International Journal of Hospitality Management 113 (2023) 103513

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

International Journal of Hospitality Management

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/ijhm

Special privileges or busywork? The impact of qualitative job insecurity on idiosyncratic deals and illegitimate tasks among hospitality workers

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:
Challenge-hindrance stressor framework
Idiosyncratic deal
Illegitimate task
Job insecurity
Proactivity

ABSTRACT

This study examined relationships linking qualitative job insecurity (JI) to idiosyncratic deals (i-deals) and illegitimate tasks (i-tasks) for hospitality workers. I-deals are valuable arrangements, opportunities, or privileges provided to employees by their supervisors for which employees' have negotiated for themselves and, thus, may not be available to all other employees. I-tasks, refer to employees' perceptions that they have been delegated tasks that are neither necessary nor reasonable for them to complete. Leveraging the challenge-hindrance stressor framework, we proposed that employee stress appraisals mediate relationships between qualitative JI and both i-deals and i-tasks and that employee proactivity serves as a boundary condition of relationships between qualitative JI and stress appraisals. Results from a four-wave, time-lagged survey study largely supported our hypotheses. In particular, employee stress appraisals were found to explain relationships between qualitative JI and both i-deals and i-tasks. Moreover, employee proactivity moderated the relationship between qualitative JI and hindrance appraisals.

1. Introduction

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, workers from around the world have faced a variety of concerns regarding uncertainties related to the physical conditions under which they work, how their health or the health of their friends and families might be impacted by the virus, and how to meet financial obligations despite a reduction or elimination of income due to business shutdowns and closures. Compared to other industries, hospitality, tourism, and related service-providing industries were especially adversely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, and as a result, work-related uncertainties among service employees grew disproportionally (Gursoy and Chi, 2020). Many hospitality organizations that were able to resume "normal" operations were, and still are, struggling to find talented employees to fill positions. Dubbed "The Great Resignation" (Klotz, 2021), where over 4 million American workers left their jobs mostly from hospitality and retail businesses, this exodus has overextended workers who have remained, and who not only carry out the duties outlined in their pre-pandemic job descriptions, but who also complete tasks and other responsibilities for positions that remain vacant (Baum et al., 2020). These unforeseen changes to their jobs may leave hospitality workers perceiving a heightened level of uncertainty regarding various aspects of their jobs.

Job insecurity (JI) refers to employees' feelings of uncertainty concerning whether valued features of their jobs such as desirable tasks, working conditions, and benefits will persist (qualitative) or whether they will have a job in the future at all (quantitative; Abbas et al., 2021). The common perspective taken by organizational researchers is to consider JI as a specific job stressor that results in a multitude of affective, cognitive, and behavioral strain outcomes (Shoss, 2017). Such outcomes include poorer psychological well-being, higher intentions to quit, poorer in-role performance, and increased counterproductive work behavior (Shoss, 2017).

While there is a growing body of research on the largely negative impact of JI on a variety of outcomes for workers in the hospitality industry, especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, much of this research has focused on the outcomes of quantitative rather than qualitative JI (Abbas et al., 2021; Chen and Eyoun, 2021; Karatepe et al., 2020). However, as many hospitality organizations are struggling to attract and retain talented workers due to the Great Resignation, existing hospitality workforces are stretched thin, with many employees taking on added responsibilities that were previously carried out by workers in other positions. This means that hospitality workers may be

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https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2023.103513
Received 1 July 2022; Received in revised form 2 May 2023; Accepted 10 May 2023
Available online 16 May 2023

asked to complete unattractive tasks that are also unfamiliar to them and/or complete assigned tasks under a new set of working conditions (e.g., filling positions at multiple properties, working shifts at various times of day, completing work outdoors). While we acknowledge that many hospitality workers were fearful of losing their jobs in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is likely that many others who were employed in the hospitality industry during the pandemic were also fearful of what their jobs would look like in the future. That is, hospitality workers may be left wondering whether and at what point in the future their jobs will resemble what is outlined in their job descriptions and/or what they had come to know and expect about their jobs prior to the pandemic. Moreover, prior research indicates that qualitative JI may exhibit stronger relationships with various strain outcomes for employees such as decreased job satisfaction, and greater emotional exhaustion and psychological stress symptoms relative to quantitative JI (Callea et al., 2019). Because of the predominant focus on employee feelings of quantitative JI, we chose to focus on qualitative JI which likely also served as a salient job stressor among hospitality workers.

1.1. Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this research is to examine the impact of qualitative JI on two relevant, yet underexplored work-related outcomes for hospitality workers: idiosyncratic deals (i-deals; Rousseau et al., 2006; Simosi et al., 2021) and illegitimate tasks (i-tasks; Semmer et al., 2010). We posit that the degree to which hospitality employees perceive their current work situations as challenging for them to perform better and/or hindering their ability to successfully carry out their assigned duties explain relationships between qualitative JI and both i-deals and i-tasks. Lastly, because highly proactive employees are better able to understand the nuanced implications of their work situations, we propose that proactivity moderates the relationships between qualitative JI and both challenge and hindrance appraisals. Accordingly, there are three main objectives underlying the present research: (1) expand the nomological network of qualitative JI in the hospitality management literature, (2) explore the role of stress appraisals on employee reactions to qualitative JI, and (3) determine the extent to which proactivity serves as a boundary condition of relationships between feelings of qualitative JI and employee stress appraisals.

