



## COVID-19 outbreak effects on affectivity, emotional labor, and emotional exhaustion of service workers

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**Abstract.** *Purpose.* This paper investigates service workers' emotional aspects, including affectivity, emotional labor, and emotional exhaustion during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Methodology.* This paper tests the hypotheses by analyzing data from 250 service workers in Indonesia responding to online questionnaires. *Findings.* The result shows that workers with positive affectivity respond positively to the new work measures during the COVID-19 pandemic and do not feel emotionally exhausted. Meanwhile, for the workers with negative affectivity, new work measures evoke their emotional exhaustion. *Research implications for practice.* The present study suggests that service workers with negative affectivity are prone to negative consequences amidst the crisis, hence managers should pay more attention to them. Further, this study suggests the organization initiate training and development programs regarding service delivery during the crisis, as the quality of services given by the workers are at risk during the crisis. *Value of the results.* This study empirically establishes that during the time of crisis, affectivity, emotional labor, and emotional exhaustion interact differently compared to the normal time.

**Keywords:** COVID-19; service workers; emotional exhaustion; affectivity; emotional labor.

### Introduction

The COVID-19 outbreak has changed the way humans live their lives. The changes impact all life segments, from how people communicate, how people move from one place to another, how people conduct businesses, and other ways of living. Countries worldwide are conducting measures to reduce the number of people infected, such as national quarantines, mass testing, and physical distancing. Millions of employees are working from home, markets are gradually down, and many companies shut down. Many people believe that remote working is an alternative solution. Trial and error are practiced to determine how best to carry out online working during this pandemic. However, as T. Lee reported, seven in ten employers struggle to adapt to this arrangement. Most employers do not have an emergency

preparation plan before this COVID-19 pandemic. Two in three employers mention that maintaining employee morale is a considerable challenge (Lee, 2020).

The work adjustments are likewise befallen in the service industry. The adjustments even bring more challenges for the service industry as one of the hardest affected industries due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Guzman et al., 2020). The service industry is strongly concomitant that face-to-face interaction is incompatible with the new work measures (Avdiu, Nayyar, 2020). The new work measures' put service industries in a dilemmatic situation. The workers are either adapting to give online services, work in a shift, or completely stop operating. Adapting to the new work systems raises a vital concern for the service workers' emotional well-being.

It is not easy to measure how employees feel about working under new measures following the COVID-19 pandemic, such as working from home (for an exception, see: Taylor et al., 2020) fear of coming into contact with possibly contaminated objects or surfaces, fear of foreigners who might be carrying infection (i.e., disease-related xenophobia). Several studies have reported the drawbacks of working from home, such as decreased motivation to work, hindered communication amongst employees, and lower employee retention (Kaushik, Guleria, 2020; Purwanto et al., 2020). With those many challenges, employees must continue to work amid limitations following the pandemic, making these workers prone to feel exhausted emotionally. Emotional exhaustion is one of the burnout syndromes frequently occur among service businesses (Maslach, Jackson, 1981). Some researchers argue that emotional exhaustion depends on workers' affectivity (e.g., Diefendorff et al., 2011; Morris, Feldman, 1996; Rouxel et al., 2016). However, related to the COVID-19 context, there is no empirical evidence that the relationship between affectivity on emotional exhaustion remains constant. This research examines the void of restricted knowledge on the relationship between service workers' affectivity, emotional labor, and emotional exhaustion before and during the COVID-19 outbreaks. In a broader sense, this research contributes to the knowledge of affectivity, emotional exhaustion, and emotional labor variables interplay under crisis.

The authors administered a cross-sectional study to gather data from 250 service workers from various sectors across Indonesia. This research examined the data set by structural equation modeling (SEM). In doing so, this research has several contributions. First, this study is amongst the first to examine the state of emotional exhaustion among service workers from various working fields as one of the most impacted parties following the COVID-19 outbreak. As previous researches on the COVID-19 predominantly focus on medical workers or students, this study might add the knowledge about the COVID-19 impacts on the broader part of the society (e.g., Cao, Fang et al., 2020; Cao, Wei et al., 2020; Unadkat, Farquhar, 2020; Zhai, Du, 2020). Second, this study profoundly probes how service workers perform their duties by examining emotional labor variables. Previous research was focused on emotional labor during the COVID-19 pandemic (Hjálmsdóttir, Bjarnadóttir, 2020). However, this study context is limited to the family dynamics (i.e., emotional labor performed by mothers), the understanding of emotional labor in work contexts during the COVID-19 remains unidentified. Finally, throughout the examinations, the authors depict theoretical contributions and practical contributions. Especially on how the service workers should adjust to this unprecedented situation and how service companies should manage their workers' productivity and wellbeing despite the existence of numerous constraints.

## **Theoretical background and hypotheses**

### **Emotional exhaustion**

Emotional exhaustion is a burnout condition that often occurs among workers in service industries (Maslach, Jackson, 1981). Some researchers describe emotional exhaustion as a state of drained strength from a set of stress-related returns to excessive emotional and psychological demands (Jackson et al., 1987). G. Kerse with colleagues define burnout as someone's decreased

energy, fatigue, and exhaustion as a response to extreme work, and it is more likely to happen in someone who does an intensive job linked to other people (Kerse et al., 2018).

