

Emotional Labour and Work-Family Interference Conflict of Front-Line Employees

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Abstract

This study examines how the process of performing emotional labour impacts on the individual's personal/family domain. The study was carried out in an airline which is renowned for its customer-oriented culture. Two hundred and six participants from two departments responded to the self-administered questionnaire which measured three variables related to the study. The results indicated that performing emotional labour is positively related to work-family interference conflict. The study found emotional exhaustion partially mediated the relationship between emotional labour and work-family interference conflict. The findings have implications for front-line employee training and development, recruitment and long-term employee and organisational well-being.

Key words: Emotional Labour, Work-family Interference, Emotional Exhaustion, Airline Industry, Front-line employees

Introduction

Over the past few decades there has been a considerable debate over the implications of Work-Family Conflict. As the society moves to more equal distribution of work and family responsibilities, the need to play multiple roles has arisen creating a

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conflict between these different roles for individuals (Rabinowitz, 2007). Amidst the extensive research that has taken place in this area, there is an argument that it has only partially depicted the reality and the fundamental questions are yet to be addressed (Eby, Casper, Lockwood, Bordeaux, & Brinley, 2005). Having these gaps identified, increasing scholarly and practitioner interest has led researchers to analyse this phenomenon more broadly. The antecedents which contribute to work-family conflict (WFC) keep evolving and expanding in line with the dynamic social, cultural and business environment. For instance, “emotions in organisations” and its impact on individual’s personal life is a relatively new topic which positively adds to WFC.

Control over emotions for business purposes in the service sector is an emerging phenomenon. In Sri Lanka, the service sector is a leading contributor to economic growth. The service sector’s share of GDP was 58.5% (Central Bank of Sri Lanka [CBSL], 2012). Further, this sector currently employs the highest number of persons (42.9%) in the country (CBSL, 2012). The service sector, despite the rapid growth and benefits brought about by it, manifests a host of sensitive issues such as management of emotions and aesthetic labour (Nath, 2011). These sensitive issues may not be visible on the surface but are deeply embedded within and can be detrimental to the employees (e.g., Nath, 2011). Thus, these issues have to be understood and addressed by individuals and organisations.

Workplace emotions and the emotional experience of work and family life were first identified by the scholars of Organisational Behaviour (Ashkanasy, Hartel, & Zerbe, 2005 as cited in Karim, 2009). Although emotions has been a well known topic in subjects like psychology and sociology (Clark, 1992; Thoits, 1990 as cited in Karim, 2009), emotions at work is still at its initial stage, and is an area sparsely researched (Ogbonna & Harris, 2004). In line with the current focus in WFC literature, the present study attempts to identify whether the workplace emotions, specifically, emotional labour and emotional exhaustion, impact on work-family interference conflict of front-line employees in the Sri Lankan context.

Next, we briefly review the literature on emotional labour and work-family interference conflict and then develop the hypotheses and present the conceptual framework of this study. Methodology, results and discussion of the findings and conclusions follow in the later sections of the paper.

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Emotional Labour

Emotional labour is a phenomenon that cascades down from workplace emotions. Sociologist Arlie Hochschild (1983) introduced the construct of Emotional Labour (EL) in her studies related to flight attendants' work. She defined emotional labour as "the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display" (Hochschild, 1983, p. 7 as cited in Grandey, 2000). Hochschild, in her later work on emotional labour, redefined emotional labour as "the regulation of emotions for a wage" (Hochschild, 1990, p. 118 as cited in Grandey, 2000).

Initially, emotional labour was identified as the behaviour essentially expected of service sector employees. For example, Seery and Corrigan (2009) explain that emotional labour has mainly been studied among three types of service workers: customer service jobs, caring professions (e.g., doctors, nurses) and social control jobs (e.g., policemen, bouncers). When emotional labour in customer service jobs is examined, "service with a smile" can be taken as a classic example (Humphrey, Pollock, & Hawver, 2008; Rafaeli & Sutton, 1987 as cited in Grandey, 2003). Emotional labour is used and practised in order to "shape others' emotions". When this is applied to the customer service setting, emotional labour can be used as a tool to create positive moments of truth. Further, emotional labour is conceptualised as an essential duty of front-line employees (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Ashkanasy & Daus, 2002; Morris & Feldman, 1996; Rafaeli & Sutton, 1987 as cited in Grandey, 2003).

