

FRONT LINE EMPLOYEE'S SERVICE SABOTAGE IN BANK BRANCHES

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Abstract: *This study aims to investigate the mediating role of emotional exhaustion in the relationship between emotional dissonance and service sabotage in front line employees in Mellat Bank branches in Mashhad, Iran. Simple random sampling method was used for sampling. Data was collected from front line employees of Mellat bank in Mashhad, Iran. Usable responses were received from 226 respondents. Partial Least Squares (PLS) in Smart PLS software and Hierarchical Regression in SPSS were used for data analysis. Findings reveal that emotional exhaustion not only has significant positive impact on service sabotage but also has partial mediating role in the relationship between emotional dissonance and service sabotage, Moreover positive impact of emotional dissonance on service sabotage is confirmed, in this study. These findings suggest that Mellat Bank avoid of service sabotage by front line employees should design programs to reduce employee's emotional exhaustion and emotional dissonance. This paper fulfills an identified need to study how front line employees can motivated to service sabotage and this hadn't been conducted in the context of Iranian banking industry.*

Keywords: *Emotional dissonance, emotional exhaustion, service sabotage.*

INTRODUCTION

Service sabotage is service employees' misbehavior that is intentionally designed to negatively affect service (Harris and Ogbonna, 2002:6). Retaliatory actions, altering the speed of service, playing pranks, and expressing frustration or aggression to customers are examples of service sabotage (Lee and Ok, 2014:1). Harris and Ogbonna (2002:166) argued that service sabotage, is likely to be especially damaging not only to service encounters but also to firm profitability and growth. Although the costs of employee sabotage are difficult to calculate, Murphy (1993) suggested that such

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behaviors could cost U.S. firms up to \$200 billion annually (Harris and Ogbonna, 2006:1).

Schneider and Bowen (1992), believe that the perceived quality of the service is often profoundly affected by how the service provider acts and speaks with the customer (quoted from Lee and Ok, 2014: 1). Given a progressively more competitive environment, it is increasingly contended that the pivotal factor in the success and indeed survival of organizations is the effective management of service encounters (Harris and Ogbonna, 2002). The topic of service sabotage is important in the service industries, particularly in banks. However, this issue has been overlooked in the banking industry.

Given this, the purpose of this study was to expand the body of knowledge to the banking industry by empirically investigating why bank employees engage in service sabotage and how their misbehavior can be prevented. Increased competition among many banks has forced them to focus further attention on service quality (Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman, 1996). However, excessive pursuing a philosophy of "customer is king" or "friendly service with a smile" remains a priority for banks. Because the quality of the interpersonal interaction between customers and employees is critical to customer satisfaction (Gremler and Gwinner, 2000), most companies focus on managing their employees' emotional expressions toward customers (Diefendorff and Richard, 2003). Some companies implicitly or explicitly dictate appropriate manner to express expressions of emotions used by their employees during interactions with customers (Ashforth and Humphrey, 1993). As a result, service employees are required to hide or suppress displaying any negative emotion and express positive emotions to customers. Previous researches show that suppressing or faking emotion can be a source of deviant behaviors (Lee and Ok, 2014).

Based on the foregoing, the primary objective of the present study is to provide theoretical logic and empirical evidence of why front line banking employees undertake the negative service sabotage behaviors. To satisfy this objective, we hypothesized that employee's emotional dissonance can be the leading reason for motivating banking employees to sabotage the service encounter.

The secondary objective aims to provide an answer to the question "how emotional exhaustion referring to a state of depleted energy caused by excessive psychological and emotional (Saxton, Phillips, and Blakeney, 1991) can lead to service sabotage behaviors".

The third objective is to provide an answer to the question "Can emotional exhaustion mediate the impact of emotional dissonance on service sabotage?"