2. Theory and hypotheses

2.1. Linking qualitative job insecurity to idiosyncratic deals and illegitimate tasks

I-deals and i-tasks are two critical work-related constructs that, to our knowledge, have yet to be explored as strain outcomes of qualitative JI. I-deals are opportunities, privileges, or special work arrangements that employees negotiate with their leaders that are unique to them and are not available to all other employees (Rousseau et al., 2006). Examples of i-deals for hospitality workers may take the form of scheduling arrangements that allow a worker to balance work and caregiving responsibilities at home as well as special consideration for selection into manager-in-training programs. I-deals have been consistently linked to positive outcomes such as enhanced leader-member exchange, perceived organizational commitment, and job satisfaction and fewer turnover intentions (Liao et al., 2016). Due to a variety of reasons, work in the hospitality industry is considered quite stressful (Zohar, 1994). Accordingly, i-deals likely serve as valuable resources that can offset the detrimental impact of these job stressors for hospitality workers. Indeed, prior research has found that the receipt of i-deals promotes enhanced occupational well-being and organization-based self-esteem for workers in the hospitality industry (Sun et al., 2021). To receive these i-deals, however, an employee must initiate the process on their own and come to an agreement with one's supervisor concerning which resources the employee must offer their supervisor (e.g., respect, loyalty, time, effort) in exchange for securing the i-deal (Simosi et al., 2021). As an example, upon becoming aware of a selective manager-in-training program, a hotel front desk agent may reach out to their direct supervisor to identify which actions they must take to secure their supervisor's recommendation for the manager-in-training program. Unfortunately, employees experiencing high levels of qualitative JI must allocate valuable personal resources to cope with the strain resulting from JI perceptions, leaving them with fewer resources to secure i-deals from their leaders (Baumeister et al., 1998; Baumeister et al., 1994).

An i-task is a delegated task that an employee perceives to be either unreasonable for them to have to complete or unnecessary for any employee to have to complete (Semmer et al., 2010). While hospitality workers may find frequently find themselves being asked either by supervisors, customers, or their peers to complete tasks that fall outside of their job descriptions, the fact that a delegated task falls outside of one's job description does not mean that the employee will perceive the task as illegitimate. Indeed, a variety of factors serve as either determinants of i-task perceptions or as moderators of relationships between i-tasks and work-related outcomes (Ilyas et al., 2020; Muntz et al., 2019). However, given that hospitality workers are constantly asked to do work that falls outside of their job descriptions, it is particularly necessary for research to identify the factors that may serve as determinants of i-task perceptions among hospitality employees. Unsurprisingly, i-tasks have been linked to detrimental work-related outcomes including burnout, resentment, feelings of injustice, and reduced self-esteem (Ding and Kuvaas, 2022). Moreover, recent research has found that i-tasks may inhibit hospitality workers' willingness to perform discretionary service behaviors (Zhao et al., 2023; Zhao, Jolly et al., 2022). When facing workplace uncertainty, research contends that employees will attempt to gather information from their surroundings in order to reduce the discomfort that often accompanies feelings of uncertainty (Bradac, 2001; Kramer, 1999). Hence, with qualitative JI serving as a form of workplace uncertainty, employees will likely pay closer attention features of their jobs that deviate from either information outlined in their job descriptions or what they have come to expect and appreciate about their jobs, thus resulting in more i-task perceptions.

Hypothesis 1a. *: Qualitative JI is negatively linked to employee perceptions of their receipt of i-deals.*

Hypothesis 1b. *: Qualitative JI is positively linked to employee perceptions of i-tasks.*

2.2. Challenge-hindrance stressor framework

The challenge-hindrance stressor framework (CHSF; Cavanaugh et al., 2000; LePine, 2022) is a theoretical perspective which may serve to explain relationships between qualitative JI and both the receipt of i-deals and i-task perceptions. The theory maintains that while many stressors cause employees to perceive greater obstacles or hurdles hindering their abilities to perform, other stressors have a motivating effect that leaves employees feeling challenged to increase their efforts so that they can attain higher levels of mastery and performance. The literature utilizing the CHSF frequently categorizes certain work stressors as challenges (e.g., job demands, time pressures) and others as hindrances (e.g., abusive supervision) on an a priori basis (Griffin and Clarke, 2011; O'Brien and Beehr, 2019). For example, in studying the outcomes of work overload and job responsibility, which were categorized as challenge stressors, Kang and Jang (2019) found that among a sample of frontline hotel workers, those with greater job responsibilities reported higher levels of work engagement and fewer turnover intentions than did workers with fewer job responsibilities. At the same time, research supports the notion that, depending on the circumstances, a single stressor (e.g., workload) can be perceived as either a challenge or a hindrance (O'Brien and Beehr, 2019) and that employees do not always agree when classifying certain stressors as either challenges or hindrances (O'Brien and Beehr, 2019).

By paying closer attention to whether and under which conditions employees appraise JI as either challenging or hindering their on-the-job performance, researchers are left with a more extensive understanding of the nomological network of JI. Indeed, researchers have begun leveraging this theory to examine the effects of JI on strain outcomes. For example, Charkhabi (2019) found evidence supporting the notion that employees' challenge and hindrance appraisals of JI explained the relationships between quantitative JI and both job satisfaction and emotional exhaustion. According to uncertainty reduction theory (Bradac, 2001; Kramer et al., 2004), individuals tend to find the experience of situational uncertainty as uncomfortable and, thus, tend to engage in behaviors intended to reduce or settle this uncertainty. Furthermore, because employees often expend valuable personal resources by seeking information to reduce uncertainty such as that caused by perceptions of qualitative JI, they will have fewer resources left to conduct other important work-related functions (e.g., in-role performance, extra-role behaviors; Baumeister et al., 1998). As such, we expect that as feelings of qualitative JI increase, employees will appraise their work situations as being less of a challenge and more of a hindrance to their work-related performance.

Hypothesis 2a. *: Qualitative JI is negatively related to challenge appraisal.*

Hypothesis 2b. *: Qualitative JI is positively related to hindrance appraisal.*

When employees appraise their current job situations as a challenge that can be mastered with motivated action, they are willing to increase their efforts in ways that enable them to achieve their fullest potential (Ohly and Fritz, 2010). One strategy that employees may use as a result of appraising their current work situations as a challenge is attempting to negotiate more desirable tasks, incentives, developmental opportunities, and work-related autonomy. Indeed, i-deals have been linked to employee success in the form of increased career satisfaction and upward mobility (Guerrero et al., 2016). As employees view elements of their current work situations as a challenge, the more likely they are to consider assigned duties and responsibilities as additional opportunities to expand their existing roles, even if these assigned duties extend beyond what they know and expect about their existing jobs.