Grandey (2000) illustrates that Hochschild's early conceptualisation of emotional labour in 1979 stresses that the process of controlling something as personal as emotions make "feelings commercialised" which can be unpleasant to the employee. Hochschild's research on emotional labour mainly views the negative component of emotional labour. Ashforth and Humphrey (1993 as cited in Grandey, 2000) view emotional labour more as an "observable behaviour" than as a management of feeling. They argued that emotional labour does not necessarily require conscious effort; instead, practice of emotional labour may become routine and will not always be a source of stress. Furthermore, they proposed that emotional labour is positively related to "task effectiveness" provided that the customer perceived the expression as sincere, and hence highlighted the positives of emotional labour.

Conceptualising different perspectives and integrating literature on emotional labour, Grandey (2000) concludes that “emotional labour may involve enhancing, faking or suppressing emotions to modify emotional expression” (p. 97). She stresses that emotional labour is about changing one’s emotions in order to change the emotions of the other party’s emotional reaction.

The literature proposes four dimensions of emotional labour, namely, (a) frequency of transactions, (b) attentiveness (intensity of emotions, duration of interaction), (c) variety of emotions required, and (d) emotional dissonance (Grandey, 2000). Researchers who have done extensive studies on emotional labour agree with these dimensions. Yet, Grandey (2000) argues that the four proposed dimensions do not completely define the emotion management process of the employee.

Hochschild (1983, as cited in Grandey, 2000), expressed how organisations have expectations regarding the display of emotions in the work setting. These expectations are shaped by social, cultural and organisational norms. The organisations have formalised these expectations of appropriate behaviour as “display rules”. In the customer service setting these display rules are said to guide the front-line employees in their typically expected expression of positive behaviour. These rules would shape the way an employee performs emotional labour and they are often communicated to the employee through the job description. It is believed that the manner in which service sector employees manage their emotional state promotes customer spending and repeat transactions (Tsai & Huang, 2002 as cited in Kinman, 2009).

The literature highlights “surface acting” and “deep acting” as the two dramaturgical forms of performing emotional labour as recognised by Hochschild (1983). Deep acting is the process where employees actually attempt to feel what they project to the external world (Humphrey et al., 2008). This is involved with one’s inner feelings, where one actually attempts to internalise the feeling, such as the feeling of “empathy” (Blau, Fertig, Tatum, Connaughton, Park, & Marshall, 2010). Deep acting is also known as “acting done in good faith” as it requires “reappraisal” or “self-talk”, which are internal efforts (Grandey, 2000). This type of emotional labour depicts the goodwill the employee has towards the organisation which expects him/her to reproduce his/her thoughts to fit organisational requirements.

Surface acting comes into play when employees change or modify their outward expressions but do not attempt to feel or modify the internal feelings that they are

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experiencing. This is done through “response modulation” (Grandey, 2000; Grandey, 2003). Surface acting is also known as “acting in bad faith” (Rafaeli & Sutton, 1987 as cited in Grandey, 2003) as the employee conforms to the desired behaviour by the organisation not to help the organisation or the customer but to keep his or her job. For example, a hotel clerk who is handling a difficult client may show a sympathetic face but actually be irritated inside.

Integral emotional component in the customer services setting has both its advantages and disadvantages. In terms of a customer service setting, displaying emotional labour would create positive customer interactions by shaping the customer’s emotional state. Theories of human memory and learning explain why organisations whose employees display pleasant emotions (that appear genuine) may promote sales. Customers who have felt good about a product and are in a good mood at the encounter tend to recall the place easily and to select the same service provider based on the previous learning which is the positive encounter that they want in the particular service the next time (Grandey, 2000).

Nevertheless, the process of regulating emotions for social or customer interactions for a long period of time can be toxic, especially if the employees are not provided with the resources to cope with the pressures that created it leading to psychological distress and strained outcomes, which in turn can be harmful to the employee (Grandey, 2000; Mann, 2007). Further, the target or the receiver can manifest negative effects if the display appears “false and unauthentic” as “synthetic compassion can be more offensive than none at all” (Thompson, 1976, as cited in Mann, 2007, p. 556).

Work-Family Interference Conflict

The concept of work-family conflict (WFC) and related terminology have been adopted only during the last 20 years, but the issue is much older (Roberts, 2007, as cited in Yavas, Babakus, & Karapte, 2008). The concern for WFC in the industrialised West emerged when women embarked on paid employment in the decades following the World War II (Haas & Hawang, 1995; DeCieri et al., 2005, as cited in Ball & Brewis, 2008).

