

## **Role of Display Rule Demands and Affective Traits in Emotional Exhaustion among Customer Services**

**Adnan Adil**

Quaid-i-Azam University and  
University of Sargodha

**Anila Kamal**

Quaid-i-Azam University

The present study examined the impact of gender, display rule demands, and affective personality traits on emotional exhaustion in a sample of 232 Pakistani customer services representatives of cellular companies and banks. Emotion Work Requirements Scale (Best, Downey, & Jones, 1997) was used to measure display rule demands; emotional exhaustion was measured using Erickson and Ritter's (2001) Emotional Exhaustion Scale; while affectivity was measured through Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988) and Emotional Intelligence Scale (Wong & Law, 2002). Analysis revealed that women employees were significantly higher on emotional exhaustion and hiding negative emotions as compared to their men counterparts. The final hierarchical regression model demonstrated that display rule demands, i.e. hiding negative emotions, negative affectivity, and emotional intelligence were positive predictors of emotional exhaustion whereas positive affectivity turned out to be a negative predictor of emotional exhaustion. Furthermore, Sobel test (Sobel, 1982) indicated that negative affectivity fully mediated the relation between display rule demands of hiding negative emotions and emotional exhaustion. Limitations and suggestions for future studies have been discussed.

*Keywords:* Emotional exhaustion, emotional intelligence, display rule demands, affective traits, customer services, positive affect, negative affect

Given their orientation toward people and helping, service occupations are specifically vulnerable to emotional exhaustion

---

Adnan Adil, National Institute of Psychology, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, Pakistan and Department of Psychology, University of Sargodha, Sargodha, Pakistan; Anila Kamal, National Institute of Psychology, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, Pakistan.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Adnan Adil, Department of Psychology, University of Sargodha, Sargodha, Pakistan. E-mail: livespirit786@yahoo.com

(Goddard, Patton, & Creed, 2001), where employee skills become the technology (Burke, Greenglass, & Schwarzer, 1996). In their efforts at managing personal issues, human service professionals frequently share close emotional experiences with clients (Burke et al., 1996), which can be emotionally taxing (Moore & Cooper, 1996). Employers and clients often unrealistic expectations constitute additional challenges for human service employees (Um & Harrison, 1998). A growing body of research has reported negative consequences of such work demands in a significant proportion of human service workers including social workers and counselors (Burke et al.), teachers (Greenglass, Burke, & Ondrack, 1990), employees in nursing homes or similar facilities (Shaddock, Hill, & Van Limbeek, 1998), psychologists (Kramen-Kahn & Hansen, 1998), and psychiatrists (Thomsen, Soares, Nolan, Dallender, & Arnetz, 1999). One of the most significant and frequent negative outcome of customer services jobs is reportedly emotional exhaustion.

According to Brand (2007), an emotionally exhausted person is characterized by a depletion of emotional energy and a feeling that one's emotional resources are inadequate to deal with the situation at hand. This "compassion fatigue" as Cordes and Dougherty (1993) put it, may coexist with feelings of frustration and tension as workers realize that they cannot continue to give of themselves or be as responsible to their clients as they have been in the past. Given that employees in customer services constitute a risk group for emotional exhaustion, the current study investigated the relationship of display rule demands, affective dispositions, and emotional intelligence (EI) with emotional exhaustion and highlighted the role of gender in these variables.

Display rules demands refer to the degree to which showing and hiding emotions is seen as an expected part of employee performance (Wharton & Erickson, 1995) and this deprives the employees of their emotional autonomy. Diefendorff and Richard (2003) found significant and positive relationships for demands for both expressing positive and suppressing negative emotions across variety of jobs and organizations. Best et al. (1997) found that hiding negative emotions was positively associated with emotional exhaustion. Similarly, the requirement to express positive emotions and hide negative emotions was related positively to physical symptoms for employees in one organization (Schaubroeck & Jones, 2000). In line with these empirical findings, Grandey (2000) argued that emotional demands and display rules are stressful because they create the need to manage emotional states for the organizational goals, and this emotion work is the more proximal predictor of stress. In this context, the present study

hypothesizes that display rule demands of hiding/suppressing negative emotions would lead to more emotional exhaustion as compared to display rule demands of expressing positive emotions. The rationale of this hypothesis comes from the mode of emotional regulation required to meet the display rule demands. In hiding/suppressing negative emotions, employees are more likely to undertake surface acting (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Diefendorff, Croyle, & Gosserand, 2005) which in turn may make them more prone to emotional exhaustion (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002) in contrast with deep acting that is often employed in meeting the display rule demands of expressing positive emotions. These empirical evidences lead to the formulation of the first hypothesis of this study.

Affectivity has been defined as a general tendency to experience a particular mood or to react to objects in a particular way or with certain emotions (Abraham, 1998). Research has identified two basic types of affectivity: Positive Affectivity (PA) and Negative Affectivity (NA). NA is a negative predisposition which is associated with a type of negative cognitive bias that includes both an affective tendency and a cognitive style through which individuals interpret their experiences.

