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Responsibilities In The "New Employment Relationship": An Empirical Test Of An Assumed Phenomenon ........................................ 307
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The reported study investigates whether the assumed "new employment relationship" is reflected in the beliefs and expectations of job-seekers and recruiters. Key characteristics of the assumed new employment relationship were identified through a review of the literature, and the extent to which beliefs regarding employment relationship responsibilities differed between groups was investigated. Results indicated that although assumptions regarding characteristics of the new employment relationship were generally upheld, key characteristics did not map directly onto respondents' beliefs and significant group differences were found. The implications and limitations of this research are discussed.

Supervisory Emotional Support And Burnout: An Explanation Of Reverse Buffering Effects .......................................................... 328
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This study investigated the role of supervisory emotional support in the relationship between job/role demand stressors and emotional exhaustion. The interactive effects of role conflict and supervisory emotional support, as well as time pressure and supervisory emotional support on employees' emotional exhaustion, were examined. The participants were 213 employees, at various levels in their organizations, who were mostly in managerial and professional/technical positions. Hierarchical regression analyses revealed that the relationship between role conflict and emotional exhaustion, as well as the relationship between time pressure and emotional exhaustion, were moderated by the participants' perceptions of their supervisors' emotional support. Contrary to many models of job stress and support, but as predicted in this study, supervisory emotional support acted as a reverse buffer by strengthening the positive relationship between demand stressors and emotional exhaustion. Specifically, as employees encountered additional role conflict, emotional exhaus-
tion significantly increased when there was high supervisory emotional support. Similarly, as employees experienced additional time pressure, emotional exhaustion also increased when there was high supervisory emotional support. Managerial implications and future research directions are discussed.

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Although some have stressed the importance of relationship-building in business negotiations in East Asia and in other parts of the world, there exists a lack of empirical evidence describing the nature of relationship-building through negotiations or the contributions of relationship-building to negotiation outcomes. This article addresses relationship-building throughout the process of negotiations within a Chinese context. Interviews conducted in two East Asian countries provided empirical evidence that relationship-building during each phase of negotiations enhances negotiations outcomes in East Asia. Direction is provided for preliminary formulation of a model of Chinese negotiations.

An Exploratory Examination Of The Knowledge Transfer Of Strategic Management Concepts From The Academic Environment To Practicing Managers................................................................. 360
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This exploratory study examines the relationship of knowledge transfers between academics and professional managers. A three-dimensional conceptual model is developed to examine the relationship. The model describes four sources managers use for acquiring knowledge, including _experience, association, involvement, and direct education_. Results suggest that managers learn academic concepts principally through experience, followed by association and involvement, in turn. Survey results also indicate that managers are familiar with, and find usefulness in, nine academic concepts used in the study. However, results show that for these nine academic concepts _direct education was not a significant knowledge source for practitioners_. These findings suggest the need to
Supervisory Emotional Support And Burnout: An Explanation Of Reverse Buffering Effects

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The current operating and economic conditions for organizations have had a substantial impact on employees’ work demands and obligations. Businesses are increasingly pressured to make rapid changes to their workforce as the trends toward restructuring and downsizing continue to be an integral part of the economic and employment landscape (Coffey et al., 1994; Hitt, 1998). In some instances, staff reductions created through restructuring and downsizing have resulted in “lean and mean” organizations, which may lead to increased work expectations and longer working hours on the part of the surviving employees (Moskal, 1992). Corresponding with all of these changes, researchers and practitioners have attempted to uncover job and organizational factors that contribute to the employee burnout process (see Cordes and Dougherty, 1993; Kahn and Byosiere, 1992). Over the last two decades, most of the research focus has been on investigating the relationships between specific demands or stressors of the job and adverse employee outcomes or strains (for example, burnout), with subsequent consequences for the organization (job dissatisfaction, poor in-role job performance, and intentions to quit). Moreover, research has also focused on those factors that may alleviate the adverse effects of some of these job stressors.