The initial work in this area of study identified this phenomenon as stemming from the concept of “role conflict”, defined as “simultaneous occurrences of two (or more)

sets of pressures such that compliance with one would make more difficult compliance with the other” (Kahn et al., 1964, p. 19, as cited in Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Yavas et al. (2008) stated that inter-role conflicts emanate from demands of the two universal domains of adult life, namely, the professional domain and the personal domain. Further, recent research in this area explicitly recognises this relationship as “bidirectional”, these particular domains are intertwined with each other as “work interferes with family” and “family interferes with work”. Based on the work of Kahn et al. (1964), Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) define work-family conflict as “a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect. That is, participation in the work (family) role is made more difficult by virtue of participation in the family (work) role” (p. 77). The literature finds work-family conflict mainly as time-based, strain-based and behaviour-based. Work-related or family-related time-based conflict occurs when “time pressures [of one domain] are incompatible with the demands of the other role domain” (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p. 80). Strain-based conflict occurs when the “strain created by one [domain] makes it difficult to comply with the demands of another” (p. 80). Behaviour-based conflict occurs when “behaviour required in one role makes it difficult to fulfil requirements of another role” (p. 78).

Evidence shows that work-related factors impact on work-family interference (WFI) conflict rather than on family-work interference (FWI) conflict (Major, Fletcher, Davis, & Germano, 2008). As the aim of the study is to identify whether the strain created by performing emotional labour at work might have an impact on the family domain, the focus of the current study is on WFI conflict.

Consequences of WFI conflict can be identified mainly in connection with three categories: psychological and physical outcomes, work consequences, and family consequences (Eby et al., 2005). Despite these findings on how WFI conflict can adversely impact different layers of contemporary society, there remains much resistance to enabling real transformation to facilitate better ways to integrate paid work with the rest of people’s lives (Lewis, Rapoport, & Gambles, 2003).

Strain-based conflict is involved with role-produced strain. For example, when performance of one’s work role creates strain symptoms such as tension, anxiety, fatigue, depression, apathy and irritability it may lead to strain-based conflicts (Brief, Schuler, & Van Sell, 1981; Ivancevich & Matteson, 1980 as cited in Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). That is, when strain is created as a result of job demand and this

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strain intrudes or “spillover” from work to the non-work domain, an individual finds it difficult to fulfil the duties of that role (Karim, 2009). Further, if the individual possesses greater work salience, the emotional involvement in occupation and career would be greater whilst positively contributing to WFI conflict.

Emotional Labour, Emotional Exhaustion and Work-Family Interference Conflict

It has been established that emotional labour is embedded to a certain degree in most professions. However, in the case of service professions, emotional labour has become a fundamental component essential to maintain positive relationships with customers (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002, as cited in Kinman, 2009) in comparison to other occupational groups such as policemen and doctors. Also, studies suggest that customer services employees are subordinates of their customers, and thus, the nature of the relationship stifles the expression of true emotions causing more suppression and faking of emotions (Grandey et al., 2004; Grandey & Fisk, 2006, as cited in Kinman, 2009). From another point of view, customer services employees should be consistently on alert to prevent “emotional leakage” or boredom or frustration (Leidner, 1999; Putnum, & Mumby, 1993; Schneider & Brown, 1999; Zapf et al., 2003, as cited in Kinman, 2009) and to treat customers politely even when they are subjected to abuse (Glomb & Tews, 2004 as cited in Kinman, 2009).

Literature which directly addresses the relationship between emotional labour and WFI conflict is limited. However, emotional labour has been identified as one of the antecedents of strain-based WFI conflict (Karim, 2009; Kinman, 2009; Montgomery, Panagopolou, & Benos, 2005; Yanchus, Eby, Lance, & Drollinger, 2010). The study by Montgomery et al. (2005) is noted as the pioneering study (Karim, 2009) which examines the effect of emotional labour on WFI conflict among Greek health care professionals. Also, Karim (2009) has done a study on a sample of employees working in three public sector organisations. A more recent study, “The impact of emotional labour on work-family outcomes” by Yanchus et al. (2010) highlights the lack of research which delves into the direct relationship between emotional labour and WFC. The relationship between emotional labour and WFC conflict for front-line employees can be seen in the form of strain-based and behaviour-based conflict (Karim, 2009; Grandey, 2000; Montgomery et al., 2005). Nevertheless, as stated earlier, the current study narrows the focus only towards work-family interference conflict.

