

Examining the Selected Consequences of Customer-Related Social Stressors in the Hotel Industry

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to develop and test a research model that examines emotional exhaustion as a mediator of the effects of customer-related social stressors (as manifested by disproportionate customer expectations, customer verbal aggression, disliked customers, and ambiguous customer expectations) on job performance, extra-role customer service, and turnover intentions. These relationships were assessed using data gathered from frontline employees in the three- and four-star hotels in Cameroon. One-month time lag for data collection was used. The relationships among variables were tested using LISREL 8.30 through structural equation modeling.

According to the results of this study, customer-related social stressors increase emotional exhaustion. Emotional exhaustion reduces job performance and extra-role customer service and exacerbates turnover intentions. In addition, customer-related social stressors influence job performance, extra-role customer service, and turnover intentions only through emotional exhaustion. In other words, emotional exhaustion has a full mediating role in this process.

In light of the results given above, implications for managers are offered in this thesis. Moreover, limitations of the study and implications for future research are provided.

Keywords: Cameroon; Customer-Related Social Stressors; Emotional Exhaustion; Hotel Employees; Job Performance; Turnover Intentions

ÖZ

Bu tezin amacı, duygusal yorgunluk yoluyla müşteri kökenli stresin (orantısız müşteri beklentileri, sözlü müşteri saldırısı, belirsiz müşteri beklentileri ve hazzedilmeyen müşteriler) iş performansı, ekstra rol performansı ile işten ayrılma niyeti üzerindeki etkilerini inceleyen bir araştırma modelini geliştirip test etmektir. Bu ilişkiler Kamerun'da üç ve dört yıldızlı otellerde çalışan işgörenler vasıtasıyla değerlendirilmiştir. Veri toplama aralığı için belirlenen süre bir aydır. Değişkenler arası ilişkiler LISREL 8.30 istatistikî paket programı kullanılarak yapısal eşitlik modeliyle ölçülmüştür.

Çalışmanın bulgularına göre, müşteri kökenli stres duygusal yorgunluğu artırmaktadır. Duygusal yorgunluk ise, iş performansı ile ekstra rol performansını düşürmekte ve işten ayrılma niyetine ivme kazandırmaktadır. Buna ilaveten, müşteri kökenli stres iş performansı, ekstra rol performansı ile işten ayrılma niyetini sadece duygusal yorgunluk üzerinden etkilemektedir. Bir diğer deyişle, duygusal yorgunluk tam bir aracı değişken görevini görmektedir.

Tezde, yukarıda belirtilen bulgular ışığında, yöneticilere yönelik önerilere yer verilmiştir. Ayrıca, çalışmanın sınırları ve gelecek araştırmalar için belirlemeler üzerinde durulmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Duygusal Yorgunluk; İş Performansı; İşten Ayrılma Niyeti; Kamerun; Müşteri Kökenli Stres; Otel Çalışanları

This work is dedicated to my late dad Mr. Nkendon Abraham Ngonjwing.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The introduction chapter provides information regarding the purpose of the study, the potential contributions of the study to the literature, and the relationships among customer-related social stressors, emotional exhaustion (EE), job performance (JP), extra-role customer service (ERCS), and turnover intentions (TI). The introduction chapter also provides information concerning the sample of the study, data collection, questionnaires and measures used in the study, and data analysis.

1.1 Research Philosophy

As is the case with empirical studies centering on model development and testing, this study utilizes deductive approach in order to develop and test a research model. As Ali and Birley (1999) state, "... in deductive research there is a well-established role for existing theory since it informs the development of hypotheses, the choice of variables, and the resultant measures which researchers intend to use. Within this paradigm the scientist formulates a particular theoretical framework and then sets about testing it" (p. 103). In a deductive approach, the researcher develops logical relationships among various study constructs based on well-established theoretical frameworks and then collects data for assessing the relationships proposed.

In this empirical study a research model is proposed and tested. This research model tests the mediating role of EE in the relationship between customer-related social

stressors and job outcomes. Disproportionate customer expectations (DCE), customer verbal aggression (CVA), disliked customers (DC), and ambiguous customer expectations (ACE) are the indicators of customer-related social stressors (Dormann & Zapf, 2004). JP, ERCS, and TI are the job outcomes. Data are used from frontline hotel employees in Cameroon to test these relationships.

1.2 Purpose of the Empirical Study

Employees in frontline service jobs experience a number of stressors in the workplace. Dysfunctional customer behaviors are among these stressors (Boyd, 2002). Since frontline employees have intense face-to-face or voice-to-voice interactions with customers, they seem to be faced with aggressive behaviors of customers (Karatepe, Yorganci, & Haktanir, 2009).

As mentioned above, DCE, CVA, DC, and ACE are the indicators of customer-related social stressors (Dormann & Zapf, 2004). DCE refers to “situations in which customers tax or challenge the service that they want to receive from the service provider” (Dormann & Zapf, 2004, p. 75). CVA refers to customers’ intentions to harm frontline employees (cf. Dormann & Zapf 2004). DC refers to “interactions with hostile, humorless, and unpleasant customers and interruptions by customers”, while ACE describes “... unclear customer expectations” (Dormann & Zapf, 2004, p. 76). Studies indicate that such stressors lead to EE, which “is characterized by a lack of energy and a feeling that one’s emotional resources are used up” (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993, p. 623) and results in negative job outcomes such as TI, ineffective JP, and job satisfaction (Harris & Reynolds, 2003; Karatepe et al., 2009; Sliter, Jex, Wolford, & McInnerney, 2010).

Conservation of Resources (COR) theory and the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model are used to develop the relationships between customer-related social stressors, EE, and job outcomes. According to COR theory, "...individuals strive to obtain, retain, protect, and foster those things that they value" (Hobfoll, 2001, p. 341). They are object, personal, condition, and energy resources (Hobfoll, 1989). When individuals lose resources as a result of stressors, they experience strain (Lee & Ashforth, 1996). The health impairment process in the JD-R model also provides guidance to develop the mediating role of EE in the relationship between customer-related social stressors and job outcomes (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

In light of the information presented above, the purpose of this study is to propose and test a research model that tests EE as a mediator of the effects of customer-related social stressors as manifested by DCE, CVA, DC, and ACE on JP, ERCS, and TI.

1.3 Potential Contributions of the Empirical Study

This empirical study has a potential to contribute to the hospitality marketing literature in the following ways. First, frontline employees are expected to serve customers effectively who report complaints and show frustrations in the service encounter (Sliter et al., 2010). However, a review of the current literature indicates that empirical studies regarding the outcomes of dysfunctional customer behaviors are scarce (Mueller & Tschan, 2011; Sliter et al., 2010; Walsh, 2011). Therefore, this study assesses the outcomes (i.e., EE, JP, ERCS, TI) of customer-related social stressors. More importantly, this study tests EE as a mediator of the effects of customer-related social stressors on these job outcomes. Second, unlike other empirical studies (e.g., Daunt & Harris, 2011; McColl-Kennedy, Patterson, Smith, &

Brady, 2009), this study tests these relationships using data obtained from frontline hotel employees in Cameroon, which is a developing sub-Saharan African country. As a sub-Saharan African country, Cameroon is a developing country whose tourism and hospitality industry is still in its development stage. The official languages in the country are French and English. Yaoundé is the capital city, while Douala is regarded as the economic capital city (Karatepe & Ngeche, 2012). The term ‘Africa in miniature’ is specifically used for Cameroon, because the country is noted for its geological and cultural richness. The country is also noted for its wild life parks. However, the tourism and hospitality industry in Cameroon is still devoid of well-trained and educated human resources as well as modern human resource management practices such as recruitment and selection, training, or performance appraisal.

Finally, the results of the study will present useful implications regarding the management of customer-related social stressors and EE in frontline service jobs in the hotel industry.

1.4 Proposed Methodology

As stated above, this study uses deductive approach, because a research model including hypotheses is developed and tested. This is a common approach among empirical studies that center on proposing and testing a research model.