In general, most studies considering the effects of NA present a somewhat dim outlook for high-NA individuals, including the likelihood of experiencing more frequent episodes of stress and frustration and lower levels of job satisfaction (Levin & Stokes, 1989). Because emotional exhaustion is defined as a specific type of stress reaction, one can expect that high-NA employees will report higher levels of job related emotional exhaustion than will low-NA employees. This has further been empirically supported by Parkes (1990) who found that although NA was not strongly associated with perceptions of high job demands, when high-NA individuals did perceive high demands, they responded with higher levels of affective distress, while low-NA individuals did not exhibit this reactivity.

It must be noted that NA did not predict perception of high job demands; rather it is the perception of high job demands that make individuals high on NA more vulnerable to emotional distress. A person who is constantly required to hide/suppress negative emotions at job may become more reactive and irritable and this reactivity may get itself established as a relatively stable part of his/her dispositional repertoire. Thus perception of high job demands may lead to emotional distress via NA suggesting its mediational role. This evidence is evocative of second hypotheses of the present research.

In most of the studies on the relationship between affectivity and emotional exhaustion, PA has often been a negative correlate of

emotional exhaustion. Zellars, Perrewé, and Hochwarter (2000) found that it was neuroticism (which is equated with NA) that predicted exhaustion and depersonalization component of emotional exhaustion whereas extraversion (equated with the PA) predicted diminished accomplishment component of the same.

The correspondence between NA and neuroticism, and PA and extraversion has been empirically supported (Brief, 1998). Individuals high on PA may respond more positively to all situations, including ones in which negative affective events occur. Therefore, these individuals may have to put less effort to display organizationally desired emotions. Accordingly, the third hypothesis of the research was generated.

An individual's ability to appraise, express, and regulate emotion in oneself and in others and to utilize these emotions in the thought processes characterize his or her EI (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Oginska-Bulik (2005) postulated that individuals with high level of EI will perceive their work environment as less stressful and that they will experience less negative health consequences. In a study by Chan (2006), results suggested that emotional exhaustion could be positively influenced by emotional appraisal and positive recognition and that personal accomplishment could be developed independently from other dimensions of emotional exhaustion, through the positive utilization of emotions.

In addition, Gerits, Derksen, Verbruggen, and Katzko (2005) reported that female nurses with reasonably high level of EI, reported the smallest number of emotional exhaustion symptoms and that their male counterparts with higher problem solving and stress-tolerance skills also reported lower levels of emotional exhaustion. Mikolajczak, Menil, and Luminet (2007) reported that when confronted with emotional labor, high trait EI individuals experience lower levels of emotional exhaustion and somatic complaints. In the light of these findings, the fourth hypothesis was generated.

Literature on gender differences in emotional exhaustion has yielded mixed result. Various studies have reported greater emotional exhaustion (Griffith, Steptoe, & Cropley, 1999), work exhaustion (Thomsen et al., 1999), and stress (Ptacek, Smith, & Zanas, 1992) in women. On the contrary, Goddard and Patton (1998) found no gender differences in emotional exhaustion whereas Burke et al. reported greater emotional exhaustion in men.

One plausible explanation for gender differences in emotional exhaustion can be offered in the reasoning that men and women may experience emotions similarly but express them differently. This has

empirically been supported by Plant, Hyde, Keltner, and Devine (2000) who found that women experienced and expressed the majority of 19 emotions studied more often than men, except anger and pride, which were thought to be experienced and expressed more often by men.

Male anger is often thought of as acceptable in organizations and its direct expression is typically characterized by shouting and yelling, that becomes the basis for organizational folklore and storytelling (Aaltio-Marjosola, 1994). Female anger, on the other hand, is often expressed in more subtle ways, and often results in tears which are typically seen as an inappropriate response to interpersonal interactions in organizational situations (Hoover-Dempsey, Plas, & Wallston, 1986). Thus suppression of negative emotions on the part of women may increase their vulnerability to emotional exhaustion as compared to men who may have more opportunities to express their negative emotions in work settings. Accordingly, the present study postulated hypotheses on gender differences in emotional exhaustion and display rule demands. The hypotheses of the study were:

*Hypothesis 1:* The display rule demands of hiding/suppressing the negative emotions would lead to more emotional exhaustion as compared to the display rule demands of expressing positive emotions.

*Hypothesis 2:* Negative affectivity would mediate the relationship between display rule demands of hiding negative emotions and emotional exhaustion.

*Hypothesis 3:* Positive affectivity would be the significant and negative predictor of emotional exhaustion.

*Hypothesis 4:* Emotional Intelligence would be the significant and negative predictor of emotional exhaustion.

*Hypothesis 5:* Women would be significantly higher on emotional exhaustion as compared to men.