In terms of the findings which directly link emotional labour to WFI conflict, Seery and Corrigan (2008) found a positive relationship between surface acting (a form of emotional labour) and WFI conflict. On the contrary, Montgomery et al. (2005) found no significant relationship between surface acting and WFI conflict. Also, Karim (2009) suggests that the “degree of emotional labour undertaken by employees may have negative implications for their psychological wellbeing beyond their work domain” (p. 593). He further highlights that deep acting is significantly related to WFI conflict; further, the direct effect of surface acting is stronger for WFI conflict when compared to deep acting’s impact on the same. Empirical studies provide evidence that surface acting whereby employees modify and control their true emotions is related to stressful outcomes (Brotheridge, 1999; Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002 as cited in Grandey, 2003). Thus, it is proposed that:

Hypothesis 1: Emotional labour is positively related to work-family interference conflict.

In her comprehensive study of the dramaturgical perspective, Grandey (2000) states that emotional labour leads to a state of emotional exhaustion. Researchers have identified that acting in one’s job role may create emotional exhaustion for two key reasons: (1) the experience of tension from emotional dissonance, and (2) the draining of resources or depletion of emotional resources and lack of energy as a consequence of full acting (Ganines & Jermier, 1983, as cited in Yavas et al., 2008; Hochschild, 1983; Wharton, 1993, as cited in Grandey, 2003). Studies have found that emotional exhaustion is closely linked with emotional dissonance (Abraham, 1998; Morris & Feldman, 1997, as cited by Grandey, 2003) and both constructs collectively will lead to negative spillover (Dijik & Kirk, 2007). Further, they identified that emotional dissonance has the highest contribution to emotional exhaustion through surface acting (Dijik & Kirk, 2007; Grandey, 2003) because due to surface acting an employee feels the discrepancy between his/her expressions and inner feeling and this leads to emotional dissonance. For example, an employee may paste a “smile” on her face or put an empathetic “mask” in order to remain polite (Grandey, 2000).

When deep acting is linked to emotional dissonance and emotional exhaustion, it is in some ways fundamentally different from surface acting. Grandey (2000) states that to modify internal states or to change inner feelings, there is a requisite for attention and energy, and thus, the depletion of cognitive and energy resources may lead to emotional exhaustion. In deep acting if the employee makes a sincere effort

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to feel what is prescribed by display rules, it may lessen the gap between what is expressed and what is felt. Further, some argue that when employees get involved in deep acting they would find it difficult or confusing to change their behaviour pattern when they walk out of the work environment. Employees performing deep acting can be too preoccupied with their work roles finding it difficult to detach themselves even when they leave their work domain. This scenario has been used as a metaphor to argue that employees who are exposed to high emotional labour and are engaged in high pressure work should “decompress” themselves before moving into the normal pressures of private/family life (Maslach, 1982, as cited in Montgomery et al., 2005).

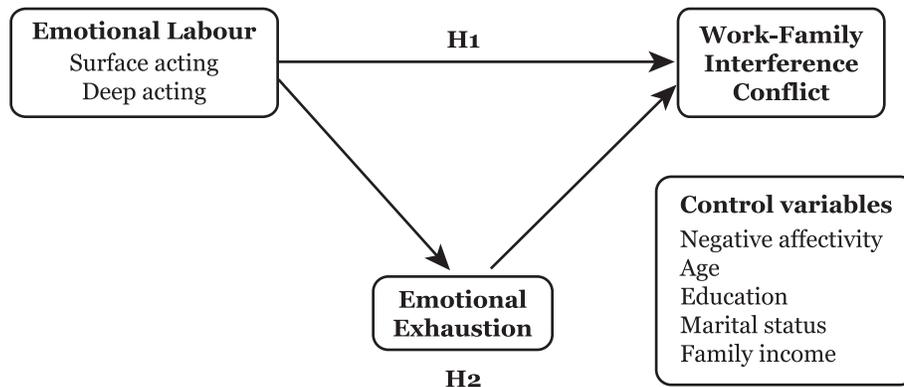
In sum, surface acting largely contributes to emotional exhaustion through emotional dissonance and deep acting contributes to emotional exhaustion mostly through energy and resource depletion. Finally, the strains created through these processes intrude or spillover to the family domain creating debilitating effects on family life. Based on past studies, it can be argued that if employees are provided with mechanisms to get over the work strain or replace the depleted emotional resources before he or she enters into the family domain, the degree of the negative spillover would be minimised. Thus, it is proposed that:

