, so I jeopardized the quality to rush."

"I engaged in the rule-breaking behavior because having to stand around and wait for the manager to get a $2 out of the register was not efficient or practical."

"To save myself time and space, (I) carried several drinks on trays or more than one butter per basket of bread."

4.4.2. Nature

Unlike Morrison's (2006) findings where most rule-breaking

behaviors with an efficiency motive were to use fewer resources and using personal resources for organizational purposes, we found that increase efficiency by cutting service and skipping procedure were the major forms of rule-breaking behavior. This was consistent with the intangible nature of hospitality service (cf. Erickson and Rothberg, 2017). For example:

Increase efficiency by cutting service (n = 1) **–** "There was a time where I was cooking on the grill and I did not fry mustard my meat. What this means is I did not put mustard on the meat patty when it was requested by the customer. The rule I broke was the ability to serve quality. That little detail not putting the mustard on the meat jeopardizes the quality of the burger, and a satisfied customer. They don't always know when the mustard isn't there, but they do know a certain flavor is missing."

Increase efficiency by skipping procedure (n = 6) – "A situation where I have broken the rules was when I took the tip I made, by working to go from the register myself instead of waiting for the manager to take them out. We were supposed to wait for a manager to take the tips out for us."

4.4.3. Outcome

Employees were aware that they were doing something immoral and that the company might have incurred a loss of revenue due to their rule-breaking behaviors. While some employees received minor verbal warnings for engaging in rule-breaking behaviors to increase efficiency, others were encouraged by their managers.

"I was not punished because I got away with it, but internally I knew I was technically doing something wrong."

"I just was sat down with my Store Manager and Division Manager to always make sure I follow all quality procedures and if I don't in the future, I will receive a write-up."

"There was no consequence because the managers did not find out. Some managers knew I did it and encouraged me to do it, but the rule book said we had to wait for a manager. Guests could have had more money put on the tip line that what they gave. The organization could have lost money."

4.5. Prosocial-rule-breaking to promote guest service

4.5.1. Intention

Consistent with Morrison's (2006) and Dahling et al. (2012) findings, another common intention behind rule-breaking behavior among employees is to enhance guest service. Particularly, 12 employees (25% of all rule-breakers) reported that they defied company rules because they wanted to help the guests or customers.

"I wanted to assist guests who are not familiar with English."

"I did it because I didn't want the customers to wait when there's an open table."

"The age for kid's All-You-Can-Eat is 4-7 year (old), but I did not charge any price 4-year-old kid. Just (to enhance) customer satisfaction and (to) avoid some situation."

4.5.2. Forms

Our results showed that prosocial rule-breaking to promote guest services have 3 distinct forms, as stated below:

Provide extra service (n = 5) **–** "I helped someone book an airline ticket. We are not allowed to assist with online purchases."

Prioritize guests (n = 3) **–** "That was a very busy day. There has been a long line before our restaurant gate. Many guests wanted me to help them with 'to go order'. I just refused them and told them to have to have a line first. Also, at that time, there were two old ladies in the line. I just gave them seats first."

Waive service charge (n = 4) **–** "I broke the rules to waive delivery for a customer. We generally charge delivery to cover labor costs."

4.5.3. Consequences

Employees who engage in prosocial rule-breaking behaviors to promote guest service may generate financial costs for the organizations. However, most participants did not face any consequences because their actions resulted in greater guest satisfaction. Some respondents even suggested that their managers appreciated their effort. There was only one case that the participant states he/she received minor verbally disciplined. However, even in this case, the participant received a high remark for the improvement of overall guest experience.

"Guest was thrilled. Boss said she would have done the same."

"We may have lost quite a bit of revenue…Our Boss was onboard with the decision."

"I was not punished but praised for making a fair acceptation to the rule."

"While this stressed out my manager and a few servers, the large party paid the bar high remarks and even notified our corporate offices of their overall experience. I was verbally disciplined. I was told never to do so unless I had been approved by a manager and notified involved staff."

