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The Effect of Social Support on the Relationship between Emotional Labour and Wellbeing in Call Centre Employees

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A research project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MA by coursework and Research Report in the field of Industrial Psychology in the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 9 February, 2011.

I declare that this research report is my own, unaided work. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination at this or any other University

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ABSTRACT

In order examine different types of social support (emotional and instrumental) from different sources of social support (colleague and supervisor) as potential moderators of the relationship between emotional labour and psychological wellbeing and intention to leave in call centre employees, a study involving 184 call centre employees within a prominent Johannesburg financial institution in the banking sector was conducted. Participants voluntarily completed four questionnaires, namely Brotheridge and Lee's (2003) Emotional Labour Scale, Caplan, Cobb, French, Van Harrison and Pinneau's (1980) Social Support Scale, the twelve-item version of the General Health Questionnaire (Goldberg, 1972) and O'Driscoll and Beehr's (1994) Turnover Intentions Scale. Moderated Multiple Regression Analyses were used explore possible main and interaction effects of the independent and moderator variables.

Results indicate significant main effects of each type and source of support on the dependent variables of psychological wellbeing and intention to leave. With regard to support as a potential moderator, both emotional and instrumental support from supervisors were found to have had moderating effects on the relationship between emotional labour and intention to leave. In particular, support from supervisors altered the direction of the relationship between emotional labour and intention to leave by inverting it to a positive value, suggesting that in the event of the experience of emotional labour, supervisor support increases the intention of the individual to leave the organisation. Therefore findings of the current research offer that despite prior literature to the contrary, emotional labour may not always serve to increase employee turnover intentions. In addition, the role of supervisor social support in mitigating working conditions and employee turnover intentions is questioned.

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