Hypothesis 2: Emotional exhaustion mediates the relationship between emotional labour and work-family interference conflict.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 depicts the conceptual framework and shows how the researchers have conceptualised emotional labour and WFI conflict and hypothesised possible relationships. Emotional labour is shown as the independent variable consisting of two elements -“surface acting” and “deep acting”. It is assumed that the independent variable is related to emotional exhaustion, which mediates the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable, which is WFI conflict. Five variables, namely, negative affectivity, age, education, marital status, and family income, are included in the model as control variables to avoid confounding the results due to their correlation with independent and/or dependent variables (Greenhaus, Parasuraman, Granrose, Rabinowitz, & Beutell, 1989).

Figure 1: Conceptual framework



Methodology

This research was designed as a quantitative study. An airline was taken as the contextual setting to conduct the research. The sample for the study comprises two categories of employees, namely, the Cabin Crew and Airport Service Agents to represent the population of front-line employees. Convenience sampling which falls under non-random sampling was used as the sampling strategy.

Following the survey strategy, self-administered questionnaires were distributed as the instrument for data collection. Out of 350 questionnaires distributed, 206 questionnaires were accepted as properly filled (response rate of 58.86%).

Of the 206 questionnaires, 105 were Cabin crew and 101 were Airport Service Agents. The respondents' ages ranged from 19 to 57 years with a mean of 31.72 years. The majority of the respondents were married (52.9%) and 46.6% were single. In terms of education, 66% had studied up to GCE A/L, 12% up to GCE O/L and 11% had professional qualifications. The participants' family monthly income levels were spread among the five income categories, with 38% earning Rs. 100,000 or more, 26% earning between Rs. 70,000 and Rs. 99,999, and 14% earning between Rs. 50,000 and Rs. 69,999 per month.

Measures with high reliability were incorporated in the study based on a thorough literature review. WFI conflict was measured using the five-item scale developed by Netemeyer, Boles, and McMurrian (1996). A sample item is "Things I want to do at home do not get done because of demands my job puts on me". Scale items

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were measured on a response scale ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 7 (Strongly agree). The construct of emotional labour was measured by a scale developed by Brotheridge and Lee (1998). Even though this scale is comprised of subscales that measure the six dimensions of emotional labour, which are duration, frequency, intensity, variety, deep acting and surface acting, only deep and surface acting were considered for analysis. Respondents were asked the following lead-in statement “On an average day at work, how often do you do each of the following when interacting with customers?” A sample item is “Try to actually experience emotions that I must show”. Scale items were measured on a response scale ranging from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always). Lastly, emotional exhaustion was measured using the nine-item scale developed by Maslach and Jackson (1986, as cited in Johnson, 2004). These nine items comprise the emotional exhaustion subscale of the Maslach Burnout Inventory. A sample item is “I feel emotionally drained at work”. Scale items were measured on a response scale ranging from 1 (Never) to 7 (Every day). All the measures were shown to have high reliability having Cronbach’s alpha over .85 in previous studies. The final scores for the variables were obtained by averaging the items for emotional labour (independent variable), WFI conflict (dependent variable), and emotional exhaustion (mediator variable).

Individual characteristic and demographic variables were incorporated in the model to control for extraneous sources of variance. Negative affectivity was measured using the PANAS scale developed by Watson, Clark, and Tellegen (1988). Marital status was measured using a single question “What is your marital status?” with four response categories -“single, married, divorced and widowed”. Education qualifications was measured using a single question - “Select the highest educational qualification acquired” and response categories were “Up to GCE O/L, Up to GCE A/L,” etc. Family’s monthly income was measured using a single question -“What is your family’s monthly income?” with response categories such as “Rs.29, 999 or less, Rs.30, 000 – 49,000”, etc. Age was measured by a single question “What is your age?”

Confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) were conducted using AMOS 16.0 for the three variables: WFI conflict, emotional labour and emotional exhaustion. Results of the CFA for WFI conflict indicated a reasonable fit ($\chi^2 = 13.03$, $df = 5$, $p = 0.023$, $TLI = 0.96$, $CFI = 0.98$ and $RMSEA = 0.08$). Results of the second-order CFA for emotional labour indicated reasonable fit ($\chi^2 = 20.39$, $df = 8$, $p = 0.009$, $TLI = 0.93$, $CFI = 0.96$ and $RMSEA = 0.08$).

