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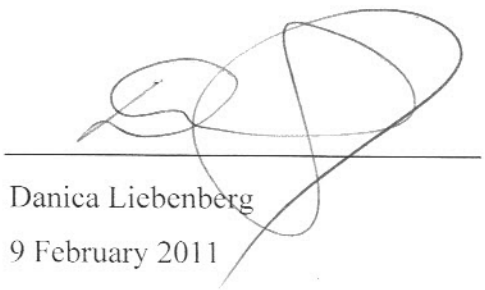
A research project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MA by coursework and Research Report in the field of Industrial Psychology in the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 9 February, 2011.

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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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1: Introduction and Research Outline **1**

1.1. Introduction 1

1.2. Research Outline 2

Chapter 2: Theoretical and Conceptual Background **3**

2.1. Stress 3

2.1.1. Introduction 3

2.1.2. Models of Stress 3

2.1.3. The Transactional Model of Stress 4

2.1.4. The Call Centre Environment 7

2.2. Emotional Labour and Psychological Wellbeing 8

2.3. Emotional Labour and Intention to Leave 9

2.4. Social Support 10

2.4.1. Introduction- Defining Social Support 10

2.4.2. Types of Social Support 11

2.4.3. Sources of Social Support 11

2.4.4. The Main Effect of Social Support 12

2.4.5. Moderating Effect of Social Support 13

2.4. Research Objective 14

Chapter 3: Methodology **18**

3.1. Research Design 18

3.2. The Model 18

3.3. Sample 19

3.4. Measures 21

3.5. Procedure 23

3.6. Scoring Procedure 24

3.7. Statistical Analysis 24

3.7.1. Moderated Multiple Regression 24

3.7.2. Assumptions of Moderated Multiple Regression 26

3.7.2.1. Relationship of Biographical Variables 26

3.7.2.2. Absence of Outliers 26

3.7.2.3. Absence of Multicollinearity 26
3.7.2.4. Normality, Linearity and Homoscedasticity of Residuals 27
3.7.2.5. Measurement Error 27

Chapter 4: Results **28**
4.1. Tests of Assumptions of Moderated Multiple Regression 28
4.1.1. Relationship of Biographical Variables 28
4.1.2. Absence of Outliers 31
4.1.3. Normality, Linearity and Homoscedasticity of Residuals 31
4.1.4. Measurement Error 31
4.1.5. Absence of Multicollinearity 32
4.2. Results of Moderated Multiple Regression Analyses 34
4.2.1. Psychological Wellbeing 34
4.2.2. Intention to Leave 39
4.3. Results Summary 44

Chapter 5: Discussion **46**
5.1. Limitations and Directions for Future Research 54
5.2. Conclusion 57

References 58

Appendices 67
Appendix A- Survey 67
Appendix B- Request for Access Letter 73
Appendix C- Participant Information Sheet 74

List of Figures

Figure 1 The Transactional Model 6

Figure 2 Main and Moderating Effect of Social Support 14

Figure 3 The Transactional-Michigan Model of Stress 16

List of Tables

Table 1 Demographic Details of Sample 20

Table 2 Independent Samples T-tests Comparison of Gender for Psychological Wellbeing and Intention to Leave 28

Table 3 One-way Analyses of Variance Comparisons of Education, Marital status and Ethnicity for Psychological Wellbeing and Intention to Leave 29

Table 4 Pearson Product-Moment Correlations between Age, Number of Dependents, Psychological Wellbeing and Intention to Leave 30

Table 5 Cronbach's Alpha Internal Consistency Estimates for Measurement Instruments 32

Table 6 Pearson Product-Moment Correlations between Emotional Labour, Social Support, Psychological Wellbeing and Intention to Leave 33

Table 7 Moderated Multiple Regression for Psychological Wellbeing on Emotional Labour and Colleague-Emotional Support 34

Table 8 Moderated Multiple Regression for Psychological Wellbeing on Emotional Labour and Colleague-Instrumental Support 35

Table 9 Moderated Multiple Regression for Psychological Wellbeing on Emotional Labour and Colleague-Instrumental Support- No Interaction Term 36

Table 10 Moderated Multiple Regression for Psychological Wellbeing on Emotional Labour and Supervisor-Emotional Support 36

Table 11 Moderated Multiple Regression for Psychological Wellbeing on Emotional Labour and Supervisor-Emotional Support - No Interaction Term 37

Table 12 Moderated Multiple Regression for Psychological Wellbeing on Emotional Labour and Supervisor-Instrumental Support 38

Table 13 Moderated Multiple Regression for Psychological Wellbeing on Emotional Labour and Supervisor-Instrumental Support - No Interaction Term 39

Table 14 Moderated Multiple Regression for Intention to Leave on Emotional Labour and Colleague-Emotional Support 39

Table 15 Moderated Multiple Regression for Intention to Leave on Emotional Labour and Colleague-Emotional Support- No Interaction Term 40

Table 16 Moderated Multiple Regression for Intention to Leave on Emotional Labour and Colleague-Instrumental Support 41

Table 17 Moderated Multiple Regression for Intention to Leave on Emotional Labour and Colleague-Instrumental Support- No Interaction Term 42

Table 18 Moderated Multiple Regression for Intention to Leave on Emotional Labour and Supervisor-Emotional Support 43

Table 19 Moderated Multiple Regression for Intention to Leave on Emotional Labour and Supervisor-Instrumental Support 44