When workers experience burnout, they exhibit physical and behavioral signs, feel depressed, struggle to hold in feelings, and perceive that people surrounding them create problems (Freudenberger, 1974). Emotional exhaustion can generate negative senses, such as anxiety, displeasure, and disappointment. In general, workers feel emotionally exhausted when overwhelmed, have no control over their workload, and deal with conflicting demands and dissatisfaction (Saxton et al., 1991).

Generally, emotional exhaustion is affected by personal, job, and environmental variables. Personal variables, such as status, money, and self-esteem, may reduce the degree of emotional exhaustion (Hobfoll, 1989). Meanwhile, job variables such as job autonomy and supervisor support affect emotional exhaustion. Workers with a higher level of job autonomy and supervisor support tend to have lower emotional exhaustion degrees, and customers with unfavorable character will increase workers' exhaustion (Goldberg, Grandey, 2007). Stress predicts emotional exhaustion, disrespectful interactions with colleagues, lack of appreciation from supervisors, lack of incentives, time pressures, and unrealistic goals (Khoo et al., 2017).

### **Affectivity**

Affectivity is the sum of individual mood states, and the two dominant affectivity dimensions are positive and negative affectivity (Watson et al., 1988). Positive affectivity is an individual tendency to experience positive and pleasurable moods (Kaplan et al., 2013). The high degree of positive affectivity reflects the extent to which a person feels enthusiastic, fully concentrated, and has many energies. In contrast, a low degree of positive affectivity reflects sadness and exhaustion (Watson et al., 1988). Negative affectivity is the tendency of a person to experience subjective distress, bad moods, and a substantial degree of grief and discontent (Watson, Pennebaker, 1989).

Positive affectivity provides a good state of a person's focus and behavior to deal with physical, social, intellectual, and psychological resources (Fredrickson, 2001). Affectivity relates to experiences, as experience rises, commonly positive affectivity will follow to grow (Seo et al., 2004). Negative affectivity corresponds to one of the big five dominant personality factors: neuroticism (Jeronimus et al., 2013). Although negative affectivity frequently associates bad characteristics, J. P. Forgas argues that negative emotions are not necessarily perceived negatively (Forgas, 2017). He contends that negative affectivity contributes to a person's cognitive strategies to deal with environmental challenges. Negative affectivity connects to the bottom-up cognitive process in response to an unfamiliar or problematic environment (Forgas, 1998)<sup>3</sup>. Individuals with negative affectivity also predispose to be cautious about coping with deceptive and manipulative environments better (Chaiken, Trope, 1999).

### **Emotional labor**

Emotional labor is a term coined by A. R. Hochschild regarding the interaction between service provider or employee and service receiver or customer. The emotional labor concept perceives the workplace as the set of stages where employees act as actors and customers act as audiences. Service business requires its employees to perform particular emotions in dealing with customers. Sometimes, employees need to fake or adjust their genuine emotions to perform an emotion their company desires. When an action occurs, the interaction between the employee and customers is like a play on a stage (Hochschild, 1983).

A. R. Hochschild defines emotional labor as 'the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display' (Hochschild, 1983, p. 7). Other authors define emotional labor as 'the display of expected emotions by service agents during service encounters' (Meanwhile, Ashforth, Humphrey, 1993, p. 88) or as 'the effort, planning, and control needed to express organizationally

desired emotions during interpersonal transactions' (Morris, Feldman, 1996, p. 987). Emotional labor is the process of regulating both feelings and expressions for organizational goals (Grandey, 2000). S. M. Kruml and D. Geddes state that 'emotional labor is what employees perform when they are required to feel, or at least project the appearance of, certain emotions as they engage in job-relevant interactions' (Kruml, Geddes, 2000, p. 9). The key point of those definitions is that emotional labor reflects employees' emotional management to perform the required emotions, to achieve organizational goals.

The dimensions of emotional labor are diverse among researchers. However, emotional labor mainly comprises a surface and deep acting (Brotheridge, Lee, 2003; Chu, Murrmann, 2006; Grandey, 2003; Kruml, Geddes, 2000; Morris, Feldman, 1996). Surface acting is the condition where an employee changes only his or her outward appearances and behavior to fit the organization's demands (Hochschild, 1983). Contrary to that, deep acting is where an employee truly feels his/her demonstrated emotions. Deep acting is further divided into passive deep acting and active deep acting (Ashforth, Humphrey, 1993; Chu, Murrmann, 2006). Passive deep acting (also called genuine acting) is where the aligned shown and felt emotions happened naturally, meanwhile active deep acting is where the employee put some effort to adjust the felt and the expressed emotion (Ashforth, Humphrey, 1993; Chu, Murrmann, 2006).