However, CFA for emotional exhaustion revealed a poor fit. As the CFA model was of poor fit, principal axis factor analysis with varimax rotation, which is a technique for exploratory factor analysis (EFA), was performed. According to Hurley, Scandura, Schriesheim, Brannick, Seers, Vandenberg, and Williams (1997), "If one does apply CFA to the data and subsequently finds poor fit, then ... one should revert to EFA" (p. 673).

EFA revealed that four items had double loading (i.e., loaded to two factors). Hence, a decision was made to remove those items from further analyses and once again CFA was conducted. The fit indices indicated a good fit of the model to the data ($\chi^2 = 9.12$, $df = 5$, $p = 0.104$, $TLI = 0.951$, $CFI = 0.98$ and $RMSEA = 0.06$).

All the interval-based scales demonstrated good internal consistency reliability (see Table 1), where an alpha of 0.70 is the minimum considered acceptable (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994 as cited Karim, 2009).

Results

For the preliminary analysis, bivariate correlations (see Table 1) were calculated to identify how the study variables are related to each other, to determine the magnitude and direction of the relationships.

As expected, emotional labour and emotional exhaustion were positively correlated with WFI conflict. Emotional labour and emotional exhaustion were also positively correlated. Emotional labour and emotional exhaustion were negatively correlated to two of the control variables -age, and family income, and emotional exhaustion was positively correlated to negative affectivity. None of the control variables were correlated with WFI conflict.

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Table 1: Correlations and Reliability

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. WFI conflict	(.85)						
2. Emotional Labour	.227**	(.72)					
3. Emotional Exhaustion	.294**	.320**	(.77)				
4. Negative Affectivity	0.72	.132	.492**	(.85)			
5. Age	0.21	-.142*	-.195**	-.146*			
6. Marital Status	-.035	-.101	-.077	-.017	.425**		
7. Education	0.14	.075	.020	.044	.012	-.039	
8. Family Income	-0.64	-.190**	-.172*	-.186**	.121	.071	.057

Note: ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Reliability (Cronbach's alpha) values are given within parenthesis

To test Hypothesis 1, WFI conflict (dependent variable) was regressed on emotional labour (independent variable) after controlling for the five control variables (Negative affectivity, Age, Marital status, Education and Family income) to find out the direct effect of emotional labour on WFI conflict. Control variables were used in the analysis for Hypothesis 1 only. To test Hypothesis 2, the four-step mediation test developed by Kenny and colleagues (as cited in Frazier, Tix, & Barron, 2004) was followed. Table 2 shows the results of the step-wise mediator regression analysis.

First, the dependent variable WFI conflict was regressed on independent variable emotional labour to find out the direct effect of emotional labour on WFI conflict after controlling for the five control variables. Results of the hierarchical regression analysis to test Hypothesis 1 revealed that emotional labour is positively related to WFI conflict ($\Delta R^2 = .040$, $\beta = .205$, $t = 2.818$, $p = .005$). Emotional labour explained 40% of the variance over and above the five control variables (14%). Hence, Hypothesis 1 was supported.

Second, the mediator analysis to test Hypothesis 2 was conducted (see Table 2). In the first step, WFI conflict (dependent variable) was regressed on emotional labour (independent variable) and it was found that emotional labour was positively related to WFI conflict ($\beta = .227$, $t = 3.322$, $p = 0.001$). The unstandardised regression coefficient (B) was 0.449. In the second step, mediator variable, emotional exhaustion, was regressed on the emotional labour ($\Delta R^2 = 0.102$, $\beta = .320$, $p = 0.000$). In this regression, the unstandardised regression coefficient was 0.634. As the third step, WFI conflict (dependent variable) was regressed on the mediator variable, emotional exhaustion, controlling for emotional labour ($\Delta R^2 = 0.054$,

$\beta = .246$, $p = 0.001$). In this regression, the unstandardised regression coefficients for emotional exhaustion and emotional labour were 0.246 and 0.293, respectively. As the final step, the unstandardised regression coefficients for emotional labour were compared. The effect of emotional labour reduced from 0.449 to 0.293 and the effects are significant. This suggests partial mediation as the effect of emotional labour on WFI conflict while controlling for employee exhaustion was smaller and more significant “than when mediator was not in the equation, but still greater than zero” (Frazier et al., 2004, p. 128). Next, to test if the difference in the effect is significant, the Sobel test was conducted. Results of the Sobel test ($t = 2.814$, $p = 0.005$) confirmed the difference as significant. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is partial mediation effect of emotional exhaustion on the relationship between emotional labour on WFI conflict. Hence, Hypothesis 2 is not supported. However, results indicate that emotional exhaustion has a significant positive relationship with WFI conflict and emotional labour has a significant positive relationship with emotional exhaustion.