Theoretically, at the heart of this study is the relationship between stressors and strains as described by Beehr (1995) in his model illustrative of the occupational stress research program. Work environment stressors, such as role conflict and time pressure, are characteristics of the work that may adversely affect an individual (cause human strains). Burnout is an example of a psychological strain (Beehr et al., 1990; Gaines and
Jermier, 1983). Although most researchers agree that burnout is composed of three factors (emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment; Cordes and Dougherty, 1993), several authors see the emotional exhaustion component as the main factor (Beehr et al., 1990; Gaines and Jermier, 1983; Maslach, 1982). Emotional exhaustion is a feeling of being emotionally depleted and exhausted by one's work (Maslach and Jackson, 1981). As such, emotional exhaustion might be seen as a rather extreme result of chronic emotional stress (Maslach and Jackson, 1986). Many researchers (for example, Burke and Greenglass, 1995; Lee and Ashforth, 1993; Wright and Bonett, 1997) have not only argued that emotional exhaustion plays a salient role in the burnout process, but have found emotional exhaustion to be a strong predictor of job and life satisfaction, subsequent job performance, absenteeism, commitment, and turnover intentions.

One factor which may alleviate the effects of job stress is the amount of supervisory support an employee receives during stressful events and occurrences (see House, 1981; Kasl and Wells, 1985). That is, once employee stress is recognized and noticed, supervisors can provide the individual employee with both emotional and instrumental support that serves to buffer or reduce the effects that job stressors can have on job-related attitudes and outcomes. Thus, the association that exists between these stressors and adverse employee behaviors is moderated by the employee's perception of supervisory support, both emotional and instrumental, given to him/her through daily interactions in the work environment. Emotional support is often characterized by actively listening and caring about the needs of an employee, whereas instrumental support is often characterized by the behaviors of giving tangible assistance and expertise in completing a job responsibility or task (Kaufmann and Beehr, 1986).

However, as asserted by Fenlason and Beehr (1994), the debate over the buffering effects of these types of support has yet to be settled. Across many studies, the results have been inconsistent in investigating the function of support as a buffer between job stressors and burnout. Although some have found support for the buffering effect of supervisory support (for example, see Fried and Tiegs; 1993, Kirmeyer and Dougherty, 1988), others have not (for example, see Beehr and McGrath, 1992; Burke and Greenglass, 1995; Kaufmann and Beehr, 1986; LaRocco and Jones, 1978).

Moreover, it has been difficult to find differential buffering effects between types of support given (emotional or instrumental) since many studies have either not classified the specific subtype of support measured or have combined both subtypes into a single index. Although Cohen and Wills (1985) concluded that studies using scales combining both types of supervisory support (emotional and instrumental) have shown support for the buffering model of social support, Fenlason and Beehr (1994) and McIntosh (1991) asserted that there is a need to operationalize more specifically the measures of supervisory support to find how support interacts with role stressors to affect employee strains (such as burnout).

Because the moderating influence of supervisory support in the relationships between job/role demand stressors and employee burnout remains
unclear, the purpose of this study is to further examine the role of supervisory support between specific job/role demand stressors (role conflict and time pressure) and a component of employee burnout, emotional exhaustion (see Figure 1). Instead of relying on a multi-dimensional measure of supervisory support that combines both emotional and instrumental subtypes, this study will investigate emotional support and its function as a moderator between role stressors and emotional exhaustion. We believe that in the case of the role conflict and time pressure stressors, supervisory emotional support may act as a reverse buffer and, rather than alleviating employee emotional exhaustion, may actually exacerbate the strain on employees.

Job/Role Demand Stressors

Role conflict is defined as "the simultaneous occurrence of two or more role expectations such that compliance with one would make compliance with the other more difficult" (Katz and Kahn, 1978: 204). According to Matteson and Ivancevich (1987), role pressures are combinations of expectations and demands that individuals either place upon themselves, or have placed upon them by other people. Cordes and Dougherty (1993) note that the few research studies on role conflict have consistently found significant positive relationships between role conflict and the burnout dimensions, and most often with emotional exhaustion. In Beehr et al.'s (1990) study of registered nurses, two measures of role conflict were consistently related to emotional exhaustion.