This study uses a judgmental sample of full-time frontline employees in the three- and four-star hotels in Cameroon. In judgmental sampling, “the sample elements are selected because it is believed that they are representative of the population of interest” (Churchill, 1995, p. 582).

This study collects data with a time lag of one month for reducing the potential threat of common method bias. Such an approach is necessary, because common method bias leads to measurement error, which in turn threatens the validity of the conclusions about the hypothesized relationships (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003).

All items are originally prepared in English and then translated into French via the back-translation method (Parameswaran & Yaprak, 1987). That is, the researcher prepared the questionnaires in English. Then, two bilingual individuals (fluent in both in English and French) participated in the translation process independently. Finally, the researcher checked the questionnaires for any inconsistencies.

The Time I and Time II questionnaires are tested with a pilot sample of three different employees regarding the understandability of items. The Time I questionnaire includes the DCE, CVA, DC, and ACE measures. The Time I questionnaire also includes items regarding respondents' age, gender, education, organizational tenure, and marital status. The Time II questionnaire includes the JP, ERCS, and TI measures.

The indicators of customer-related social stressors are measured with items from Dormann and Zapf (2004). That is, eight items are used to measure DCE, while five items are used to measure CVA. DC and ACE each are operationalized via four items. Responses to items in customer-related social stressors are rated on five-point scales ranging from 5 (*absolutely true*) to 1 (*not at all true*). Eight items from Maslach and Jackson (1981) are used to operationalize EE. Five items adapted from Babin and Boles (1998) are used to assess JP. Five items from Bettencourt and

Brown (1997) are used to evaluate ERCS. Finally, three TI items come from Singh, Verbeke, and Rhoads (1996). Responses to items in EE, JP, and ERCS are rated on five-point scales ranging from 5 (*strongly agree*) to 1 (*strongly disagree*).

Frequencies are used for depicting respondents' profile. The psychometric properties of measures are evaluated based on confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using LISREL 8.30 (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988; Joreskog & Sorbom, 1996) and internal consistency reliability analysis (Nunnally, 1978). The correlations among study constructs are also presented. The hypotheses are tested via structural equation modeling (SEM). As suggested by James, Mulaik, and Brett (2006), the fully mediated model is compared with the partially mediated model to identify the model which seems to offer useful explanations against the model that does not.

1.5 The Rest of Chapters in the Thesis

There are seven chapters including chapter 1 in this thesis. In chapter 2 roles stressors, customer-related social stressors, EE, and relevant job outcomes are discussed. As the theoretical frameworks used in this study, COR theory and the JD-R model are discussed to develop the relevant relationships.

Chapter 3 includes the research model and hypotheses of the study. The hypotheses of the study refer to the effects of customer-related social stressors as manifested by DCE, CVA, DC, and ACE on EE. The hypotheses also refer to the effect of EE on JP, ERCS, and TI. Finally, the hypotheses refer to the mediating role of EE in the relationship between customer-related social stressors and job outcomes.

Chapter 4 includes the methodology of the study. In this chapter deductive approach is explained, sampling and data collection are described, and questionnaires and measures used are presented. This chapter also presents data analysis used in the empirical study.

Chapter 5 consists of the results of the empirical study. That is, the results for respondents' profile, the psychometric evaluation of measures, and correlations among study variables are provided in chapter 5. The results for hypotheses based on SEM are also given.

Discussion of the results is provided in chapter 6. In this chapter the results are discussed in detail based on past and prior similar studies, COR theory, and the JD-R model. Management implications are offered using the results of the study. This chapter presents the study limitations and offers various future research implications to overcome the limitations mentioned. In addition, this chapter offers a number of implications for managers to reduce the detrimental effects of customer-related social stressors and EE on JP, ERCS, and TI. The conclusion part is given in chapter 7.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review chapter introduces a synthesis of studies that focuses heavily on role stressors and their outcomes. In this chapter customer-related social stressors, EE, and job outcomes are explained. That is, the relationship between DCE, CVA, DC, and ACE and EE and the association between DCE, CVA, DC, and ACE and job outcomes are discussed. COR theory and the JD-R model are presented and discussed for developing the study hypotheses.

2.1 Role Stressors

Stress is a frequent phenomenon in the day-to-day life of frontline employees in the hotel industry. On one hand, frontline employees' role performance depends on how they feel emotionally when dealing with role senders such as customers. On the other hand, their role performance depends on management of the hotel that appears to provide limited social support. Frontline employees working under these conditions experience stress. Role conflict and role ambiguity are the main role stressors studied in the current literature. Role conflict and ambiguity are the main role stressors facing frontline employees in the hotel industry (Karatepe & Sokmen, 2006). The following sections pertain to a discussion regarding the relationships of role conflict and ambiguity with EE and various job outcomes.

2.1.1 Role Conflict

Frontline employees experience role conflict when they receive incompatible job demands from managers, coworkers, or other role partners (cf. Walker, Churchill, & Ford, 1975). For instance, a customer demands services from a frontline employee that does not appear to be consistent with the organization's policy. Under these circumstances, this might create tension and a sense of conflict for this frontline employee, because he or she is going out of the organization's norms to please a customer.

Incongruent expectations and organizational policies seem to be the main factors behind role conflict. Role conflict puts them in difficult situations as frontline employees are confused on how to carry out their assigned roles. As employees are frequently faced with role conflict, they become confused on the right method of performing their job-related tasks, because they are frequently faced with disagreement from various parties such as managers, coworkers, or customers.

An analysis of the current literature suggests that role conflict leads to EE, influences frontline employees' job satisfaction deleteriously and increases their TI (e.g., Babakus, Yavas, & Karatepe, 2008; Karatepe & Sokmen, 2006; Walker et al., 1975). However, role conflict is sometimes reported to increase frontline employees' performance in the organization (e.g., Karatepe & Sokmen, 2006; Karatepe & Uludag, 2008). This is due to the fact that frontline employees are used to receiving incompatible job demands from various parties, and therefore, developing their own strategies to cope with such incompatible job demands. Under these circumstances, their JP increases.

2.1.2 Role Ambiguity

Frontline employees also experience role ambiguity when they lack adequate information about how to perform their job-related tasks (cf. Walker et al., 1975). For example, if a waiter or waitress is unaware of his or her role requirements due to the unavailability of job descriptions or is untrained about how to perform his or her duties, role ambiguity becomes inevitable. It appears that role ambiguity occurs in the workplace when frontline employees have inadequate resources to perform their roles. The lack of adequate training programs, sufficient support surfacing from supervisors and/or coworkers, and orientation programs can also lead to higher ambiguity to be experienced by frontline employees.

Arnold, Flaherty, Voss, and Mowen (2009) also state, “An employee who is given multiple tasks without directive as to prioritization may experience the stress of ambiguity” (p. 196). It is, therefore, imperative that managerial expectations from employees need to be well-explained.

An analysis of the current literature clearly suggests that role ambiguity results in EE and job dissatisfaction, poor JP, and higher TI. Specifically, frontline employees experiencing high levels of role ambiguity are dissatisfied with various aspects of their jobs, cannot carry out their role requirements successfully, and display intentions to leave the organization (e.g., Arnold et al., 2009; Karatepe & Sokmen, 2006; Walker et al., 1975).

2.2 Customer-Related Social Stressors and EE

DCE, CVA, DC, and ACE can be conceptualized as the indicators of customer-related social stressors. Such stressors result in EE that is the initial stage of the

burnout syndrome (cf. Cordes & Dougherty, 1993; Karatepe & Uludag, 2008). Frontline employees in the hotel industry appear to be frequently faced with aggressive customers and have to deal with their needs and problems without destroying the service standards. This is not surprising, because ‘the customer is always right’ philosophy produces an unequal power between the employee and the customer (Grandey, Dickter, & Sin, 2004). Under these circumstances, employees have to serve customers and meet their expectations.

The abovementioned customer-related social stressors trigger EE among frontline employees (Dormann & Zapf, 2004). Customers might transfer their bad mood to employees and might even insult them. Employees can find it difficult working with such customers. These entire attitudes and behaviors shown by such customers have negative effects on the organization and employees. Employees who are often faced with hostile customers turn to be less productive at work and this leads to EE, and therefore, results in a high rate of turnover.