Table 2: Regression analysis for Emotional Exhaustion as mediator between Emotional Labour and WFI conflict

	R ²	ΔR ²	B	β	t	Sig.
STEP ONE						
EL on WFI conflict	0.051	0.051	0.449	0.227	3.322	0.001
STEP TWO						
EL on EE	0.102	0.102	0.634	0.320	4.818	0.000
STEP THREE						
EL (controlling)	0.051		0.293	0.148	2.111	0.036
EE on WFI conflict	0.106	0.054	0.246	0.246	3.517	0.001

Note: EE=Emotional exhaustion, EL= Emotional labour, WFI=Work-family interference

Discussion

Emotional labour has been linked to a variety of well-being and performance-related outcomes through the strain created by surface and deep acting in the work domain. The findings of the current study reveal that emotional labour is positively related to WFI conflict in line with past studies (Brotheridge & Lee, 2000; Grandey, 2003; Kinman, 2008; Montgomery et al., 2005; Yanchus et al., 2010) and there is partial mediation effect of emotional exhaustion on this relationship. Further, emotional exhaustion has a positive relationship with WFI conflict and emotional labour has a positive relationship with emotional exhaustion.

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As hypothesised by the researchers emotional labour contributes to WFI conflict. In interpreting this result, firstly, it should be noted that scholars have viewed the consequences of emotional labour in multiple dimensions (Grandey, 2000; Pulguisi, 1999, as cited in Seery & Corrigan, 2009). These dimensions include positive effects, neutral effects and negative effects. Furthermore, scholars stress the fact that even though there are crucial negative outcomes of performing emotional labour, if the positive outcomes override the negatives the final effect would be neutral or rather less detrimental to the employee. For instance, the level of effort involved in acting to show a happy face might be exhausting, yet the positive reactions from the customer may restore employees' emotional resources and would create a sense of achievement (Grandey, 2000). But this outcome can rarely be seen and mostly employees find that performing emotional labour is emotionally exhausting. Secondly, service workers perform emotional labour in a highly repetitive manner and usually have a narrow range of emotions that they have to display in their particular job. Therefore, it can be argued that although displaying emotional labour creates strains it is lessened to an extent through the effects of a cheerful psychological state. Moreover, this result is also related to "person-job fit", a phenomenon which is not addressed in the particular study but closely associated with the concepts studied. Person-job fit corresponds with a person's ability to deep act which softens the negative effects of emotional labour (Grandey, 2000; Yanchus et al., 2010).

Further, the level of job satisfaction is also said to minimise the strain created by one's job when a person feels good about what he or she is doing. In such cases, it is unlikely to surface and therefore produces less strain (Bono & Vey, 2005 as cited in Yanchus et al., 2010; Grandey, 2000). The difficulty of measuring the true nature using the self-reporting method should also be recalled when interpreting the result. The literature clearly touches on the point that capturing the true nature of sensitive and complicated human elements such as emotions is difficult. Therefore, although the relationship revealed is positive, the facts which did not come under the current researchers' purview should not be undermined.

Emotional exhaustion was incorporated in the study as a mediator between emotional labour and WFI conflict. Although there was only partial mediator effect in the relationship between emotional labour and WFI conflict, the results indicate that emotional labour directly and indirectly through emotional exhaustion impacts on WFI conflict. It was also found that emotional exhaustion had a significant positive relationship with WFI conflict and emotional labour had a significant

positive relationship with emotional exhaustion. Although past literature highlights that the strain created through surface acting and to a lesser extent through deep acting intrude or spillover into the family domain producing debilitating effects on family domain (Grandey, 2003), how this actually happens needs more clarification. Further, researchers did not find any literature pertaining to the particular relationship of emotional exhaustion as a mediator between emotional labour and WFI conflict, stressing the need for further investigation.

Practical Implications

The ability to manage one's emotions appropriately should be valued in exactly the same way as any other skill (Smith, 1999 as cited in Montgomery et al., 2005). Steps should be taken to develop the skill of affective management when the show must be carried on by front-line employees. They should be educated to master the basic skills behind genuine emotional expressions.

