How emotional labor affects job performance in hospitality employees: The moderation of emotional intelligence

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ABSTRACT

The study examines how surface acting and deep acting affect emotional exhaustion and job performance in the hotel industry and whether emotional intelligence has a moderating effect on the relationship. The study was conducted using a questionnaire survey, and the data were analyzed using a structural equation model. Main findings of the study demonstrate that surface acting has no effect on emotional exhaustion while deep acting has a negative effect on emotional exhaustion. This indicates that deep acting not only produces better service performance but also reduces emotional exhaustion. Moreover, surface acting and deep acting both have a positive effect on job performance, showing that both acting skills are all about demonstrating a better job performance at work. Furthermore, emotional intelligence has a moderating effect on the relationships between surface acting and job performance and deep acting and job performance, this indicates that employees with higher emotional intelligence are more likely to perform a more effective outcome of acting on job performance, regardless of whether it is surface acting or deep acting. But this phenomenon only occurs when employees are not experiencing emotional exhaustion. If employees are already experiencing emotional exhaustion, emotional intelligence does not have any moderation effect on job performance.

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Introduction

The hotel industry is an industry that creates customer satisfaction through service, and the provision of services is mostly performed by front of house employees. Due to the long hours spent facing customers, these frontline employees are prone to emotional exhaustion caused by the effects of emotional labour (Hülsheger & Schewe, 2011). This affects not only the well-being of employees, but also their work performance, which indirectly has an impact on the performance of the establishment’s operations (Lee & Chelladurai, 2016). Emotional exhaustion refers to the ongoing process of modulating internal and external expressive performance with the intention of achieving organizational goals (Grandey, 2000). In past studies, surface acting (SA) and deep acting (DA) are both considered to be one of the emotional regulation strategies for frontline employees who encountered with emotional exhaustion (Wang, 2020; Xu et al., 2020). Lu and Cursory (2016) also found that a frequent source of stress among hotel employees is continued contact with customers over long hours, producing feelings of emotional exhaustion among employees. In the hospitality industry, frontline service staff often obliged to perform what is acceptable to the open public, which is to be well-mannered and to smile at customers. Thus, hiding their inner emotions is inevitable (Kim, 2008). Employee emotional exhaustion also impacts employees’ job performance (Kim et al., 2007).

Although the proper deployment of human resources across the various departments of a company facilitates the realization of organizational goals and enhances operational efficiency, Kim (2020) pointed out that there is insufficient attention paid to the...
operational performance and human resource performance of companies, and personality traits and individual capabilities are not considered when examining a company’s competitiveness. Therefore, management should take employees’ abilities into consideration in their business strategies. Generally speaking, employee competencies include an intelligence quotient (IQ), emotional quotient (EQ; or emotional intelligence, EI), and adversity quotient (AQ) (Soysub & Jarint, 2018). While IQ is related to individual behaviour or performance (Demetriou et al., 2020), emotional intelligence is a way for individuals to recognize and manage their possess emotions plus the emotions of other individuals, which is used to rationalize difficulties, using emotions to solve problems and guide appropriate behaviours (Sabie et al., 2020).

For frontline employees in the hotel industry, emotional intelligence clearly plays an important influence role. Therefore, in this study we try to clarify how front of house service staff in hotels affects job performance. In addition to discussing the effects of SA and DA on job performance (JB), which are the two main determinants of emotional labour, we will also examines the moderating effects of emotional intelligence.

**Literature Review**

Lately, the increasing number of studies have focused on emotional display in interactions with customers and how organizations pursue to effectively monitor this emotional exposure (Grandey & Melloy, 2017). Emotional labour is the specific manifestation of emotional display. Hochschild (1983) interpreted emotional labour by means of a manifestation of emotional regulation, generating facial and bodily expressions for customer interactions and argues that both SA and DA are the ways in which service providers modify their emotions with the intention of coping with organizational demands for required emotional performance.

**Empirical Review and Hypothesis Development**

**Emotional Labour**

Surface acting (SA) is a way of displaying the emotions required in the workplace, so it tends to be involuntary. Deep acting (DA) is a way of regulating inner feelings to display emotions that meet the organization’s requirements. Because the external performance of deep acting is consistent with inner feelings, the performance is authentic and empathetic (Grandey & Melloy, 2017). Shapoval (2019) pointed out that deep acting can enhance performance and, in turn, produce positive feedback from customers and achieve organizational goals. Employees who have frequent or prolonged contact and interaction with customers perform better in terms of organizational development and job satisfaction.