#### **Affectivity on emotional exhaustion**

Some researchers suggest that affectivity is a robust personal predictor of emotional exhaustion (e.g., Iverson et al., 1998; Raman et al., 2016; Rouxel et al., 2016). Negative affectivity is significantly related to emotional exhaustion (Iverson et al., 1998; Marchand, Vandenberghe, 2016). Positive affectivity negatively influences emotional exhaustion (Linando, Sitalaksmi, 2017; Raman et al., 2016). A person with high negative affectivity is inclined to frequently experience distress (Watson et al., 1988), which will produce emotional exhaustion. On the other hand, a person with positive affectivity tends to process and perform emotional information, solve problems, make plans, and earn achievement easily, in which these characters negatively correspond to emotional exhaustion (Fredrickson, 2001).

After the COVID-19 outbreak, the authors argue that the relations between affectivity and emotional exhaustion will be influenced. A high degree of work stress eventually leads to emotional exhaustion (Gaines, Jermier, 1983). Empirically, studies show that during the COVID-19 pandemic, service workers' stress levels from various industries like education, hospitality, and health generally worsen (Košir et al., 2020; Mo et al., 2020; Yu et al., 2021). The higher stress level is due to numerous factors such as the obscurity of working arrangements, the chaotic work-life balance, and the fear of getting COVID-19 infection. As people with negative affectivity tend to focus on the bad things in life (Jeronimus et al., 2013), the authors hypothesize that workers with negative affectivity will experience greater emotional exhaustion during the pandemic. Contrary to that, workers with positive affectivity see a crisis as a challenge and might still thrive during the crisis, and these workers will be more unlikely to fall into emotional exhaustion (Kaplan et al., 2013). Based on those arguments, the hypotheses are:

*H1a. Positive affectivity has a higher negative influence on emotional exhaustion during COVID-19 compared to before COVID-19;*

*H1b. Negative affectivity has a higher positive influence on emotional exhaustion during COVID-19 compared to before COVID-19.*

#### **Affectivity on emotional labor**

A person with positive affectivity will tend to feel enthusiastic, active, and optimistic. In contrast, a person with negative affectivity will tend to feel aversive, anger, fear, and cynical (Grandey, 2000; Morris, Feldman, 1996; Watson et al., 1988). The condition where a worker's affectivity conflicts



with the emotion he/she should perform is the condition where the gap between what the worker performs and what the worker feels occurs (Morris, Feldman, 1996). For instance, a worker with positive affectivity may not fit well in a job that requires negative emotions such as bill collecting (Johnson, 2004), thus the worker in such a condition may implement only surface rather than deep acting. Researchers discover that negative affectivity is positively related only to surface acting and has no significant effect on deep acting (e.g., Diefendorff et al., 2011; Grandey, 2000; Lee, Chelladurai, 2016).

Meanwhile, individuals with positive affectivity tend to put more effort into managing their inner feelings and thus engage in deep acting and negatively link with surface acting (Diefendorff et al., 2011; Lee, Chelladurai, 2016). The authors argue that the COVID-19 crisis will influence the effect of these relationships significantly. For instance, though workers with positive affectivity tend to focus on the bright side even during a difficult time (Fredrickson et al., 2003), to perform deep acting requires significant efforts that might be tough to perform (Grandey, 2003; Hochschild, 1983).

Moreover, in an uncertain and unstable working condition under COVID-19, the authors argue that the workers with positive affectivity will have a higher association to deep acting before COVID-19 and at the same time also have a higher negative association to surface acting before COVID-19. The condition of the COVID-19 pandemic is associated with excessive working online fatigue, work and personal/family time that has no clear boundaries, and more efforts to show feelings demanded at work due to non-face-to-face interaction. This condition triggers employees with positive affectivity to be even more tired from working during the pandemic than before. This condition might encourage employees with positive affectivity to have lower deep acting and surface acting levels during the pandemic. Because the perceived work fatigue and the mechanism of achieving the desired emotional level are increasingly complex, employees with positive affective tend to reduce their efforts to objectify emotional labor and adjust it to the emotional level that can be achieved. In other words, compared to before COVID-19, during the pandemic, workers with positive affectivity will be less attached to emotional labor.

Finally, workers with negative affectivity will have even more dissonance between what they feel and what they show during the COVID-19 crisis. This hypothesis is relevant to the nature of negative affectivity that significantly correlates with surface acting, and the characteristic of workers with negative affectivity that is inclined to find the gap to not put the best performance at work (Cheung, Tang, 2009; Kaplan et al., 2009). Hence, based on those arguments, the hypotheses are:

*H2a. Positive affectivity has a higher negative influence on surface acting before COVID-19 compared to during COVID-19;*

*H2b. Positive affectivity has a higher positive influence on deep acting before COVID-19 compared to during COVID-19;*

*H2c. Negative affectivity has a higher positive influence on surface acting during COVID-19 compared to before COVID-19.*