Also, the Effort-Recovery Model (E-R Model) (Meijman & Mulder, 1998, cited in Karim, 2009) suggests that negative effects are produced at work but this necessarily does not raise negative consequences for the employees' well-being as long as they are provided with adequate time to recover from these effects. Thus, jobs involving substantial amounts of emotional labour should be given adequate amounts of private time to recover from the strain created by the emotional demands. This method works as a decompression strategy, and therefore, the negative spillover would be minimised.

Based on the findings related to "Emotions Regulation Theory", people can be trained to regulate emotions for social transactions. Training given to regulate emotions would reduce the strain on employees and the acting would be more authentic. Besides these, training may help to internalise their roles rather than faking their emotions (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1983 as cited in Karim, 2009). Moreover, employees can be educated on strategies to cope with work related emotional exhaustion.

The negative consequences of emotional labour can be minimised by recruiting and selecting candidates with good job fit. If an organisation achieves the best "person-job fit" there would be a minimised need to act among its employees. Substantially, organisations should intervene with strategies to broaden positive emotions within employees (Grandey, 2000; Kafetsios, 2007, as cited in Karim, 2009).

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As emotional exhaustion has a positive impact on WFI conflict, individuals and organisations should identify the causes of emotional exhaustion and take necessary steps to reduce exhaustion. This will reduce WFI conflict experience as well.

Limitations of the Study

Firstly, it should be noted that the sample selected is homogenous with respect to the personal characteristics required by the occupation and also occupation training. Thus, the findings of the study are restricted to generalising only among a similar population and setting, where the customer services are considered as a prime concern and an essential element in the business. Secondly, all measures are self-reporting based measures. Hence, we cannot avoid the social desire bias. In line with Kinman (2009), self-administered reporting brings with it the fundamental difficulty of measuring features of the psychosocial work environment, and strain outcomes examined in the current study independently of a person's perception of them. Thirdly, the sampling convenience basis and non-random procedure may have incorporated unmeasured selection effects. Fourthly, this study only touches one domain, excluding the family-work domain. It can be argued that these two domains in adult life are closely associated with each other. Hence, studying only one domain would obscure the real picture.

Another important research design limitation is that the researchers cannot draw cause and effect inferences as the study was a cross-sectional one. Furthermore, the present study does not assess a person's level of job fit which would have been an important factor in deciding on the amount of acting done by an employee. Also, gender has not been taken into consideration.

Directions for Future Research

The main focus of this study can be simplified as an effort to recognise the level of emotional regulation for job requirements and its connection to WFI conflict of entry level or bottom layer employees. In future, this can be extended to the next layer of middle management or to different occupational groups.

Moreover, the same can be investigated for jobs of different levels and that differ in interpersonal transactions and intellectual capacity (e.g., sales, engineering, internal customer service providers).

Gender is identified as one of the moderating factors especially when it comes to WFI conflict. Further, studies related to emotions also discuss the gender-based difference with relevance to emotional regulation. Thus, research can be done incorporating gender to investigate whether gender determines better performance in certain occupations. Also, incorporating the family domain would enrich and expand the scope of the study. Emotional labour is visible in the family domain (Yanchus et al., 2010) and exploring how emotional labour created in personal and family domains influence work obligations would be worthwhile.

Conceptualising emotional labour by incorporating other related concepts such as emotional intelligence, personality traits and different organisational factors such as supervisory support, and training extended to the employees who are routinely exposed to emotional labour can be noted as another future direction for research.

Conclusion

This study was conducted with the aim of understanding the relationship between emotional labour and WFI conflict. It also examined if emotional exhaustion mediated the relationship between emotional labour and WFI conflict. This study's findings indicated that not only is emotional labour positively related to WFI conflict but emotional exhaustion partially mediates this relationship as well.

Emotions management and specifically emotional labour and its effects related to different occupations are an important area of study given that the service sector is important to our economy. Even though all occupations have an emotional component embedded in them, in the case of service professions emotional labour has become a fundamental component essential to maintain positive relationships with customers.

In conclusion, based on past research and the current study findings, emotional labour and emotional exhaustion can be taken as antecedents linked to individual well-being. The findings of this study also highlight the importance of studying emotional factors at work, and their impact on work-family interference conflict. Further, the results of this study extend emotional labour and work-family conflict research to a non-Western country. Its findings have implications for front-line employee training and development, recruitment and long-term employee and organisational well-being.

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