Customer-related social stressors seem to be among the primary roots to EE among frontline employees. Customer aggression towards frontline employees is a major social stressor that causes EE among frontline employees and increases their quitting intentions (Ben- Zur & Yagil, 2005). In addition, customer aggression can demoralize frontline employees and affect their interest in the job deleteriously.

2.2.1 DCE and EE

As defined before, DCE refers to “situations in which customers tax or challenge the service that they want to receive from the service provider” (Dormann & Zapf, 2004, p. 75). Where an employee is being challenged by a customer for the service

provided, he or she becomes psychologically disturbed. Due to the challenges faced by frontline employees on the services they provide, they start experiencing EE and, as a result of this, they become less productive at work. Customers always feel they deserve to be treated with special care and attention as a result of the fact that they spend their money in the organization. Therefore, they challenge the services provided for them by frontline employees. However, employees having personal and/or job resources may cope with such customers (cf. Hobfoll, 2001). For example, employees who can work under resource-depleted conditions and are customer-oriented and have sufficient training and empowerment can deal with customers who prove to have DCE.

2.2.2 CVA and EE

Due to the fact that employees in frontline service jobs have intense face-to-face or voice-to-voice interactions with customers, they are faced with CVA. Verbal harassment is a form of aggression that can be defined as “behavior expressed through words, tone or manner that is aimed at intentionally harming another employee in the workplace” (Deery, Walsh, & Guest, 2011, p. 744). Verbal aggression can be said to be one of the most common forms of customer-related social stressors frontline employees have to cope with.

CVA demoralizes frontlines employees, heightens EE, erodes job satisfaction, and triggers TI (Karatepe et al., 2009). This is not surprising, since frontline employees may be unable to have enough energy to respond to service failures and cope with a number of problems arising from customers’ aggressive verbal behaviors.

It seems that frontline employees with positive core self-evaluations can deal with difficulties arising from CVA. That is, frontline employees who have self-esteem, internal locus of control and emotional stability and are self-efficacious appear to deal with customers demonstrating verbal aggression in service encounters (Karatepe, Haktanir, & Yorganci, 2010). Under these circumstances, it would be possible that such employees experience lower EE.

2.2.3 DC and EE

Frontline employees have to deal with a number of hostile and unfriendly customers in service encounters. As defined before, DC refers to “interactions with hostile, humorless, and unpleasant customers and interruptions by customers” (Dormann & Zapf, 2004, p. 76). It appears that frontline employees’ well-being is negatively influenced by such customers.

Many customers interrupt frontline employees when they are busy with other things or even serving other customers. These customers expect employees to serve them immediately and do not care about the rest. Under these circumstances, employees are highly stressed, and therefore, experience EE (Dormann & Zapf, 2004; Karatepe et al., 2010). Unfortunately, such customers can also prove to display hostile and unpleasant behaviors toward employees who have already responded to their requests promptly. Employees with personal resources may be able to deal with such customers better in service encounters (Hobfoll, 2001; Karatepe et al., 2010).

2.2.4 ACE and EE

According to Dormann and Zapf (2004), ambiguous customer expectations refer to unclear customer expectations. Customers might at times be unspecific and they do not provide clear information of what they want from frontline employees. Unclear information is very stressful as customers expect frontline employees to satisfy their demands without considering the fact that the information provided is inadequate. An employee suffering from unclear customer demands uses lots of personal and job resources in order to meet the demands of these customers. However, they are highly emotionally exhausted in this process.

A clear and understandable communication is very important when conveying a message to employees. As employees strive to seek clarification to the excessive demands of customers, they become worn out and start experiencing EE. As mentioned before, frontline employees having personal resources can cope with customers better who have unclear expectations (Karatepe et al., 2010).

2.3 Outcomes of Customer-Related Social Stressors and EE

An analysis of the current literature suggests that attitudinal outcomes such as job and career satisfaction and organizational commitment are among the outcomes of customer-related social stressors and EE (e.g., Cordes & Dougherty, 1993; Karatepe et al., 2009; Lee & Ashforth, 1996). However, in this study JP, ERCS, and TI are considered as the outcomes of customer-related social stressors and EE.

2.3.1 JP

JP refers to “the level of productivity of an individual employee, relative to his or her peers, on several job-related behaviors and outcomes” (Babin & Boles, 1998, p. 82). Frontline employees are often confronted with different types of customers and their numerous complaints, and the manner these customers would address or speak to employees will determine their job output. For instance, if an employee is suffering from a high rate of stress, he or she would definitely be less productive at work. Customer unfriendliness is considered to be a major negative impact on frontline employees’ JP.

Employee’s performance greatly depends on the relationship they have with customers. If the relationship they have is a healthy one, their JP will be good. However, if their relationship is based on an unfriendly and aggressive atmosphere, employees will experience EE, and therefore, will display poor job outcomes. Customer-related social stressors are among the prime roots to EE, poor job outcomes, and high rates of turnover. Customer poor behavior can negatively affect frontline employees’ overall JP and thus influence the organization as well.

In addition, employees with elevated levels of EE demonstrate poor JP, because they are unable to serve customers successfully due to the loss of their energies and interests in the job (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993; Karatepe & Uludag, 2008).

2.3.2 ERCS

ERCS is an important variable in frontline service jobs in the hotel industry. This is due to the fact that hotel managers are always in need of employees who can meet and exceed customers’ expectations. In this study ERCS is defined as “discretionary

behaviors of contact employees in serving customers that extend beyond formal role requirements” (Bettencourt & Brown, 1997, pp. 41-42). Employees with ERCS behaviors go beyond their job-related tasks in order to satisfy customers and exceed their expectations. However, when they are faced with a number of unfriendly and hostile customers or customers showing CVA, they are emotionally exhausted and may be unable to go beyond their role requirements as expected (cf. Harris & Reynolds, 2003).

In Bakker, Demerouti, and Verbeke’s (2004) study, a negative association between exhaustion and extra-role performance has been reported. Such a finding clearly suggests that exhaustion is one of the barriers impeding employees’ ERCS behaviors. It seems that employees who lack sufficient job resources such as training, empowerment, and social support are unable to meet or exceed customers’ expectations. As highlighted in successful industry applications, training and empowerment are among the important tools that help employees to serve customers effectively, respond to their requests and complaints promptly, and meet their expectations (Yavas, Karatepe, & Babakus, 2010). In addition, as discussed earlier, employees who have personal resources (e.g., job resourcefulness, core self-evaluations) can cope with difficulties arising from customer-related social stressors and EE. It may be possible that such employees can display ERCS behaviors in the workplace.

2.3.3 TI

Turnover is an important problem in the hotel industry (Babakus et al., 2008). When employees leave the organization, there are a number of costs for the organization. Specifically, it is expensive to find a better employee for the open position in the

organization. This is because managers need to spend money for recruitment and selection practices. They need to provide these employees with orientation and training programs and expect them to adapt to the new work environment. This would also result in time cost. If such employees cannot adapt to the new work environment, there would be poor service, low morale, and lack of commitment to the organization.

Employees with TI would also deliver poor services and have low morale. Therefore, hotel managers need to find ways for decreasing stressors and strain experienced by their employees. When employees are faced with customer-related social stressors, they are emotionally exhausted (Karatepe et al., 2009, 2010). Such employees in turn have poor performance in the workplace and have intentions to leave the organization (Karatepe et al., 2009, 2010). These employees can also display tardiness and absenteeism in the workplace. Under these circumstances, managers have the risks and costs mentioned above.

2.4 COR Theory and the JD-R Model

COR theory and the JD-R model are the theoretical frameworks used in this study to develop the relationships among customer-related social stressors, EE, and job outcomes. That is, these frameworks present the guidelines for developing the study hypotheses.

