

# Effect of Customer Orientation Attitude on Emotional Exhaustion Through Mediation of Surface Acting

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**Abstract**—This study explores the relationship between customer orientation attitude, surface acting and employee exhaustion in the restaurant industry. The research method uses laboratory experiments, which are data collection techniques using a questionnaire with a case scenario of emotional exhaustion employees. A questionnaire was distributed to 190 economics faculty students department of management. The structural equation model (SEM) is then applied for data analysis. The results showed that customer orientation attitude was significantly related to surface acting in the restaurant industry. Surface acting variables cannot mediate the relationship between customer orientation attitude and emotional exhaustion. and surface acting has a significant impact on emotional exhaustion. Based on these findings, theoretical and practical implications are provided, as well as limitations and research recommendations for future studies.

**Keywords:** *customer orientation attitude, surface acting, emotional exhaustion*

## I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, researchers and marketing practitioners interested in the concept of customer orientation. Today, businesses has a high level of responsiveness to customers. Businesses improve the quality of service effectively and efficiently to win the competition (1). Employee motivation shows the best service with the aim of customer orientation (2). Customer orientation has two dimensions which include, customer oriented attitude and customer oriented behavior (1).

Customer orientation is implemented to provide service quality and achieve company success (1). (3) explain the attitude of proactive services can meet the needs and wants of consumers. Customer-oriented attitude (COA) encourages companies always be oriented to customer satisfaction (4), so employees must be able to understand customer needs in any condition (5). Emotional employees under certain conditions will act on the surface acting (SA) (6); (7); (8);) and emotional exhaustion (EE) (9); (10); (11).

Surface acting is an act that presents a good view of employees or actions as expected by the company, even though their feelings do not match the feelings they show (12). Changes in emotions in the form of surface acting by employees have a negative impact, because the company loses employee motivation and reduces performance in service quality (13).

Employee performance decreases due to other factors such as emotional exhaustion. (14) explains that the emotional, psychological, and physical condition of employees is a determining factor in the quality of customer service. Therefore, companies need to understand the SA and COA factors of employees. This condition has a negative impact on service quality. employees as service providers will be motivated to improve service quality (15). Furthermore, this behavior will not only reduce the quality of employee services (16); and (17), but will have implications for company losses (15) , and service failure.

This study uses a COA scenario design in the restaurant industry. Restaurants are a high contact system in the service sector (18). A high contact system is the level of interaction between employees and customers. Employees who have a high contact system have the opportunity to get pleasant and unpleasant attitudes from customers. In addition, restaurants offer both service products and goods that make customer dissatisfaction higher than other industries (19). Therefore, This study aims to explore the COA, SA, and EE conducted by employees using the experimental method.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Research from (5) shows that COA that is run continuously for the long term also involves surface acting behavior in employees (5). The more pressure from the organizational environment makes employees do not have an actual COA. Thus, employees will show a pretense attitude in doing services to customers. Surface acting in service becomes a daily routine that is carried out by employees to satisfy customers. This will have an impact on

the psychological and mental conditions of employees in the form of emotional exhaustion at work (6). Emotional exhaustion experienced by employees will have a negative impact both for the organization, individuals, and their lives as a whole (11).

#### *A. Emotional Exhaustion*

Emotional exhaustion is a state of emotional and mental frustration that is caused by stress that continuously causes depersonalization and fatigue (20). (21) argues that emotional exhaustion results from a combination of depression, emotional lethargy, and cynicism in the environment. (22) explain that there are several triggers for increased emotional exhaustion in employees such as aggressive behavior from customers in the form of verbal aggression, physical aggression, and sexual harassment. This behavior will have an impact on the decline in employee performance which will result in losses for the company (15).

The effects of emotional exhaustion are based on the conservations of resource theory. According to (23), conservations of resources (COR) are related to the loss and gain of resources which are the main concepts that can be linked to employee performance. When employees use personal resources to handle organizational demands in accordance with their duties and functions, they do not experience a reduction in resources or stress, on the contrary when work is considered to be beyond one's ability. This will have an impact on reducing or depleting the level of emotional resources (24). Based on COR theory, if employees must obey the rules of their organizational expression on a continuous basis regardless of the perceived emotionalness it will tend to have an impact on fatigue and depletion of emotional resources.