5. Discussion

This study highlights the omnipresence of rule-breaking behavior among hospitality employees with a variability in their intention in doing so. Apparently, hospitality employees disregard organizational rules to help the guests, to increase the efficiency of their job and to assist their coworkers. However, certain employees were deviant when breaking rules. The findings were consistent with the work of Morrison (2006) who studied rule-breaking behavior as a "positive" or "constructive" deviance in various organizational sectors. The three broad categories of prosocial rule-breaking converge with Morrison's (2006) study.

5.1. Theoretical contributions

This study makes a prominent contribution in hospitality literature by focusing on rule-breakers intentions behinds their actions. Traditionally, hospitality researchers assumed rule-breakers are deviant without investigating their intentions (e.g., Hight and Park, 2018; Lee and Ok, 2014; Poulston, 2008a). As such, they recommend improving training on moral reasoning to reduce rule-breaking behaviors (Poulston, 2008b). Our study suggests that such an assumption may oversimplify the nature of hospitality rule-breaking.

Unlike extant literature (e.g., Morrison, 2006), the results of this study indicate that hospitality employees' deviant rule-breaking behavior is not always calculated or planned. This can be attributed to the demanding nature of the industry with long working hours, where employees are daily challenged with serving customers under pressure. Therefore, they sometimes deviate from organizational policies without even realizing the rules at the time of deviance. In most cases, they disregard the rule because they forget about its existence. This sort of unintentional rule-breaking behavior arises occasionally from employees' disinclination toward the rule and not out of any interest toward self or anyone else. This is a contribution to the literature of deviant behavior in the hospitality context (e.g., Hight and Park, 2018;

Lee and Ok, 2014; Poulston, 2008a), wherein we highlight the fact that not all deviant behavior is intentional.

This study not only underlines that employees in the hospitality industry may break rules with prosocial motives but also demonstrates that the ratio of prosocial rule-breaking is higher than deviant rule-breaking. In line with Morrison's (2006) findings, our study showed that 54% of employees engaging in rule-breaking behaviors out of prosocial motives but only 40% of employees engaging in rule-breaking behaviors out of deviant motives. This indicates that the percentage of prosocial rule-breaking in the hospitality industry may not be different from other industries. Related to deviant rule-breaking, our results were in line with some of the recent research on deviant rule-breaking by showing that stealing, absenteeism, violation of interpersonal norms, and service sabotage are common types of rules broken (e.g., Chia and Chu, 2017; Lee and Ok, 2014; Poulston, 2008a). However, we also identified understudied rule-breaking, such as pocketing tips, and violation of technology policy. Our results highlight the fact that organizational rules evolve with society development. For example, the technology policy corresponds to the increased use of cellphone and wearable device in the last decade. Accordingly, our study provides an update on rule-breaking that are relevant to the hospitality industry in today's workplace.

Our study explores the intention, nature, types, and consequences of rule-breaking in the hospitality industry. In doing so, it extends Morrison's (2006) study by investigating the types of rules broken under each intention. By focusing on the hospitality industry, we found that rule-breaking behaviors in the hospitality industry can be different from those in other industries (e.g., manufacturing, retails, education, etc.). The hospitality industry is unique as it is labor-intensive (e.g., Tracey and Hinkin, 1994; Choi et al., 2000). The repetitive nature of work and long working hours make employees emotionally dependent on their peers at the workplace (cf. Loi et al., 2014). Previous literature suggested that prosocial rule-breaking behaviors to help coworkers are purely altruistic and include behaviors such as sportsmanship (e.g., “providing recognition to staff”, Morrison, 2006, p. 14) and courtesy (e.g., “informing divisions of upcoming audit”, Morrison, 2006, p. 11). However, we found that participants help their subordinates or coworkers to an extent of covering up for them or misusing company resources to deliver a personal favor to them. This is in line with the importance of the social relationship with coworkers in the hospitality workforce (cf. Susskind et al., 2007; Karatepe, 2013). Despite its prosocial nature, such personal favor can result in a cost to the organization similar to deviant rule-breaking behaviors. Indeed, misusing company resources for coworkers can be similar to a type of well-known deviant rule-breaking – stealing (Poulston, 2008a). However, our study also highlighted another unexplored rule-breaking behavior: covering-up for coworkers. Since the hospitality workplace requires employees to work in a team (Pizam and Shani, 2009), covering-up for coworkers may result in severe negative consequences and deserves much research attention.