DEFINITIONS

Service Sabotage

As mentioned earlier, service sabotage is broadly defined as organizational member behaviors that are intentionally designed negatively to affect service. It is important to note that this view emphasizes saboteur intention and relegates victim perception. That is, service sabotage occurs when there is malicious intent, irrespective of discernment by customers or managers (Harris and Ogbonna, 2002: 6). Employees make mistakes, get things wrong, and occasionally do silly things. This is not necessarily sabotage, even if service is negatively affected. The line between sabotage and simple error is clearly demarked by intent. Thus, sabotage encompasses deliberate actions by employees that knowingly negatively disrupt or harm otherwise functional service encounters (Harris and Ogbonna, 2009: 2).

Emotional Labor

Emotional labor is defined as the labor to enhance, fake, or suppress emotions to express the emotions an organization desires during interpersonal transactions (Morris and Feldman, 1996). In previous research, two forms of compliance to display rules have been identified as dimensions of emotional labor: surface acting and deep acting. Surface acting refers to managing observable expressions by feigning unfelt emotions and/or hiding felt emotions (Hochschild Arlie, 1983). Surface acting occurs when employees choose to merely mask their feelings, presenting an outward appearance that does not match their genuine feelings (Ashforth and Humphrey, 1993). A frontline employee in a branch of bank who must keep a smile even though he or she feels frustration or even anger with rude customers is an example of surface acting. Deep acting refers to employees' attempt to sincerely feel and show the emotions that must be displayed. Unlike surface acting, deep acting occurs when employees make an effort to regulate and control their inward thoughts and feelings to match the emotions an organization desires (Hochschild, 1983). Thus, employees choose to engage in deep acting by consciously modifying their genuine feelings so they understand customers, have empathy with the situations, and feel customers' feelings as part of their own (England and Farkas, 1986). Zapf et al (2002) found that these positive characteristics of deep acting generally increase employees' sense of accomplishment and job satisfaction.

Emotional Dissonance

Emotional dissonance occurs when expressed emotions conform to organizational norms but clash with true feelings (Rafaeli and Sutton, 1987 quotes from Abraham, 2000:4). This state also occurs when an employee must avoid displaying any form of negative emotion toward customers and express positive emotions contrary to the employees' true feelings (Lee and Ok, 2014: 2).

Emotional Exhaustion

Emotional exhaustion is the most representative indicator of job burnout, which is characterized as lacking energy and feeling exhausted of emotional resources (Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter, 2001). Emotional exhaustion is also usually accompanied by frustration and tension, which makes individuals psychologically unable to concentrate on work (Luo and Bao, 2013: 3). Furthermore, emotionally exhausted employees may lack the resources needed for the work domain and may have difficulties meeting role expectations for their work (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985). As a result they may be more inclined to behave impatiently and negatively when interacting with customers. In particular, in the face of customers' mistreatment behaviors (*e.g.*, treating the employee in a disrespectful manner, showing aggression toward the employee; Wang *et. al.*, 2011), they cannot regulate their own behavior, which increases the likelihood of engaging in service sabotage behavior (Luo and Bao, 2013 quoted from Dai, *et. al.*, 2014: 6).

LITERATURE REVIEW AND BACKGROUND

Service sabotage of the frontline employees may be influenced by many factors. Some researches have been conducted in this context. For example, Wallace and de Chernatony (2009) in an exploratory study in the context of retail banking found that: employee fear, overworked employee and compliance requirements can lead to service sabotage of front line employees.

Lee and Ok (2014), investigated the hotel employees' service sabotage. They hypothesized hospitality employees' emotional labor, specifically, emotional dissonance, to be a major source of service sabotage. They also hypothesized burnout to have, a mediating effect, while emotional intelligence has a buffering effect on the mediated relationship, between emotional dissonance and service sabotage via burnout. The results of moderated mediation, regression analyses of the data from 309 customer-contact hotel employees in the U.S. supported all, the hypotheses in this study.

In study of Dai, *et. al.* (2014), the consequences of family interference with work (FIW) in a service setting was investigated. They examined the influence of FIW on service sabotage via the mechanism of emotional exhaustion, and the role of employees' negative affectivity as a boundary condition. Based on 2 waves of data collected from 132 Chinese employees working in a call center, results showed a positive relationship between FIW and service sabotage, and emotional exhaustion acted as a mediator in this relationship.