COR theory posits that object, personal, condition, and energy are the resources individuals seek to acquire and maintain (Hobfoll, 1989). The first principle of COR theory states, "... resource loss is disproportionately more salient than resource gain" (Hobfoll, 2011, p. 343). Accordingly, employees invest their limited resources to be

able to deal with customers who are unfriendly and hostile, have DCE and ACE, and display verbal aggression with an expectation that they will obtain positive outcomes in return (Karatepe et al., 2009, 2010). However, if they lose these limited resources and do not receive positive outcomes in return, they feel emotionally exhausted. Such reasoning provides the rationale for developing the relationship between customer-related social stressors and EE. In addition, according to COR theory, employees display negative job outcomes, because they lose their scarce resources and become emotionally exhausted (Lee & Ashforth, 1996).

According to the JD-R model, the health impairment process provides the guideline to present the mediating role of EE. Specifically, the health impairment process suggests that chronic job demands such as CVA sap employees' physical and mental resources and result in depletion of energy, which in turn leads to negative health and job outcomes (e.g., poor JP, depression, TI) (Bakker et al., 2004; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Under these circumstances, employees who are faced with DCE, CVA, DC, and ACE feel emotionally exhausted. Such employees in turn display poor JP and ERCS behaviors and have higher TI.

Chapter 3

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

The research model, direct and mediating effects, and empirical studies as well as COR theory and the JD-R model that are used for developing the hypothesized relationships are presented in this chapter. Specifically, this chapter presents the research model and hypotheses that refer to the direct effects of customer-related social stressors as manifested by DCE, CVA, DC, and ACE on EE, the direct effect of EE on JP, ERCS, and TI, and the full mediating role of EE. This is followed by a discussion of hypotheses based on empirical studies, COR theory, and the JD-R model.

3.1 Research Model

The research model is presented in Figure 1. The model proposes that four types of customer-related social stressors increase employees' EE. That is, DCE, CVA, DC, and ACE as the indicators of customer-related social stressors facing employees in frontline service jobs trigger their EE. As the initiator of the burnout syndrome, EE reduces JP and ERCS and increases TI. When these relationships are taken into consideration, it becomes clear that EE has a full mediator role. EE fully mediates the effects of customer-related social stressors on JP, ERCS, and TI.

These relationships are developed using empirical studies in the current literature as well as COR theory and the JD-R model.

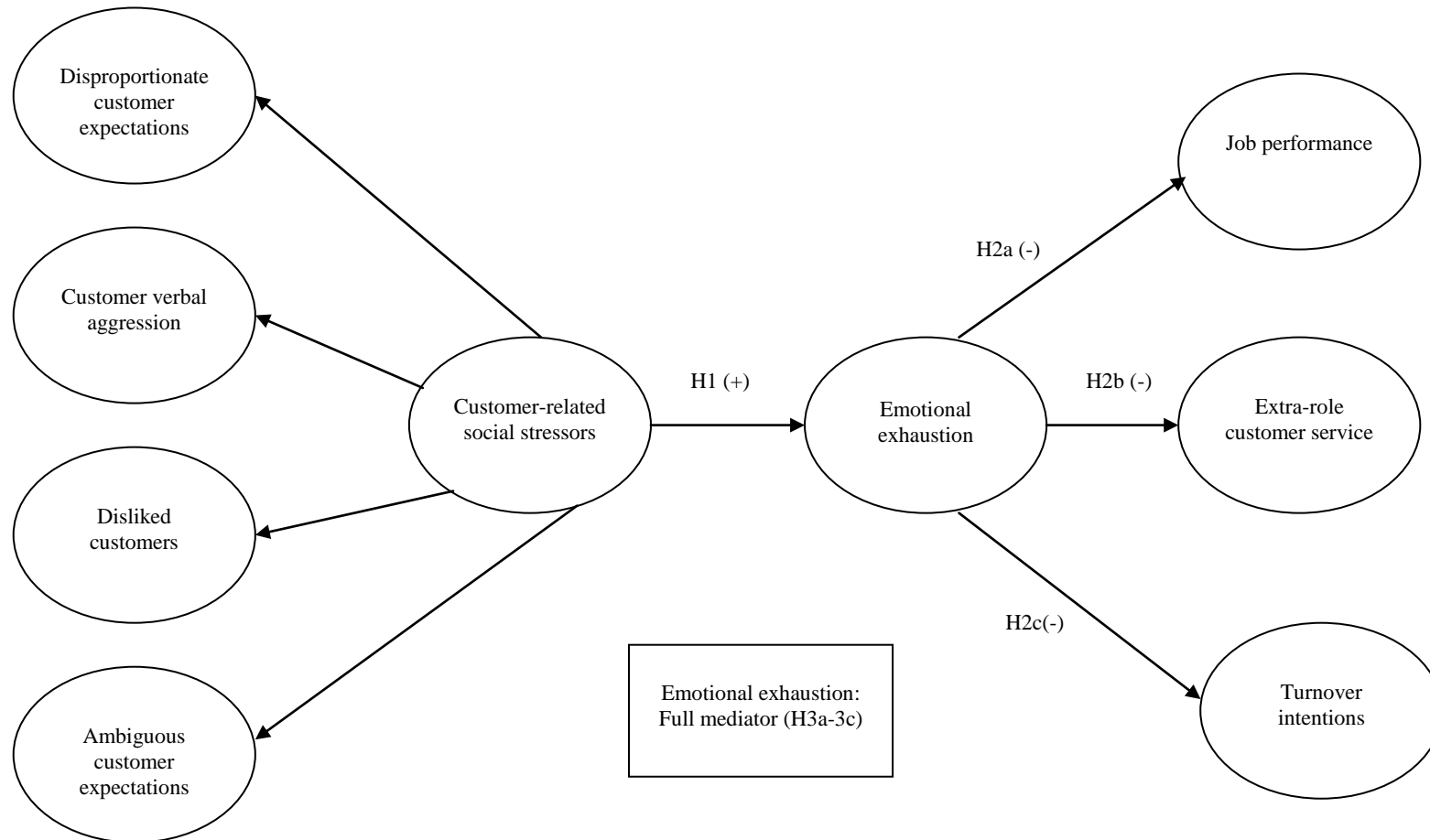


Figure 1: Research Model

3.2 Hypotheses

3.2.1 Direct Effects

The first group of hypotheses refers to the direct effects of customer-related social stressors on EE. In a previous study conducted by Grandey et al. (2004), it was hypothesized that “frequency of customer verbal aggression is positively related to emotional exhaustion” (p. 402). This relationship was supported in their study. This relationship can also be developed using the guidelines provided by COR theory. That is, COR theory proposes that employees experience high levels of EE when they find that they lose their limited resources to deal with problems arising from customer-related social stressors (Hobfoll, 1989; Karatepe et al., 2009).

Dormann and Zapf (2004) measured the relationship between customer-related social stressors and EE using samples of flight attendants, employees in travel agencies, and salespeople in shoe stores. In Dormann and Zapf’s (2004) study, CVA, DC, and ACE (but not DCE) were found to increase frontline employees’ EE. Obtaining data from different occupations (e.g., bank tellers, receptions, clerks, salespeople) in Israel, Ben-Zur and Yagil (2005) showed that aggressive behaviors displayed by customers resulted in EE.

Karatepe et al. (2009) indicated that CVA heightened EE among frontline hotel employees in Northern Cyprus. In a study of employees in frontline bank jobs in Northern Cyprus, Karatepe et al. (2010) reported that ACE increased EE, whereas the rest of the customer-related social stressors did not significantly affect EE. Sliter et al. (2010) found that customer incivility heightened EE among bank tellers. In a

study of frontline hotel employees in the United Arab Emirates, it was also shown that customer aggression heightened EE (Karatepe, 2011). Therefore, using empirical studies mentioned above and COR theory as the theoretical framework, the following hypothesis is presented:

H1: Customer-related social stressors as manifested by DCE, CVA, DC, and ACE increase frontline employees' EE.

The second group of hypotheses refers to the direct effect of EE on JP, ERCS, and TI. COR theory proposes that employees demonstrate poor JP and ERCS and have high levels of TI as a result of resource loss and EE (Lee & Ashforth, 1996). Employees who lose their limited resources to deal with customer-related social stressors experience EE. In this process it appears that they will have negative job outcomes.