### **Emotional labor on emotional exhaustion**

Emotional exhaustion is when workers drain their energy because of excessive emotional demand (Saxton et al., 1991). Workers who experience role conflict will be exhausted emotionally (Morris, Feldman, 1996). Role conflict means the emotion shown and felt by the workers are not parallel. In other words, surface acting rather than deep acting will lead to emotional exhaustion (Brotheridge, Lee, 2003; Grandey, 2003; Kruml, Geddes, 2000). Furthermore, in the COVID-19 context, role conflict has a greater chance to occur. Working arrangement obscurity (i.e., less direct interaction with the customers) might make service workers lose the grip upon the emotions they should perform, which eventually leads to a higher degree of emotional exhaustion. In addition, the

authors also argue that in the COVID-19 time, not only surface acting but also deep acting might lead to emotional exhaustion. The changing working arrangements during the pandemic may obstruct the process of performing deep acting. For instance, for the workers who shift from offline-based to online-based services, it would be more challenging to show the customers that the displayed emotion is the same as felt. Meanwhile, the fear of getting infected may interfere with the worker's personal feelings for those who still work at the office, making deep acting more difficult to perform. These argumentations align with J. Yoo and T. J. Arnold suggestion, that additional job stressors will affect the ability to deliver deep acting (Yoo, Arnold, 2016).

Hence the hypotheses are:

*H3a. Deep acting has a higher positive influence on emotional exhaustion during COVID-19 compared to before COVID-19;*

*H3b. Surface acting has a higher positive influence on emotional exhaustion during COVID-19 compared to before COVID-19.*

## Method

### Research design and participants

This study's data were collected using questionnaires to test the hypotheses, and the questionnaires were outspread online. This study does not restrict the industries; service workers who work in various industries may participate. The final data includes respondents from education, financial, law, health, tourism, advertisement, culinary, and consultation services. Initially, the authors collected 303 data, which was then filtered by the degree of interaction these workers had with customers. One question asks interaction intensity level with the customer ranging from '1' as the least intense to '6' as the most intense. The authors only include respondents who choose at least '4' out of '6' intensity levels. Finally, the authors eliminated 53 data and further tested 250 usable data. The filtering process is in line with several criteria of jobs that involve emotional labor on its processes, namely: a) jobs that require direct contacts such as face-to-face or voice-to-voice contact; b) jobs that require the workers to perform a specific emotion while he/she gives services; c) jobs that allow the employer to control and evaluate the emotional activities of employees (Hochschild, 1983).

The final data had 95 (38%) male respondents and 155 (62%) female respondents. On generation category, 156 (62,4%) are Baby Boomers and Gen X, 87 (34,8%) are Gen Y, 7 (2,8%) are Gen Z. On marital status, 30 (12%) are single, 213 (85,2%) are married and 7 (2,8%) are divorced. In terms of work tenure, 12 (4,8%) work for less than two years, 62 (24,8%) work for 2–8 years, and 176 (70,4%) work for more than eight years. Regarding the COVID-19 impact on the respondents' work, most of the respondents (64,8%) doing Work from Home (WFH) and other responses are varying amongst working in a shift, Work from Office (WFO) with shorter hours, a mix of WFO and WFH, and few respondents normally work at the office as they did before the COVID-19 outbreak. The majority of the respondents (98,8%) mention that their job requires them to perform positive emotions at work, while the rest (1,2%) mention that their job requires them to perform negative emotions at work.

### Measures

All variable measurements use a 6-point Likert scale to avoid central tendency bias. The respondents need to choose one out of six scales that best reflects their condition, with '1' = "strongly disagree" to '6' = "strongly agree." The questionnaires are in Bahasa Indonesia to match the language primarily used by the respondents. For translation accuracy, all scales were translated from English to Bahasa Indonesia by a professional company, namely Center for International Language and Cultural Studies (CILACS). In addition, before questionnaire circulation, the authors discussed and checked for each item's validity (i.e., whether the questions are understandable, not ambiguous).

### **Affectivity**

This research uses the *I-PANAS-SF* (Thompson, 2007; modified from “*The Positive and Negative Affect Schedule, PANAS*” by Watson et al., 1988) to test workers’ affectivity, the scale consists of 10 items. Five items to examine positive affectivity and five others to examine negative affectivity. Items of this scale include “Determined’ reflects my personality”, “Active’ reflects my personality”, “Afraid’ reflects my personality” and “Hostile’ reflects my personality”. Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  for the positive affectivity scale is 0.841 and negative affectivity is 0.792.

### **Emotional labor**

This research employs the scale offered by C. M. Brotheridge and R. T. Lee (modified from “*Emotional Labour Scale*”) to measure emotional labor. The scale consists of 6 items with 3 items to examine surface acting and 3 items to examine deep acting. Items of this scale include “Resist expressing my true feelings” and “Make an effort to actually feel the emotions that I need to display to others” (Brotheridge, Lee, 2003). For this variable, the measurement was conducted twice. The authors ask the respondent about their emotional labor before and after the COVID-19 outbreak. Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  of surface acting scale before COVID-19 is 0.854, and during COVID-19 is 0.821. Meanwhile, Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  of deep acting scale before COVID-19 is 0.890, and during COVID-19 is 0.888.