(25) describe four dimensions in emotional exhaustion, namely workload, time pressure, lack of social support, and role stress. Meanwhile, (26) revealed that emotional exhaustion can be influenced by emotional disturbances, work fatigue, fatigue when you wake up in the morning, fatigue facing work schedules, frustration at work, fatigue when working too hard and work limits.

#### *B. Customer Oriented Attitude*

The concept of COA is an interacting with customer in feeling pleasure, and gives own satisfaction (4). COA can reflect things like employee affinity or interest in dealing with customers, and concept of employees to interact effectively with customers to improve service performance (5).

Employees working in the service sector must have a COA. COA will have an impact on the behavior or actions that must be carried out by employees (3). Attitude orientation differs from behavior orientation, because behavior is not permanent whereas attitude can drive customer orientation for the long term (4). COA will create a good relationship between employees and customers. It will make employees aware of the importance of customer orientation both for individual performance and company performance.

The COA will shape customer orientation and perception of the value created and felt, thus impacting on

customer satisfaction. The ability to understand customers will make companies recognize potential customers. It's not only recognizing customers, but also understanding and knowing the wants and needs of customers for the present and the future (27).

Employees in carrying out their duties and functions must be careful in responding to their customers. They must position themselves as what the customer feels (4). This will make customers have a sense of emotional closeness and feel satisfied with employee service.

Every job that involves customer interaction requires employees to be able to engage in good emotional regulation, such as displaying certain emotions (for example, happiness) and suppressing emotions that are felt to others (for example, anger) (5). So that customers always feel in good condition when interacting with customers. This is part of complying with job requirements and organizational expectations for dealing effectively with customers (28). Furthermore, the development of a strong COA will encourage positive interpretation and reaction to the service environment among employees and potentially lead to surface acting and emotional exhaustion behavior (29). Based on this relationship, the research hypothesis is proposed as follows:

H1: Customer oriented attitude affects surface acting

H2: Customer oriented attitude affects emotional exhaustion

#### *C. Surface Acting*

Surface acting was first introduced by (30). Surface acting is a pretense of emotional behavior that is being displayed to be in accordance with organizational rules (8). Employees as service providers will always try to display happy expressions when serving customers. It aims to create a positive service experience for customers (7).

Surface acting that continues to be carried out by employees can have a negative impact on organizational performance, because it can comprehensively reduce value and honesty (31), feelings of alienation from oneself, increased depression (30), and reduce work performance (32). In addition, surface acting can have an impact on cognitive dissonance. Cognitive dissonance theory states that a person is aware of an attitude that causes discomfort but continues to carry out that attitude (Kern and Grandey, 2009). Surface acting as part of functional emotional regulation is also very helpful in producing quality services but can show dysfunctional indications for employee health and work stress levels (29).

Empirically, studies have shown that the majority of employees report frequent emotional counterfeiting with the aim of achieving organizational standards (33). (34) added the fact that customers can identify between authentic and fake smiles if customers find employees who display fake smiles in the service process it will have an impact on the fall of the assessment on the service.

Emotions experienced by employees is a form of response to something that happens in a work environment that includes all forms of work such as variations in tasks, requests for work, autonomy, and obligations in expressing emotions. Service sector employees will face various kinds of conflicts in their work. Conflicts that occur will become

obstacles in their work. This encourages employees to have the ability to manage emotions that must be displayed to customers.

Empirical research has explained that the effects of surface acting on organizations and employees show a variety of negative results, such as work exhaustion, resource depletion, depersonalization, and depression (21). Based on cognitive dissonance theory (35), involvement in surface acting develops emotional/cognitive dissonance that can be an antecedent of emotional exhaustion, employees experience stress because of the obligation to display emotions that differ from their true feelings (29), thus we argue that surface acting by employees in service can increase emotional exhaustion. Based on this relationship, the research hypothesis is proposed as follows:

H3: Surface acting affects emotional exhaustion

*D. Effect of Customer Oriented Attitude mediated by Surface Acting on Emotional Exhaustion*

Composition of customer orientation can influence behavior employees, such as strategies for managing emotions associated with occupation (5). Positive perception of employee oriented customers can ultimately influence employee performance (5). The work environment that is not conducive or negative comes from customers will create conditions that are challenging, stressful, and emotional exhaustion for employees. This is due to the development of COA which requires employees to correlate to customer satisfaction (4).

Service employees who have more positive COAs tends to be related to acting in service meetings, be it acting both deep and pretend acting. Employee who having a customer-oriented attitude will be reflected in that behavior will meet the needs and desires of customers (4). When employees try to meet the needs and desires of customers, they tend to do surface acting actions that have an impact on emotional exhaustion (6).