There are, however, studies that show an unexpected finding between EE and JP. For example, Karatepe and Uludag (2008) reported a positive relationship between EE and JP among frontline hotel employees in Northern Cyprus. They attribute this finding to the fact that employees pay attention to their duties and responsibilities in the workplace to protect themselves from additional stress and to attain higher job performance. On the other hand, Karatepe et al. (2009) reported that employees who were faced with EE were unable to deal with customer requests and complaints effectively. Simply put, they found a negative relationship between EE and service recovery performance. In a previous study of social welfare workers, Wright and Cropanzano (1998) also showed that EE reduced JP. It seems that these mixed findings require additional research.

Moliner, Martínez-Tur, Ramos, Peiró, and Craponzano (2008) reported a negative relationship between exhaustion and ERCS among frontline hotel employees in Spain. The relationship between EE and TI obviously showed that EE facing frontline employees increased their intentions to leave the organization (Karatepe, 2011; Karatepe et al., 2009) and heightened absenteeism (Grandey et al., 2004).

Overall, it seems that employees cannot perform their duties effectively due to heightened EE. That is, when they experience EE, they are less likely to deal with customer requests successfully and show extra-role performance. They also think about leaving the organization when they are faced with EE. These relationships are supported by COR theory. Therefore, the following hypotheses are presented:

H2: EE reduces frontline employees' (a) JP, (b) ERCS, and increases their (c) TI.

The third group of hypotheses refers to the full mediating role of EE in the relationship between customer-related social stressors and job outcomes. EE is the work-related strain that mediates the effects of customer-related social stressors as manifested by DCE, CVA, DC, and ACE on JP, ERCS, and TI among frontline employees. The JD-R model can be used as a theoretical framework to develop these hypotheses. Specifically, the health impairment process of the JD-R model proposes that job demands drain employees' physical and mental resources and lead to loss of energy, which in turn results in negative job outcomes (e.g., Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). As a result, the job demands-strain-organizational outcomes relationship can be developed using the JD-R model.

There are empirical studies providing support for the mediating role of burnout/exhaustion/EE. For example, gathering data from different occupations (e.g., employees of an insurance company and a pension fund company) in the Netherlands, Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) reported that burnout fully mediated the effects of job demands on health problems and turnover intentions. Bakker, Demerouti, de Boer, and Schaufeli's (2003) study conducted with nutrition production employees in the Netherlands provided support for the full mediating role of burnout. That is, they found that job demands increased absenteeism only through burnout.

There are also studies indicating exhaustion as a partial mediator. For instance, Babakus et al.'s (2008) study conducted with frontline hotel employees in Turkey revealed that job demands increased TI both directly and indirectly through EE. Karatepe (2011) reported that EE partially mediated the effect of customer aggression on life satisfaction and TI. Bakker et al. (2004) reported that job demands influenced in-role performance both directly and indirectly through exhaustion.

This study proposes that EE has a full mediator role. As the JD-R model proposes, customer-related social stressors (i.e., DCE, CVA, DC, ACE) sap employees' mental and physical resources and lead to loss of energy and EE. That is, frontline employees who frequently meet such customers cannot deal with their requests and problems effectively at all times. Such conditions increase their EE. So, frontline employees who experience EE due to customer-related social stressors are unable to display good performance-in terms of dealing with customer requests and problems and going beyond formal role obligations- and have turnover intentions. Therefore, the following hypotheses are presented:

H3: EE fully mediates the effects of customer-related social stressors (as manifested by DCE, CVA, DC, and ACE) on (a) JP, (b) ERCS, and (c) TI.

Chapter 4

METHODOLOGY

The present chapter gives information about deductive approach that is utilized in this study. This is followed by information regarding the sample of the study and procedures used in data collection. Then, information about the questionnaires and measures used in the empirical investigation is provided. This chapter concludes with information about data analysis.

4.1 Deductive Approach

Deductive approach is utilized in this study, because using COR theory and the JD-R model as theoretical frameworks, a research model is developed and tested through data collected from frontline hotel employees in Cameroon. In the research model the mediating role of EE in the relationship between customer-related social stressors (as manifested by DCE, CVA, DC, and ACE) and job outcomes is evaluated.

4.2 Sample and Procedure

In this study judgmental sampling is used. In judgmental sampling, “the sample elements are selected because it is believed that they are representative of the population of interest” (Churchill, 1995, p. 582). Accordingly, this study uses a judgmental sample of full-time frontline employees (e.g., front desk agents, waiters/waitresses, bell attendants, bartenders) in the three- and four-star hotels in Cameroon. Frontline employees are selected, because they have frequent face-to-face or voice-to-voice interactions with customers, provide information to management of

the hotel about customer requests and problems, and play an important role in delivery of service quality (Karatepe, 2011; Karatepe & Sokmen, 2006).

According to the information received from the National Tourism Council under the ministry of Tourism in Cameroon at the time of this study there were 3 four-star hotels and 14 three-star hotels in Douala. In addition, there were 6 three-star hotels, 3 four-star hotels, and 1 one five-star hotel in Yaoundé and 4 three-star hotels in Bamenda. The researcher contacted managements of all hotels using a letter that included the purpose of the study and permission for data collection. Permission was obtained from managements of 3 three- star hotels and 3 four-star hotels. However, managements of the hotels did not allow the researcher to handle data collection process. Therefore, all questionnaires were submitted to the relevant managers in these hotels.

Data were collected from frontline hotel employees using a time lag of one month. This is consistent with a recent study conducted in Cameroon (Karatepe & Ngeche, 2012). Controlling common method bias is critical because it results in measurement error and threatens the validity of the conclusions about the relationships among study variables (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Two questionnaires were used in data collection: Time I and Time II. The Time I questionnaire included items about DCE, CVA, DC, ACE, and EE. The Time I questionnaire also included items (i.e., age, gender, education, organizational tenure, marital status) about respondents' profile. The Time II questionnaire included items about JP, ERCS, and TI. In order to match the Time I questionnaires with the Time II questionnaires, the following procedures were used. First, the researcher prepared a master list that included the names of frontline employees. Second, the researcher gave an identification number to each

employee in the master list. Third, the researcher wrote the identification number on each Time I and Time II questionnaire that included information about the assurance of confidentiality and anonymity. Finally, the researcher matched the Time I questionnaires with the Time II questionnaires using the identification numbers. This procedure is also consistent with the recent research employed in Cameroon (Karatepe & Ngeche, 2012).

It should be noted that each frontline employee who filled out the Time I/Time II questionnaire put it in a special box with a sealed envelope. This was important for confidentiality and anonymity.

152 questionnaires were submitted to the relevant managers at Time I. 141 questionnaires were retrieved, providing a response rate of 92.8% of the sample at Time I. 141 questionnaires were then distributed to the same frontline employees at Time II. 136 questionnaires were retrieved, providing a response rate of 89.5% of the sample at Time I and a response rate of 96.5% of the sample at Time II.

4.3 Questionnaires and Measures

4.3.1 Questionnaires

In this study data were collected from frontline hotel employees in Cameroon using a time lag of one month. Therefore, two questionnaires were utilized in data collection process. All items in the Time I and Time II questionnaires were prepared in English and then translated into French using the back-translation method (Parameswaran & Yaprak, 1987). That is, the questionnaires were prepared in English. Then, two individuals who were fluent in English and French participated independently in the translation process. Finally, the researcher controlled the Time I and Time II

questionnaires for any inconsistencies. This is because French is the language spoken in Yaoundé and Douala. However, English is the language spoken in Bamenda. Therefore, the original questionnaires were used in Bamenda.

The Time I questionnaire was tested using a pilot sample of 3 frontline hotel employees. The Time II questionnaire was also tested using a pilot sample of 3 frontline hotel employees. The results showed that none of the employees had difficulty understanding items in the questionnaires.

4.3.2 Measures

Customer-related social stressors were measured as a second-order latent variable in this study. DCE, CVA, DC, and ACE were the indicators of customer-related social stressors. All items were taken from Dormann and Zapf's (2004) study. DCE was measured using 8 items. CVA was measured through 5 items. DC and ACE each included 4 items. Responses to items in DCE, CVA, DC, and ACE were rated on five-point scales ranging from 5 (*absolutely true*) to 1 (*not at all true*).

