

Must Emotional Demands Always Be Stressful?

The Moderating Role of Specific Job Resources in Health Care Work

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Jan de Jonge*, Maria Peeters#, and Pascale Le Blanc#

* Eindhoven University of Technology # Utrecht University

The Netherlands

Email: j.d.jonge@tue.nl

/Department of Technology Management

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Overview

- Introduction and Research Problem
 - Inconsistent findings of emotional demands on well-being due to the moderating role of so-called matching job resources?
- Method
 - Cross-sectional survey among health care workers
 - Multivariate multiple regression analysis (LISREL)
- Results
 - Interactions between emotional demands and resources do matter
- Major Conclusion
 - More support for well-shaped matching interaction effects than for well-shaped non-matching interactions

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Introduction

- Emotional job demands: prolonged effort at work associated with the regulations of emotions
- Could have negative effects on employee well-being (e.g., professional burnout)
- Recently: investigation of positive well-being effects (e.g., job satisfaction, professional efficacy)
- However, empirical research findings are inconsistent

Theoretical Perspective (1)

- Possible explanation
 - particular moderating role of so-called job resources: some sort of energy reservoirs in the work environment that can be tapped (e.g., job control, emotional support)
- Theoretical refinement on this moderating role
 - Functional self-regulation processes:
 - buffering effects to be strongest when job resources correspond to ('match') the kind of job demands

Theoretical Perspective (2)

- Theoretical refinement on this moderating role (cont.)
 - For instance, emotional supportive colleagues are likely to be helpful in case of high emotional demands to reduce strain
 - Optimal conditions for positive well-being in case of a balanced mixture between corresponding demands and resources
 - For instance, high emotional demands versus high emotional resources in the prediction of job challenge

Hypotheses

- Job resources moderate the relation between emotional demands and well-being outcomes:
 - weaker, positive, association between demands and negative well-being in case of high job resources (H1a)
 - stronger, positive, association between demands and positive well-being in case of high job resources (H2a)
 - moderating effect is stronger for matching (i.e. emotional) job resources than for non-matching (i.e. cognitive) job resources (H1b/2b)

Design and Sample

- Cross-sectional survey study (n=1,259)
- 826 health care workers (66% response rate)
- 90% female
- Mean age of 41 years (SD=11)
- Mean work experience of 7 years (SD=7)
- 12% full-time workers (i.e., >> 36 hours per week)

Measures (1)

- Job characteristics
 - Emotional demands (8 items; CFA: 3 subscales)
 - Confrontation with dying & human suffering (2 items; $r = .70$)
 - Confrontation with awkward & aggressive clients (3 items; $\alpha = .86$)
 - General emotionally demanding work (3 items; $\alpha = .79$)
 - Emotional resources: emotional support (4 items; $\alpha = .79$)
 - Cognitive resources: cognitive control (5 items; $\alpha = .81$)

Measures (2)

- **Employee well-being**
 - emotional exhaustion (5 items; $\alpha = .87$)
 - + creativity (12 items; $\alpha = .96$)
 - + active learning (4 items; $\alpha = .87$)
 - + job challenge (2 items; $r = .49$)
- **Demographics**
 - gender & age
 - education & type of contract

Analytical Strategy

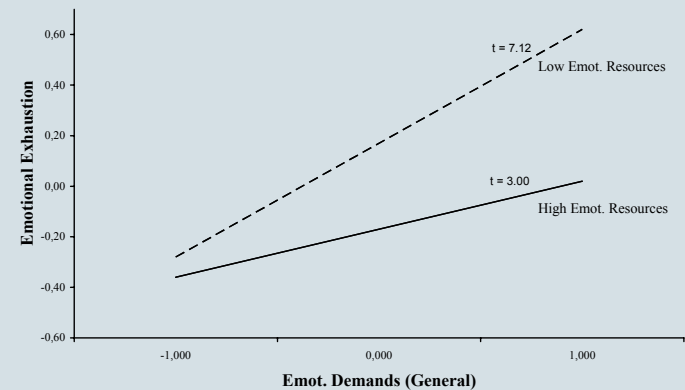
- **Multivariate multiple regression analysis (LISREL 8.30)**
- **Covariance matrices and ML estimation**
- **Multiplicative interaction terms out of standardized demands and resources**
- **Controlling for demographics**
- **Cross-validation procedure: random split (50%/50%) into a test group and a validation group**

Results (1)

- Model comparison: chi-square difference test
- 'Interaction-effect' model versus 'main-effect only' model
- Interactive model has a better statistical fit in the test group ($\Delta\chi^2(24) = 39.07, p < .05$) than the main-effect model
- Interactions between demands and resources do matter (i.e., overall evidence for moderation)
- Cross-validation: Interactive model has a better statistical fit in the validation group as well ($\Delta\chi^2(24) = 44.14, p < .01$)

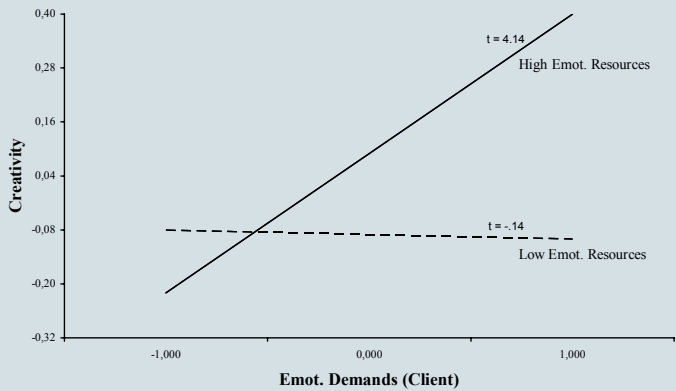
Results (2)

Emotional Exhaustion on Emot. Demands (General)



Results (3)

Creativity on Emot. Demands (Client)



Results (4) matching vs non-matching interactions

| Interaction Pattern | Valid Interactions | Reversed Interactions | Tested Interactions | Ratio Valid / Tested |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| Matching (emo-dem vs emo-res) | 5 | 1 | 24 | 20.8% |
| Non-matching (emo-dem vs cog-res) | 3 | 3 | 24 | 12.5% |

Conclusions (1)

- In general, more support for well-shaped matching interaction effects than for non-matching interactions
- Both emotional and cognitive resources were able to buffer the positive relation between emotional demands and emotional exhaustion (H1a confirmed, H1b not)
- Positive relations between emotional demands and positive well-being were merely detected in case of matching, emotional, demands (H2a & H2b confirmed)

Conclusions (2)

- Limitations
 - cross-sectional design
 - less successful cross-validation for interaction effects
 - moderating role of matching personal resources
- Practical implications
 - providing service workers with more, preferably matching, job resources could make emotional demands less stressful, and even stimulating and challenging