Moreover, the nature of rule-breaking behaviors to improve efficiency in our study was different from that of the extant rule-breaking studies in management literature due to the intangible nature of the hospitality industry. Some examples of rule-breaking behaviors to increase efficiency in Morrison's (2006, p. 11) study includes choosing a cheaper vendor and using personal resources. All these actions result in cost-savings to the organizations. In contrast, our respondents provided examples of prosocial rule-breaking to increase efficiency that focus on efficiency in procedures, which may not result in immediate measurable outcomes for the organization. In line with the intangible nature of service, the outcomes of these actions are intangible – they save time and space but not financial cost. Our study also identifies a case where rule-breakers skip part of the service procedures to increase efficiency. While its nature is similar to service sabotage and can be caused by a similar reason of high job demand (cf. Lee and Ok, 2014), the prosocial rule-breakers can engage in the actions out of engagement. It calls for research on the potential dark side of work engagement (Schaufeli and Salanova, 2011).

We found that some hospitality employees break rules with prosocial intentions to help the guests, which is in line with existing literature of prosocial rule-breaking behavior (Morrison, 2006; Dahiling et al., 2012). Indeed, two types of the rules broken – waiving service charge and providing extra-service – are in line with growing literature on service improvisation (e.g., John et al., 2006; Secchi et al., 2016). Service improvisation is defined as “the systemic ability of service firm's employees to deviate from established processes and routines in order to timely respond to unexpected events, using available resources” (Secchi et al., 2016, p. 6), and is generally consider as positive employee behaviors that improve guest satisfaction (John et al., 2006). However, our study reveals that these goodwill employees may be “too creative” and break rules that can threaten organizational stability (cf. Goodsell, 2000). This suggests that service improvisation can have unintended negative outcomes.

Our qualitative findings also suggest that the five types of rule-breaking behaviors can result in different outcomes. These findings have implications on how to measure and study rule-breaking behaviors. Employees who break rules with a deviant and a prosocial motive to help coworkers can face major penalties. However, those who break rules to increase efficiency and to promote guest service face minor punishment and receive compliments. Our findings also show a similar pattern for organizational consequences – whereas deviant rule-breaking behaviors and prosocial rule-breaking behaviors to help coworkers can be highly detrimental to guests and organization, prosocial rule-breaking behaviors to increase efficiency and to promote guest service can increase guest satisfaction. Instead of combining the three prosocial rule-breaking behavior as one unified variable in the current prosocial rule-breaking literature (e.g., Morrison, 2006; Huang et al., 2014), our study provided support to the distinctiveness of the four types of rule-breaking behaviors. In line with Dahling et al. (2012) findings, we suggest that the five types of rule-breaking behaviors should be evaluated and studied separately.

5.2. Practical implications

This study reveals that hospitality employees' rule-breaking behaviors can be complex. While some employees may engage in rule-breaking behaviors out of deviant/self-interested motives, others may engage in those behaviors out of prosocial motives to help coworkers, to make work efficient, and to improve guest service. The findings yield implications on how to control employees' rule-breaking behaviors. Instead of using a “one-size-fits-all” approach to control rule-breaking behaviors, it is essential for hospitality managers to understand the motive behinds employees' engagement in rule-breaking behaviors. When employees break rules, managers should not only keep track of the behaviors but also investigate the intentions behind the rule-breaking behaviors. After an audit of the motives behind rule-breaking behaviors, managers who want their employees to conform to rules, regulation, and standards need to adjust their reinforcement and training practices. While moral training can be effective at eliminating deviant/self-interested rule-breaking behaviors (Poulston, 2008b), those practices can be counter-productive to prosocial rule-breaking behaviors. Instead, ensuring a high conformity organization climate can be more effective at reducing prosocial rule-breaking behaviors (Dahling et al., 2012; Morrison, 2006). In addition, our study showed that managers should consider the potential negative outcomes of employee rule-breaking behaviors. Our study showed that some managers may see prosocial rule-breaking as more acceptable, low-risk crime – they are less likely to control those behaviors which may also result in costs for the organizations. We recommend them to provide more consistent punishment for various rule-breaking behaviors as unjust execution of punishment can lead to a feeling of unfairness, triggering employee's negative emotions and attitudes (Podsakoff et al.,

