

## **Work Environment and Service Recovery Performance in Hotel Operations in Egypt**

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### **Abstract**

Employees should be encouraged to deal with any mistakes and to satisfy angry customers to keep a long-term relationship with them and keep the hotel's image. Hence, the purpose of this study is to investigate factors that improve service recovery performance (SRP) in hotel operations. A survey was designed and distributed to hotel employees in three departments; front office, housekeeping and restaurant. They were randomly selected from five-star hotels in Egypt. Results indicated that training, empowerment; motivation, organizational support, and service technology are effective elements for work environment and to predict SRP. The study concludes that hotel management should struggle to provide better work environment to their employees to perform service recovery effectively. It emphasized that training, empowerment; motivation, organizational support, and service technology are effective elements for work environment to enhance employees' SRP. Accordingly, the study advises hotels management to provide encouraging work environment for all guest contact employees.

**Keywords:** *Work environment; service recovery performance; Egypt*

### **1. Introduction**

Many mistakes and problems frequently occur in the hospitality industry during offering service to guests. Employees in the hospitality industry have a challenge to deal with guests' problems and complaints, and to not lose them (Schumacher and Komppula, 2016). Losing guests means both profit decrease and negative word of mouth (Filip, 2013). Therefore, all guests' problems and complaints should be recovered to ensure long-term relationships with customers (Michel *et al.*, 2009). When employees offer excellent service recovery, customers will feel satisfied and will do positive actions for the organization (Othman *et al.*, 2013). Service recovery policies should be planned and well-considered and not to be haphazard. It is the responsibility of management to help their employees perform service recovery. It should enhance the working conditions in order to provide a better working environment for employees to perform better (Kiruja and Kabare, 2013). Work environment that involves good training, empowerment, motivation, supportive management, and service technology for frontline employees will encourage employees' service recovery performance and maintain customers' satisfaction (Piaralal *et al.*, 2016). Thus, this study

seeks to highlight and investigate many factors that can provide helpful work environment to improve service recovery performance (SRP) in hotel operations.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Training

Training is generally defined as an important process to improve employees' existing skills, knowledge, experience, and abilities (Ameeq and Hanif, 2013; Shaheen *et al.*, 2013; Alfandi, 2016). Training motivates employees to retain in their organization by increasing their satisfaction (Vuta and Facras, 2015; Kesen, 2016). Effective training helps employees develop their personal characters and increase their self confidence to solve problems (Nenna *et al.* 2013). In addition, training influences the quality and quantity of work and speed of work achievement (Kum *et al.*, 2014; Alfandi, 2016). It was also found that trained employees are more competent and motivated than untrained employees (Manoj, 2013; Asfaw *et al.*, 2015).

Hotel staff has to be well trained continuously to satisfy the customer they contact with (Ameeq and Hanif, 2013). Training ensures the employees' ability to work in the changing business environment or with the new technology (Falola *et al.*, 2014). It also gives employees the skills and experience to cope with more complex situations (Kum *et al.*, 2014). Training is as an investment to get future benefits and also to achieve competitive advantage (Elnaga and Imran, 2013). Moreover, training creates a pleasant work environment that encourages team spirit among employees (Zahra *et al.*, 2014).

### 2.2 Empowerment

Empowerment is defined as the leaders' ability to allow employees have input and control over their work as well as trusting their employees to make some independent decisions (Ramesh, 2014). According to the concept of empowerment, employee can handle customers' complaints and solve their problems in the way he/she sees it suitable (Wamuyu *et al.*, 2015). It is very essential to allow employees to manage failure (Bhandari *et al.*, 2007) and to meet or exceed customers' expectations during the service (Ukil, 2016). Empowerment practices encourage employees to increase their knowledge and skills and to be innovative in handling work (Fernandez and Moldogaziev, 2011). In addition, empowerment is seen as one important element for work environment that influence the service recovery (Masoud and Abu Hmeidan, 2013). In particular, empowerment is more important to hotel front desk operations to deal with frequent and sudden situations or complaints of customers (Yilmaz, 2015). Empowerment helps employees who are in continuous contact with customers take rapid actions for the service recovery (Wamuyu *et al.*, 2015).