Another work demand that we believe is extremely likely given the nature of many organizational environments today is time pressure. Time pressures seem to be increasing and may result from restructured organizations. Indeed, the United States has now surpassed Japan to become the longest-working country, reports the International Labor Organization, when comparing nations in the advanced industrial world (Lardner, 1999). James T. Bond, vice president of the Families and Work Institute, also reports two changes that occurred between 1977 and 1997. Salaried Americans working at least 20 hours increased their average work week hours from 43 to 47. Furthermore, more workers are working 50 or more hours a week, with percentages increasing from 24 to 37. This increase in work hours and the associated time pressures to complete a job place additional work constraints and demands on the employees. Cordes and Dougherty propose that "high levels of work demands are the primary determinants of emotional exhaustion" (1993: 629). More recently, Cordes, et al. (1997) found a positive significant relationship between many of their quantitative role overload items (such as those measuring time pressure) and employee emotional exhaustion.

Coping Resources: The Role of Supervisory Support

While emotional exhaustion is defined as a psychological strain or outcome of a stressor, emotional support is seen as one possible coping resource, which may serve as a buffer between stressors and strains (Beehr, 1985). The workplace stress literature has most often operationalized support as supervisor and/or co-worker support. After reviewing 22 studies
Figure I. Proposed Model of Study

- Supervisory Emotional Support
- Job/Role Demand Stressors
  - Role Conflict
  - Time Pressure
- Employee Burnout
  - Emotional Exhaustion
published from 1978 to 1987, Kahn and Byosiere (1992) noted that 20 studies reported main effects for support on strain. However, the results for buffering or moderating effects of support were not as consistent.

To illustrate how support buffers the effects of stress, Kirmeyer and Dougherty (1988) studied police radio dispatchers and found that when high workload was perceived, and dispatchers had high supervisory support, they undertook more coping actions, and felt less tension-anxiety than the low-support dispatchers. Fried and Tiegls (1993) studied the social support of shop stewards on auto workers and also found results that are congruent with the buffering model of stress-strain relations. However, Kaufmann and Beehr (1986) found supervisory support to have a reverse buffering effect in the association between job stressors and employees' psychological and physiological strains (job dissatisfaction, boredom, workload dissatisfaction, depression, heart rate, and blood pressure) as well as between job stressors and organizational consequences (absenteeism and job performance). That is, support made the positive associations between stressors and strains stronger, not weaker.

A common way of categorizing coping is to utilize the emotion-focused and problem-focused dichotomy (Folkman, 1982). An individual utilizing problem-focused coping may try to change the stressful situation he or she is in. For example, if an employee is receiving conflicting messages from two supervisors, and subsequently experiencing role conflict, he or she may try to get the two supervisors to work it out. Where time pressure is being experienced, an employee might request deadline extensions for work. These problem-focused examples may be seen as instrumental or tangible sources of assistance that a supervisor could provide the employee.

We believe that when employees are experiencing role conflict or time pressure, their supervisors' attempts to provide emotional support may actually strengthen employees' emotional exhaustion, thus creating a situation of reverse buffering. Supervisors may be a source of job/role demand stressors and, rather than providing the instrumental support necessary to diminish the sources of stress, supervisors' attempts at emotional support may be perceived as insincere, or incongruent with their actions. That is, if the supervisor is a source of role conflict or time pressure, who creates conflicting demands on an employee or sets unreasonable deadlines, then the employee would perceive an inconsistency between the supervisor's actions and subsequent attempts at emotional support. Given the preceding arguments, the following reverse buffering hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 1: The relationship between role conflict and emotional exhaustion will be moderated by supervisory emotional support. That is, as employees encounter additional role conflict, emotional exhaustion will significantly increase when there is high supervisory emotional support.

Hypothesis 2: The relationship between time pressure and emotional exhaustion will be moderated by supervisory emotional support. That is, as employees encounter added time pressure, emotional exhaustion will significantly increase when there is high supervisory emotional support.

We utilized a subtype of supervisory emotional support when testing our hypotheses. This supervisory style, operationalized by Ivancevich and Matteson (1983), is defined as super-
visors who "go to bat" for their subordinates, are concerned about their subordinates' welfare, and trust and respect their subordinates. The Stress Diagnostic Survey which this subscale is from is described in the Method section below, along with the other measures that employees responded to. While controlling for job category, data were examined by a series of hierarchical regression analyses. The results of the regression analyses are reported, along with the confirmatory factor analysis for the four variables of the study, and the nature of the interactions. Finally, the managerial implications of supervisory emotional support are discussed, along with directions for future research.