H4: Customer oriented attitude mediated influential surface acting on emotional exhaustion

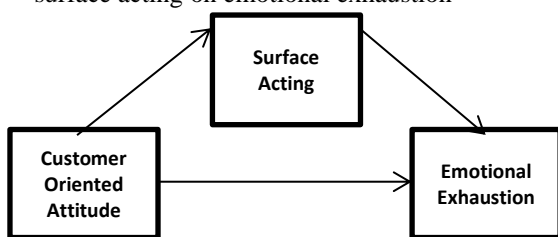


Fig. 1. Illustrates The Empirical Model of COA, SA, and EE

a. An empirical model of COA, SA, and EE

**III. RESEARCH METHODS**

*A. Methode, Data Collecting, and Participant*

This research used laboratory experimental, which is data collection techniques using a questionnaire with a case scenario of emotional exhaustion employees. The scenario procedure used by the researcher consists of three scenarios. Each scenario has a case to one another, where the second

case is a continuation of the first case and the third case is a continuation of case I and case II. This study uses a simple random sampling method, where random members of the population are taken using a sample calculation for SEM. (36) explained that the calculation of samples from the population in SEM is at least five times the number of parameters used in the study.

Participants in this study 190 respondents, department of management students of the Faculty of Economics and Business became the object of research. Management students were selected as samples because they were considered relatively homogeneous, not only based on age differences but also in grades, life experiences, and behavior. In addition, management students have an understanding of business conditions. Furthermore, the primary data obtained were processed using SEM (Structural Equation Modeling) analysis tools.

*B. Scenario Procedure*

The first procedure performed in this study is directing respondents with written consent, and asking them to imagine themselves in the position of restaurant employees. After that, the respondent answers the question on the question sheet. The questionnaire consists of cases of customer-oriented attitude consists of three case section. Each case is related to one another. Second case is a continuation of the first case and the third case is a continuation of case I and Case II.

The first part, respondents will be guided to position and Imagine themselves as sports positioned as employees who work in one restaurant. Next, in the second part of the case the respondent will return read and understood about the surface practice of acting at work, then as approving case I, the respondent will ask to answer questions related to the respondent respondents to the scenario that has been be delivered. In the last section, respondents will be asked to answer related questions characteristics of emotional exhaustion in employees.

**VI. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

*A. Measurement model analysis*

To be able to establish that the theory fits the sampled data, the validity and reliability of the measured constructs were confirmed. The reflective model was used to measure constructs associated parameters. Following the Rule of Thumb for evaluating measurement model, the PLS algorithm was calculated to test measures including the composite reliability (to assess the internal consistency reliability), indicator reliability, convergent validity, AVE and discriminant validity (36) (Figure 2).

With regards to internal consistency reliability, values of composite reliability must be bigger than 0.708 to be considered acceptable. Convergent validity is defined as the degree of positive correlation among alternative measures of a construct. Indicators of the reflective construct indicate that the AVE should be larger than 0.50 or higher to indicate the construct's ability to explain over half of the variations of its indicators.

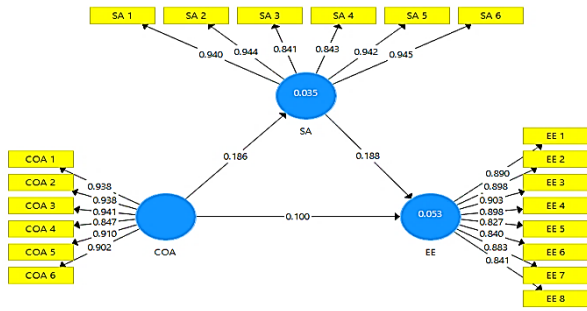


Fig. 2. High Levels of Internal Reliability (meaning the composite reliability values are higher than 0.7) on All Measured Latent Variables.

AVE value as the evaluation criterion is used to assess convergent validity. AVE registered values of constructs were above 0.50. In view of this, it can be confirmed that there is a positive correlation among alternative measures of the same latent variables.

Employing the Rule of Thumb in evaluating the reflective measurement model chosen, it has arrived that internal consistency reliability was achieved as a result of having composite reliability bigger than 0.708. Indicators of the reflective construct showed that the AVE was higher than 0.50 suggested threshold or bigger indicating the construct's ability to explain over half of the variations of its indicators. The AVE's square root of each latent variable was bigger than its highest correlation with another construct. This, in summary, suggests that the theory well fits the sampled data, confirming the validity and reliability of the measured constructs.