If employees frequently occupied in surface acting at workplace, they are more presumably to encounter fatigue, and the employee needs more recovery and rest after work. Conversely, if the employee often engages in deep acting at work, the employee experiences less fatigue and has a shorter recovery period after a day at work (Xanthopoulou et al., 2018) because deep acting internalizes and adapts emotions according to the requirements of the workplace, reducing stress. Conversely, a survey of managerial-level employees has found that when managers actively engage in surface acting at work, it greatly enhances their well-being (Lennard et al., 2019). That is to say, when employees actively change their reflexive behaviour, this is a process of psychological internalization that may require certain non-reflexive behaviours to achieve.

Employees in the service industry who engage more frequently in deep acting are also more customer-oriented. They also display more sincerity when providing services and have more empathy for customers (Grandey, 2003). Lam et al. (2018) also pointed out that person-job fit and person-organization fit are both positively interrelated with deep acting, while conversely, surface acting shows a negative correlation.

**Emotional Exhaustion**

Emotional exhaustion (EE) is a form that displays negative emotion and is also a gradual detachment of the individual from an assigned job or task as a result of the erosion of the individual’s emotional resources (Mansour & Tremblay, 2018). When workers engaged in emotional labour suffer from persistent emotional dissonance, they are likely to have a reduced sense of self-identity or to exhibit a pseudo-identity, which often leads to physical and mental health issues, including headaches, anxiety, sleep disorders, and cardiovascular disease (Kwak et al., 2018; Yilmaz et al., 2015). These phenomena are regarded as manifestations of emotional exhaustion (Ahmad & Begum, 2020). Bakker et al. (2006) also pointed out that people who suffer from neuroticism or are easily prone to negative disturbances have a greater chance in experiencing emotional exhaustion.

The emotions mentioned are caused by the excessive emotional demands placed on employees at work, leading to low morale among employees (Celiker et al., 2019). Any type of ongoing emotional discrepancy can cause individuals with emotional exhaustion to feel overworked and extremely mentally and physically fatigued. These negative emotions often produce defects in the quality of work (Judge et al., 2009). This inevitably affects the consistency of the quality of service delivery, absenteeism rates, and employee turnover rates.

Employees working in the tourism industry and hotels have a greater tendency to project in experiencing emotional exhaustion due to the fact of long working hours they are required to work, the high intensity of their work, the large number of customers they deal with, and the pressure of being under time constraints (Celiker et al., 2019). Due to different manifestations of SA and DA, past studies have commonly analysed the diverse effects of these two forms of emotional labour on emotional exhaustion separately (Lee...
& Madera, 2019; Rafique et al., 2017; Xu et al., 2020). Lai et al. (2020) also pointed out that one of the significant causes of emotional exhaustion is from surface acting, while deep acting mitigates emotional exhaustion. On this basis, the hypotheses are:

**H1**: SA of front of house employees in hotel is positively correlated to EE.

**H2**: DA of front of house employees in hotel is negatively correlated to EE.

### Job Performance

Heskett et al. (1994) used fit theory to explore factors affecting employees’ performance. The authors argued that when there is a discrepancy between the behaviours exhibited at work and the inner feelings of employees, employees will tend to feel frustrated and dissatisfied with their work, also affecting customer satisfaction. In the context of the trend toward customer service orientation, the most common manifestations of emotional labour are demonstrating positive feelings and restraining negative feelings because this form of deep acting can increase customer satisfaction along with the service provided, which in turn enhances work performance (Hur et al., 2015).

Mo and Shi (2017) pointed out that SA demonstrates a moderating consequence on workforces’ workplace deviance and job performance (JP). In other words, when employees know that certain behaviours are not permitted at work, engagement in surface acting will lead to their performance at work being recognized by the employer, enhancing job performance. In addition, deep acting could produce positive feedback from customers as well as from service providers (Yoo, 2016). This implies if deep acting is appreciated by both parties, a better job performance can be foreseen. On this basis, we listed the following hypotheses:

**H3**: Surface acting of front of house employees in hotel is positively allied with job performance.

**H4**: Deep acting of front-of-house employees in hotel is positively allied with job performance.

González et al. (2016) argued that long-term emotional labour could affect job satisfaction, damaging both physical as well as mental health and leading to an unsatisfied life. Other studies also show that emotional exhaustion (EE) is not only harmful to an individual’s psychological well-being, it also affects physiological functioning and has a negative impact on job performance (Rutherford et al., 2011). Therefore, the following hypothesis in this study will be tested:

**H5**: Emotional exhaustion of front of house employees in hotel has a negative correlation to job performance.

### Emotional Intelligence

Emotions are the result of external events and are highly subjective, positive or negative, and high or low valance feelings (Wiegand, 2007). Intelligence can be interpreted as an ability to think abstractly, or the ability to learn or to adapt to the environment, or the ability to adapt quickly to a new environment (Pfeifer & Scheier, 1999). Therefore, an individual’s emotional intelligence can, to a certain extent, be detected through cognitive, emotional, and experiential performance. Emotional intelligence (EI) indicates the competence of recognizing a person’s emotional status, it is a way to justify the capability of self-regulating ability among the emotions sensed, directing the regulated emotions to a positive path that shall anticipate a better job performance (Mattingly & Kraiger, 2019).

In the past, the intelligence quotient (IQ) represented an individual’s cognitive and mental abilities. Therefore, IQ tests are administered during the school or college admission process to determine future academic performance or career success (Bar-On et al., 2006). However, IQ alone does not predict success in life or performance at work. Emotional intelligence can produce better performance in the workplace (Bar-On, 2007). According to Farahbakhsh (2012), emotional intelligence is highly related to organizational development and the development of individual potential. Because emotional intelligence offers a new way to understand and assess people’s behaviour, attitudes, management approach, interpersonal communication, and future potential, the emotional intelligence model is divided into four indicators: insight, assimilation, cognition, and managing one’s own and others’ emotions. In addition, if a person’s characteristics embrace high resistance to tension, this confrontation can alleviate the loss of resources (Hur & Moon, 2015; Jeon, 2016). A study conducted in the insurance industry in Indonesia by Wulansari et al. (2021), the results indicated that the moderating effect of EI had an affirmative interaction on job performance of employees when related with SA, DA, work commitment, and work exhaustion. Han et al. (2017) conducted a survey on restaurant service staff and revealed that with their particular emotional intelligence and, if, along with external verbal or physical supports from restaurant managers, will develop a direct impact on employees’ job satisfaction and polished employees’ job performance unintentionally. However, in stressful working environment, emotional intelligence doesn’t seem to have a significant moderating factor on job performance.

Therefore, emotional intelligence is considered to be a factor in foreseeing how well the duty is performed (O’Boyle et al., 2011). Emotional intelligence appears to be a better predictor of successful occupational performance than intellectual capacity and personality (Joseph & Newman, 2010). From the above observation, the study will test the following hypotheses:

**H6**: Emotional intelligence positively moderate the correlation between SA and JP.

**H7**: Emotional intelligence positively moderate the correlation between DA and JP.

**H8**: Emotional intelligence positively moderate the correlation between EE and JP.
Research and Methodology

Based on the above discussions and hypotheses, research path model for this study was depicted as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Research Model

Participants and procedures

Data were collected from those who works in front-of-house sectors of four-star and five-star hotels in Taiwan. Questionnaires were delivered to hotel personnel offices and dispatched to front-of-house workforces. The questionnaires were used to assess the insights of these employees on their perceived approaches on SA, DA, EE, JP, and also investigate shall emotional intelligence have a moderating effect on their emotions at work. In this study, there are five dimensions in the questionnaire and are all individually independent to one another. The questionnaire designed for measuring SA and DA was based upon Brotheridge and Lee (2003), there were 3 items on SA and 3 items on DA. The questionnaire included five items on the facet of emotional exhaustion and five items on the facet of job performance, using the questionnaire design of Hori and Chao (2019). There were eight items on emotional intelligence facet, the items designed by Soleimani and Einolahzadeh (2017) were applied. All questionnaire items were adjusted to accommodate in line with the phenomenon happened in hospitality industry’s daily operations. All of the above questions employed a 7-point Likert scale, the response options are as followed: “strongly disagree,” “disagree,” “somewhat disagree,” “neither agree nor disagree,” “somewhat agree,” “agree,” and “strongly agree,” weighted from 1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree.