Method

Participants and Procedure

Participants were 213 employees enrolled in a part-time MBA (Master of Business Administration) program at a large, Midwestern university. These students were recruited from management courses included within the graduate curriculum. Only those students who were currently employed by an organization were included in the study. It was explained that the data would be used for research purposes, anonymity would be assured, and extra credit would be given to participating students.

Based upon an adaptation of the occupational categories employed by the Dictionary of Occupational Titles, 50 percent of the participants were in professional/technical jobs, 37 percent were in managerial positions, with the remainder of the participants coming from clerical and sales positions (7 percent and 6 percent, respectively). The mean age of participants was 32.57 years, 54 percent were men, over 85 percent were Caucasian, and almost 68 percent were "living as married" (included married couples as well as couples cohabiting but not married) as opposed to "not married." Approximately 76 percent of the participants worked between 41 and 60 hours per week, while the remaining 24 percent worked between 31 and 40 hours per week.

Measures

Role Conflict, Time Pressure, and Supervisory Emotional Support. The Stress Diagnostic Survey (Ivancevich and Matteson, 1983), an instrument designed to measure common macro and micro organizational stressors, includes subscales of four items each. The Role Conflict subscale measures the extent to which an individual feels conflicting expectations at work. A sample item includes, "I do things on the job that are accepted by one person and rejected by another person." The extent to which an individual perceives unreasonable deadlines and time demands is measured by the Time Pressure subscale. Sample items include, "I am constantly working against the pressure of time," and "The time deadlines for completing work assignments are too unreasonable."

Employees also report their perceptions of their supervisor's supportiveness, as well as how much their supervisor trusts and respects and is concerned about them, in the Supervisory Style subscale. Sample items include, "Supervisors are not concerned about the personal welfare of their subordinates" (reverse scored)
and “Supervisors show a lack of trust in their subordinates” (reverse scored). The Supervisory Style subscale operationalizes supervisory emotional support since it measures how subordinates perceive that supervisors care about the emotional well-being and needs of their employees, but not necessarily provide them with tangible assistance and expertise toward a specific job or task fulfillment (Kaufmann and Beehr, 1986).

Responses to these three subscales of the Stress Diagnostic Survey were made on a seven-point scale (1 = “The condition is never a source of stress,” 7 = “It is always a source of stress”). A high response to a Role Conflict item indicates that an employee perceives high role conflict, and a high response to a Supervisory Style item (after being reverse scored) indicates that an employee perceives high supervisory emotional support. The internal consistencies (Cronbach’s alpha) of the measures in our sample were .76 for Role Conflict, .83 for Time Pressure, and .83 for Supervisory Emotional Support (Supervisory Style).

**Emotional Exhaustion.** A subscale of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI; Maslach and Jackson, 1981) was adapted to measure emotional exhaustion. Participants rated the intensity of their emotional exhaustion through eight attitudinal statements using a seven-point response scale (0 = “never,” 7 = “very strong”). Sample items include, “I feel emotionally drained from my work” and “I feel burned out from my work.” In order to get the internal consistency reliability above .70, as is recommended by Churchill (1979) and Nunnally (1978), the item, “Working with people all day is really a strain for me,” was deleted. In our sample, Cronbach’s alpha (internal reliability) was .87. Although the deletion of this item does not significantly alter the measurement of emotional exhaustion, it may refine the burnout component’s measurement in non-human service occupations.

**Data Analysis**

To test the study’s hypotheses, the main and interactive effects of role conflict and supervisory emotional support, and time pressure and supervisory emotional support on emotional exhaustion were examined through hierarchical regression analyses. The control variable of job category, the main effects, and second-order interaction terms were entered as the predictors in three steps. For example, for the dependent variable, emotional exhaustion, the first step was to enter job category. For the second step, the main effects of role conflict, time pressure, and supervisory emotional support were simultaneously entered. Finally, in the third step, the interaction effects of role conflict by supervisory emotional support and time pressure by supervisory emotional support were included in the regression equation.