Luo and Bao (2013) examined the mechanisms of rumination including its antecedents (positive and negative affectivity) and outcomes (emotional exhaustion and service sabotage behavior). Theoretical model of this study was tested using data

collected from 751 employees in a call center in China. One of the results of this study was positively impact of emotional exhaustion on service sabotage behavior.

Karatepe and Aleshinloye (2009), conducted a study with the purpose of developing and testing a model, which investigated emotional dissonance and emotional exhaustion among employees in frontline service jobs. Data were gathered via self administered questionnaires from a sample of frontline hotel employees in Nigeria. The results of the hierarchical multiple regression analyses demonstrated a number of significant direct and partial mediating effects and provided support for the majority of the hypothesized relationships. Specifically, emotional dissonance partially mediated the relationships of negative affectivity and intrinsic motivation with emotional exhaustion. The results also revealed that emotional exhaustion partially mediated the effect of emotional dissonance on turnover intentions. Unexpectedly, emotional dissonance was found to be positively related to job performance.

In some researches, surface acting has been identified with emotional dissonance because employees feel the discrepancy between inner feeling and outward expression to some degree while engaging in surface acting (Kruml and Geddes, 1998 quoted from Lee and Ok, 2014). On the other hand, Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) and Johnson and Spector (2007) view emotional dissonance as a consequence of surface acting. They argue that emotional dissonance is primarily created by inauthentic emotional behavior in surface acting. Previous researches have confirmed the impact of emotional dissonance on service sabotage (Lee and Ok, 2014). Therefore, the following hypothesis is recommended to investigate in bank's staff in Mashhad.

H1: Emotional dissonance has a positive impact on service sabotage.

As mentioned above, previous studies have supported the impact of emotional exhaustion on service sabotage (Dai, Chen, Arnulf, and Dai, 2014; Lee and Ok, 2014; Luo and Bao, 2013). Therefore, the following hypothesis is suggested to examination.

H2: Emotional exhaustion has a positive impact on service sabotage.

Emotional exhaustion is predicted via emotional dissonance, based on the argument that emotional dissonance is a type of role conflict and role conflict has been shown to be a key antecedent of emotional exhaustion (Lewig and Dollard, 2003:6).The partially mediator effect of emotional exhaustion in the relationship between emotional dissonance and turnover intentions has confirmed by previous studies (Karatepe and Aleshinloye, 2009). Thus, the following hypothesis is suggested to test:

H3: Emotional dissonance has a positive impact on emotional exhaustion.

H4: Emotional exhaustion has a mediating role in the relationship between Emotional dissonance and service sabotage.

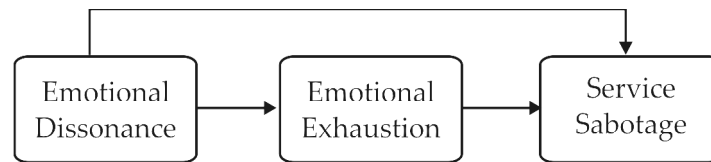


Figure 1: Conceptual Model

Conceptual Model

In this section, a conceptual model has been provided that shows the impact of both emotional dissonance and emotional exhaustion on service sabotage, also the mediating role of emotional exhaustion in the relationship between emotional dissonance and service sabotage. According to the research literature related to the topic and review of related models presented in previous researches, conceptual model is recommended as follows (Figure 1):

Research Hypotheses

According to the above mentioned research hypotheses are developed as follows:

- H1:** Emotional dissonance has a positive impact on service sabotage.
- H2:** Emotional exhaustion has a positive impact on service sabotage.
- H3:** Emotional dissonance has a positive impact on emotional exhaustion.
- H4:** Emotional exhaustion has a mediating role in the relationship between emotional dissonance and service sabotage.

METHODOLOGY

Data Collection

Simple random sampling was used to assess employee's emotional dissonance, emotional exhaustion and service sabotage. The respondents of this study were front line employees working in MellatBank branches in Mashhad, Iran. Sampling was done randomly, based on a list of employees. The population size was 540, whereas the sample size using the Cochran's formula was 224. Totally 300 questionnaires were sent to the respondents and 226 questionnaires were returned (response rate = 75%) for statistical analysis.