### **Emotional exhaustion**

This research uses scale to measure emotional exhaustion (from “*Maslach Burnout Inventory, MBI*” by Maslach, Jackson, 1981). The scale consists of 9 items to examine emotional exhaustion. Items of this scale include “I feel emotionally drained at work”, “Working with people is really a strain on me” and “I feel like I am at the end of my rope”. The measurement for emotional exhaustion was also conducted twice. The authors ask the respondent about their emotional exhaustion before and during the COVID-19 outbreak. Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  of this scale before COVID-19 is 0.905, and during COVID-19 is 0.914.

## **Data analysis and results**

### **Instrument testing**

Instrument testing in this study includes measurement, validity, and reliability tests using SPSS 22 software. Since this study identifies the comparative effects of COVID-19 pandemic conditions, the authors present analysis results before and after the pandemic. The use of questions addressing a particular period (i.e., before and after the pandemic) is conceptually termed as ‘reference period’. Among the rule of thumb for this approach, the shorter the reference period is, the more likely the respondents could recall the situation from their memory (Saris, Gallhofer, 2014). When the authors conducted this study, the COVID-19 pandemic had only been running for almost a year, making it relatively easy for the respondents to recollect the conditions they were facing before the pandemic. In addition to that conceptual justification, several authors (e.g., Craig et al., 2003; Katou, 2013) also apply this method to conduct empirical research.

This study employs Structured Equation Modeling (SEM) for instrumentation tests, correlation, paired sample *t*-test, and structural model testing. The factor analysis result shows good measurement validity of the before and after the pandemic conditions (Tables 1 and 2). However, the authors must delete some variable items because they do not meet the specified factor values. The factor value limit is a minimum of 0.5, where the factor is extracted by the maximum likelihood method and the Varimax rotation. Factor rotation requires six repetitions for maximum factor yield. Meanwhile, the removed items for “before the COVID-19” are EE4b, EE6b, EE8b, EE9b, and NA5. The removed items for “during the COVID-19” are EE6a, EE8a, EE9a.

Table I. Factor analysis, reliability results<sup>a</sup> (before the pandemic)

Construct and indicators <sup>b</sup>	Reliability <sup>c</sup>	Factor loading				
		PA	NA	DA	SA	EE
Emotional exhaustion (EE)	<b>(.884)</b>					
EE1b						.781
EE2b						.854
EE3b						.777
EE5b						.858
EE7b						.540
Surface acting (SA)	<b>(.855)</b>					
SA1b						.650
SA2b						.851
SA3b						.674
Deep acting (DA)	<b>(.891)</b>					
DA1b						.858
DA2b						.848
DA3b						.761
Positive affectivity (PA)	<b>(.842)</b>					
PA1						.691
PA2						.730
PA3						.572
PA4						.788
PA5						.788
Negative affectivity (NA)	<b>(.791)</b>					
NA1						.623
NA2						.893
NA3						.552
NA4						.557

**Notes:** Total explained variance for five constructs is 61.886%. Extraction method: Maximum likelihood. Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser normalization. <sup>a</sup> — Rotated factor matrix. <sup>b</sup> — Converged in 6 iterations. <sup>c</sup> — Cronbach's alphas are in parentheses and bold.

Table 2. Factor analysis and reliability results<sup>a</sup> (after the pandemic)

Construct and indicators <sup>b</sup>	Reliability <sup>c</sup>	Factor loading				
		PA	NA	DA	SA	EE
Emotional exhaustion (EE)	<b>(.879)</b>					
EE1a						.792
EE2a						.824
EE3a						.758
EE4a						.544
EE5a						.828
EE7a						.532
Surface acting (SA)	<b>(.822)</b>					
SA1a						.562
SA2a						.902
SA3a						.658
Deep acting (DA)	<b>(.888)</b>					
DA1a						.798
DA2a						.897
DA3a						.753
Positive affectivity (PA)	<b>(.842)</b>					
PA1						.677
PA2						.727
PA3						.563



Construct and indicators <sup>b</sup>	Reliability <sup>c</sup>	Factor loading				
		PA	NA	DA	SA	EE
PA4		.790				
PA5		.790				
Negative affectivity (NA)	(.793)					
NA1			.634			
NA2			.870			
NA3			.593			
NA4			.590			
NA5			.406			

**Notes:** Total explained variance for five constructs is 58.226%. Extraction method: Maximum likelihood. Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser normalization. <sup>a</sup> — Rotated factor matrix. <sup>b</sup> — Converged in 6 iterations. <sup>c</sup> — Cronbach's alphas are in parentheses and bold.

**Table 3.** Means, standard deviations, and correlations

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Emotional exhaustion (EE)	3.0	1.1	1	.405**	.290**	-.111	.230**
2. Surface acting (SA)	2.3	1.1		1	.411**	-.179**	.466**
3. Deep acting (DA)	2.9	1.2			1	-.030	.306**
4. Positive affectivity (PA)	5.1	0.7				1	-.328**
5. Negative affectivity (NA)	2.6	1.0					1

**Notes:**  $N = 250$ . \* —  $p < 0.05$ , \*\* —  $p < 0.01$ . All variables using condition before COVID-19. There is no significant difference between before and during COVID-19 in correlation.