### 2.3 Motivation

Motivation is an internal or external driving energy that pushes employees to maximize their efforts to achieve the required tasks (Patterson, 2010). The internal driving energy comes from within an individual while the external energy is generated by the organization (Maduka and Okafor, 2014). In fact, keeping employees motivated and especially under stressful work

conditions is a great challenge (Manzoor, 2012). Hence, it is very important to motivate employees to deliver the inspired services and to perform their works optimally. It is the role of managers to know their employees very well and adopt new plans to motivate each of them according to their personal wants and needs (Ahmad *et al.*, 2012; Ganta, 2014). Managers also need to remember that motivating employees is a continuous process that fills the vacuum created by a need in the human being (Maduka and Okafor, 2014). They should consider the environment that creates a motivated workforce (Safiullah, 2015). It was found that level of motivation is influenced by the good working environment (Yazdani *et al.*, 2011). If employees feel appreciated for their work, it will increase their productivity and loyalty (Dobre, 2013). Moreover, when employees are well motivated, they are ready for service recovery performance (Cheraghalizadeh, 2014).

#### 2.4 Organizational Support

According to Krishnan and Mary (2012), organizational support is an employee's feeling of the extent to which organization is concerned for his/her welfare. It reflects quality of social interactions that occur between employers and their employees (Casper *et al.*, 2011). Organization should develop policies and strategies that improve employees' impressions about the organization (Eisenberger *et al.*, 2016). It is also necessary to pay more attention to their salaries and career promotion; it should distribute rewards fairly among employees and provide fair career opportunities (Alizadeh and Cheraghalizadeh, 2015). Additionally, management should do its efforts to help employees improve their job-related knowledge, skills, abilities, and behaviors (Ibrahim *et al.*, 2016). In fact, organizational support is principal to enhance the employees' job satisfaction the organizational commitment (Woo and Chelladurai, 2012; Alijanpour *et al.*, 2013; Guan *et al.*, 2014). It has a significant impact on employee retention (Iqbal and Hashmi, 2015). When employees feel support from their organization, they feel responsibility to retain for helping it to succeed (Beheshtifar and Heart, 2013). Moreover, this organizational support motivates employees to do voluntary action for the sake of their organizations (Danish *et al.*, 2015). Furthermore, it is a significant factor in generating creativity among their employees to perform good job (Ibrahim *et al.*, 2016).

#### 2.5 Service Technology

Recently, information technology has influenced the management and quality of services. It facilitates the delivering of services in more comfortable and rapid ways (Bitner *et al.*, 2010). For example, a computerized system supports employees to carry out their tasks easily (Oluwagbemi *et al.*, 2011). Generally, service technology has a remarkable role in achieving speed of service quality and customer satisfaction (Bakhat, and Aziz, 2012). In particular, by adopting and using technology in hotel sector, service quality can be improved (Koutroumanis, 2011). Nowadays, employees can use many information technology applications to deliver the service to customers effectively and in a competitive way (Bakhat, and Aziz, 2012). Fartash and Gharechedaghi (2012) confirmed that service can be better handled and recovered due to technological shifting in information technology and communication. Accordingly, technology service was found to enable both customers and employees to receive and provide service effectively (Bitner *et al.*, 2010). By using it, employees can access easily to the required data and resources as well as they can contact

their colleagues. It also helps employees for better customer relationship management (Devi and Jyothsna, 2014). Moreover, adopting service technology in hotel sector enables customers to have a better experience (Bhatt, 2013).

### 2.6 Service Recovery performance

The characteristic of hospitality environment makes service failure is expected from time to time (Ogbonna, and Igbojekwe, 2015). This service failure may cause customer dissatisfaction (Kim *et al.*, 2009). Hence, service recovery plans should be ready in hotels to deal with any mistakes and to satisfy angry customers and to keep a long-term relationship with them (Santos-Vijande *et al.*, 2013). Service recovery performance (SRP) refers to the actions taken by service provider to resolve a service failure (Karatepe and Vatankhah 2015). SRP may not always resolve service failures, but it can reduce its harmful effect (Varela-Neira *et al.*, 2010). SRP handles problems in two possible states: before a customer's complaints and after his complains (Gronroos, 2007). Hence, CSR helps organizations turn its unhappy customers into satisfied and loyal (Smith *et al.*, 2012). SRP is considered as a part of service quality that should be enhanced to assure excellence service quality is provided to customers (Rejikumar, 2015). Moreover, the organization's reputation depends on the level of SRP presented to its customers (Hassan, 2015).