On the contrary, hindrance appraisals signify that employees view their jobs as having obstacles that impede their abilities to effectively fulfill the duties and responsibilities outlined in their job descriptions. Thus, as hindrance appraisals increase, employees are likely to devote more of their efforts and cognitive resources to circumnavigating these impediments, leaving fewer resources to negotiate valuable i-deals for themselves (Baumeister et al., 1998). In addition, as hindrance appraisals grow stronger, employees become unconsciously motivated to gather additional evidence supporting their beliefs that elements of their current job situations serve as hindrances to their performance (Nickerson, 1998). As such, the appraisal of one stressor as a hindrance should increase the salience of other hindrance stressors. Not only are i-tasks themselves likely to be appraised as hindrance stressors (Semmer et al., 2015), but employees who already perceive their current work situations as containing impediments to their performance resulting from feelings of qualitative JI are more likely to perceive that they have been assigned i-tasks which may have a similarly hindering effect on their performance. Together, we propose that employee appraisals of their current work situations as challenging or hindering their performance serve as mediators of relationships between feelings of qualitative JI and both the receipt of i-deals and perceptions of i-tasks.

Hypothesis 3. *Challenge appraisal is (a) positively related to i-deals and (b) negatively related to i-tasks.*

Hypothesis 4. *Hindrance appraisal is (a) negatively related to i-deals and (b) positively related to i-tasks.*

Hypothesis 5a. *: There is a negative indirect effect of qualitative JI on i-deals through challenge appraisal.*

Hypothesis 5b. *: There is a positive indirect effect of qualitative JI on i-tasks through challenge appraisal.*

Hypothesis 5c. *: There is a negative indirect effect of qualitative JI on i-deals through hindrance appraisal.*

Hypothesis 5d. *: There is a positive indirect effect of qualitative JI on i-tasks through hindrance appraisal.*

2.3. Proactivity

We chose to consider worker proactivity as a potential moderator of relationships between qualitative JI and challenge and hindrance stress appraisals for two reasons. First, because JI pertains to employees' beliefs about the future of their jobs, worker proactivity, which relates to employees' abilities to forecast and control the future of their jobs, may play a particularly meaningful role in how employees respond to feelings of qualitative JI. Second, prior research has pointed to proactivity leading to almost exclusively desirable or positive outcomes including improved career satisfaction and upward mobility (Seibert et al., 1999). In fact, a meta-analysis conducted by Liao et al. (2016) found a positive and statistically significant relationship between proactivity and i-deals that is consistent across different cultures. At the same time, however, research must elucidate those situations wherein proactivity interacts with other constructs to result in less desirable outcomes; an objective that the present research sought to accomplish.

Proactivity is a personality trait that captures the extent to which a person is forward-thinking and tends to behave in ways that demonstrate an initiative toward effecting strategic change and future success (Bateman and Crant, 1993). Proactive individuals constantly make predictions about the future and exert control over their work situations by taking actions that they believe will lead to the most optimal outcomes in the future. Under typical circumstances, proactive employees strive to take control of their work situations by way of setting and then achieving challenging work-related goals (Crossley et al., 2013). Therefore, when feelings of qualitative JI are low, it is expected that highly proactive employees perceive their work situations as more of a challenge and less of a hindrance relative to less proactive employees. A different and, perhaps, relatively unexpected pattern of relationships is likely to emerge when feelings of qualitative JI are high. As JI is negatively related to perceived control over one's work situation (Vander Elst et al., 2014), highly proactive employees who strive to demonstrate agency and exert control over their work are likely to find qualitative JI as a particularly frustrating impediment to their work-related goals, especially as compared to less proactive employees. Therefore, when experiencing high levels of qualitative JI, highly proactive employees will find their work situations as less of a challenge and more of a hindrance than less proactive employees because they understand that uncertainty surrounding features of their jobs can hamper their performance at work and this uncertainty may be beyond their control. Fig. 1 presents an illustration of the unified conceptual model.

Hypothesis 6a. *: Proactivity moderates the relationship between qualitative JI and challenge appraisal such that this negative relationship is stronger when proactivity is high rather than low.*

Hypothesis 6b. *: Proactivity moderates the relationship between qualitative JI and hindrance appraisal such that this positive relationship is stronger when proactivity is high rather than low.*

Hypothesis 7a. *: The negative indirect effect of qualitative JI on i-deals through challenge appraisal is stronger at high rather than low levels of proactivity.*

Hypothesis 7b. *: The positive indirect effect of qualitative JI on i-tasks through challenge appraisal is stronger at high rather than low levels of proactivity.*

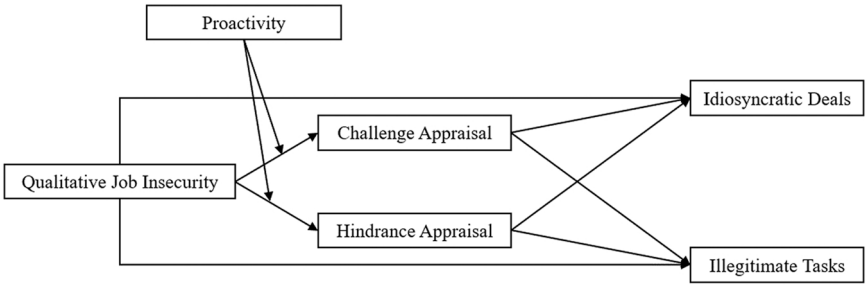

Fig. 1. Conceptual model of the effect of qualitative job insecurity on both idiosyncratic deals and i-tasks through challenge and hindrance appraisals across levels of proactivity. For conciseness and clarity, notations for indirect effects (Hypotheses 5a-5d) and conditional indirect effects (Hypotheses 7a-7d) were omitted from this illustration.

Hypothesis 7c. *: The negative indirect effect of qualitative JI on i-deals through hindrance appraisal is stronger at high rather than low levels of proactivity.*

Hypothesis 7d. *: The positive indirect effect of qualitative JI on i-tasks through hindrance appraisal is stronger at high rather than low levels of proactivity.*

3. Method

3.1. Participants and procedure

Data were collected in January and February 2022 across several surveys beginning with an initial 5-minute screening survey, followed by a series of four, 30-minute surveys. These four surveys were spaced one week apart, which is consistent with prior research finding that job insecurity can have immediate impacts on employee outcomes within a week's time (Schreurs et al., 2012). A total of 761 individuals responded to the screening survey which was distributed to users of the Prolific online research panel to determine whether they met eligibility requirements to participate in the four-part study. To participate, individuals must have met each of the following criteria: be at least 18 years of age, able to read and write in English, reside in the United States, work at least an average of 20 h each week for paid employment, work in the hospitality industry (i.e., lodging/resorts, food/beverage, casino/gaming, travel/tourism, theme parks/attractions, meetings/events), and interact with at least five guests or customers each shift/day at work as part of their job.