Eight items came from Maslach and Jackson (1981) for measuring EE. This is consistent with other studies (e.g., Karatepe et al., 2009, 2010). Five items were adapted from Babin and Boles (1998) to measure JP. This is consistent with other studies (e.g., Karatepe & Uludag, 2008; Yavas et al., 2010). ERCS was measured using items from Bettencourt and Brown (1997). Three items came from Singh et al. (1996) for measuring TI. Responses to items in JP, ERCS, and TI were rated on five-point scales ranging from 5 (*strongly agree*) to 1 (*strongly disagree*). The same items for measuring TI were also used in other studies (e.g., Karatepe et al., 2009; Karatepe & Ngeche, 2012).

4.4 Data Analysis

Frequencies were used for presenting respondents' profile in terms of age, gender, education, organizational tenure, and marital status. Means and standard deviations of constructed were reported. This study employed both bivariate and multivariate statistical analyses. Pearson-product moment correlations were used. Internal consistency reliability was measured based on the .70 threshold (Nunnally, 1978).

This study used a two-step approach (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). Specifically, the first step consisted of the evaluation of the measures in terms of convergent and discriminant validity using the CFA through LISREL 8.30 (Joreskog & Sorbom, 1996). The second step included the comparison and evaluation of the fully mediated model with the partially mediated model based on the χ^2 difference test. That is, two models were compared to identify the model which seemed to offer useful explanations against the model that did not (James et al., 2006). The hypothesized relationships were measured using SEM.

The χ^2/df , CFI, NNFI, and RMR were used to evaluate the model fit statistics. Kelloway (1998: 24-31) define these tests as follows:

Chi-square: Since chi-square test is sensitive to large sample sizes ($n \geq 200$), other fit statistics are to be taken into account. *CFI-Comparative Fit Index:* The comparative fit index is based the non-central chi-square distribution. *NNFI-Non-Normed Fit Index:* The NNFI results in numbers with a lower bound of 0 but an upper bound greater than 1. Higher values of the NNFI indicate a better fitting model, and it is common to apply the .90 rule as indicating a good fit to the data.

RMR-Root Mean Square Residual: This is the square root of the mean of the squared discrepancies between the implied and observed covariance matrices.”

Chapter 5

RESULTS

This chapter presents the results of the empirical study conducted with frontline hotel employees in Cameroon. Specifically, respondents' profile in terms of age, gender, education, organizational tenure, and marital status is given. This chapter gives information about the psychometric properties of measures in terms of convergent and discriminant validity based on the CFA results. The internal consistency reliabilities for each variable are reported based on coefficient alpha. The correlations among study variables are presented in the current chapter. Finally, this chapter provides the results of hypotheses through SEM.

5.1 Respondents' Profile

Table 1 gives the results for respondents' profile in terms of age, gender, education, organizational tenure, and marital status. The results in Table 1 indicate that respondents were balanced in marital status (50 percent single or divorced and 50 percent married). According to the results in Table 1, 35 (26%) respondents ranged in age from 18 to 27 years, while 46 (34%) respondents ranged in age from 28 to 37 years. 27 percent of the respondents (36 respondents) were between the ages of 38-47. The rest of respondents were older than 37. The majority of the respondents were male (79 male respondents, 58%). 16 percent of the respondents (22 respondents) had secondary and high school education. 78 percent of the respondents (106 respondents) had two-year college degrees and four-year college degrees. 1 (0.7%)

respondent had a graduate degree. The rest of the respondents had primary school education. 71 respondents (52%) had organizational tenures of five years or less. The rest of the respondents had tenures more than five years.

Table 1: Respondents' Profile (n = 136)

	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>%</u>
Age		
18-27	35	25.7
28-37	46	33.8
38-47	36	26.5
48-57	17	12.5
58 and over	2	1.5
Total	136	100.0
Gender		
Male	79	58.1
Female	57	41.9
Total	136	100.0
Education		
Primary School	7	5.1
Secondary and High School	22	16.2
Two-Year College Degree	62	45.6
Four-Year College Degree	44	32.4
Graduate Degree	1	0.7
Total	136	100.0
Organizational Tenure		
Less than 1 year	19	14.0
1-5	52	38.2
6-10	39	28.7
11-15	24	17.6
16-20	2	1.5
Total	136	100.0
Marital status		
Single or divorced	68	50.0
Married	68	50.0
Total	136	100.0

5.2 Measurement

Some of the items were dropped as a result of CFA because of correlation measurement errors and low standardized loadings ($< .50$). That is, four items each from DCE and EE, one item each from CVA, ACE, and ERCS, and two items from DC were dropped during CFA. Dropping items during CFA for scale purification is

also widespread among other empirical studies (e.g., Karatepe & Sokmen, 2006). Items removed from further analysis are shown with an asterisk in the Appendix. The results of CFA demonstrated the following fit statistics: ($\chi^2 = 550.97$, $df = 349$; $\chi^2 / df = 1.58$; CFI = .92; NNFI = .91; RMR = .068). These results showed that the eight-factor measurement model fit the data acceptably. The standardized loadings ranged from .68 to .95. All t -values were significant. These results showed evidence of convergent validity (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988).

Discriminant validity was controlled using the χ^2 difference test ($p < .01$). That is, DCE was compared with EE based on the χ^2 difference test to see whether these two variables were distinct. A two-factor model was compared with one-factor model. The result was significant, because a two-factor model that included DCE and EE had a significant result. This was repeated for the rest of the variables. The results were significant for each pair of measures. Therefore, the results also showed evidence of discriminant validity (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988).

The results in Table 2 showed that coefficient alphas were above the cut-off level of .70. That is, coefficient alphas for DCE, CVA, DC, ACE, EE, JP, ERCS, and TI were .90, .89, .90, .89, .89, .89, .91, and .84, respectively. Means, standard deviations, and correlations of study variables were presented in Table 2. The results in Table 2 also showed that the overwhelming majority of the correlations among study variables were significant.

Table 2: Scale Reliabilities, Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations of Study Variables

Variables	Mean	SD	Alpha	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Disproportionate customer expectations	3.52	1.16	.90	1.000							
2. Customer verbal aggression	2.63	1.24	.89	.556 ^{***}	1.000						
3. Disliked customers	2.93	1.34	.90	.613 ^{***}	.764 ^{***}	1.000					
4. Ambiguous customer expectations	2.93	1.34	.89	.595 ^{***}	.731 ^{***}	.669 ^{***}	1.000				
5. Emotional exhaustion	2.72	1.29	.89	.426 ^{***}	.650 ^{***}	.734 ^{***}	.708 ^{***}	1.000			
6. Job performance	4.06	.88	.89	-.078	-.155 ^{**}	-.152 ^{**}	-.126 [*]	-.149 ^{**}	1.000		
7. Extra-role customer service	4.02	.94	.91	-.030	-.115 [*]	-.160 ^{**}	-.090	-.256 ^{***}	.558 ^{***}	1.000	
8. Turnover intentions	2.61	1.20	.84	.324 ^{***}	.484 ^{***}	.495 ^{***}	.461 ^{***}	.504 ^{***}	-.285 ^{***}	-.251 ^{**}	1.000

Notes: ^{*} $p < .10$, ^{**} $p < .05$, ^{***} $p < .01$ One-tailed test.

5.3 Model Test Results

As suggested by James et al. (2006), the hypothesized or fully mediated model ($\chi^2 = 593.85$, $df = 368$) was compared with the partially mediated model ($\chi^2 = 586.33$, $df = 365$) ($p < .01$). According to the results of the χ^2 difference test, there was a non-significant difference in fit ($\Delta\chi^2 = 7.52$, $\Delta df = 3$). Therefore, the fully mediated model seemed to demonstrate a better fit than the partially mediated model. The results for the fully mediated model were as follows: ($\chi^2 = 593.85$, $df = 368$; $\chi^2 / df = 1.61$; CFI = .91; NNFI = .91; RMR = .082). These model fit statistics also suggested that hypothesized or fully mediated model fit the data acceptably.

