The challenge of providing good service while social distancing

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"The high physical-proximity nature of service industry jobs makes it difficult to practice social distancing at work, which jeopardizes employees' work engagement and career-related attitudes," Dr. Huo says.

"Work engagement—including taking pride and pleasure in your job and seeing future career prospects in the role—is a key factor in employee wellbeing, so situations that reduce work engagement can lead to negative vocational experiences, including career regret and turnover intention."

While recognizing the importance of social distancing measures in reducing the spread of COVID-19, Dr. Huo says there is a need for greater understanding of their impact on service employees, and greater recognition of the ways in which employers and customers can help reduce that impact.

"In order to maintain service employees' engagement and their positive career attitudes, managers may endeavor to reduce work demands incurred by social distancing difficulties," Dr. Huo says.

"Example strategies include limiting the number of patrons, implementing contactless payment and delivery systems, and providing employees with personal protective equipment.

"Furthermore, it is helpful to encourage customers' co-production behaviors in service delivery so that they can help restaurant workers to practice social distancing during service.

"Emphasizing the necessity and benefits of social distancing rules helps enhance employees' acceptance of regulations, thereby reducing their perceived threat of social distancing difficulty."

More information: Meng-Long Huo et al,

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