A total of 278 survey respondents who met these eligibility criteria were invited to participate in the first of four, 30-minute surveys. Only those who completed any given survey were invited to complete the following survey within the sequence. In the end, 180 participants completed all four surveys in the sequence (65.1% retention). Participants completing all portions of this multi-part study received $21.25 (USD) in compensation; $0.85 for the 5-minute screening survey and $5.10 for each of the four, 30-minute surveys.

The final sample of participants who completed all four surveys of the study were a majority female (68.5%), reported an average age of 31.23 years (*SD*=11.50), an average organizational tenure of 5.36 years (*SD*=6.88), an average tenure in the hospitality industry of 9.12 years (*SD*=7.74), and most worked full-time (66.5%) at an average of 36.81 h each week (*SD*=10.17). Most indicated that they worked in the food/beverage sector of the hospitality industry (74.7%), followed by lodging/resorts (15.4%), and theme parks/attractions (3.8%). Concerning interactions with guests, 95.6% of participants reported that they either "sometimes," "often," or "always" interacted with guests or customers as part of their jobs, with 87.3% of participants estimating that they interacted with at least ten guests or customers during a typical shift or day at work. Almost half of participants indicated that they worked in an entry-level, non-supervisory position (49.2%), followed by 23.8% in shift supervisor roles, 22.6% in either assistant manager, general manager, or senior leadership positions, and the remaining 4.4% in a variety of other roles. Participants were encouraged to select as many ethnicities as they felt represented their own racial/ethnic identities. Most participants identified as White or Caucasian American (80.2%), followed by Black or African American (9.9%), Hispanic American or of Latin origin (9.9%), and Asian or Asian American (4.4%). While those who completed all four surveys differed from those who dropped out of the study prematurely with regard to their age ($t = -5.16$, $p < .05$), organizational tenure ($t = -3.09$, $p < .05$), industry tenure ($t = -5.56$, $p < .05$), and hours worked each week ($t = -6.64$, $p < .05$), a series of bivariate correlations indicated that neither qualitative JI ($r = -0.03$, $p = .67$), challenge appraisal ($r = 0.02$, $p = .83$), nor hindrance appraisal ($r = 0.07$, $p = .32$) significantly correlated with whether participants dropped out of the study prior to completing the final survey. These results indicate that the exogenous study variables were not predictive of participant retention and, thus, the demographic differences between participants with regard to whether or not they completed all components of the multi-part study were of little practical significance.

3.2. Measures

In addition to the demographic information collected from the screening survey, the four weekly surveys were divided accordingly: the week 1 survey included a measure of proactivity; the week 2 survey included a measure of qualitative JI; the week 3 survey included measures of both challenge and hindrance appraisal, and the week 4 survey included measures of i-deals and i-tasks. Unless specified otherwise, response scales for each measure ranged from 1 (*Strongly disagree)* to 5 (*Strongly agree*) and participants' responses to the items within each measure were averaged to form each participant's overall score for the construct.

3.2.1. Qualitative job insecurity

We measured qualitative JI using the three-item measure by Van den Broeck et al. (2014). Participants responded to each item on a scale from 1 (*Strongly disagree)* to 5 (*Strongly agree*). A sample item from this scale read: "I feel insecure about the characteristics and conditions of my job in the future" ($\alpha = 0.91$).

3.2.2. Challenge and hindrance appraisal

We used eight items to measure challenge and hindrance appraisal – four items for each construct using the measure by Tuckey et al. (2015) which was adapted from an original measure by Searle and Auton (2015). A sample item from the challenge appraisal scale read: "My overall job situation helps me to develop my professional skills" ($\alpha = 0.88$). A sample item from the hindrance appraisal scale read: "My overall job situation hinders my ability to achieve my professional goals" ($\alpha = 0.90$).

3.2.3. Idiosyncratic deals

We measured employees' perceptions of their receipt of i-deals using the multidimensional scale by Sun et al. (2021). We elected to include items from two of the four dimensions of i-deals, task and flexibility deals, as these two factors may be most relevant to employees' abilities to settle job-related uncertainty associated with feelings of qualitative JI. For this reason, we did not include the remaining two factors, career and incentives deals, in our measurement of i-deals. Furthermore, given that participants must interact with guests or customers during each shift in order to participate in this study, we eliminated one item that aimed to capture the extent to which employees were able to work remotely as many hospitality workers tend to interact with guests or customers in the same physical space. In the end, four items captured task deals and four items captured flexibility deals. Participants were instructed to reflect on their most recent experiences at work and then indicated the extent to which they agreed that their jobs provided them with a variety of beneficial outcomes on a scale ranging from 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly agree*). A sample item capturing the receipt of task deals read: "Job tasks that fit my personal strengths and talent." A sample item capturing the receipt of flexibility deals read: "A work schedule customized to my personal needs." There was evidence of strong internal consistency across the four items capturing task deals ($\alpha = 0.88$), the four items capturing flexibility deals ($\alpha = 0.88$), and the eight items capturing both task and flexibility deals ($\alpha = 0.89$).

3.2.4. Illegitimate tasks

We used the eight-item measure by Semmer et al. (2010) to capture employee perceptions of i-tasks. This measure consists of two dimensions: unnecessary and unreasonable tasks. Participants were instructed to reflect on their most recent experiences at work and then respond to each item on a scale from 1 (*Never*) to 5 (*Frequently*). A sample item measuring unnecessary tasks read: "How frequently were you asked to complete tasks which kept you wondering if the tasks had to be done at all?" A sample item measuring unreasonable tasks read: "How frequently were you asked to complete tasks which kept you wondering if the tasks should be done by someone else?" ($\alpha = 0.93$).

3.2.5. Proactivity

We used the ten-item, short version of Bateman and Crant's (1993) scale which was first used by Seibert et al. (1999) to measure proactivity. A sample item from the measure read: "I am constantly on the lookout for new ways to improve my life" ($\alpha = 0.88$).