Data Collection, Sample, and Statistical Method

Questionnaires were distributed to the front-of-house service staff in four-star hotels and above in Taiwan. Convenience sampling technique was adapted while sampling hotels to be conducted. Four-star and five-star hotels from the following cities were selected: Taipei, Taichung, Tainan, Kaohsiung, and Pingtung. There were 380 front of house employees participated in this survey. After removing invalid questionnaires, there were 359 valid questionnaires which leads to 94.47% response rate. The sample consisted of 57.66% female and 42.34% male. A greater number of samples fell in the age category of 18-35, accounting for 74.38% of respondents. Of the respondents, 61.3% were part-time employees, and between six months to three years of working experience accounted for the largest group (52.4%); however, between three and six years of working experience also accounted for 12.5%. These data indicate that the employment of part-time staff is the norm in hotels and is consistent with the composition of hospitality staff in Taiwan. In this study, we applied Bollen-Stine bootstrap approach proposed by Enders (2005) to path modelling to assess the measurement and structural parameters in this structural equation model (SEM). That is, a provision for understanding the influences of hotel employees’ emotional intelligence on the impact on these facets: SA, DA, EE, and JP, Amos 22 was selected as the analytical tool.

Findings

Measurement Model

The model presented for measurement scrutinizes relationship among these latent variables or hypothetical structure and their measures and show that the set of measured variables are valid and reliable in the scale (Hair et al., 2017). For the purpose of reaching the confirmation and to accurately assess the presented model, it is crucial to measure the reliability and validity of the represented model. In this study, consistency of response was assessed by composite reliability and average variance extracted. All observed variables were listed in Table 1 listed below: factor loadings, t-values, average variance extracted (AVE), and composite reliability (CR). These figures are to weigh the suitability of the measurement model of this study. For all measures, all factor loadings are in
excess of the cut-off value of .6 and AVE exceeds .5 where the boundary value stands, all of the above were in line with the criteria mentioned by Hair et al. (2017). In addition, according to Fornell and Larcker (1981), it is an acceptable result if the CR value exceed .6. Hence, the CR values shown in table 1 had reached the reliability required. All the above figures show the assessments of measured variables explicated a convergent strength.

Table 1: Confirmatory Factor Analysis and Scale Reliability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Factor loading</th>
<th>Z</th>
<th>CR</th>
<th>AVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Surface acting (SA; α=.815)</td>
<td>.823</td>
<td>.610</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA1: I do hide my genuine moods.</td>
<td>.739</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA2: I tend to express the emotions that I don’t actually possess.</td>
<td>.874</td>
<td>15.052</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA3: I hide my true feelings when there is something happening.</td>
<td>.721</td>
<td>12.567</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deep acting (DA; α=.911)</td>
<td>.911</td>
<td>.773</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DA1: I fake my actually emotions when I need to present to others.</td>
<td>.869</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DA2: I actively emerge the emotions that I must display.</td>
<td>.888</td>
<td>21.920</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DA3: I actively emerge the emotions I need to display when working.</td>
<td>.880</td>
<td>21.923</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional exhaustion (EE; α=.857)</td>
<td>.858</td>
<td>.550</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EE1: I feel worn out from work.</td>
<td>.618</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EE2: I always felt fatigued after waking up from sleep and realised there are job needs to be carry on.</td>
<td>.701</td>
<td>10.849</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EE3: Dealing with people all day at work really strains me.</td>
<td>.744</td>
<td>11.462</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EE4: I notice that I felt burned out from work.</td>
<td>.872</td>
<td>11.085</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EE5: I notice that I felt frustrated by my job.</td>
<td>.749</td>
<td>10.279</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job performance (JP; α=.909)</td>
<td>.911</td>
<td>.672</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JP1: I consistently discharge the assigned duties.</td>
<td>.796</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JP2: I consistently achieve the required performance on job.</td>
<td>.877</td>
<td>19.034</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JP3: I consistently achieve the required responsibilities on my job.</td>
<td>.860</td>
<td>18.358</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JP4: I consistently fulfil my obligations to perform for my job.</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>16.730</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JP5: I perform essential duties regularly.</td>
<td>.751</td>
<td>15.303</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional intelligence (EI; α=.933)</td>
<td>.931</td>
<td>.633</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EI1: I can notify my emotions and feelings to colleagues.</td>
<td>.846</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EI2: I can express pleasant emotions to other colleagues easily.</td>
<td>.903</td>
<td>23.477</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EI3: I can respect the opinions of other colleagues even if it’s not real.</td>
<td>.930</td>
<td>24.043</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EI4: I can master my emotions and anger while having controversies with colleagues.</td>
<td>.884</td>
<td>22.063</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EI5: I can comprehend the feelings of other colleagues.</td>
<td>.722</td>
<td>15.829</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EI6: I can hypothesize the actual perceptions and emotions of colleagues from their behaviours.</td>
<td>.699</td>
<td>15.161</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EI7: My emotions and desires will affect other colleagues.</td>
<td>.684</td>
<td>14.726</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EI8: I will encourage and elevating hopeless colleagues.</td>
<td>.638</td>
<td>13.407</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: When the Z-value exceeds 1.96, Z-value shows it’s inference at p < .05.