### Paired sample T-test

Before moving into structural model testing, the authors first wanted to test the changes in affectivity perceptions before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. This test is one of this study's strengths as the effectiveness of structural model test results depends on whether employees perceive differences in work conditions, burdens, and affectivity before and after the COVID-19. The authors chose the paired sample t-test to compare the difference between the two means of paired samples. This test aims to reveal the COVID-19 effect on employees from the same subjects' paired sample data on different situational perceptions.

After the pandemic, there are differences in the mean of three pairs of paired samples, which show a higher mean value. Each paired data correlation value also shows a significant result at  $0.000 < 0.05$ , which means that each increase of one data in the paired cluster corresponds to other data in the paired cluster. To see the paired sample test results in more detail, the authors present table 4 below.

**Table 4.** Paired samples test

Pairs	Paired differences		<i>t</i>	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	SD		
Pair 1. EE <sub>b</sub> — EE <sub>a</sub>	-.17	1.25	-2.208	.028*
Pair 2. DA <sub>b</sub> — DA <sub>a</sub>	-.10	.79	-2.151	.032*
Pair 3. SA <sub>b</sub> — SA <sub>a</sub>	-.08	.77	-1.676	.095

**Notes:**  $df = 249$ . \* —  $p < 0.05$ . *b* — before COVID-19, *a* — after/during COVID-19. Pair 3 is not significant.

### Structural equation model testing

The authors employ AMOS 22 to run SEM testing, which seeks to test the variables' structural model in this study. Each hypothesis states the magnitude of influence differences between variables both before and during the pandemic. Table 5 presents the complete hypothesis testing results.

The research model also shows a good fit between variables and the data used in the analysis. However, the RMSEA value slightly does not match the expectation, the score is slightly higher. RMSEA

is a measure to indicate the discarded residual value as a consequence of partially omitted data variance in the initial analysis. Here is the goodness of fit model results in more detail:  $\chi^2$  value with  $df = 1$  is 33,510,  $p < 0.05$ , RMSEA = 0.361, GFI = 0.952, CFI = 0.823, SRMR = 0.113, and NNFI = 0.827.

Table 5. Hypotheses testing result

No.	Hypothesis	Estimates value		Statement
		Before COVID-19	During COVID-19	
H1a	Positive affectivity has a higher negative influence on emotional exhaustion during COVID-19 compared to before COVID-19	-.074	-.102	Supported
H1b	Negative affectivity has a higher positive influence on emotional exhaustion during COVID-19 compared to before COVID-19	.020	.150	Supported
H2a	Positive affectivity has a higher negative influence on surface acting before COVID-19 compared to during COVID-19	-.047	-.036	Supported
H2b	Positive affectivity has a higher positive influence on deep acting before COVID-19 compared to during COVID-19	.143	.096	Supported
H2c	Negative affectivity has a higher positive influence on surface acting during COVID-19 compared to before COVID-19	.492	.444	Not supported
H3a	Deep acting has a higher positive influence on emotional exhaustion during COVID-19 compared to before COVID-19	.141	.219	Supported
H3b	Surface acting has a higher positive influence on emotional exhaustion during COVID-19 compared to before COVID-19	.345	.301	Not supported

Note: \* —  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* —  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* —  $p < 0.000$ . The authors consider the difference in the estimated value in addition to the probability value.

## Discussion

Hypothesis 1A and Hypothesis 1B are supported. Even though everyone faces similar challenges after the COVID-19 pandemic, exhaustion is perceived differently depending on each affectivity. A person with positive affectivity perceives working as a challenge, so they do not get tired quickly. When the pandemic happens, those who have positive emotions will feel more challenged, more motivated to unlock an achievement, full of enthusiasm hence unlikely to feel tired. Meanwhile, a worker with negative affectivity would see the COVID-19 pandemic as an additional burden for them.

The arguments align with what B. L. Fredrickson suggests, that positive affectivity causes the individual to engage with the environment, meaning that they are more likely to be adaptive as an individual (Fredrickson, 2001). The new work measures following the COVID-19 pandemic may trigger the workers with positive affectivity to create the urge to savor current life conditions and integrate these circumstances into new views of the working life. They will create the urge to push the limits and be more creative to finish their job. These adaptations of the difficult situation are related to what C. A. Estrada with colleagues suggest, that individuals with positive emotions tend to enhance creative solutions for the difficulties they face (Estrada et al., 1994). The pandemic also causes many people to spend more time at home than outside, leaving them with much free time. Those with positive emotions are likely to see it as a time to explore (Izard, 1977). In their home-working time, they might explore new activities that they can do at home or seek new information to develop themselves more than they could before. Being at home and surrounded by family makes a person feel more comfortable and secure, so they will feel less tired than when they have to work in the office physically (Izard, 1977). These notions strengthen the role of positive emotions, specifically during the crisis. Individuals with high positive affectivity may respond positively to the crisis, positioning positive affectivity as one of the critical capitals indicating human's strength.

The COVID-19 outbreak also adds enormous stress to many people. People with negative affectivity might have experienced a more negative reaction to all changes following the pandemic.