As far as investigating the nature of the interactions, we used the procedures recommended by Aiken and West (1991). In order to examine the reverse buffering effect, as described by Beehr (1995), we conducted simple slope analyses. The information from the analyses was used to graphically depict the effect of role conflict as well as time pressure on emotional exhaustion at high and low levels of supervisory emotional support (i.e., using one standard deviation above and below the mean).
Results

The means, standard deviations, reliabilities, and correlations for our constructs are reported in Table 1. The reliabilities of the measures used were all over the .70 minimum established by Churchill (1979) and Nunnally (1978).

Before testing our hypotheses and proposed model, a confirmatory factor analysis for each of the four constructs (role conflict, time pressure, supervisory emotional support, and emotional exhaustion) was conducted on the current study’s sample. The analyses were carried out in Lisrel 8 (Joreskog and Sorbom, 1993), using the covariance matrix. Model parameters were estimated using the maximum likelihood method. Although the chi-square score for this model was significant, \( \chi^2(146, N = 213) = 288.55, p<.001 \), two incremental fit indexes, the comparative fit index (CFI) and the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), were .91 and .90, respectively. These indexes are independent of the size of the sample and degrees of freedom (Marsh et al., 1988). Bentler and Bonett (1980) recommended that a value of .90 or higher on the CFI and TLI indicates an adequate fit of model to data. In addition, a single-factor model was also estimated and compared to this four-factor structure. This unidimensional model had a chi-square score of 1232.19 \( (p<.001) \), with 152 degrees of freedom (CFI=.59; TLI=.54). The chi-square difference between the unidimensional model and the four-factor model was significant \( \Delta \chi^2(6, N = 213) = 836.22, p<.001 \). Therefore, from these results and comparisons, support was found in this study for the measures of role conflict, time pressure, supervisory emotional support, and emotional exhaustion as separate and distinct dimensions.

As stated earlier, hierarchical multiple regression was used to test our hypotheses. Examination of Hypothesis 1 (see Table 2), and the moderating influence of supervisory emotional support between role conflict and emotional exhaustion, revealed a significant two-way interaction (beta = .69, \( p<.001 \)). Moreover, as for Hypothesis 2 (also in Table 2) and the moderating role of supervisory emotional support between time pressure and emotional exhaustion, the interaction term was also significant (beta = .36, \( p<.05 \)).

In order to fully examine our study’s hypotheses and proposed relationships, including the nature of the significant interactions, we used the procedures developed by Aiken and West (1991). In order to conduct simple slope analyses of employees’ emotional exhaustion on role conflict and time pressure for both high and low levels of supervisory emotional support, they recommend that the predictor variables be centered in order to maximize interpretability and to minimize problems of multicollinearity. Centering involves subtracting the mean from each observation; such transformed observations are also referred to as deviation scores (Howell, 1992).

The results of the simple slope analyses are plotted in Figures II and III. As predicted in Hypothesis 1, concerning the moderating role of supervisory emotional support between role conflict and emotional exhaustion, results revealed a reverse buffering effect. That is, as shown in Figure II, as employees encountered additional role conflict, emotional exhaustion significantly increased when
Table 1. Descriptive Statistics, Correlations, and Reliabilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Job Category</td>
<td>(-)</td>
<td>(-)</td>
<td>(-)</td>
<td>(.76)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Role Conflict</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>(.83)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Time Pressure</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.48**</td>
<td>(.83)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Supervisory Emotional Support</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>-.56**</td>
<td>-.29**</td>
<td>(.83)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Emotional Exhaustion</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.38**</td>
<td>.50**</td>
<td>-.24**</td>
<td>(.87)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: N = 213. Cronbach alpha reliabilities are shown in parentheses and along the diagonal. **p<.01

there was high supervisory emotional support (simple slope = .55). Similar reverse buffering effects were found in examining Hypothesis 2 which also predicted that supervisory emotional support would moderate the association between time pressure and employees’ emotional exhaustion (see Figure III). As employees experienced added time pressure, emotional exhaustion significantly increased when there was high supervisory emotional support (simple slope = .50).