*Hypothesis 6:* Perception of display rule demands of suppressing negative emotions at the job would be significantly higher in women employees as compared to their male counterparts.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

A purposive sample of 232 customer services representatives (CSRs) from various cellular service providers and private banks of

Islamabad and Rawalpindi, Pakistan, was drawn. Equal number of CSRs from both the professions were included. Furthermore, 58 men and 58 women were chosen from each occupational category. The minimum academic qualification of the sample was graduation. The age range of the sample was 19 to 57 years ( $M = 26.36$ ,  $SD = 5.37$ ). Participants' job experience ranged from 1 to 30 years ( $M = 4.18$ ,  $SD = 4.26$ ). Data was collected at the offices of cellular services providers and banks.

## Measures

**Emotional Exhaustion Scale.** Emotional exhaustion was measured through a seven-item, summated rating scale developed by Erickson and Ritter (2001). It was a 7-point scale ranging from 0 = "*never felt this way while at work*" to 6 = "*felt this way every day*"; where respondents were asked to indicate how often they had experienced each of the enlisted situations during the previous six months period. High scores corresponded to higher level of emotional exhaustion and vice versa. The scale had been found to be a consistent and reliable measure of emotional exhaustion with a reported alpha of .90 (Erickson & Ritter, 2001). This was supported by the present study; the researchers found an internal reliability of .81.

**Emotion Work Requirements Scale.** Display rule demands were measured by seven-item Emotion Work Requirements Scale (EWRS; Best et al. 1997). The EWRS comprised two subscales which included the subscale of display rule demands of expressing positive emotions (four items) and the subscale of display rule demands of hiding negative emotions (three items); it was a 5-point scale (ranging from 1 = *never required* to 5 = *always required*) and tapped the level to which employees reported that their emotional displays were controlled by their jobs. The respondents were asked to indicate how often they were required to show (or hide) emotion during their job while interacting with the customers. High scores indicated more stringent display rule demands and vice versa. Brotheridge and Grandey (2002) reported an alpha of .78 for display of positive emotions subscale, and an alpha of .77 for hiding negative emotions subscale. For the present study, display rule demands of expressing positive emotions yielded an internal consistency of .70 and display rule demands of hiding negative emotions were found to have an alpha of .71.

**Positive and Negative Affect Schedule.** Positive and negative affectivity were measured through Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) developed by Watson et al. (1988). Responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = “*very slightly or not at all*” to 5 = “*extremely*” regarding the degree to which the respondents generally felt the enlisted emotions in their lives. Watson et al. (1988) conceptualized PA and NA as two separate constructs. Accordingly, the scale comprised two subscales, each consisting of 10 emotions. In the present study, the scale operationalized PA and NA as traits. Cronbach’s alphas of .86 and .91 for PA and .85 and .83 for NA have been reported in successive studies (Schaubroeck & Jones, 2000); the current study reported an internal consistency of .76 for PA and .81 for NA, which demonstrate sound internal consistency of the scale.

**Emotional Intelligence Scale.** Emotional intelligence was measured through 16 item Emotional Intelligence Scale (Wong & Law, 2002). It was a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 “*strongly disagree*” to 6 “*strongly agree*”. High scores corresponded to high levels of emotional intelligence. Wong and Law (2002) demonstrated sound psychometric properties of their measure with an alpha coefficient of .94. Its convergence validity with measures of emotional intelligence, the Trait Meta-Mood Scale (TMMS; Salovey, Mayer, Goldman, Turvey, & Palfai, 1995) and the EQ-i (Bar On, 1997) and discriminant validity with Big Five personality dimensions and a measure of IQ by Eysenck (1979) is reported. The alpha coefficient for the present study was found to be .89.

## Procedure

The administrative officials of various cellular providers and banks in Islamabad and Rawalpindi, Pakistan, were personally contacted and after their final approval employees in customer services were personally approached by the researcher.

Those customer services representatives who consented for participation in the study were given the booklets containing study scales. All the scales were in English language and were administered in the work settings of the participants. They were informed about the objectives of the study and were told how to respond to items of different scales contained in the booklets; written instructions also accompanied each booklet. The employees were assured of the confidentiality of the information they provided and were heartily thanked for their cooperation and support.

## Results

Table 1 shows the zero-order correlations among the variables included in this study and descriptive statistics.

Table 1

*Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations between Gender, Display Rule Demands, Affective Traits, and Emotional Exhaustion (N = 232)*

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Gender <sup>a</sup>			-	.06	.17**	.10	-.08	.04	.19**
2. DR positive emotions	14.51	3.06		-	.41**	.43**	.37**	-.03	.19**
3. DR negative emotions	9.66	2.87			-	.17*	.15*	.17	.23**
4. Emotional intelligence	72.36	11.77				-	.45**	-.14*	.13*
5. Positive affectivity	33.92	6.48					-	-.13*	-.06
6. Negative affectivity	23.68	7.22						-	.32**
7. Emotional exhaustion	16.93	9.28							-

*Note.* Read DR positive emotions as display rule demands of expressing positive emotions and DR negative emotions as display rule demands of hiding negative emotions.