Measurement

In order to validate the impact of emotional dissonance and emotional exhaustion on service sabotage, survey method was adopted. Service sabotage was determined using 5 items. This scale was based on the work of (Wang, Liao, Zhan, and Shi, 2011). Emotional dissonance was determined by nine items and emotional exhaustion was

also evaluated by seven items. These two scales were based on the work of (Lee and Ok, 2012). All measures uses a 7-point Likert scale (1 = 'Strongly disagree' to 7 = 'Strongly agree').

Sample Characteristics

Respondent's characteristics were explored using demographic variables such as: sex, age, education and job experience. 76.5 percent of respondents were male and 41.2 percent were under 40 years of age. The majority of respondents (42 percent) had university education and 35 percent were at least 20 years of job experience. Sample Characteristics are given in Table 1.

Table 1
Sample characteristics (n = 226)

<i>Description</i>		<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Gender	Male	173	76.5 %
	Female	53	23.5 %
Age	Under 30	22	9.7 %
	31-40	93	41.2 %
	41-50	85	37.6 %
	Above 50	26	11.5 %
Education	High school	58	25.6 %
	Advanced Diploma	40	17.7 %
	College/ university	95	42 %
	Master degree	33	14.6 %
	PH.D.	0	0 %
Working experience	Less than 5 years	12	5.31 %
	5-10	23	10.2 %
	10-15	64	28.32 %
	15-20	47	20.8 %
	Above 20	80	35 %
<i>Total number</i>		226	100

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

PLS (partial least square) was adopted for data analysis as a tool, in this study. PLS is a commonly accepted data analysis method. This software applies the bootstrapping technique for re-sampling, and the partial least square method for coefficient estimation. This study used Smart PLS 2.0 for data analysis. The measurement and structural models were both evaluated, and each construct was modeled to be reflective in data analysis.

MEASUREMENT VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

To verify construct measures, convergent validity and discriminate validity were first provided ((Komiakand Benbasat, 2006, p. 11). Note that Cronbach's alpha, the

underlying factor structure and composite reliability were also justified. Convergent validity refers to the consistency with which multiple items measure the same construct. Unidimensionality, the average variance extracted (AVE), and the composite reliability (CR) are adequate indicators in understanding convergent validity of measurements (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988, p. 7). These measurements, as well as Cronbach's alpha, were presented in this study. Regarding to the unidimensionality, factor loading (> 0.5) and t -value (> 1.96) of items were both required (Azar *et. al.*, 1391, p. 125). The results of factor loading, as well as AVE, CR and Cronbach's alpha, are given in Table 2.

Table 2
Average variance extracted (AVE), composite reliability (CR),
Cronbach's Alpha, and factor loading/weight of construct measurement

Constructs	AVE	CR	Alpha	ED	EE	SS	t -value
<i>Emotional Dissonance (ED)</i>							
ED1				0.691			16.98
ED2				0.763			27.03
ED3				0.796			25.34
ED4				0.836			28.98
ED5	0.629	0.938	0.925	0.851			34.84
ED6				0.831			30.33
ED7				0.858			39.37
ED8				0.835			32.62
ED9				0.652			13.61
<i>Emotional Exhaustion (EE)</i>							
EE1					0.821		34.98
EE2					0.812		34.13
EE3					0.892		61.72
EE4					0.896		71.40
EE5					0.894		57.14
EE6	0.702	0.943	0.928		0.787		22.16
EE7					0.748		18.85
<i>Service Sabotage (SS)</i>							
SS1			0.962			0.913	62.46
SS2	0.868	0.970				0.940	78.14
SS3						0.925	56.73
SS4						0.953	113.25
SS5						0.928	65.83

The results showed that all the constructs had CR values higher than 0.7 and all AVE values were higher than 0.5. All question items had acceptable t -value (> 1.96) and loadings (> 0.5). Also, the results showed the commonly acceptable convergent validity of the measurements. In addition, all Cronbach's alpha values were higher than 0.7, which indicates the reliability of all measurements.