Recovery activities may include apologies, explanations and substitutions (Edvardsson *et al.*, 2011). Service providers should provide their customers with number of potential resolutions that enhance responsiveness in recovery situation (Smith *et al.*, 2012). Compensation is also one of the most important service recovery strategies that are used in hotels (Wamuyu *et al.*, 2015). Actually, service provider should adopt different SRP approaches depending upon the nature of the problem as well as the type of customers (Lai and Chou, 2015). Moreover, effective communication and quickness in SRP are necessary to overcome customer dissatisfaction (Rejikumar, 2015). Organizations can encourage employees' SRP by providing a convenient and motivating work environment. Masoud and Hmeidan, (2013) indicated that training, empowerment, motivation, supportive management, and service technology can motivate frontline employees' SRP. Rewards, team work, job satisfaction are also found important for motivating employees' SRP (Malhotra and Lages, 2015; Nadiri, and Tanova, 2016; Mahyoub *et al.*, 2017).

### 3. Hypotheses of the Study

Based on the previous literatures, this study has the following hypotheses to test:

H1 : Work environment positively influences the employees' services recovery performance.

H1a: Training positively influences the employees' services recovery performance.

H1b: Empowerment positively influences the employees' services recovery performance.

H1c : Motivation positively influences the employees' services recovery performance.

H1d: organizational support positively influences the employees' services recovery performance.

H1e: Service technology positively influences the employees' services recovery performance.

H2: Services recovery performance is varied significantly according to the hotel department.

## 4. Methodology of the Study

### 4.1 Samples and Data Collection Method

The target population for the research is all 5-star chain-affiliated hotels in Egypt. A survey was designed and distributed to employees of these hotels; they were randomly selected. 900 questionnaires were distributed among employees who are in contact with guests; front office department, housekeeping department and restaurants. 715 questionnaires were answered and returned, but only 640 were valid for analysis, counting for 71% of the total sample, representing a satisfying response rate.

### 4.2 Variables and Measures

The survey consists of two parts; the first part is related to the respondents' demographic data and the second part is related to measure the study's variables and is divided to six sections; the first section measures training and involves 5 items; the second measures "empowerment" and involves 4 items; the third measures "motivation" and involves 4 items; the fourth section measures "organizational support" and involves 5 items; the fifth section measures "service technology" and involves 4 items and the sixth section measures "service recovery performance" and involves 5 items. All these items were measured using a 5-item scale ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5). The first five sections represent the independent variables while the sixth section represents the dependent variable. All participants confirmed that they are in contact with guests in their work.

## 5. Results

### 5.1 Reliability Analysis

First, the survey was pre-tested to identify items that are not clear to participants and to avoid any mistakes that might lead to biased answers. Second, Cronbach's Alpha test was conducted as seen in table 1. The closer the Cronbach's Alpha is to 1, the higher the internal consistency reliability (Sekaran, 2003). The analysis showed that Cronbach Alpha values for all constructs are high which means their high reliability.

Table 1: Reliability Analysis

The constructs of the study	N	Cronbach's Alpha
Training	5	.937
Empowerment	4	.821
Motivation	4	.902
Organizational support	5	.924
Service technology	4	.954
Service recovery Performance	5	.929

### 5.2 Respondents' Profile

Table 2 shows that 63% of respondents were male and 37 % were females, the majority (67%) was graduated from college, and 80% were aged between 20 to 40 years. 30 % of participants are

working in the front office department, 31% are working in the hotel restaurants and 39 % are working in the housekeeping department. Respondents were asked about how many years of experience they had in the hotel industry; 56% answered they had experience less than 5 years, 36% had experience from 5 to ten years and only 8% had experience more than 10 years.