2010).

5.3. Limitations and future research

This study has a few limitations which call for additional research in the future. First, our study recruited undergraduate and graduate students who have work experience in the hospitality industry as participants. As such, 86% of our participants were frontline employees with limited managerial responsibilities. Therefore, the results might not be generalizable to managerial rule-breaking behaviors. With managers having more power and a larger span of control, the rule-breaking behaviors can have a larger impact and can come in different forms. Also, managers' interactions with coworkers (i.e., other managers and subordinates) can be different from the interactions among frontline employees. Thus, managers can have different rule-breaking behaviors which this study could not uncover. We encourage future research to replicate our findings with managerial samples.

Second, participants were asked to report one rule-breaking incident by recalling from their memory using a structured survey. We analyzed the theme based on a single incident reported by each participant. It confined participants to one single report of rule-breaking behavior despite the possibility that they might engage in multiple rule-breaking behaviors. As a result, participants reported the incident which was most vivid in their memory. There may be other incidents which participants failed to report, which would impact the results of the study.

Third, our study used a structured survey method to gather data from hospitality employees rather than face-to-face interviews. While the structured survey is appropriate for the study of sensitive topics, like rule-breaking behaviors, one limitation of the structured survey is that it may not provide as much in-depth content as an unstructured interview (Kwortnik, 2003; Walsh, 2003). In some cases, we might not be able to capture the essence of rule-breaking behavior comprehensively as we could not ask follow-up questions. Moreover, we could not be able to accurately capture any verbal and non-verbal cues or emotions from respondents. Therefore, participants' level of enthusiasm for the topic of rule-breaking behavior remains unknown. Future researchers can replicate our study by using instant messaging or real-time response text communication which can capture the participants' eagerness while maintaining the anonymous nature of the investigation.

Finally, this study asked participants to self-report the consequences of their rule-breaking behavior. This approach provides information based on participants' judgment on which incidents are the most relevant to them (Gremler, 2004). Therefore, it reflects the normal way the employee thinks without forcing them to conform to any given framework (Gremler, 2004). This approach relies on the honesty of their participants and can be subjected to social desirability bias. Even though it would not impact the reporting of incidents as major rule-breaking are vivid in memory, respondents may be hesitant to report extreme consequences for the organization and guests. This calls for research that measures the consequences of different forms rule-breaking behaviors. Future research can be conducted to investigate distinct organizational outcomes of the four types of rules-breaking behaviors, including but not limited to employee sanction, service performance, guest satisfaction, and unit financial performance.

Our study sheds light on the patterns and intentions of rule-breaking behavior among hospitality employees. We also suggested that the deviant rule-breaking have stronger effects on organizational performance and organizational sanctions than prosocial rule-breaking. We encourage future research to extend our findings by investigating the nomological networks the four major types of rule-breaking behavior using quantitative studies. In particular, it will be highly interesting to examine antecedents that have differential effects on deviant and the three type of prosocial rule-breaking behaviors, such as agreeableness (e.g., Berry et al., 2007; Morrison, 2006) and moral training (Poulston, 2008b). Considering the importance of employee's service performance on customer satisfaction (Voss et al., 1998), we call for future studies to examine the relationship between the four types of rule-breaking behaviors on employee's service performance.

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