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to further examine the reverse buffering effects of supervisory emotional support in the relationship between job/role demand stressors and emo-

Table 2. Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Emotional Exhaustion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictors</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE B</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>ΔR²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 1: Control Variable</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Category</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 2: Main Effects</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role Conflict</td>
<td>-.55</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>-.58***</td>
<td>.27***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Pressure</td>
<td>-.51</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>-.59***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisory Emotional Support</td>
<td>-.54</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>-.61***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 3: Two-Way Interactions</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role Conflict X Supervisory Emotional Support</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.69***</td>
<td>.05***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Pressure X Supervisory Emotional Support</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.36*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: N = 213. B, SE B, and β are the values from the full regression equation with all predictor variables. ΔR² = is the incremental variance explained between each step.

***p<.001 *p<.05
tional exhaustion of employees with supervisors (including managers). Previous research investigating the function of supervisory emotional support has been inconsistent. Because many researchers have combined both elements of emotional and instrumental supervisory support, it has been difficult to examine the role that each subtype of support has in acting as a positive or negative buffer between demand stressors and emotional exhaustion. We predicted and found support for the reverse buffering effect. Furthermore, by separating supervisory emotional support from instrumental supervisory support, we believe that we can offer
a rational explanation for why the reverse buffering effect occurred.

One of the reasons why supervisory emotional support may have a dysfunctional effect on the relationship between job/role demand stressors and employee exhaustion may be due to the nature of the relationship between this form of support and the stressors examined in our study. Both of our role conflict and time pressure measures are operationalized in such a manner that takes into consideration many of the behaviors and demands placed on employees by their supervisor. To illustrate, the role conflict item—"I seem to receive conflicting requests from different people (for example, co-workers, bosses)"—and the time pressure item—"The time deadlines for completing work assignments are too unreasonable"—are examples of how supervisors may be an important
source and stimulant of many of these job/role demand stressors. Therefore, because these supervisors may be seen as causing stress within their employees, an attempt of supervisor intervention by offering emotional support could actually be a stressful occurrence.

Instead of giving and offering tangible assistance in helping employees solve their problems and obligations, the supervisor’s actions are inconsistent with the words of emotional support being offered. These mixed messages may exacerbate the stressful occurrence and situation, rather than alleviate it. Inconsistent messages and the manner in which they are communicated may influence how an employee behaves and reacts to the demands of his/her job. Future investigations should examine how the content and salience of the message received by the employee interacts with role demands to influence employee outcomes and burnout.

As Fenlason and Beehr (1994) pointed out, there is no widely accepted reason why reverse buffering occurs. Although Beehr (1995) noted that it is difficult to discover different results for emotional and instrumental support, because of the strong empirical relationship between the two types, the current study contributes to the research on social support by providing a clear example of reverse buffering when only utilizing supervisory emotional support, separated from any instrumental support. As such, it helps to offer a rationale for reverse buffering. Further research into the specific types of supervisor support, as opposed to the more global measures of support, may provide additional explanations for the reverse buffering effect.

Managerial Implications

What can managers learn from this study to enable them to more effectively manage their subordinates? One of the keys is to provide subordinates with the type of support they need in a given situation. The ability of managers to diagnose the needs of subordinates, along with the current workplace situation, is vital to providing the right kind of support. Along with diagnostic skills, managers must have the ability and skill to provide different types of support, both emotional and instrumental, should the situation require it. It may be more difficult to provide instrumental support, depending on the types of stressors being experienced. Providing instrumental support may require managers to self-reflect and become aware of the part they are playing in creating the stressor in the first place. Fenlason and Beehr (1994), after finding the reverse buffering effect point out that when co-workers engage in gripe sessions, the stressed employee does not reduce his or her strains. Likewise, our results indicate that emotional support during certain stressful situations only makes a bad situation worse. Managers should not try to emotionally support their subordinates if they are part of the problem.

Finally, managers should also realize the role that both explicit and implicit forms of communication and observation can play in determining employees’ emotional reactions. When employees perceive that they have been given incompatible role demands or time deadlines and are given support that is inconsistent with these demands or deadlines, employees are feeling additional strain. Managers should seek to understand and clarify employees’
work demands and expectations. In doing so, they may be giving the type of supportive behavior that may be necessary to alleviate some of the symptoms associated with employee burnout, particularly emotional exhaustion.

