How Can Stressed Employees Deliver Better Customer Services? The Underlying Self-Regulation Depletion Mechanism

By

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All interested are welcome
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Abstract

This research delineates and empirically tests how regulatory depletion may affect high-stress employees’ service performance. Using a laboratory experiment and a field study in two service industries (finance and education), this research examines (1) whether work stress will cause a depletion effect such that high work stress undermines service employees’ performance on tasks requiring self-regulation (e.g., customer complaint handling performance (CCHP)) or requiring limited or no self-regulation (e.g., customer-directed extra-role performance (CDERP)), (2) whether the depletion effect of work stress can be overcome by supervisor support or employees’ engagement in perspective taking, and (3) how the aforementioned moderating effects might be mediated by employees’ feelings of fatigue and job motivation. Results confirm the process of regulatory depletion in which high-stress employees feel more fatigue and perform more poorly than low-stress employees in CCHP which requires self-regulation. Interestingly, work stress improves employees’ performance on non–self-regulation tasks (CDERP) rather than undermine it. Moreover, mediated moderation tests show that the extent of the depletion effect is not uniform. Employees who can replenish resources from supervisor support or enhance goal focus by engaging in perspective taking will be less affected by regulatory depletion. These buffering effects occur because of the enhanced job motivation.