Forced to adapt to the new conditions might have been challenging for them. Those people find this condition unacceptable and lead them to experience more negative emotional reactions. Therefore, the accumulation of those negative emotions leads to emotional exhaustion (Spagnoli, Molinaro, 2020). Concerning work-related factors, people who work at home might feel hard to cope with new changes. These adjustments might produce distress as the COVID-19 pandemic forces workers to adapt to the new working conditions. Workers exposed to a high degree of distress will likely experience emotional exhaustion (Glomb, Tews, 2004).

Hypothesis 2A and 2B are supported. These hypotheses focus on the workers with positive affectivity. Before the COVID-19, these workers will have a stronger tendency to perform deep acting rather than surface acting. During the COVID-19, the workers with positive affectivity are getting closer to performing surface acting and further from deep acting. Though the current values do not significantly confirm that positive affectivity relates to surface acting during the pandemic, considering the values pattern, the authors posit that there is a possibility where at a certain point, the values will be significant. The findings relate to emotional display duration, where a longer duration typically entails more emotional stamina (Hochschild, 1983; Morris, Feldman, 1996).

Meanwhile, the existence of the COVID-19 pandemic potentially absorbs the emotional stamina the worker has. Thus, maintaining a deep acting performance will be immensely challenging. Another explanation of these findings might be related to what J. A. Morris and D. C. Feldman postulate, that explicitness of display rule and closeness of monitoring will influence the workers' acting (Morris, Feldman, 1996). The COVID-19 occurrence distorts those two components. In the new work settings following the COVID-19, all businesses will need time to reorganize the display rule the workers should perform and the existence of supervisor monitoring is trifling or even totally absent.

Hypothesis 2C is not supported. Surface acting relates to negative affectivity both before and during COVID-19. However, the relationship is slightly stronger before the COVID-19 pandemic. While the results for before and during the COVID-19 are similar, the authors argue that the slight difference may be caused by the new work measures that put most respondents to either work from home or considerably decreasing work from office intensity. As the workers are work from home or spending less time at the office, they do not need to serve customers directly through face-to-face interaction and give most of the services through online communication media instead. Such a condition potentially makes service workers become somewhat disconnected from their work during the pandemic (Auger, Formentin, 2021). Face-to-face interaction with the customers will require more effort to perform (Morris, Feldman, 1996). Thus, for the workers with negative affectivity, the authors presume that before the COVID-19, the urge to execute surface acting is more significant than in the condition with no face-to-face interaction. This finding is also in line with what J. P. Forgas asserts, that negative affectivity contributes to an individual's cognitive strategies to deal with environmental challenges (Forgas, 2007). In a crisis, workers with negative affectivity might find a fault not to perform emotional acting as firm as they have to during the normal condition.

Hypothesis 3A is supported. The finding shows that the works involving deep acting will be more tiresome for the workers during the COVID-19 than before the COVID-19. Meanwhile, data testing is proven otherwise for hypothesis 3B. The higher level of emotional exhaustion during the COVID-19 only resulted from the works involving deep acting, not from the works involving surface acting. Our data testing shows that deep acting positively influences emotional exhaustion only during the COVID-19, but not before. Meaning that the existence of the COVID-19 truly affects the degree of emotional exhaustion felt by the workers who perform deep acting. Meanwhile, both before and during the COVID-19, surface acting results in emotional exhaustion. However, the relationship between surface acting and emotional exhaustion is higher before the COVID-19 than during the COVID-19.

To rationalize these findings, we need to understand the nature of both surface and deep acting. As A. R. Hochschild suggests, when surface acting happens, a service provider does not truly feel the emotions he/she performs (Hochschild, 1983). On the other hand, when deep acting happens, a service provider attempts to feel the emotions he/she performs. B. E. Ashforth and R. H. Humphrey differentiate surface and deep acting based on employees' focus when they perform the actions (Ashforth, Humphrey, 1993). Surface acting focuses on the emotion needed to perform, known as "outward behavior", while deep acting focuses on the worker's feelings. Deep acting relates to a strong concern for the customers, whereas surface acting may relate to weak and robust concerns (Ashforth, Humphrey, 1993). From the characterization of both acting types, it is understandable that deep acting will require more effort to be performed rather than surface acting, thus emotional exhaustion is more likely to happen from deep acting than surface acting. This argument is consistent with researchers who suggestion that deep acting makes the service workers connected more strongly with the customers than surface acting (e.g., Allen et al., 2010; Brotheridge, Grandey, 2002).

The work avenue during the COVID-19 will also elucidate our findings. During the COVID-19, most workers are shifting from office working into work from home. Emotional exhaustion happens when the demand for emotional work exceeds the capacity of the worker's emotion during interactions with the customers (Maslach et al., 2001). The workers who perform deep acting tend to perform higher than those who perform surface acting. Furthermore, working during the COVID-19 bears specific difficulties such as time management, the unclear boundaries between work and life matters, challenging supervision system, reduced employee productivity, difficulty on communication, and others (Lane et al., 2020; Routley, 2020). In such work avenues, workers with deep acting will feel that their work becomes more demanding than ever. Thus, it will lead to emotional exhaustion. A bit different from what happens inside the mind of workers with surface acting, they will generally feel that working during the COVID-19 will reduce their work demands. During the COVID-19, they can work with less supervision, less pressure, and at last, less demand to perform well.