Table 2 shows the intercorrelations of the four latent variables. The absolute values lay between .018 and .584, lower than the lower-limit of .85 recommended by Kline (2015). The absolute values of the AVE figures for each of the constructs lay between .018 to .058, within the lower-limit of .85 (Kline, 2015).

In this study, criterion mentioned by Hair et al. (2017) was used, that is, within the designated constructs, the correlation coefficients amongst other constructs ought to be smaller than the square roots of AVE, these numbers also shown that the dimensions presented a good discriminant validity. The correlation coefficients illustrated in following table displayed all the constructs numbers were less than the square root of average variance extracted, a respectable indication of the discriminant validity was delivered.

Structural Model

There are several approaches when comparing an observed distribution to an expected distribution through SEM statistical analysis, the common approaches to measuring methods are the GFI, CFI, RMSEA, and TLI are applied (McDonald & Ho, 2002). This study applied the maximum likelihood method for estimating the SEM. In Table 3, we displayed the results of a maximum likelihood using AMOS 22.0. The results are \( \chi^2 = 119.387 \), df=98, GFI=.967, AGFI=.945, RMSEA=.025, TLI=.992, and CFI=.994.

All of the above values demonstrated a respectable goodness-of-fit touchstones and so as the equivalent recommended principles on the research model.
The path coefficients of the research model shown in Table 3 had reached the significance level. Concerning the path hypothesized analysis, we revealed that there are two hypotheses which were not significant, while all other hypothesized relationships were supported for the estimated structural model. Firstly, surface acting appears to have a statistically insubstantial impact on emotional exhaustion ($p>.05$), hence rejecting H1. Additionally, the effects of emotional intelligence moderating on the link of emotional exhaustion to job performance did not show its significance, hence rejecting H8. However, while testing the remaining four paths of the study: DA on EE, SA on JP, DA on JP, and EE on JP, all the results were evidenced to be statistically substantial. Therefore, the hypotheses H2, H3, H4, and H5 were supported. In addition, emotional intelligence demonstrates an affirmative and direct moderate outcome on the relationships on the following path: SA and JP, and DA and JP. Therefore, H6 and H7 were supported.

The model presented for measurement scrutinizes the relationship among these latent variables or hypothetical structure and their measures and show that the set of measured variables are valid and reliable in the scale (Hair et al., 2017). For the purpose of reaching the confirmation and to accurately assess the presented model, it is crucial to measure the reliability and validity of the represented model. In this study, consistency of response was assessed by composite reliability and average variance extracted. All observed variables were listed in Table 1 listed below: factor loadings, $t$-values, average variance extracted (AVE), and composite reliability (CR). These figures are to verify the suitability of the measurement model of this study. For all measures, all factor loadings are in excess of the cut-off value of .6 and AVE exceeds .5 where the boundary value stands, all of the above were in line with the criteria mentioned by Hair et al. (2017). In addition, according to Fornell and Larcker (1981), it is an acceptable result if the CR value exceeds .6. Hence, the CR values shown in Table 1 had reached the reliability required. All the above figures shows the assessments of measured variables explicated a convergent strength.