<sup>a</sup>Gender was coded as Male = 1, Female = 2.

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$

All measures have obtained satisfactory internal consistency over .70. To examine the incremental validity of personality factors over the situational characteristics in accounting for variance in emotional exhaustion, hierarchical regression analysis was conducted. Gender was entered as covariable at step one. Display rule demands of expressing positive emotions and hiding negative emotions were entered on the second step. Next, personality factors including affectivity and emotional intelligence were included on the third step.

The results of the regression analysis revealed that at step I gender constituted a statistically significant model explaining 3.5% of the variance in emotional exhaustion. At step II, the display rule demands explained a significant additional variance of 5.4% in emotional exhaustion. The model identified display rule demands of hiding negative emotions as positive predictor of emotional exhaustion whereas display rule demands of expressing positive emotions was not a significant predictor. At step III, personality



factors contributed with statistically significant  $R^2$  changes to the variances of emotional exhaustion. NA was found to be the positive predictors of emotional exhaustion whereas PA turned out to be the significant and negative predictor of emotional exhaustion. Emotional intelligence was also found to be the significant and positive predictor of emotional exhaustion. Display rule demands of hiding negative emotions was no more a significant predictor of emotional exhaustion in the final model whereas display rule demands of expressing positive emotions turned out to be the significant predictor of the same. This provided a clue for the potential mediational effect of NA on the relationship between display rule demands of hiding negative emotions and emotional exhaustion (see Table 2).

Table 2

*Hierarchical Regression Analysis Predicting Emotional Exhaustion from Display Rule Demands and Affective Traits (N = 232)*

Predictor	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$
Step 1	.04**	
Gender		.19**
Step 2	.05**	
DR positive emotions		.12
DR negative emotions		.16*
Step 3	.11***	
Emotional intelligence		.14*
Positive affectivity		-.14*
Negative affectivity		.31***
Total $R^2$	.20***	

*Note.* Read DR positive emotions as display rule demands of expressing positive emotions and DR negative emotions as display rule demands of hiding negative emotions.

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

This mediational potential of NA was further ascertained according to the guidelines of Baron and Kenny (1986) who argued that three conditions are necessary in order to test a mediating relationship. First, the independent variable (display rule demands of hiding negative emotions) must predict the dependent variable (emotional exhaustion). Second, mediator (NA) must predict the

dependent variable (emotional exhaustion). Finally, the independent variable (display rule demands of hiding negative emotions) must predict the mediator (NA). When these three conditions are met, mediation is suggested if the effect of independent variable is reduced (partial mediation) or become nonsignificant (full mediation) after entering the mediator into the model. The first condition for testing the mediation has been demonstrated in Table 2 (Step II) where display rule demands of hiding negative emotions significantly predicted emotional exhaustion. The second condition is evident in Table 2 (Step III) where NA significantly predicted emotional exhaustion. The third condition is made evident in Table 3 (Step II and III) where only display rule demands of hiding negative emotions significantly predicted NA.

Table 3

*Hierarchical Regression Analysis Predicting Negative Affectivity from Display Rule Demand, Emotional Intelligence, and Positive Affectivity (N = 232)*

Predictors	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$
Step 1	.001	
Gender		.04
Step 2	.04**	
DR positive emotions		-.12
DR negative emotions		.22**
Step 3	.03*	
Emotional intelligence		-.12
Positive affectivity		-.10
Total $R^2$	.07**	

*Note.* Read DR positive emotions as display rule demands of expressing positive emotions and DR negative emotions as display rule demands of hiding negative emotions.

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$

The final evidence of mediation is evident as the effect of display rule demands of hiding negative emotions on emotional exhaustion became nonsignificant when NA was entered into the model in the third step of Table 2. Therefore, the results indicated that NA fully mediated the relationship between display rule demands of hiding negative emotions and emotional exhaustion.

The mediational analysis of the current study was further supplemented by Sobel (1982) test. The test statistic determines the indirect effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable through the mediator. Reported *p* values are acquired from the unit normal distribution under the assumption of a two-tailed test of the hypothesis that the mediated effect is zero in the population using  $\pm 1.96$  as the critical values (Preacher & Hayes, 2004). A significant *p* value signifies mediation. Results of the Sobel test indicate that NA fully mediated the relationship between display rule demands of hiding negative emotions and emotional exhaustion ( $z = 2.61, p < .01$ ). The test further elucidated that 41.2% of the total variance explained by display rule demands of hiding negative emotions in the emotional exhaustion was attributable to the mediational effect of NA.