Table 2: Description of Respondents' Profile

<b>Respondents' Profile</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	
<b>Gender</b>	Male	202	63
	Female	118	37
<b>Educational level</b>	Under secondary school	23	7
	Secondary school	71	22
	College	214	67
	Other	12	4
<b>Age</b>	20-30	125	39
	31- 40	132	41
	41- 50	53	17
	Above 50	10	3
<b>Years of Experience</b>	Less than 5	180	56
	5-10	115	36
	More than 10	25	8
<b>Department</b>	Front office	97	30
	Housekeeping	124	39
	Restaurants	99	31

### 5.3 Descriptive Analysis of the Variables

Table 3 presents the mean scores and attitudes for the study constructs. It is seen that empowerment as an element of work environment is the most perceived by respondents (4.44), followed by training (4.24), followed by organizational support (3.87), followed by service technology (3.83) and employee motivation is the least perceived (3.65). The total mean score of work environment is high. Moreover, Respondents showed that they do service recovery practices highly.

Table 3: Mean Scores and Attitudes of the Study Variables

<b>The study variables</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>Attitude</b>
Work environment	4.00	.42	Agree
1. <i>Empowerment</i>	4.44	.70	Strongly agree
2. <i>Training</i>	4.24	.64	Strongly agree
3. <i>Organizational support</i>	3.87	.25	Agree
4. <i>Service technology</i>	3.83	.64	Agree
5. <i>Motivation</i>	3.65	.41	Agree
Service recovery performance	4.18	.49	Agree

#### 5.4 Data Analysis and Testing Hypotheses

A correlation analysis (table 4) was done on all constructs to determine if there are significant correlations. The result showed that work environment correlates significantly and positively with SRP, it recorded p value less than .001. All elements of work environment; training, empowerment, motivation, organizational support and service technology correlate significantly and positively with SRP, they all recorded p value less than .001.

Table 4: Pearson Correlation Analysis

		Service Recovery performance
Training	Pearson Correlation	.391**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
Empowerment	Pearson Correlation	.460**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
Motivation	Pearson Correlation	.622**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
Organizational Support	Pearson Correlation	.720**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
Service Technology	Pearson Correlation	.868**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
Work Environment	Pearson Correlation	.737**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2

Regression analysis (table 5) was also performed to predict the level of SRP based on work environment. According to the results, work environment correlates and influences significantly with service recovery performance ( $R = .737$ , sig.000). It was noted that about 54% of the variance could be predicted by work environment. The changes of 1 unit in the work environment will cause a change of 0.856 units in the SRP. Hence, H1 is supported. The results also showed that all elements of work environment (training, empowerment, motivation, organizational support and service technology) influence significantly the SRP. Results showed that training caused about 15% of the variance in SRP. The changes of 1 unit in the training will cause a change of 0.301 units in the SRP. Hence, H1a is supported. Empowerment caused 21% of the variance in SRP. The changes of 1 unit in empowerment will cause a change of 0.322 units in the SRP. Hence, H1b is supported. Motivation caused about 39% of the variance in SRP. The changes of 1 unit in motivation will cause a change of 0.746 units in SRP. Hence, H1c is supported. Organizational support caused about 52% of the variance in SRP. The changes of 1 unit in support will cause a change of 1.418 units in SRP. Hence, H1d is supported. Moreover, the strongest correlation was found between service technology and SRP ( $R = .868$ , sig. =.000). It was noted that about 75% of variance could be predicted by Service technology. The changes of 1 unit in service technology will cause a change of 0.670 units in SRP. Hence, H1e is supported. Although organizational support ( $B = 1.418$ ) had the greatest effect on SRP followed by motivation ( $B = .746$ ) and service technology ( $B = 0.670$ ). However, training ( $B = 0.301$ ) had the smallest effect and followed by empowerment ( $B = 0.322$ ).

Table 5: Regression Analysis

	<b>R</b>	<b>R Square</b>	<b>Adjusted R Square</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>Sig.</b>	<b>Hypotheses</b>
Work environment	.737 <sup>a</sup>	.543	.542	.856	.000	H1 supported
1 Training	.391 <sup>a</sup>	.153	.150	.301	.000	H1a supported
2 Empowerment	.460 <sup>a</sup>	.212	.209	.322	.000	H1b supported
3 Motivation	.622 <sup>a</sup>	.387	.385	.746	.000	H1c supported
4 Organizational support	.720 <sup>a</sup>	.518	.517	1.41	.000	H1d supported
5 Service technology	.868 <sup>a</sup>	.753	.752	.670	.000	H1e supported

Kruskal-Wallis test was conducted to see if there are significant variances among respondents' SRP based on the department they work. Results in table 6 showed that employees' SRP varied significantly (p. value = .015) based on their department. It was found that front office employees' SRP was the highest (mean rank = 180.49) followed by housekeeping employees' SRP (mean rank = 157.66) while restaurant employees' SRP was the lowest. Hence, H2 is supported.