The results of hypotheses were presented in Table 3. The results of SEM demonstrated that DCE ($\gamma_{11} = .66$, $t = 7.17$), CVA ($\gamma_{21} = .88$, $t = 8.88$), DC ($\gamma_{31} = .93$, $t = 11.21$), and ACE ($\gamma_{41} = .86$, $t = 10.70$) were significant indicators of customer-related social stressors. The results of SEM indicated that customer-related social stressors as manifested by DCE, CVA, DC, and ACE were significantly and positively related to EE ($\gamma_{51} = .87$, $t = 9.41$). Therefore, hypothesis 1 was supported.

The results in Table 3 revealed that EE was significantly and negatively related to JP ($\beta_{65} = -.17$, $t = -1.75$). Hypothesis 2(a) was therefore supported. Hypothesis 2(b) was supported, because the results demonstrated a significant negative relationship between EE and ERCS ($\beta_{75} = -.27$, $t = -2.94$). The results also indicated that EE significantly and positively affected TI ($\beta_{85} = .58$, $t = 5.51$). Hypothesis 2(c) was therefore supported.

Table 3: Model Test Results

Hypothesized model parameters		Standardized path estimate	t-value
H1	Customer-related social stressors → Emotional exhaustion (γ_{51})	.87	9.41
H2(a)	Emotional exhaustion → Job performance (β_{65})	-.17	-1.75
H2(b)	Emotional exhaustion → Extra-role customer service (β_{75})	-.27	-2.94
H2(c)	Emotional exhaustion → Turnover intentions (β_{85})	.58	5.51
H3(a)	Customer-related social stressors → Emotional exhaustion → Job performance	-.15	-1.74
H3(b)	Customer-related social stressors → Emotional exhaustion → Extra-role customer service	-.24	-2.91
H3(c)	Customer-related social stressors → Emotional exhaustion → Turnover intentions	.51	5.35
	Disproportionate customer expectations ← Customer-related social stressors (γ_{11})	.66	7.17
	Customer verbal aggression ← Customer-related social stressors (γ_{21})	.88	8.88
	Disliked customers ← Customer-related social stressors (γ_{31})	.93	11.21
	Ambiguous customer expectations ← Customer-related social stressors(γ_{41})	.86	10.70

R² for:

Customer-related social stressors	.71
Emotional exhaustion	.76
Job performance	.03
Extra-role customer service	.07
Turnover intentions	.34

Model fit statistics:

$\chi^2 = 593.85$, $df = 368$; $\chi^2 / df = 1.61$; CFI = .91; NNFI = .91; RMR = .082

Notes: T-values: one-tailed test $t > 1.3$, $p < 0.10$; $t > 1.65$, $p < .05$; and $t > 2.33$, $p < .01$. All direct estimates are significant. All indirect estimates are also significant based on Sobel test. CFI = Comparative fit index; NNFI = Non-normed fit index; RMR = Root mean square residual.

The results showed that the standardized indirect effects of customer-related social stressors on JP through EE (-.15, t -value = -1.74) were significant based on Sobel test. Hypothesis 3(a) was therefore supported. The standardized indirect effects of customer-related social stressors on ERCS via EE (-.24, t -value = -2.91) were significant based on Sobel test. Thus, hypothesis 3(b) was supported. Hypothesis 3(c) was also supported, since the standardized indirect effects of customer-related social stressors on TI through EE (.51, t -value = 5.35) were significant based on Sobel test. Overall, these results suggested that EE fully mediated the effects of customer-related social stressors on JP, ERCS, and TI. The results explained 71% of the variance in customer-related social stressors, 76% in EE, 3% in JP, 7% in ERCS, and 34% in TI.

Chapter 6

DISCUSSION

This chapter provides a detailed assessment of the results using the JD-R model, COR theory, and empirical evidence in the relevant literature. Using the results of this study, this chapter provides useful implications for hotel managers. Finally, the present chapter gives a discussion of the limitations of the empirical study and avenues for future research.

6.1 Contribution to the Hospitality Marketing Literature

This study makes two important contributions to the hospitality marketing literature. First, frontline employees have to solve customer problems successfully and deal with their requests based on specific service standards set by management of the hotel. However, they also have to serve customers who show frustrations and various types of aggressive behaviors in service encounters (Karatepe et al., 2009; Sliter et al., 2010). Therefore, this study centers on customer-related social stressors as manifested by DCE, CVA, DC, and ACE in frontline service jobs. This is significant, because there are few empirical studies that examine the consequences of dysfunctional customer behaviors in the extant literature in general (Sliter et al., 2010; Walsh, 2011) and hospitality marketing literature in particular (Karatepe et al., 2009).

Second, this study collects data from frontline hotel employees with a time lag of one month in Cameroon. It is obvious that most of the empirical studies on customer-related social stressors or dysfunctional customer behaviors are based on the samples from the Western countries (e.g., Daunt & Harris, 2011; McColl-Kennedy et al., 2009). Collecting data from the under-represented countries such as the sub-Saharan African countries is significant (Karatepe & Ngeche, 2012). As a developing sub-Saharan African country, the hospitality industry in Cameroon is one of the most appropriate settings to examine the study relationships.

6.2 Evaluation of Findings

This study developed and tested a research model that examined EE as a full mediator of customer-related social stressors on JP ERCS, and TI. The results of SEM provide support for the full mediating role of EE. The results are evaluated and discussed below.

The results suggest that DCE, CVA, DC, and ACE are significant indicators of customer-related social stressors. DC appears to be the most important indicator of customer-related social stressors, followed by CVA, ACE, and DCE. Consistent with other studies in the current literature (Dormann & Zapf, 2004; Ben-Zur & Yagil, 2005), customer-related social stressors or aggressive customer behaviors facing frontline employees in service encounters lead to EE. This is also consistent with COR theory that frontline employees experience EE when they find that they lose their limited resources as a result of dealing with customer-related social stressors and do not obtain positive outcomes in return (Hobfoll, 2011).

The results further suggest that EE results in negative outcomes such poor JP and ERCS and higher TI. That is, employees who experience EE are unable to display satisfactory performance in the workplace and have intentions to leave the organization. These results are consistent with the works of Karatepe et al. (2009) and Moliner et al. (2008). In addition, these results are consistent with COR theory that frontline employees have negative outcomes, because they lose their limited resources as a result of stressful conditions and experience EE (Lee & Ashforth, 1996).

When the full mediating role of EE is considered, the results suggest that EE fully mediates the effects of customer-related social stressors on JP, ERCS, and TI. Consistent with the health impairment process of the JD-R model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), customer-related social stressors deplete frontline employees' physical and mental resources and result in loss of energy, which in turn gives rise to negative job outcomes. That is, frontline employees who are unable to deal with dysfunctional customer behaviors experience EE, and therefore, display poor JP and ERCS and have TI.

When the results of this study are compared with the ones belonging to Western countries, there are various similarities. For instance, the result for the effect of customer-related social stressors on EE is consistent with Dormann and Zapf's (2004) study conducted in Germany. The result for the effect of EE on ERCS is in line with Moliner et al.'s (2008) study in Spain. The result regarding the effect of EE on JP is also in line with Wright and Cropanzano's (1998) study in the United States.

6.3 Limitations and Future Research Directions

There are several limitations to this study. Based on these limitations, future research directions are offered. First, this study was employed in a single country and in a particular industry. It raises concerns about the issue of generalizability. Therefore, in future studies cross-national samples (e.g., Cameroon, the United States, Germany) in different tourism and hospitality settings can be used for investigating EE as a mediator of the effects of customer-related social stressors on JP, ERCS, and TI.

Second, this study collected data from frontline hotel employees with a time lag of one month. This is one of the potential remedies against common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003). This study's time-lagged design can also provide some evidence for the issue of causality, but it is not enough. Therefore, in future studies using longitudinal studies for the issue of causality would be more appropriate.