In measuring discriminant validity, the factor loadings belonging to the same construct should be higher than those of different constructs (Azar *et. al.*, 1391, pp.

164-165). Table 3 shows the results of factor loadings. They showed that each item loaded higher on its principal construct than on other constructs. In a summary, the results suggested good measurement properties.

Table 3
Cross loadings

Items	Emotional Dissonance	Emotional Exhaustion	Service Sabotage
EE1	0.364688	0.821053	0.324030
EE2	0.401962	0.812458	0.347943
EE3	0.454039	0.892445	0.428546
EE4	0.384092	0.896242	0.396334
EE5	0.375867	0.893818	0.39912
EE6	0.450613	0.786635	0.396354
EE7	0.384813	0.748460	0.378345
ED1	0.690649	0.356658	0.362644
ED2	0.762963	0.416182	0.308500
ED3	0.795526	0.361295	0.381878
ED4	0.836297	0.336531	0.383681
ED5	0.850849	0.414271	0.372616
ED6	0.830750	0.428396	0.450344
ED7	0.857959	0.434167	0.462820
ED8	0.834795	0.403275	0.381300
ED9	0.652190	0.266180	0.297951
SS1	0.391529	0.341575	0.912515
SS2	0.388655	0.410219	0.939865
SS3	0.441673	0.416496	0.924666
SS4	0.485005	0.465103	0.952585
SS5	0.510502	0.478268	0.927591

Path Analysis and Hypothesis Testing

With adequate convergent and discriminant validity, the hypotheses were then empirically tested. The results of the Smart PLS analysis are shown in Figures 2 and 3.

Figure 2 shows the result of bootstrapping whereas, the numbers on the arrowsshow t -values. Figure 3 presents the result of PLS algorithm. In this respect, the values on the arrowsshow beta. The results indicated that the direct positive impact of emotional dissonance on service sabotage (H1) was significant ($|t| > 3.29, p < 0.001$). H2 proposed a positive relationship between emotional exhaustion and service sabotage. The estimated structural path between emotional exhaustion and service sabotage was significant ($|t| > 3.29, p < 0.001$), thus H2 was supported. H3 suggests that emotional dissonance has a positive impact on emotional exhaustion. The results reveal that this hypothesis also received support from the data ($|t| > 3.29, p < 0.001$). The results also indicated that variables entered into the model explained 29.8 percent of the variance of bank staffs' service sabotages (Figure 3). The result of hypothesis (H1-H3) analysis is shown in Table 4.