3.2.6. Control

Given the ubiquity of social comparisons, especially in the workplace (Buunk and Gibbons, 2007; Festinger, 1954), the extent to which employees appraise the quality of their relationships with their leaders as either of higher or lower quality than those of their peers, has the propensity to deeply influence whether these employees appraise various stressors as either challenging or hindering their abilities to perform their jobs (Liu et al., 2019; Mugayar-Baldocchi, 2021; Vidyarthi et al., 2016). Accordingly, we included leader-member exchange social comparison (LMXSC) – employees' appraisals of their relationships with their leaders in relation to that of their peers who report to the same leaders – as a covariate when testing each of our hypotheses. LMXSC was measured on the final survey using the six-item measure by Vidyarthi et al. (2010). A sample item from this measure read: "I have a better relationship with my manager than most others in my work group" ($\alpha = .92$).

4. Results

4.1. Analytical methods

Mplus version 7 was utilized to test the core components of our conceptual model (all relationships excluding interactions and conditional indirect effects). Because structural equation modeling cannot provide model fit indices for models involving latent factor interactions (Maslowsky et al., 2014), we tested the hypothesized interaction effects, including conditional indirect effects, using the PROCESS macro for SPSS (Hayes, 2009). Mean-centered predictor terms were used to calculate interaction terms and were included in statistical models of interaction effects. Indirect effects and conditional indirect effects were estimated with 5000 bootstrap samples (Hayes, 2009).

4.2. Descriptive statistics and correlations

The means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations among primary study variables and selected demographic variables are reported in Table 1. Age was not significantly correlated with any of the primary study variables. There was a small, negative correlation between gender and proactivity ($r = -0.12$). Given that neither age nor gender related to any of hypothesized dependent variables, neither of these demographic variables were controlled when testing hypotheses. As expected, LMXSC was significantly correlated with several primary study variables; namely positive correlations with proactivity ($r = 0.23$), challenge appraisal ($r = 0.43$), and idiosyncratic deals ($r = 0.43$), and a negative correlation with qualitative JI ($r = -0.19$). Accordingly, we included LMXSC as a covariate when testing each of the hypothesized relationships.

4.2.1. Discriminant validity of measurement

Before testing the hypothesized relationships, we conducted confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using Mplus version 7 to establish the discriminant validity among the primary study variables. The initial measurement model consisted of eight first order factors (qualitative JI, proactivity, challenge and hindrance appraisal, unnecessary and unreasonable tasks, and task and flexibility deals) and two second-order factors with the task and flexibility deals first-order factors loading onto a common factor of i-deals and the unnecessary and unreasonable tasks first-order factors loading onto a common factor of i-tasks. Results indicated that this model fit the data well ($\chi^2(610) = 865.03$, $p < .001$; CFI = 0.94; TLI = 0.94; RMSEA = 0.04; SRMR = 0.07; Hu and Bentler, 1999).

We then conducted a second factor analysis with five first-order factors representing qualitative JI, proactivity, stress appraisal (items from both challenge and hindrance appraisal), idiosyncratic deals (items from both task and flexibility deals), and i-tasks (items from both unnecessary and unreasonable tasks). Results indicated that this model fit the data considerably worse than the initial model ($\chi^2(619) = 1684.50$, $p < .001$; CFI= 0.75; TLI= 0.73; RMSEA= 0.08; SRMR= 0.11). Buttressing this assertion, results from a Satorra-Bentler scaled chi-square difference test indicated that the initial model fit the data significantly better than did this five-factor model ($\Delta\chi^2(9) = 1240.45$, $p < .001$). Taken together, these results provided strong support for our hypothesized measurement model. As such, we retained the initial, hypothesized measurement model when building our structural model for hypothesis testing.

4.2.2. Hypothesis testing

Hypotheses 1a through 5d were tested using structural equation modeling (SEM) in Mplus version 7. Multiple fit indices indicated that the model fit the data well ($\chi^2(477) = 754.39$, $p < .001$; CFI= 0.94; TLI= 0.94; RMSEA= 0.05; SRMR= 0.07). As hypothesized, qualitative JI was negatively related to i-deals ($\beta = -0.20$, $p < .05$) and positively related to i-tasks ($\beta = 0.41$, $p < .05$). Qualitative JI was negatively related to challenge appraisal ($\beta = -0.25$, $p < .05$) and positively related to hindrance appraisal ($\beta = 0.49$, $p < .05$). Challenge appraisal was found to positively predict i-deals ($\beta = 0.41, p < .05$) but not i-tasks. Results found that hindrance appraisal negatively predicted i-deals ($\beta = -0.27, p < .05$) and positively predicted i-tasks ($\beta = 0.43, p < .05$). Moreover, results indicated that there was an indirect effect of

Table 1
Summary of means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations among study variables.

Variable	*M (SD)*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Qualitative Job Insecurity	2.59 (1.11)	–								
2. Proactivity	3.70 (0.62)	-0.13	–							
3. Challenge Appraisal	3.40 (0.97)	-0.29 * *	0.40 * *	–						
4. Hindrance Appraisal	2.44 (0.99)	0.44 * *	-0.04	-0.37 * *	–					
5. Idiosyncratic Deals	4.39 (1.39)	-0.40 * *	0.22 * *	0.49 * *	-0.45 * *	–				
6. Illegitimate Tasks	2.63 (0.87)	0.53 * *	0.03	-0.18 *	0.55 * *	-0.46 * *	–			
7. Age	27.87 (10.63)	0.06	0.04	0.03	-0.06	0.05	-0.05	–		
8. Gender	0.78 (0.41)	0.02	-0.12 *	-0.13	-0.01	0.01	-0.10	-0.27 * *	–	
9. LMXSC	2.86 (1.02)	-0.19 *	0.23 * *	0.43 * *	-0.06	0.43 * *	0.01	0.11	-0.10	–

Note. $N = 176–274$. LMXSC=leader-member exchange social comparison. For gender, male= 0, female = 1.
* $p < .05$; * * $p < .01$.

qualitative JI on i-deals through both challenge ($\beta = -0.10$, $p < .05$) and hindrance appraisal ($\beta = -0.13$, $p < .05$), while the effect of qualitative JI on i-tasks was mediated by hindrance appraisal ($\beta = 0.21$, $p < .05$) but not challenge appraisal.