Table 4

*Means, Standard Deviations, and t-test analysis for Gender differences on Display Rule Demands, Affective Traits, and Emotional Exhaustion (N = 232)*

Variables	Men ( <i>n</i> = 116)		Women ( <i>n</i> = 116)		<i>t</i> (230)	Cohen's <i>d</i>	95% CI	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			LL	UL
DR positive emotions	14.32	3.05	14.69	3.07	.90	.12	-0.27	0.51
DR negative emotions	9.17	2.87	10.15	2.80	2.62**	.35	-0.02	0.71
Emotional intelligence	71.16	11.99	73.56	11.45	1.56	.21	-1.29	1.71
Positive affectivity	34.43	6.49	33.41	4.45	1.19	.18	-0.53	0.89
Negative affectivity	23.41	6.97	23.93	7.49	.55	.07	-0.86	0.99
Emotional exhaustion	15.21	8.79	18.64	9.46	2.87**	.38	-0.79	1.55

*Note.* Read DR positive emotions as display rule demands of expressing positive emotions and DR negative emotions as display rule demands of hiding negative emotions; CI = Confidence Interval; LL = Lower Limit; UL = Upper Limit.

\*\**p* < .01

Table 4 presents independent sample *t*-tests for exploring gender differences in emotional exhaustion, affectivity, emotional intelligence, and display rule demands. Significant gender differences were evident on emotional exhaustion and display rule demands of hiding negative emotions.

## Discussion

The current study has integrated both job and personal factors that may have a significant contribution in emotional exhaustion among customer services representatives. The significant effect of display rule demands of hiding negative emotions on emotional exhaustion provides an empirical support for our first hypothesis (see Table 2, Step II). In the context of customer services, negative emotions may arise as a consequence of interaction with difficult customers. In such a situation, customer service representatives have to comply with the display rule demands of hiding negative emotions that reduces their display rule latitude, which in turn may lead them to experience emotional dissonance (Kruml & Geddes, 2000a). The inauthenticity of this surface-level process, showing expressions discrepant from feelings, is related to stress outcomes (Abraham, 1998; Erickson & Wharton, 1997) and emotional exhaustion (Kruml & Geddes, 2000b) due to the internal tension and the physiological effort of suppressing true feelings (Pugliesi, 1999).

Among the personality factors, NA turned out to be the most important predictor of emotional exhaustion and it fully mediated the relationship between display rule demands of hiding negative emotions and emotional exhaustion. Hence the second hypothesis was also supported (Soble's  $Z = 2.61, p < .01$ ). While complying with the display rule demands of suppressing negative emotions, employees are more likely to become emotionally dissonant (Morris & Feldman, 1996) and this dissonance may lead them to experience negative emotions. Since compliance with the display rule demands is an important and ongoing facet of customer services jobs, the negative emotions and emotional dissonance spawned by employees' efforts at suppressing/hiding negative emotions would continue to accumulate over time. This cyclic process may lead customer services representatives to internalize negative emotions and this may get transformed to relatively stable personality trait; thus making them more prone to evaluate their situational cues more negatively and come up with such coping mechanisms as can be ineffective in coping with the situational demands. When such an individual is to observe the display rule demands of hiding the negative emotions, s/he is to undertake more and more emotional regulation via surface acting (Gross, 1998) resulting in more emotional dissonance which would exacerbate his/her emotional exhaustion.

As discussed earlier, affective dispositions of individuals influence the intensity of their emotional responses to work events (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). PA turned out to be the significant and

negative predictor of emotional exhaustion providing support for the third hypothesis (see Table 2, Step III). This has been further augmented by Schaubroek and Jones (2000) who found that employees with different affective styles evaluate and perceive the same display rules differently; the acting mechanisms they choose to engage in also vary. When a high PA employee is asked to display positive emotions during a service transaction, this individual may perform such emotional labor with very little degree of “acting” and hardly recognize the effort of “acting cheerful.” Consequently, such an individual is unlikely to be a prey to emotional exhaustion as s/he has exerted little effort in adhering to display rules.

The significance of EI as the positive predictor of emotional exhaustion was contrary to the fourth hypothesis (see Table 2, Step III) and appears to be contradictory with the pertinent literature. Various recent researches that have studied the relationship between emotional intelligence and emotional exhaustion have hypothesized the negative relationship between EI and emotional exhaustion. For instance, Durán, Extremera, Rey, Fernández-Berrocal, and Montalbán (2006) reported that perceived EI accounted for non overlapping variance on academic emotional exhaustion and engagement above and beyond classic constructs predicting these criterion measures such as perceived stress and general self-efficacy among college students. On a close scrutiny of their article, these researchers, however, appear to be over optimistic regarding the potentials of EI in predicting emotional exhaustion. The zero order correlations reported by these authors revealed that among various subscales of TMMS (Salovey et al., 1995) and emotional exhaustion, only mood repair was the significant negative correlate of emotional exhaustion whereas there was virtually no relationship between attention to feelings subscale and emotional exhaustion ( $r = .00$ ) and a negligible magnitude of negative relationship between mood clarity and emotional exhaustion ( $r = -.08$ ). In their regression analysis, none of the component of EI was a significant predictor of emotional exhaustion. In another recent study of nurses, Brand (2007) measured EI through Swinburne University Emotional Intelligence Test (SUEIT; Palmer & Stough, 2001) and found that understanding emotions external was a positive predictor of emotional exhaustion ( $\beta = .39, p = .00$ ), while emotional management turned out to be negative predictor of the same ( $\beta = -.46, p = .000$ ). None of the other dimensions of EI turned out to be the significant predictor of emotional exhaustion. In the same vein, Durán, Extremera, and Rey (2004) reported nonsignificant positive correlation between emotional exhaustion and attention to feelings subscale of TMMS (Salovey et al.), whereas nonsignificant negative

relationships between the other two subscales of TMMS and emotional exhaustion.