### Table 2: Matrix of Correlation and Analysis of Discriminant Validity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Discriminant validity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>5.573</td>
<td>.933</td>
<td>.781</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DA</td>
<td>5.380</td>
<td>1.105</td>
<td>.584</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EE</td>
<td>4.431</td>
<td>1.203</td>
<td>-.018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JP</td>
<td>5.549</td>
<td>.984</td>
<td>.453</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EI</td>
<td>5.490</td>
<td>.938</td>
<td>.351</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### Table 3: SEM Path Coefficients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Path coefficients</th>
<th>$Z$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
<th>Supported</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H1: SA $\rightarrow$ EE</td>
<td>.163</td>
<td>1.814</td>
<td>.070</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2: DA $\rightarrow$ EE</td>
<td>-.317</td>
<td>-3.559</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3: SA $\rightarrow$ JP</td>
<td>.339</td>
<td>4.277</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4: DA $\rightarrow$ JP</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>3.081</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H5: EE $\rightarrow$ JP</td>
<td>-1.171</td>
<td>-3.174</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H6: SA$^*$EI $\rightarrow$ JP</td>
<td>.063</td>
<td>8.091</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H7: DA$^*$EI $\rightarrow$ JP</td>
<td>.038</td>
<td>3.654</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H8: EE$^*$EI $\rightarrow$ JP</td>
<td>-.003</td>
<td>-.441</td>
<td>.659</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fit indices: $\chi^2=119.387$, df=98, GFI=.967, AGFI=.945, RMSEA=.025; TLI=.992; CFI=.994

Note: To examine the significance of the indirect effects, a bootstrapping method of 5,000 sample size produced at a 95% confidence interval (CI) was applied. SA: surface acting; DA: deep acting; EE: emotional exhaustion; JP: job performance; EI: emotional intelligence.

### Discussions

The study aims to clarify the relationship among the following facets: SA, DA, EE, and JP, and the sampling were obtained from the employees working at the front-of-house of hotels. In the same time, we also investigated on the moderating role of emotional intelligence on the connection of SA and JP, DA and JP, and of EE and JP. In hospitality establishment, front of house employees earns their salaries through face-to-face or verbal communication. Hochshild (1983) pointed out that when there is a sense of unbalanced emotion aroused between emotions felt and emotions expressed, service provider will adopt some strategies to change their external emotional expression to cope with the situation. Besides, the on-going process of manipulating surface and deep acting will somehow slowly leading service provider steps into the stage of experiencing emotional exhaustion at work because of the constant masking of emotions (Yagil & Medler-Liraz, 2017). The results show that SA, DA, and EE all displayed a substantial and direct effects on job performance. Lee and Ashforth (1996) revealed that employees’ emotional exhaustion is greatly correlated with the performance and satisfaction from job itself. Conversely, in the study, the effects on emotional exhaustion from surface acting was identified negative while the effect from job performance on emotional exhaustion appeared positive. The research of Hori and Chao (2019) and Zhang et al. (2018) also yielded the same results as surface acting negatively influence emotional exhaustion. Surface acting is an emotion involves employees modifying their
external emotional expression, such as wearing a face mask, to satisfy customers’ demands. However, these mask-on attitudes are not genuine emotional expressions, thus the effect on emotional exhaustion can be positively predicted. Johnson and Spector (2007) also pointed out that surface acting can easily cause discrepancies between real feelings and emotional performed. This is because the positive emotions are a piece of performance, a performance employees deliver to meet the requirements of the organization. This also explains why surface acting has a negative influence on emotional exhaustion yet demonstrate positively on job performance. A study conducted on upscale hotel staff showed that because upscale hotels usually have higher job-related requirements and performance requirements for employees, employees working in such upscale hotels already know what is required and accepted in the workplace. In this case, they suffer less emotional distress when surface acting is required (Kwon et al., 2019). In other words, because there is no need to add or adjust emotions during the acting process, directly expressing the internalized habitual emotions can improve job performance while delivering services.