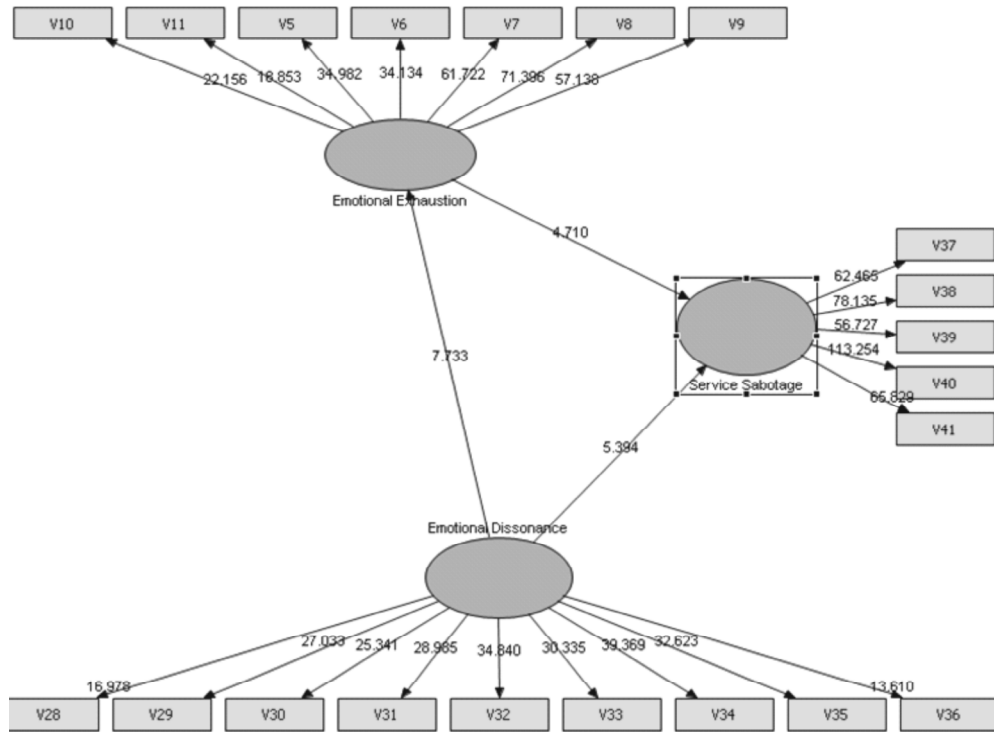


Figure 2: The Bootstrapping Results
 ($|t| > 1.96, p < 0.05$; $|t| > 2.58, p < 0.01$; $|t| > 3.29, p < 0.001$)

Table 4
 The result of hypothesis analysis

Hypothesis	Beta	t-value	p-value	Result
H1 Emotional dissonance has a positive impact on service sabotage.	0.339	5.394	<0.001	Confirmed
H2 Emotional exhaustion has a positive impact on service sabotage.	0.295	4.710	<0.001	Confirmed
H3 Emotional dissonance has a positive impact on emotional exhaustion.	0.483	7.773	<0.001	Confirmed

According to the confirmation of H1, H2 and H3, the mediating role of emotional exhaustion in the relationship between emotional dissonance and service sabotage (H4) was analyzed with the SPSS software. For this purpose, Hierarchical Regression in SPSS software was used. In the first stage, emotional exhaustion as the dependent variable and emotional dissonance as the independent variable were entered into the model. This relationship was significant (sig = 0.000, beta = 0.475). In the second stage: service sabotage as the dependent variable and emotional exhaustion as the independent variable were entered into the model. This relationship was also