Emotional intelligence in relation to emotional exhaustion has been a relatively less explored area and the aforementioned few studies present mixed findings regarding the nature of relationship between EI and emotional exhaustion. A limitation of the current investigation in this regard is that it did not study EI on facet level despite the fact that the constructs is multidimensional. Another potent reason for the mixed results pertaining to EI and emotional exhaustion lies in the fact that all of the studies examining the two constructs have used self report measures of emotional intelligence.

The fifth hypothesis of the study was supported as women were found to be significantly higher on emotional exhaustion as compared to men (see Table 4). Women might become more prone to emotional exhaustion because they generally employ emotion-focused coping to regulate the corresponding emotional response (Ptacek et al., 1992) in contrast with men who are more likely to use more problem-focused methods aimed directly at the stressor (Skues & Kirby, 1995).

The sixth hypothesis of this study was also supported as women were found to be significantly higher on hiding the negative emotions (see Table 4). Women's higher score on display rule demands of hiding negative emotions can be explained in terms of their very socialization in Pakistani culture. Women are brought up to express all feelings openly except anger, while men are socialized to suppress most feelings, but to express anger freely (Sharkin, 1993). This differential pattern of emotional expression and suppression may explain why women, in contrast with men, were more prone to perceive that their jobs require them to hide negative emotions.

### **Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research**

The reliance on self-report, cross-sectional, perceptual measures constitutes perhaps the most serious limitation of the present study as it increases the likelihood of inflating the observed relationships spuriously on account of common method variance. However, the range of correlations in the present study is .03 to .45 (see Table 1) and, despite the fact that many of the correlations were significant, none were aberrantly high. Moreover the cross-sectional design of this study did not allow casual interpretation of the findings.

The present study has focused on the personal and job variables that have relevance with emotional exhaustion. There are certain other

affective variables which are exogenous to job or personality factors. Positive and negative affective events at work are example of such factors which must be studied in relation to emotional exhaustion. It could be that positive and negative emotional events may influence the commitment to display rules and people with various affective dispositions may react differently to these events resulting in differential patterns of emotional exhaustion. Furthermore, the future studies should incorporate newer ability measures of EI such as the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT; Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2002).

Despite these limitations, the present study corroborates the relative contribution of situational demands and personality factors for predicting emotional exhaustion in customer services. The insight provided by the present study offers certain implications for customer services as per their selection practices and job demands. The employees hired in customer services should be screened for NA and the management should arrange for the positive emotional events at work through recreational activities, better psychological work environment, social and organizational support to shield this most vulnerable occupational category from burnout.

## **Implications**

The present study elucidates certain implications in customer services. Firstly, the role of affectivity in emotional exhaustion makes the construct very pertinent to recruitment and selection procedures in customer services. It follows from the findings of this study that selection devices used in customer services must incorporate assessment of affectivity, since employees with higher levels of PA and lower levels of NA are significantly less prone to emotional exhaustion. Particularly, the meditational role of NA in display rule demands and emotional exhaustion among customer services signify the importance of NA as a pertinent personal trait in the selection criteria. Secondly, the findings suggest that women are significantly higher in complying with the display rule demands of hiding negative emotions and this may justify why women are better candidates of customer service jobs. However, hiding or suppressing negative emotions on the job may enhance female employees' vulnerability to emotional exhaustion. Customer service organizations, therefore, must provide a facilitative work environment replete with positive emotions and organizational support to buffer the impact of suppressing negative emotions on the job.

## Conclusion

Overall the study has demonstrated that NA is not only a significant predictor of emotional exhaustion in customer services but it also plays a meditational role in display rule demands and emotional exhaustion. The study has provided evidence for gender differences in emotional exhaustion and display rule demands and suggested a more vulnerable status of female customer service representatives to emotional exhaustion since they are found to be significantly higher on hiding negative emotions on their job. Finally, this research also suggests a shielding role of PA from getting emotionally exhausted as it turned out to be a significant and negative predictor of emotional exhaustion.