### **Limitations and suggestions**

This study's outcomes and interpretations have limitations. First, the cross-sectional method the authors apply might be a subject of debate. The authors realize that longitudinal study might produce more accurate results on the observed variables, however, due to the relatively sudden occurrence of the COVID-19 pandemic, the comparison study of before and during the COVID-19 based on longitudinal data appears highly unlikely. Nevertheless, this study generally generates similar results compared to the rare study that successfully collected the data before and after the COVID-19 pandemic (Hwang et al., 2020). Methodologically, to compensate for this limitation, the authors run paired T-tests to see the comparative condition before and during the pandemic. The authors design the questionnaire with two hypothetical conditions for one question, before and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, the respondents can conceive their working conditions in two different moments and answer each question accordingly. In addition, the similar results between the longitudinal study performed by H. Hwangmany South Korean employees have been experiencing work stressors, threats of job insecurity, and feelings of isolation, which together lead to emotional exhaustion. The present study aimed to compare the emotional exhaustion of South Korean employees before and after the pandemic, as well as to examine how the demographic characteristics of employees affected their emotional exhaustion. We administered surveys to 276 employees before the COVID-19 pandemic (from July to October 2019 with colleagues and the cross-sectional study performed by the authors regarding the degree of emotional exhaustion before and after the COVID-19 pandemic may add to the methodological knowledge of management studies (Hwang et al., 2020).

Second, each business sector might face particular different challenges following COVID-19. As the descriptive data suggests, some respondents work from home, some work in a shift, and some still work at the office. These various work policies might produce different narratives on the workers' emotional state. This point also calls future researchers to disentangle further the emotional states of various business sectors or various new work measures. Third, while the findings might shed light on service workers' emotional states following the COVID-19, there are still many work-related emotional areas left untouched such as but not limited to: stress, intention to leave, needs for achievement, and job satisfaction.

Fourth, due to the differences in work structures worldwide, future research might find diverse findings upon the same construct as this paper did in Indonesia (Messenger et al., 2007). Finally, since the COVID-19 affects many aspects in the workplace, future studies might also want to consider replicating the model by adding the factors related to employee's emotional exhaustion, such as but not limited to: interaction with the customers during the COVID-19; interaction with the boss or colleagues during the pandemic; different work setting; the application of health and safety measures in the workplace.

## Implications

This study exposes meaningful, evidence-based implications. For employers, there are two main implications. First, employers should pay more attention to the workers with negative affectivity. Unlike workers with positive affectivity who thrive during the pandemic, workers with negative affectivity are prone to negative consequences. Second, COVID-19 is a threat to the service quality given by the workers. Our findings show that during the COVID-19, surface acting rather than deep acting will be more likely to happen regardless of the workers' affectivity.

Meanwhile, surface acting is closely related to low service quality (Hur et al., 2015; Ozcelik, 2013). To ensure that the workers' services stay at a good standard, a company may initiate training and development programs regarding service delivery amid the COVID-19 pandemic. From a theoretical perspective, this study also contributes to the knowledge of service businesses in the context of crisis. Especially from the workers' perspective, this study extricates service workers' emotional states, the crisis impact on their works, and how the workers with diverse affectivities see and cope with the crisis differently. Future research on emotional exhaustion during a crisis is suggested to include more personal variables as this study shows that different personalities lead individuals to respond to a crisis differently.

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# Влияние вспышки COVID-19 на эмоциональность, эмоциональный труд и эмоциональное истощение работников сферы услуг

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**Аннотация.** *Цель.* В этом исследовании изучаются эмоциональные аспекты работников сферы услуг, включая эмоциональность, эмоциональный труд и эмоциональное истощение во время пандемии COVID-19. *Методология.* Исследовательские гипотезы проверяются путём анализа данных 250 работников сферы услуг в Индонезии, ответивших на анкету в ходе дистанционного опроса. *Выводы.* Результаты показывают, что работники с положительной эмоциональностью положительно реагируют на новые способы работы во время пандемии COVID-19 и не чувствуют эмоционального истощения. Между тем, у работников с негативной эмоциональностью нововведения в работе вызывают эмоциональное истощение. *Значение исследования для практики.* Настоящее исследование показывает, что работники сферы услуг с негативной эмоциональностью склонны к негативным последствиям в условиях кризиса, поэтому менеджерам следует уделять им больше внимания. Кроме того, это исследование предполагает, что организация инициирует программы обучения и развития в отношении предоставления услуг во время кризиса, поскольку качество услуг, предоставляемых работниками, во время кризиса находится под угрозой. *Ценность результатов.* В данном исследовании эмпирически установлено, что во время кризиса эмоциональность, эмоциональный труд и эмоциональное истощение взаимодействуют иначе, чем в обычное время.

**Ключевые слова:** COVID-19; работники сферы обслуживания; эмоциональное истощение; эмоциональность; эмоциональный труд.