The finding also shows that those who work in front-of-house are frequently practicing deep acting, however they did not undergo the stage of emotional exhaustion. This phenomenon was also confirmed by Lai et al. (2020). This result indicate that employees engaged more in deep acting are those who are more experienced in internalized personal emotion norms or more comfortable on regulating their emotions, relieving work pressure and therefore reducing emotional exhaustion. The finding also revealed that emotional intelligence illustrated a positive moderating effect on the following: the connection between deep acting and job performance, and between surface acting and job performance. This finding shows that those who engaged in surface acting and/or deep acting at work tend to withhold a superior in emotional intelligence skills and shall yield a better job performance. Consequently, when employees are occupied with deep acting performances, only if they are able to understand the encouragements and guidance of colleagues and superiors in time, or when they receive encouraging feedbacks from customers, then employees’ emotional attachments can be strengthened and enriched whilst shed aside emotional exhaustion. This shows that employees who involve in deep acting do not only suffer negative effects, in other words, they may benefit from it. In addition, a negative moderating effect of emotional intelligence on the relationship between emotional exhaustion and job performance was verified. Raman et al. (2016) explained that employees who make effective use of SA and DA at work are more skilful when managing not only their own emotions but also the customers’ emotion. That is to say, those who can master emotions have a greater chance in taking a more proactive approach by giving a good impression and/or vigorously strengthen the companionship with colleagues and customers. However, employees who are overworked will try to avoid putting too much emotion into their work, so their job performance is less impressive (Kwon et al., 2019). Exhausted employees have a tendency to decrease emotional involvement while interacting with customers, consequently leads to a less competent in conducting job requirements. Also, as a consequence, the essence of service performance requires a large amount of face-to-face interaction and communication, the inclusion of too many emotion regulation mechanisms will lead to employee overwork. Hence, when employees are overworked, emotional intelligence can no longer regulate emotional labour. This produces negative emotions, creating emotional exhaustion, which affects job performance.

Conclusions

Hotels are workplaces that require a great deal of manpower to fulfil customer expectations and desires. Front of house employees in hotels need to interact face-to-face with customers over long periods of time. Their aim is to provide the service quality that meets the company’s standards, satisfying customers’ needs and also improving company performance and profitability. In the process of delivering services or exchanging thoughts, it is essential for managements to be observant and constantly regulate one’s emotions, because high emotional exhausting work has long been an issue of concern (Kim, 2020). For front of house employees working in higher-level hotels, because the organization’s quality requirements are higher than ordinary hotels, the organization tends to demand higher standards of employees in communicating work objectives (Kwon et al., 2019). Past studies have displayed that employees suffering from surface acting and/or deep acting may put themselves in the status of emotional exhausted (Hur & Han et al., 2015; Wulansari et al., 2021). Nevertheless, the study shown that emotional exhaustion was not positively affected by surface acting, but is negatively affected by deep acting. This is mainly because the research participants were from front-of-house at upper scale hotels. These front of house employees have already adapted themselves to the company’s quality requirements for service delivery in the workplace. That is to say, emotional exhaustion is not a self-motivated type of service performance, and because of this, the emotional regulation does not appear when these employees perform their duties, lies no discrepancies between emotional cognition and emotional performance, hence the effect on emotional exhaustion is not foreseen. In contrast, deep acting involves an alteration in emotional cognition. In particular, the service staff work in upper scale hotels require constant attentions to customers’ perceptions, these employees are genuinely alert of the company’s requirements and customer expectations when engaging in deep acting performances (Jeong et al., 2019). Nevertheless, once deep acting has become a spontaneous self-emotional modulating act, emotional exhaustion is therefore expected to be reduced.

The findings also reveal either surface acting or deep acting, the relationship with job performance can be moderated by emotional intelligence. Alternatively, the moderating effect of emotional intelligence on the connection between EE and JP is found not substantial. Put simply, service providers who possess a greater emotional intelligence are more capable of carrying out a more sophisticated touch of work during service delivering. It is because emotional exhaustion is a combination of intellectual and/or physical fatigues or disorders in this context, when the accumulated exhaustions throughout service delivery process is discloses, there is a greater possibility of generating incompetency at work (Nauman et al., 2020). When an individual is physically and/or mentally exhausted, they no longer have the energy to cater the preferences of others, nor performing satisfactory credits, not to
mention to win praises from supervisors or customers. Given the evidence that grander emotional intellectual quotient could sharpen the performance of frontline hoteliers, Mattingly and Kraiger (2019) suggested that training can positively affect the value of emotional intelligence. In other words, emotional intelligence can be trained. Front of house employees in hotels are undoubtedly one of the protagonists of emotional labour. Because the industry is labour intensive, it is often impossible to spend a long time carefully screening employees or identifying employees with higher emotional intelligence. This is a pointed issue in terms of human resources. Furthermore, if emotional intelligence can be trained, what kind of employees are suitable for training? More spontaneous and innovative employees? Or those employees that are content with their lot and follow the rules? These questions will be the focus of future research.

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