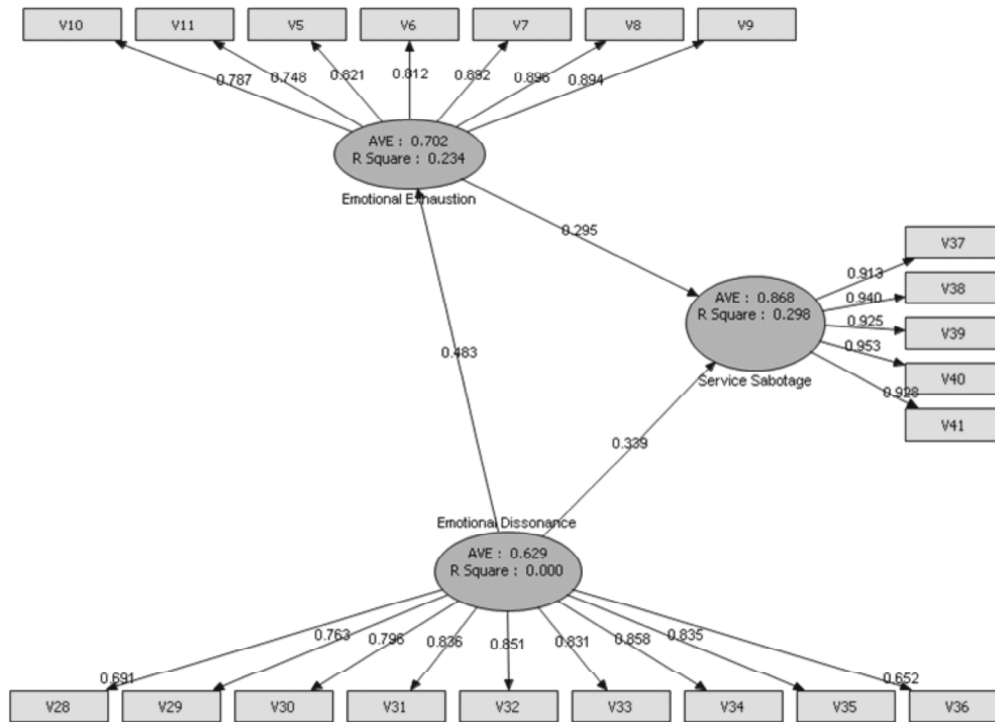


Figure 3: The PLS Algorithm Results

meaningful (sig = 0.000, beta = 0.448). In the third stage: service sabotages as the dependent variable and emotional dissonance as the independent variable were entered. This relationship was confirmed (sig = 0.000, beta = 0.469). In the last stage: service sabotage was considered as the dependent variable and emotional dissonance as the independent variable. Then emotional exhaustion was added to the independent variables. At this stage, it was observed that the beta of emotional dissonance decreased from 0.469 to 0.331 (Reduction more than 0.1) and all relationships were significant. Thus, partial mediation of emotional exhaustion in the relationship between emotional dissonance and service sabotage was confirmed. Results are shown in Table 5 and the result of mediation hypothesis is shown in Table 6.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study attempted to explain how front line employees' emotional dissonance leads to service sabotage behaviors and how this relationship can be mediated by employees' emotional exhaustion in Mellat bank branches in Mashhad, Iran. Based on the literature, we hypothesized that (1) employees' emotional dissonance (ED) is a major source of service sabotage, (2) emotional exhaustion mediates the emotional dissonance-service

Table 5
Hierarchical regression analysis
(Mediator: emotional exhaustion; dependent: service sabotage; independent: emotional dissonance)

<i>Stage</i>	<i>Variable</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>P <</i>
1.	Emotional dissonance	0.469	0.000
2.	Emotional dissonance	0.331	0.000
	Emotional exhaustion	0.290	0.000

Table 6
The result of hypothesis analysis

<i>Hypothesis</i>	<i>Result</i>
H4 Emotional exhaustion has mediating role in the relationship between emotional dissonance and service sabotage.	Confirmed

sabotagelink. To test these hypotheses, this study examined the direct relationship between emotional dissonance and service sabotage, as well as direct relationship between emotional exhaustion and service sabotage and relationship between emotional dissonance and emotional exhaustion. Then mediating effect of emotional exhaustion on the relationship between emotional dissonance and service sabotage was investigated.

The results of this study were consistent with previous findings (Dai, *et. al.*, 2014; Karatepe and Aleshinloye, 2009; Lee and Ok, 2014; Luo and Bao, 2013). As predicted, the results of our study showed that emotional dissonance was positively associated with service sabotage. Bank employees who experience emotional discrepancy between their inner feelings and outward expression are more likely to engage in service sabotage. This phenomenon can be further explained by the mediating effect of emotional exhaustion. Constant emotional consumption in emotional dissonance may cause the employees feel depleted of psychological energy and emotionally exhausted. The emotionally exhausted employees then reduce or withhold emotional involvement by treating customers impersonally and callously. As this depersonalization continues, they begin to feel less competent and less successful in their jobs, evaluating themselves negatively in terms of personal accomplishment. The frustrated employees are then motivated to engage in service misbehaviors as a way to compensate for psychological loss and frustration (Fox and Spector, 1999 quoted from Lee and Ok, 2014).

Theoretical Implications

Despite the proliferation of research on emotional labor and service sabotage, our understanding of the processes and mechanisms through which bank employees' emotional labor affects service sabotage still remains unclear. By filling these gaps, this study provides a valuable contribution to the literature on service sabotage in the