TABLE I. CONSTRUCT RELIABILITY and VALIDITY

	Cronbach's $\alpha$	$p_A$	CR	AVE
COA	0.961	0.978	0.968	0.834
SA	0.958	0.961	0.961	0.829
EE	0.956	0.964	0.962	0.762

B. Hypothesis Testing

The results on the assessment of structural model relationships indicated that a number of path coefficients recorded relatively small values. The complete bootstrapping procedure was run to confirm the significance of the constructs following the Rule of the Thumb procedure. The minimum number of recommended bootstrap samples adopted was 5,000. For a two-tailed test, significant values of 1.65, 1.96 and 2.57 are considered as satisfactory at probability error levels of 10, 5 and 1 percent, respectively.

TABLE II. SIGNIFICANCE TESTING RESULTS of the STRUCTURAL MODEL PATH COEFFICIENTS

	(O)	(M)	SD	t-values	p-values	Significance Level
COA > SA	0.186	0.195	0.060	3.115	0.002	Significant
COA > EE	0.100	0.107	0.075	1.335	0.183	Not Significant
SA > EE	0.188	0.203	0.065	2.896	0.004	Significant

For this study, path coefficients values with 5 percent probability error were considered as significant statistically. As already indicated in the structural models, path coefficients represent the hypothesized relationships among latent variables. The results of analysis for the structural model path coefficients significance levels as presented in Table 2. indicate that Customer oriented attitude was significant in influencing the respondents' Surface acting, while relationship among Customer oriented attitude and Emotional exhaustion not significance. Variable Surface acting as moderation have a significant impact on Emotional exhaustion.

The sixth hypothesis testing shows that there is a significant relationship between surface acting and emotional exhaustion. This can be proven from the t-statistic value of 2.44 (t-statistic value > 1.96) and p-value of 0.015 (p-value < 0.05). The original sample value shows a positive value of 0.138 which indicates that the direction of the relationship between surface acting variables and emotional exhaustion is positive. Thus, it can be concluded that surface acting has a positive effect on emotional exhaustion. This shows that the sixth hypothesis is accepted.

The sixth hypothesis testing results show that the relationship between customer oriented attitude mediated by surface acting has no effect on emotional exhaustion. This is because of the mediation stages determined by (37) there are stages that are not met, namely in the first stage, testing the effect of customer oriented attitude on emotional exhaustion produces a smaller T-statistic value than the T-table value, that is 1.07 and p-values 0.28 (> 0.05). So the eighth hypothesis is rejected. This is because testing has proven that COA is not mediated by SA against EE.

V. CONCLUSION

A. Conclusion

Our research explores how customer oriented attitude causes employees to choose surface acting as their emotional work strategy of choice, which develops emotional feelings of fatigue and in turn leads to lower quality work in a restaurant environment. This research lays a framework for future studies that seek to understand how customer oriented attitude is through surface acting and emotional exhaustion.

This study's approach to better understands the surface acting and emotional exhaustion experienced by frontline restaurant service employees. Adopting this approach, our findings show that employees who positively evaluate the support provided by the organization and their supervisor are more likely to control and overcome the negative effects of emotional exhaustion. Based on this finding, some specific practical implications are suggested. The results that can be followed up based on the findings of this study suggest that supervisors and restaurant managers are starting to have frontline service employees categorizing critical incidents as represented by problems related to customer impoliteness and overwork. Then using this information, scenarios can be developed to educate all front-line employee services on techniques that can be used to better relieve and overcome the situations of impoliteness and work that overcame certain customers.

Management continuously monitors the results of this program can be coordinated by the core rotation of frontline

service employees, to be regularly discussed at employee meetings. Another practical implication is for managers to actually be present regularly in the restaurant dining room so that the presence of 'supervision' is clearly seen by employees and customers. Easy access to management by customers and employees can reduce many potentially difficult situations before they escalate in confrontational and uncivilized incidents.

### *B. Limitaion and Suggestion for the Future Research*

Limitations of this research on the object which is a student. Where, this research uses the experimental method. The objects in this study never face-to-face experience with customers. Thus, researchers have difficulty in understanding the real conditions experienced by employees. Therefore, further research can use employees as research objects. Because employees understand and feel directly how to face to face with customers.

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