Hypotheses 6a through 7d were tested using Hayes (2009) PROCESS macro for SPSS. Results failed to detect a significant interaction between qualitative JI and proactivity on challenge appraisal. However, proactivity was found to moderate the effect of qualitative JI on hindrance appraisal. As illustrated in Fig. 2, highly proactive employees who felt little qualitative JI reported less hindrance appraisal than did less proactive employees who experienced similar levels of qualitative JI. However, as feelings of qualitative JI increased, highly proactive employees formed stronger hindrance appraisals than did less proactive employees. Results failed to support an indirect effect of qualitative JI on either i-deals or i-tasks that varied across levels of proactivity. However, results found statistically significant conditional indirect effects of qualitative JI on both i-deals (B=−0.08, $p < .05$) and i-tasks (B=0.08, $p < .05$), with the respective indirect effects being stronger at high rather than low levels of proactivity. See Tables 2 and 3 for the full results for Hypotheses 1a-5d and 6a-7d, respectively.

Table 2
Results of structural equation model linking qualitative job insecurity to i-deals and i-tasks through challenge and hindrance appraisals.

Effect	Estimate (*SE*)	95% CI
Main Effects		
QJI→I-deals (Hypothesis 1a)	-0.20 * (0.16)	[− 0.66, − 0.04]
QJI→I-tasks (Hypothesis 1b)	0.41 * (0.12)	[0.30,0.77]
Constituent Paths of Indirect Effects		
QJI→Challenge (Hypothesis 2a)	-0.25 * (0.08)	[− 0.37, − 0.08]
QJI→Hindrance (Hypothesis 2b)	0.49 * (0.06)	[0.24,0.48]
Challenge→I-deals (Hypothesis 3a)	0.41 * (0.22)	[0.38, 1.16]
Challenge→I-tasks (Hypothesis 3b)	0.03 (0.14)	[− 0.21,0.35]
Hindrance→I-deals (Hypothesis 4a)	-0.27 * (0.32)	[− 1.21, − 0.14]
Hindrance→I-tasks (Hypothesis 4b)	0.43 * (0.20)	[0.41, 1.17]
Indirect Effects		
QJI→Challenge→I-deals (Hypothesis 5a)	-0.10 * (0.07)	[− 0.32, − 0.04]
QJI→Challenge→I-tasks (Hypothesis 5b)	-0.01 (0.03)	[− 0.10,0.04]
QJI→Hindrance→I-deals (Hypothesis 5c)	-0.13 * (0.11)	[− 0.44, − 0.05]
QJI→Hindrance→I-tasks (Hypothesis 5d)	0.21 * (0.08)	[0.14,0.46]

Note. $N = 180$. Challenge=challenge appraisal; CI=confidence interval; Hindrance=hindrance appraisal; I-deals=idiosyncratic deals; illegitimate tasks=i-tasks; QJI=qualitative job insecurity; *SE*=standard error. Estimates of indirect effects are based on 5000 bootstrap samples. Model fit indices suggest that the model fit the data well ($\chi^2(477) = 754.39$, $p < .001$; CFI= 0.94; TLI= 0.94; RMSEA= 0.05; SRMR= 0.07). Estimates reported in this table are standardized path coefficients.
* $p < .05$.

5. Discussion

This study explored the relationships between qualitative JI and two important work-related outcomes, i-deals and i-tasks, as they pertained to workers in the hospitality industry. Results indicated that as feelings of qualitative JI increased, hospitality workers perceived that they received fewer i-deals and were delegated more i-tasks. Drawing from

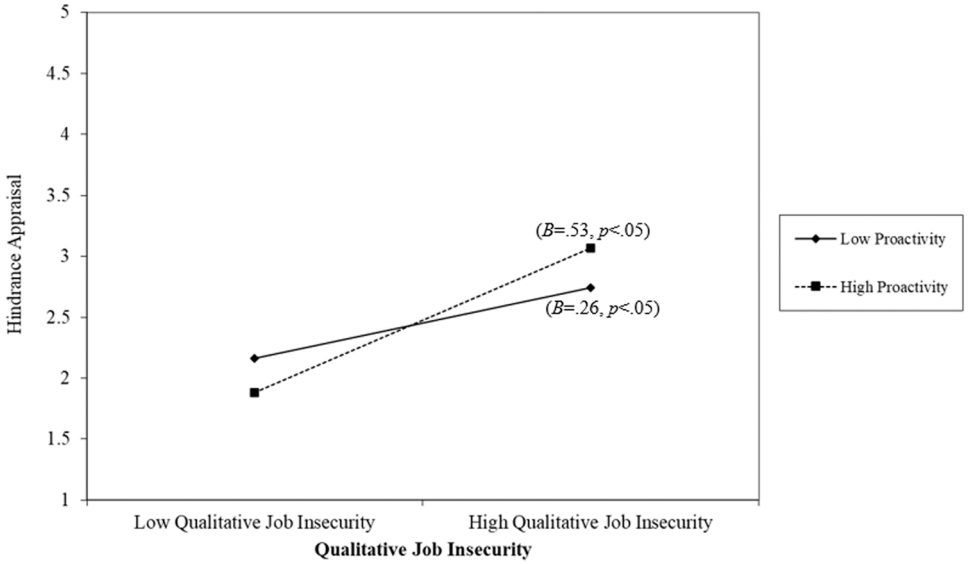

Fig. 2. Interaction plot for the influence of proactivity on the relationship between qualitative job insecurity and hindrance appraisal.

Table 3
Results of interaction effects and conditional indirect effects.