**Limitations and Future Research**

One of the limitations of this study is that the relationship between the predictors and emotional exhaustion included common method variance. These predictors and beliefs were taken from one source (the employee). In addition, this study utilized a cross-sectional design, yet the relationships suggest causal direction. Causal inferences created from cross-sectional designs are only inferences (Spector, 1981). Although the longitudinal designs have generally shown the same effects demonstrated in cross-sectional designs, it may be useful to further examine how the changing nature of the job and supervisory relationship influences employee burnout over time. Organizations and researchers may also be able to observe the effectiveness of other intervention techniques and methods in relieving some of the detrimental effects on employees' emotional well-being and their ability to perform the requisites of their jobs.

In addition, there may also be concern regarding the small magnitude of the two-way interactions. Many researchers (e.g., Pedhazur, 1982; Stone and Holtenbeck, 1984) have warned about interpreting the significance of the interaction terms that are based on the amount of variance explained (R2). Cohen and Cohen (1983) contend that it is important to examine the increment or change in variance (R2) to determine whether the association being investigated is indeed moderated. Nevertheless, to better understand the nature of the interaction effect, it is important that researchers conduct simple slope analyses and plot the relationships in question at different levels of the moderator (Aiken and West, 1991). This study utilized such an approach and investigated the relationship between demand stressors and emotional exhaustion at different levels of supervisory emotional support (high and low).

As advocated by researchers (Fenlason and Beehr, 1994), more attention should concentrate on alternative sources and types of support if researchers are to delineate those supportive actions and behaviors that can mitigate the adverse effects of job-related stressors on employee burnout and other outcomes. It may be useful to incorporate other social support sources that play a primary role in the constant demands of the job and work climate. Top management, co-workers, and family are additional people that may generate alternative sources of support beyond those received from the immediate supervisor or manager. Moreover, the types of support, ranging from instrumental (giving tangible assistance, offering ideas and suggestions) to emotional (demonstrating concerns, listening), should also be more specifically delineated to understand those supportive behaviors and responses that are functionally helpful in alleviating employee burnout.

Future research should examine not only how the message interacts with role demands but also how the employee interprets those messages in forming his/her beliefs and attitudes. The research on attitude function and preservation of schemata
(see Eagly and Chaiken, 1993) has shown that attitudes affect individuals’ interpretations of reality in such a manner that is consistent and congruent with their prior attitudes and beliefs. Employees who have many assignment and responsibility conflicts on the job, possibly through demands made by their supervisors, may interpret any interaction with their supervisor in a negative way, thereby confirming their initial attitude about the job and their relationship with their supervisor.

Although past research and recommendations have advocated supervisory support as a moderator between stressors and employee outcomes, future research should also examine the role of both emotional and instrumental support as an end result in the stress process. As recommended by Beehr (1995), it may be the case that employees, because of the job/role demands and the emotional exhaustion it causes, are actively seeking support to alleviate their stress. More work needs to be conducted through longitudinal designs to determine if employees are proactively seeking treatment and support through their supervisors due to the demands and stress of the job.

Furthermore, more research should investigate different demands of the work situation and the amount of discretion given to employees through their jobs/positions. The “demand-control-support” model by Johnson and Hall (1988) postulates that support buffers the negative effects of high demand, low control jobs. Schaubroeck and Fink (1998) found that supervisory consideration was positively associated with job performance, extra-role behavior, and in-role prosocial behavior only when employees perceived low job control. The relationship between consideration and job performance and extra-role behavior, however, was negative for those employees who perceived high job control.

**Conclusion**

Although much work remains, this study uncovers another situation where a specific type of supervisory support may not help an employee cope with demand stressors. Contrary to several models of job stress, reverse buffering effects were observed between job/role demand stressors and emotional exhaustion when there was supervisory emotional support. That is, as employees encountered additional role conflict and time pressure in their jobs, emotional exhaustion increased when there was high supervisory emotional support. As advocated by others (e.g., Fenlason and Beehr, 1994), more research is needed that specifically focuses on alternative sources and types of supportive actions and behaviors that may or may not mitigate the adverse effects of job-related stressors on employee burnout and other outcomes. There is clearly a need for more research in this area and it is our hope that future investigations will build on the initial steps and findings of the current study.
References


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