Table 6: Kruskal-Wallis Test

		<b>Mean Rank</b>	<b>Chi-Square</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Sig.</b>	<b>Hypotheses</b>
Hotel Department	Front office	180.49	8.341	2	.015	H2 supported
	Housekeeping	157.66				
	Restaurant	144.47				

## 6. Discussion

Findings demonstrated that work environment elements were positively related to SRP separately and jointly. These results are agreed with Masoud and Hmeidan (2013) as they found that training, empowerment, motivation, organizational support, and service technology significantly predict frontline employees' SRP. It is possible to properly manage hotel employees' SRP by producing the right working environment for them (Masdek *et al.*, 2011; Doh, 2013). If leaders provide their employees with the good working environment, employees will be able to service customer better (Kiruja and Kabare, 2013).

This study emphasized the importance of five elements for an effective SRP. First, training was found in this study to be a significant element of work environment to influence SRP. Previous studies found that trained employees were more prepared and experienced than untrained employees to recover services (Manoj, 2013; Asfaw *et al.*, 2015; Mahyoub *et al.*, 2017). It is needed to provide employees with foundational skills in order to deal with the complicated customers' problems and complaints. Second, empowerment was also found to be a significant element of work environment to influence SRP. It allows employees to be innovative in handling guests' matters (Fernandez and Moldogaziev, 2011). Hotels should give more empowerment to their front-line employees to deal with service failures. Empowerment was seen important to enable employees to offer suitable clarifications for the failure and take rapid actions for the SRP (Wamuyu *et al.*, 2015). Third, motivation was found a significant element of work environment to

influence SRP. Employees need motivation to be satisfied to perform their works optimally (Ganta, 2014). If employees are motivated for their work, it will lead to better SRP (Masoud and Hmeidan, 2013). Fourth, organizational support was a significant element of work environment to influence SRP. When employees become aware of their organizations' attention, admiration, support and respect towards them, they show positive return to that (Beheshtifar *et al.*, 2012). Furthermore, this support may create motivate employees to do voluntary action for the sake of SRP (Masoud and Hmeidan, 2013; Danish *et al.*, 2015). Finally, service technology was found a significant element of work environment to influence SRP. Using service technology efficiently in organizations has a great role in achieving speed of service quality and customer satisfaction (Bakhat and Aziz, 2012). Service can be better recovered due to technological changing in information technology and communication (Fartash and Gharechedaghi, 2012; Masoud and Hmeidan, 2013). By using technology, employees can access easily to the required data and resources as well as they can contact their colleagues (Devi and Jyothsna, 2014).

In this study, SRP varied according to the department. Front office employees were found to adopt more SRP than housekeeping and restaurants employees. Hence, all frontline employees in all departments should be more trained, empowered, motivated, supported and provided with technology service in equal manner to enhance their future SRP.

## 7. Conclusion

This study provides a clear and convincing evidence of the unique effects of service recovery performance since the characteristic of hospitality environment makes service failure is expected from time to time. Hotels must adopt service recovery plans to create a long-term relationship with their customers. Hence, it should struggle to provide better work environment to their employee. This study emphasized that training, empowerment; motivation, organizational support, and service technology are effective elements for work environment to enhance employees' SRP. Employees should be trained to get the required knowledge and skills to recover any expected failure as well as to deal with expected and unexpected situations. Employees should also be empowered to take independent decisions to deal with frequent and sudden situations or complaints of customers and take rapid actions for SRP. In addition, managers should do their best to motivate their employees intrinsically and extrinsically, employees who are motivated are expected to satisfy and exceed customers' needs. Moreover, management should feel their employees enough support and concern. When employees feel their organizations' attention, admiration, support and respect; they may do voluntary action in recovering service effectively. Finally, this study confirmed that service can be better handled and recovered due to service technology. By using technology, employees can access easily to the required data and resources as well as they can contact their colleagues for rapid SRP.

## 8. Limitations and Future Researches

This study highlighted only five elements for better work environment, future researches may study other elements that not included in this study. Moreover, the study investigated the antecedents of SRP; future researches may investigate its consequences as well.

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