Emotional Exhaustion and Job Performance: The Moderating Roles of Distributive Justice and Positive Mood

By

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All interested are welcome
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ABSTRACT

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Employees who get emotionally exhausted experience “a lack of energy and a feeling that one’s emotional resources are used up” (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993: 623). Although emotional exhaustion is commonly assumed to have detrimental consequences for job performance (Maslach, 1982; Halbesleben & Bowler 2007), surprisingly little research has actually investigated the exhaustion-performance linkage and identified conditional variables that can explain when emotionally exhausted employees reduce their performance levels, and when they keep investing effort into their jobs to uphold their performance. In a field study among 241 shop assistants and their 59 immediate supervisors in fashion chain stores in Mainland China and Hong Kong, we found a negative relationship between emotional exhaustion and three types of job performance (emotional display, OCB-O, and OCB-I) when employees perceive distributive justice rather than distributive injustice in their exchange relationship with the organization. Moreover, these negative two-way interaction effects of emotional exhaustion by distributive justice on performance were buffered when employees were high on positive mood and intensified when they were low on positive mood. Thus, job performance was lowest when emotional exhaustion and distributive justice were both high and positive mood was low. We use the conservation resources theory (Hobfoll, 1988, 1989, 1998; Hobfoll & Freedy, 1993) and organizational justice theory (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, & Yee Ng, 2001; Roch & Shanock, 2006) to clarify and discuss the moderating roles of distributive justice and positive mood in the relationship between emotional exhaustion and job performance.