Effect	Estimate (*SE*)	95% CI
Interaction Effects		
QJI×Proactivity→Challenge (Hypothesis 6a)	-0.12 (0.07)	[− 0.26,0.02]
-1*SD* proactivity	-0.07 (0.07)	[− 0.21,0.07]
+ 1 *SD* proactivity	-0.22 * (0.07)	[− 0.36, − 0.08]
QJI×Proactivity→Hindrance (Hypothesis 6b)	0.21 * (0.08)	[0.06,0.37]
-1*SD* proactivity	0.26 * (0.08)	[0.11,0.41]
+ 1 *SD* proactivity	0.53 * (0.08)	[0.37,0.68]
Conditional Indirect Effects		
QJI×Proactivity→Challenge→I-deals (Hypothesis 7a)	-0.04 (0.03)	[− 0.10,0.01]
-1*SD* proactivity	-0.02 (0.03)	[− 0.08,0.03]
+ 1 *SD* proactivity	-0.07 * (0.04)	[− 0.15, − 0.01]
QJI×Proactivity→Challenge→I-tasks (Hypothesis 7b)	-0.00 (0.01)	[− 0.03,0.02]
-1*SD* proactivity	-0.00 (0.01)	[− 0.02,0.01]
+ 1 *SD* proactivity	-0.01 (0.02)	[− 0.04,0.03]
QJI×Proactivity→Hindrance→I-deals (Hypothesis 7c)	-0.08 * (0.04)	[− 0.18, − 0.02]
-1*SD* proactivity	-0.10 * (0.04)	[− 0.18, − 0.03]
+ 1 *SD* proactivity	-0.21 * (0.06)	[− 0.33, − 0.10]
QJI×Proactivity→Hindrance→I-tasks (Hypothesis 7d)	0.08 * (0.03)	[0.02,0.15]
-1*SD* proactivity	0.09 * (0.03)	[0.03,0.16]
+ 1 *SD* proactivity	0.19 * (0.05)	[0.10,0.28]

Note. $N = 180$. Challenge=challenge appraisal; CI=confidence interval; Hindrance=hindrance appraisal; I-deals=idiosyncratic deals; I-tasks=i-tasks; QJI=qualitative job insecurity; *SD*=standard deviation; *SE*=standard error. Estimates of indirect effects are based on 5000 bootstrap samples. Estimates reported in this table are unstandardized regression coefficients.
* $p < .05$.

the CHSF (Cavanaugh et al., 2000; LePine, 2022), we found that these employees considered qualitative JI as a stressor that led them to appraise their work situations as less of a challenge and more of a hindrance to their on-the-job performance. The more employees appraised their work situations as a hindrance, the less likely they were to receive i-deals, and the more likely they were to experience i-tasks at work. Challenge appraisals only related (positively) to i-deals, but not i-tasks. These results were largely consistent with the extant research which finds that challenge appraisals promote positive work-related outcomes, whereas hindrance appraisals result in more negative outcomes for employees (Lepine et al., 2005; LePine, 2022). Lastly, we determined that the positive relationship between qualitative JI and hindrance appraisals, as well as the indirect effects of qualitative JI on both i-deals and i-tasks through hindrance appraisals, were stronger for employees with higher rather than lower levels of proactivity.

Although most of the hypotheses were supported, including the moderating effect of proactivity on the relationship between qualitative JI and hindrance appraisal, this same interaction was not found to predict challenge appraisal. Prior research identifies at least two dimensions of proactive motivation—goal generation and goal striving (Parker et al., 2010). This indicates that proactive individuals tend to set challenging goals (goal generation) and then work to achieve these challenging goals (goal striving). Unsurprisingly, the more that employees perceive that valued features of their jobs may not persist well into the future, the more resources they will allocate to reducing this form of work-related uncertainty (Bradac, 2001; Kramer, 1999), resulting in far fewer resources left remaining for employees to achieve their personal and/or career-related goals. This is consistent with the moderating effect of proactivity on the relationship between qualitative JI and hindrance appraisal found in the present research. However, it is likely that considerably fewer resources are needed during the goal generation stage as compared to the amount of resources needed during the goal striving stage. This is because the latter involves a number of complex sub-processes such as maintaining effort and persistence despite ever-changing situational factors, resolving conflict that often arises when striving toward accomplishing multiple goals simultaneously, as well as constantly monitoring and re-setting goals as needed (Diefendorff and Chandler, 2011). Therefore, it is possible that even though proactive employees may tend to set more challenging goals than less proactive employees, proactivity may have little to no effect on the extent to which employees' feelings of qualitative JI result in challenge appraisals (more closely aligned with goal generation), especially as compared to the effect that proactivity has on the extent to which employees' feelings of qualitative JI result in hindrance appraisals (more closely aligned with goal striving).

5.1. Theoretical implications

A primary contribution of this study is connecting qualitative JI to two outcomes – i-deals and i-tasks – that, to our knowledge, have yet to be examined as outcomes of qualitative JI. This expands the nomological network of qualitative JI, i-deals, and i-tasks, while also serving to connect the literatures surrounding these constructs which have little to no overlap. Despite JI consistently being viewed as a potent job stressor resulting in a variety of strain outcomes for employees, there are only limited empirical investigations of the role that employees' stress appraisals play in relationships linking JI to strain outcomes. By employing the CHSF, we offer an explanation as to why qualitative JI relates to i-deals and i-tasks by highlighting the role of employee stress appraisals.

It is worthwhile to highlight that proactivity interacts with qualitative JI to predict hindrance appraisals, but not challenge appraisals. This finding clearly elucidates how challenge and hindrance appraisals are truly distinct constructs rather than serving as opposite ends of a single continuum. Relatedly, the results of our study largely echo previous findings that hindrance appraisals maintain stronger relationships with outcomes when compared to relationships between challenge appraisals and these same outcomes (Lepine et al., 2005; O'Brien and Beehr, 2019). In the present study, after accounting for the effect of hindrance appraisals on i-tasks, challenge appraisals did not have a significant effect on i-tasks, which is likely why results yielded a non-significant indirect effect of qualitative JI on i-tasks through challenge appraisals.

Not only does our study answer a recent call for research on the moderating effect that individual differences have on the relationship between stressors and challenge-hindrance appraisals (LePine, 2022), it sheds lights on the somewhat counterintuitive effect that proactivity has on relationships between employees' feelings of qualitative JI and the resulting stress appraisals. By exploring the impacts of qualitative JI through the lens of the CHSF, the results of the present study found that as feelings of qualitative JI increased, highly proactive employees appraised their work situations as *more* of a hindrance to their performance compared to less proactive employees. This is likely due to the fact that proactive employees strive to predict and control their work situations to a greater degree when compared to less proactive employees; a task which becomes considerably more difficult and leads to greater frustration as feelings of qualitative JI increase. As a result, proactive employees who feel high levels of qualitative JI perceive more impediments to their performance capabilities relative to their less proactive counterparts. Accordingly, this study paints a more complete picture of the influence that proactivity plays on stressor-strain relationships.