## References

- Aaltio-Marjosola, I. (1994). Gender stereotypes as cultural products of the organization. *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, 10(2), 147-162.
- Abraham, R. (1998). Emotional dissonance in organizations: Antecedents, consequences, and moderators. *Genetic, Social, and General Psychology Monographs*, 124, 229-246.
- Bar-On, R. (1997). *Development of the BarOn EQ-I: A measure of emotional and social intelligence*. Paper presented at the 105th Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association in Chicago.
- Baron, R. M., & Kenny, D. A. (1986). The moderator-mediator variable distinction in social psychological research: Conceptual, strategic, and statistical considerations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 51, 1173-1182.
- Best, R. G., Downey, R. G., & Jones, R. G. (1997). *Incumbent perceptions of emotional work requirements*. Paper presented at the 12th annual conference of the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology, St. Louis, MO.
- Brand, T. (2007). *An exploration of the relationship between emotional exhaustion, occupational stress, and emotional intelligence in the nursing industry* (Unpublished master's thesis). University of Stellenbosch: Stellenbosch.
- Brief, A. P. (1998). *Attitudes in and around organizations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Brotheridge, C. M., & Grandey, A. A. (2002). Emotional labor and emotional exhaustion: Comparing two perspectives of 'people work'. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 60, 17-39.



- Burke, R. J., Greenglass, E. R., & Schwarzer, R. (1996). Predicting teacher emotional exhaustion over time: Effects of work stress, social support, and self-doubts on emotional exhaustion and its consequences. *Anxiety, Stress, and Coping*, 9, 261-275.
- Chan, D. W. (2006). Emotional intelligence and components of emotional exhaustion among Chinese secondary school teachers in Hong Kong. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 22(8), 1042-1054.
- Cordes, C. L., & Dougherty, T. W. (1993). A review and integration of research on job burnout. *Academy of Management Review*, 18(4), 621-656.
- Diefendorff, J. M., Croyle, M. H., & Gosserand, R. H. (2005). The dimensionality and antecedents of emotional labor strategies. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 66, 339-357.
- Diefendorff, J. M., & Richard, E. M. (2003). Antecedents and consequences of emotional display rule perceptions. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88, 284-294.
- Durán, A., Extremera, N., & Rey, L. (2004). Self-reported emotional intelligence, emotional exhaustion and engagement among staff in services for people with intellectual disabilities. *Psychological Reports*, 95, 386-390.
- Durán, A., Extremera, N., Rey, L., Fernández-Berrocal, P., & Montalbán, F. (2006). Predicting academic emotional exhaustion and engagement in educational settings: Assessing the incremental validity of perceived emotional intelligence beyond perceived stress and general self-efficacy. *Psicothema*, 18, 158-164.
- Erickson, R. J., & Ritter, C. (2001). Emotional labor, emotional exhaustion, and inauthenticity: Does gender matter? *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 64(2), 146-163.
- Erickson, R. J., & Wharton, A. S. (1997). Inauthenticity and depression: Assessing the consequences of interactive service work. *Work and Occupations*, 24(2), 188-213.
- Eysenck, H. J. (1979). *The structure and measurement of intelligence*. New York: Springer-Verlag.
- Gerits, L., Derksen, J., Verbruggen, A., & Katzko, M. (2005). Emotional intelligence profiles of nurses caring for people with severe behavior problems. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 38, 33-43.
- Goddard, R. C., & Patton, W. (1998). A comparison between burnout levels of case management staff and non-case management staff working directly with the unemployed. In E. Carson, A. Jamrozik., & T. Winefield (Eds.), *Unemployment: Economic promise and political will* (pp. 227-236). Brisbane: Australian Academic Press.
- Goddard, R., Patton, W., & Creed, P. (2001). Psychological distress in Australian case managers working with the unemployed. *Journal of Employment Counseling*, 38(2), 50-61.

- Grandey, A. A. (2000). Emotion regulation in the workplace: A new way to conceptualize emotional labor. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 5*(1), 95-110.
- Greenglass, E. R., Burke, R. J., & Ondrack, M. (1990). A gender-role perspective of coping and emotional exhaustion. *Applied Psychology: An International Review, 39*(1), 5-27.
- Griffith, J., Steptoe, A., & Cropley, M. (1999). An investigation of coping strategies associated with job stress in teachers. *British Journal of Educational Psychology, 69*, 517-531.
- Gross, J. (1998). The emerging field of emotion regulation: An integrative review. *Review of General Psychology, 2*(3), 271-299.
- Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., Plas, J. M., & Wallston, B. S. (1986). Tears and weeping among professional women: In search of new understanding. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 10*(1), 19-34.
- Kramen-Kahn, B., & Hansen, N. D. (1998). Rafting the rapids: Occupational hazards, rewards, and coping strategies of psychotherapists. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, 29*, 130-134.
- Kruml, S. M., & Geddes, D. (2000a). Exploring the dimensions of emotional labor: The heart of Hochschild's work. *Management Communication Quarterly, 14*, 8-49.
- Kruml, S. M., & Geddes, D. (2000b). Catching fire without burning out: Is there an ideal way to perform emotion labor? In N. M. Ashkanasy, C. E. J. Hartel, & W. J. Zerbe (Eds.), *Emotions and organizational life*. Westport, CT: Greenwood.
- Levin, I., & Stokes, J. (1989). Dispositional approach to job satisfaction: Role of negative affectivity. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 74*, 752-758.
- Mayer, J. D., Salovey, P., & Caruso, D. R. (2002). *Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence scale (MSCEIT) user's manual*. Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Multi-Health Systems.
- Mikolajczak, M., Menil, C., & Luminet, O. (2007). Explaining the protective effect of trait emotional intelligence regarding occupational stress: Exploration of emotional labor processes. *Journal of Research in Personality, 41*, 1107-1117.
- Moore, K. A., & Cooper, C. L. (1996). Stress in mental health professionals: A theoretical overview. *International Journal of Social Psychiatry, 42*(2), 82-89.
- Morris, J., & Feldman, D. (1996). The dimensions, antecedents, and consequences of emotional labor. *Academy of Management Review, 21*, 986-1010.
- Oginska-Bulik, N. (2005). Emotional intelligence in the workplace: Exploring its effects on occupational stress and health outcomes in human service workers. *International Journal of Occupational Medicine and Environmental Health, 18*(12), 167-175.