Third, this study used JP, ERCS, and TI as the job outcomes of customer-related social stressors and EE. Therefore, in future studies including other performance outcomes such as creative performance and team performance in the research model would be useful. Fourth, this study tested the study relationships based on frontline employees as the unit of analysis. In future studies testing the relationships at the group-level would be beneficial.

Fifth, coworker support, supervisor support, training, or job autonomy could be considered as buffers against the negative effects of customer-related social stressors on job outcomes. Therefore, future empirical studies may examine these relationships. Finally, replication studies with large sample sizes in different tourism and hospitality settings in Cameroon would provide additional insights about the

mediating role of EE in the relationship between customer-related social stressors and job outcomes.

6.4 Management Implications

There are some implications for managers using the results of this study. First, managements of the hotels should receive feedback from their frontline employees about various types of aggressive customer behaviors. This can be done through communication meetings and continuous training programs. Such feedback can then be used as case studies to teach effective coping mechanisms against customer aggression to frontline employees. Otherwise, frontline employees would experience high levels of EE as a result of customer-related social stressors.

Second, managements of the hotels should invest in teamwork. That is, in training programs the importance of working in teams to be able to deal with aggressive customers should be explained to frontline employees. Having support from coworkers and working in cooperation with coworkers in dealing with these customers appears to be an important resource for reducing customer-related social stressors.

Third, it is critical for managements of the hotels to hire individuals who fit the organization and immediate demands of frontline service jobs. It is already known that frontline service jobs are highly stressful. Therefore, managements of the hotels should consider hiring individuals with the skills and abilities needed to work in frontline service job positions. Such hiring process can be supported by the use of objective tests in the organization. Finally, it appears that due to the absence of

modern human resource management practices, these implications are also useful for the hotel industry in Cameroon.

Chapter 7

CONCLUSION

This study developed and tested a research model that examined EE as a full mediator of the impacts of customer-related social stressors as manifested by DCE, CVA, DC, and ACE on JP, ERCS, and TI. In the present study customer-related social stressors is treated as a second-order latent construct. This study used data from frontline employees with a time lag of one month in the three- and four-star hotels in Cameroon. In this thesis there are two main reasons for examining the antecedents of customer-related social stressors. First, empirical research about the outcomes of customer-related social stressors in the current literature in general and hospitality marketing literature in particular is scarce. Second, this study tests the abovementioned relationships through data gathered from Cameroon, an under-represented country in the sub-Saharan Africa.

The results suggest that EE acts as full mediator of the effects of customer-related social stressors on JP, ERCS, and TI. Specifically, customer-related social stressors increase frontline employees' EE. EE in turn reduces JP and ERCS and increases TI. The findings regarding these relationships are also consistent with theoretical frameworks such as COR theory and the JD-R model.

It is important for researchers to focus on various resources reducing customer-related social stressors in frontline service jobs. For example, coworker support,

supervisor support, training, or autonomy may prove useful for decreasing the negative effects of customer-related social stressors on job outcomes. In other words, these resources could be used as potential buffers in future empirical studies.

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APPENDICES

**Appendix A: A FIELD STUDY IN THE HOTEL INDUSTRY OF
CAMEROON
(Time I)**

Dear Respondent:

This research is aimed to better understand your daily experiences at work. Therefore, we kindly request that you self-administer this questionnaire.

Any sort of information collected during our research will be kept in confidential. We appreciate your time and participation in our research very much.

If you have any questions about our research, please do not hesitate to contact Ms. Rita Anumbose Nkendon through her e-mail address: umen2003@yahoo.co.uk.

Thank you for your kind cooperation.

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SECTION I.

Please indicate your disagreement or agreement with each statement by crossing the number using the following five-point scale:

- (1) I strongly disagree
- (2) I disagree
- (3) I am undecided
- (4) I agree
- (5) I strongly agree

1. I feel emotionally drained from my work.*	1	2	3	4	5
2. I feel used up at the end of the workday.*	1	2	3	4	5
3. I feel fatigued when I get up in the morning and have to face another day on the job.*	1	2	3	4	5
4. Working with people all day is really a strain for me.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I feel burned out from my work.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I feel frustrated by my job.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I feel I am working too hard on my job.*	1	2	3	4	5
8. I feel like I am at the end of my rope.	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION II.

Please use the following five-point scale to answer each item.

- (1) Not at all true
- (2) Not true
- (3) Undecided
- (4) True
- (5) Absolutely true

9. Some customers always demand special treatment.*	1	2	3	4	5
10. Our customers do not recognize when we are very busy.	1	2	3	4	5
11. Some customers ask us to do things they could do by themselves.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Customers vent their bad mood out on us.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Our customers do not understand that we have to comply with certain rules.	1	2	3	4	5
14. Complaining without reason is common among our customers.*	1	2	3	4	5
15. Our customers' demands are often exorbitant.*	1	2	3	4	5
16. Our customers are pressed for time.*	1	2	3	4	5
17. Customers often shout at us.*	1	2	3	4	5
18. Customers personally attack us verbally.	1	2	3	4	5
19. Customers are always complaining about us.	1	2	3	4	5
20. Customers get angry at us even over minor matters.	1	2	3	4	5
21. Some customers argue all the time.	1	2	3	4	5
22. One has to work with hostile customers.	1	2	3	4	5
23. One has to work together with customers who have no sense of humor.	1	2	3	4	5
24. Some customers are unpleasant people.*	1	2	3	4	5
25. Our work rhythm is steadily interrupted by certain customers.*	1	2	3	4	5
26. Customers' wishes are often contradictory.*	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION II.-Continued

Please use the following five-point scale to answer each item.

- (1) Not at all true
- (2) Not true
- (3) Undecided
- (4) True
- (5) Absolutely true

27. It is not clear what customers request from us.	1	2	3	4	5
28. It is difficult to make arrangements with customers.	1	2	3	4	5
29. Customers' instructions can complicate our work.	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION III.

Please indicate your answer by placing a (√) in the appropriate alternative.

1. How old are you?

- 18-27 ()
- 28-37 ()
- 38-47 ()
- 48-57 ()
- 58 and over ()

2. What is your gender?

- Male ()
- Female ()

3. What is the highest level of working in education you completed?

- Primary school ()
- Secondary and high school ()
- Vocational school (two-year program) ()
- University first degree ()
- Master or Ph.D. degree ()

4. How long have you been this hotel?

- Under 1 year ()
- 1-5 years ()
- 6-10 years ()
- 11-15 years ()
- 16-20 years ()

5. What is your marital status?

- Single or divorced ()
- Married ()

Thank you for your kind cooperation.

Appendix B: A FIELD STUDY IN THE HOTEL INDUSTRY OF CAMEROON (Time II)

Dear Respondent:

This research is aimed to better understand your daily experiences at work. Therefore, we kindly request that you self-administer this questionnaire.

Any sort of information collected during our research will be kept in confidential. We appreciate your time and participation in our research very much.

If you have any questions about our research, please do not hesitate to contact Ms. Rita Anumbose Nkendon through her e-mail address: umen2003@yahoo.co.uk.

Thank you for your kind cooperation.

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Address:

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Eastern Mediterranean University
Gazimagusa, TRNC
Via Mersin 10, Turkey

Please indicate your disagreement or agreement with each statement by crossing the number using the following five-point scale:

- (1) I strongly disagree
- (2) I disagree
- (3) I am undecided
- (4) I agree
- (5) I strongly agree

1. I voluntarily assist customers even if it means going beyond job requirements.*	1	2	3	4	5
2. I help customers with problems beyond what is expected or required.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I often go above and beyond the call of duty when serving customers.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I willingly go out of my way to make a customer satisfied.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I frequently go out the way to help a customer.	1	2	3	4	5
6. It is likely that I will actively look for a new job next year.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I often think about quitting.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I will probably look for a new job next year.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I am a top performer.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I am in the top 10 percent of frontline employees here.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I get along better with customers than do others.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I know more about services delivered to customers than others.	1	2	3	4	5
13. I know what my customers expect better than others.	1	2	3	4	5

Thank you for your kind cooperation.