5.2. Managerial implications

Extant literature indicates that the effect of qualitative JI on strain outcomes is explained by weaker perceptions of control felt by workers (Vander Elst et al., 2014). Accordingly, strategies that provide employees with more autonomy and decision latitude may offset some of the detrimental impacts of qualitative JI for hospitality workers. Job

crafting—the process through which employees take a semi-autonomous role by working alongside their supervisors in crafting satisfying and self-enriching jobs—is one such strategy. When ensuring the completion of tasks that were formerly completed by workers in positions that are currently vacant (e.g., serving dining guests, providing concierge services), rather than dictating which of these tasks workers must add to their existing set of duties and responsibilities, hospitality leaders may consider allowing workers to share which tasks they find most interesting and which may further workers' progress toward accomplishing their immediate or longer-term professional goals. Through doing so, leaders give their workers a voice in determining how their work roles are expanded and may keep employees' feelings of work-related uncertainty to a minimum. Additionally, hospitality organizations that have already expanded or altered the set of tasks for which workers are responsible for completing may consider providing training and development opportunities to promote workers' sense of confidence and competence in their newly-expanded work roles. The reason for doing so is because employees who feel competent in their work roles will experience higher levels of intrinsic motivation (Deci and Ryan, 2012) and, thus, may be equipped to more effectively navigate uncertainty and situational challenges at work. Lastly, leaders may consider providing workers with an estimated timeframe detailing how long workers will be expected to complete new duties and responsibilities, as doing so may alleviate the uncertainty workers may feel concerning at which point in the future, if ever, their jobs will return to "normal."

5.3. Limitations and future research directions

Although we used a time-lagged design to reduce common method bias, it is still possible that common method bias could influence some of our research findings. In particular, data for each of the variables were provided by the hospitality workers themselves. Given that qualitative JI, challenge and hindrance appraisals, and both i-deals and i-tasks are subjective in nature, the choice to have other sources provide data for these variables would alter the conceptual model of the study to a considerable degree. Along similar lines, although some elements of proactivity are visible to others (e.g., taking initiative, offering solutions to potential problems), other aspects of proactivity are less visible to others (e.g., identifying potential problems, brainstorming solutions, setting personal goals, creating strategies to accomplish goals). As such, it is possible that different rating sources capture unique variance in proactivity as has been shown to be the case when measuring other personality constructs (Connolly et al., 2007). Nonetheless, by relying solely on single-source data, we cannot rule out the potential impact of common method bias on the reported study results. Lastly, the sample size used in the present research was considerably smaller than many other empirical investigations of the outcomes of qualitative JI. Nonetheless, our sample size meets established minimum thresholds given the number of parameters estimated in the present research (Mueller and Hancock, 2018) and is comparable to sample sizes used in several research studies on the outcomes of qualitative JI (Callea et al., 2016; Lazauskaite-Zabielske et al., 2019; Li et al.; Tu et al., 2020).

There are a few ways that future research can build upon the findings of this study. Knowing the propensity for feelings of qualitative JI to predict employee perceptions of i-deals and i-tasks, future research can explore the antecedent conditions of qualitative JI for hospitality workers. Relatedly, although the findings of this study largely support our hypothesis that feelings of qualitative JI predict relevant work outcomes, it may be the case that some of these outcomes also serve as antecedents of qualitative JI. In particular, it is plausible that as workers experience more i-tasks, they perceive their job situations as less stable, which could result in stronger perceptions of qualitative JI. Accordingly, future research should directly explore whether reciprocal relationships between qualitative JI and i-tasks and/or i-deals may exist. Furthermore, researchers can look beyond proactivity and other individual differences to identify contextual factors that may also serve as boundary conditions of relationships between employees' feelings of qualitative JI and stress appraisals. For example, the quality of leader-employee relationships and/or the support employees receive from others at work may limit the extent to which feelings of qualitative JI cause employees to appraise their work situations as hindering their abilities to perform their jobs.

Although the present research found that higher levels of employee proactivity strengthened the positive effect of qualitative JI on hindrance appraisals, it is possible that this effect may change over time. In particular, when encountering workplace stressors, proactive employees first may seek to identify all of the potential problems or hindrances caused by these stressors and, over time, treat these potential problems as small obstacles that can be circumnavigated. Hence, future research should use longitudinal research designs to test the effect of proactivity on stressor-strain relationships over longer durations. Furthermore, while the present research sought to supplement the extant literature on i-deals in the hospitality industry using research samples from predominantly culturally-collectivist societies (Katou et al., 2020; Sun et al., 2020; Sun et al., 2021), a growing number of hospitality workers in geographical regions that are predominantly culturally-individualist come from other geographical regions with different cultures (Baum et al., 2007). Accordingly, future research should more carefully examine culture across multiple levels to disentangle the impact that culture may have on these and other critical work-related outcomes for hospitality workers and organizations.

Moreover, extant research tends to focus on the outcomes of i-deals and i-tasks, with considerably fewer studies of the determinants of these constructs (Ding and Kuvaas, 2022). While the present study explored whether qualitative JI serves as a determinant of both i-deals and i-tasks for hospitality workers, additional research on the antecedents of i-deals and i-tasks, especially as they pertain to work in the hospitality industry, is needed to provide researchers and practitioners a more comprehensive understanding of the conditions under which these important work-related outcomes emerge. Lastly, practically all of the research on i-tasks overwhelmingly treats supervisors as the initiator of illegitimate work requests (Ding and Kuvaas, 2022; Meier & Semmer, 2018). In hospitality and related service-providing organizations, guests and customers have been found to be a source of incivility and stress for workers in these organizations (Lages et al., 2023). As such, future research might consider customers as potential sources of illegitimate requests for hospitality workers, especially given that the determinants and consequences of customer-initiated i-tasks may differ from illegitimate requests made by supervisors. As a starting point, researchers may consider both servant leadership (van Dierendonck, 2011) and service climate (Schneider et al., 1998) as potential antecedents of customer-initiated i-task perceptions. This is because both servant leadership and service climate establish workplace norms for prioritizing the needs of others above personal needs and preferences, which may cause workers to categorize fewer customer requests as illegitimate.

Declaration of Competing Interest

None.

Acknowledgements

This research was supported in part by a pilot project research training grant from the Sunshine Education and Research Center. The Sunshine Education and Research Center is supported by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). The contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of NIOSH.

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