banking work place. First, this study investigated the direct relationship between emotional dissonance and service sabotage and how emotional exhaustion mediates that relationship. Thus, the primary contribution of this study is to provide greater precision in predicting and attenuating counterproductive behavior among bank employees. With sound theoretical reasoning and through empirically testing the relationships, this study provides theory-based empirical evidence of how employee emotional dissonance develops to service sabotage. Ultimately, these findings will add to the literature on emotional labor and service sabotage in banking industry and provide an accurate, comprehensive lens through which to view future research. Unlike employees outside the banking industries, bank employees engage in emotional labor everyday in face-to-face and voice-to-voice interactions with customers; they regulate their genuine emotions to evoke a certain emotional response or suppress feelings so they can express the organizationally desired outward countenance in compliance with display rules (Hochschild, 1983, quoted from Lee and Ok, 2014). Therefore, given that emotion is a critical for keeping bank customers, and subsequently, emotional labor deserves more attention from researchers and practitioners alike, this research is meaningful because it broadens our understanding of the emotion-related mechanism of service sabotage.

Managerial Implications

Given that service sabotage in the banking industry in the current competitive market makes high costs for banks; our findings provide important implications for industry practitioners, especially for their HR practices. This study found that emotional dissonance, by way of emotional exhaustion, is a source of service sabotage. First, this finding suggests that organizations should find ways to minimize emotional dissonance. One way to minimize emotional dissonance is to increase the use of deep acting techniques. Research suggests that deep acting has potential benefits for the employee outcomes: increased sense of personal accomplishment and job satisfaction, among others (Zapf, 2002 quoted from Lee and Ok, 2014).

Second, this study also calls attention to the mediating role of emotional exhaustion in leading from emotional dissonance to service sabotage. Thus, a second implication concerns strategies banks can implement to minimize the likelihood of emotional exhaustion. Banks should evaluate their own strategies and programs to preventing emotional exhaustion. Bank managers should not only be sufficiently aware of the issues involved in emotional dissonance, emotional exhaustion, and service sabotage, but also ensure that strategies and programs properly address these issues. One way to resolve emotional dissonance and emotional exhaustion is prevention. Managers may need to listen to the worries and concerns of their employees to help them recognize the signs of emotional exhaustion. Conducting formal and informal interviews and using surveys would be effective management tools for diagnosing

the symptoms of emotional dissonance and emotional exhaustion. Banks could also provide communication avenues to management by which employees discuss their frustrations in their daily contact with customers. Through these actions, management remains informed about emotional dissonance, which in turn, may prevent emotional exhaustion and service sabotage.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Although the results were promising, this study has certain limitations that must be considered when interpreting results. The first limitation concerns the use of self-report measures, which may generate exaggerated relationships among variables. Service sabotage may be a highly sensitive topic, and thus, respondents may feel uncomfortable about giving honest responses. Also, respondents who feel emotional exhaustion and emotional dissonance might be inclined to exaggerate their own service sabotage behavior because, under such frustration and anxiety, they might try minimizing cognitive inconsistency between the negative attitude they have toward service sabotage and the sabotage behavior they might have done (Festinger, 1985 quoted from Lee and Ok, 2014).

The second limitation concerns the cross-sectional design of the study. As data for this study were collected from individual respondents at a single point in time, inferences about the causal nature of the relationship examined are prone to biases (Bobko and Stone-Romero, 1998). Therefore, in future research, we recommend using longitudinal designs and other methods to reduce such biases to further validate the relationships found in this study; such longitudinal studies would allow a stronger causal inference to be established. Another limitation in this study concerns external validity of the findings. The data for this study were collected from bank employees working in Mellat bank branches in Mashhad, Iran. Thus, the findings of this study may not generalize to other contexts, other cultures, or other times; research in other settings, geographical areas, or times might yield different results (Trochim and Donnelly, 2008 quoted from Lee and Ok, 2014). Thus, replicating this study in different settings would be worth while to establish the validity and generalizability of the present findings across different contexts. To fulfill the purpose of the study, we focused on the impact of emotional exhaustion in the relationship between emotional dissonance and service sabotage.

However, previous studies also indicate the possibility of impact of other variables, for example, mediating role of burnout in the relationship between emotional dissonance and service sabotage or moderating role of emotional intelligence or even the impact of employee fear and overworked employees on service sabotage. Likely with entering these variables into the model, R square will increase.

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