- Palmer, B., & Stough, C. (2001). *Workplace SIEIT: Swinburne University Emotional Intelligence Test-technical manual*. Organizational Psychology Research Unit, Swinburne University, Australia.
- Parkes, K. R. (1990). Coping, negative affectivity, and the work environment: Additive and interactive predictors of mental health. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 75*, 399-409.
- Plant, E. A., Hyde, J. S., Keltner, D., & Devine, P. G. (2000). The gender stereotyping of emotions. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 24*, 81-92.
- Preacher, K. J., & Hayes, A. F. (2004). SPSS and SAS procedures for estimating indirect effects in simple mediation models. *Behavior Research Methods, Instruments, & Computers, 36*, 717-731.
- Ptacek, J. T., Smith, R. E., & Zanas, J. (1992). Gender, appraisal, and coping: A longitudinal analysis. *Journal of Personality, 60*(4), 747-770.
- Pugliesi, K. (1999). The consequences of emotional labor: Effects on work stress, job satisfaction, and well-being. *Motivation and Emotion, 23*(2), 125-154.
- Salovey, P., & Mayer, J. D. (1990). Emotional intelligence. *Imagination, Cognition, and Personality, 9*, 185-211.
- Salovey, P., Mayer, J. D., Goldman, S. L., Turvey, C., & Palfai, T. (1995). Emotional attention, clarity, and repair: Exploring emotional intelligence using the Trait Meta-Mood Scale. In J. W. Pennebaker (Ed.), *Emotion, disclosure, and health*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Schaubroeck, J., & Jones, J. (2000). Antecedents of workplace emotional labor dimensions and moderators of their effects on physical symptoms. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 21*, 163-183.
- Shaddock, A. J., Hill, M., & van Limbeek, C. A. H. (1998). Factors associated with emotional exhaustion in workers in residential facilities for people with an intellectual disability. *Journal of Intellectual and Developmental Disability, 23*(4), 309-318.
- Sharkin, B. S. (1993). Anger and gender: Theory, research, and implications. *Journal of Counseling and Development, 71*(4), 386-389.
- Skues, J. S., & Kirkby, R. J. (1995). Women in the workforce: Gender differences in occupational stress and coping. In P. Cotton (Ed.), *Psychological health in the workplace: Understanding and managing occupational stress* (pp. 217-231). Carlton South, VIC: Australian Psychological Society.
- Sobel, M. E. (1982). Asymptotic intervals for indirect effects in structural equations models. In S. Leinhardt (Ed.), *Sociological methodology* (pp. 290-312). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Thomsen, S., Soares, J., Nolan, P., Dallender, J., & Arnetz, B. (1999). Feelings of professional fulfillment and exhaustion in mental health

- personnel: The importance of organizational and individual factors. *Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics*, 68, 157-164.
- Tolich, M. B. (1993). Alienating and liberating emotions at work: Supermarket clerks' performance of customer service. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 22(3), 361-381.
- Um, M-Y., & Harrison, D. F. (1998). Role stressors, emotional exhaustion, mediators, and job satisfaction: A stress-strain-outcome model and an empirical test. *Social Work Research*, 22(2), 100-115.
- Watson, D., Clark, L.A., & Tellegen, A. (1988). Development and validation of brief measures of positive and negative affect: The PANAS scales. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 54, 1063-1070.
- Weiss, H., & Cropanzano, R. (1996). Affective events theory: A theoretical discussion of the structure, causes, and consequences of affective experiences at work. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 18, 1-74.
- Wharton, A. S., & Erickson, R. J. (1995). The consequences of caring: Exploring the links between women's job and family emotion work. *Sociological Quarterly*, 36(2), 273-296.
- Wong, C., & Law, K. S. (2002). The effects of leader and follower emotional intelligence on performance and attitude: An exploratory study. *Leadership Quarterly*, 13(3), 243-274.
- Zellers, K. L., Perrewé, P. L., & Hochwarter, W. A. (2000). Emotional exhaustion in health care: The role of the five factors of personality. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 30(8), 1570-1598.

Received December 21, 2010

Revision received June 07, 2011