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# The impact of social and temporal job demands and resources on emotional exhaustion and turnover intention among flight attendants

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## ABSTRACT

Based on a survey among flight attendants from a DACH-country-based airline, this study examines the effects and relative importance of social and temporal determinants of emotional exhaustion and turnover intention. Results suggest that scheduling satisfaction is the most influential predictor of both emotional exhaustion and turnover intention, followed by time pressure and surface acting for emotional exhaustion and surface acting and organizational support for turnover intention. From a practical standpoint, these results thus suggest that the most important predictors of emotional exhaustion and turnover intention can be shaped and influenced quite well by management.

## KEYWORDS

Conservation of resources theory; dominance analysis; emotional exhaustion; emotional labor; flight attendants; job demands-resources model; scheduling satisfaction; tourism frontline staff; turnover intention

## Introduction

Frontline employees in tourism, i.e., those who are in regular customer contact and thus “at the interface of delivery” (Williams & Thwaites, 2007, p. 95), are central to the service quality experienced by customers and consequently organizational performance (Baum, Kralj, Robinson, & Solnet, 2016; Madera, Dawson, Guchait, & Belarmino, 2017). Despite this crucial role for service delivery, they are often confronted with a stressful and adverse work environment (Mohamed, 2015; Zopiatis, Theocharous, & Constanti, 2018). Some typical stressors mentioned in extant research are emotional labor, customer confrontation, often long and irregular work shifts or high time pressure (Kim, Ro, Hutchinson, & Kwun, 2014; Lee, Magnini, & Kim, 2011; Shani, Uriely, Reichel, & Ginsburg, 2014). Although, each of these challenges is not unique to working in tourism, the combination of all is arguably not too common in most other industries. On the other hand, there are organizational factors which counter the

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negative effects of the stressors just mentioned, such as support by colleagues or the employing organization (e.g., Kang, Gatling, & Kim, 2015; Kim & Back, 2012; Kurtessis et al., 2017), but these are not as specific to frontline staff in tourism as the demands listed above and apply to a wider range of settings (Allen, Shore, & Griffeth, 2003).

The aforementioned challenges faced by frontline employees in tourism go with several negative consequences such as impaired employee well-being, reduced job performance and customer service or even absenteeism and sabotage (Chen & Kao, 2012; Kao, Cheng, Kuo, & Huang, 2014; Karatepe & Kaviti, 2016; Lee, Ok, Lee, & Lee, 2018). One important outcome is emotional exhaustion (Chen & Chen, 2012; Hu, Hu, & King, 2017; Karatepe & Nkendon, 2014), which in addition to impairing employee well-being and performance also affects central aspects of service delivery such as customer satisfaction (Söderlund, 2017). Another consequence which is frequently linked to this depletion of emotional resources is turnover intention (Babakus, Yavas, & Karatepe, 2008; Cho, Choi, & Lee, 2014). This intention to leave one's job and/or organization shows a high association with actual turnover (Tett & Meyer, 1993) which is named as one of the core problems in the tourism industry (DiPietro & Condly, 2007; Yam, Raybould, & Gordon, 2018).

The current study examines the effects of emotional labor, customer confrontation and time pressure as well as scheduling satisfaction and colleague and organizational support on emotional exhaustion and turnover intention. Besides exploring the effect of each predictor on the criterion variables, the analysis includes an assessment of the relative importance of each predictor, too, i.e., which proportion of the total effect explained can be attributed to each of the factors.

The purpose of this study is, thus, to assess the importance of social (interaction with customers, fellow staff and the employing organization) and temporal (time pressure and scheduling) job aspects as predictors of emotional exhaustion and turnover intention among frontline staff in tourism and hospitality. This leads to the following three research objectives: (a) To examine the rarely explored predictors of emotional exhaustion and turnover intention (customer confrontation, scheduling satisfaction, time pressure), (b) compare the effects of less researched predictors (customer confrontation, scheduling satisfaction, time pressure) to those of better-researched predictors (emotional labor, colleague and organizational support), (c) identifying potential "pressure points" for reducing emotional exhaustion and turnover intention.

## **Literature review and hypothesis development**

The theoretical background of this study relates to two widely used concepts: the conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989) and the

job-demands-resources model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). The basic notion is that people try to obtain and conserve things they value, i.e., resources (Halbesleben, Neveu, Paustian-Underdahl, & Westman, 2014). The aforementioned demands in frontline tourism work represent threats to these resources, creating stress which leads to emotional exhaustion (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001; Wright & Cropanzano, 1998), i.e., a “state of depletion and fatigue” (Grandey, 2003, p. 89). The second outcome considered here, turnover intention (defined as “a conscious and deliberate willfulness to leave the organization”; Tett & Meyer, 1993, p. 262) can be seen as a coping strategy from a conservation of resources perspective: one way to counter the threat by demands and stressors inherent in one’s frontline tourism job can be to consider an “escape route” by quitting (Siu, Cheung, & Lui, 2015).

Both emotional exhaustion and turnover intention are influenced by job demands, i.e., “aspects of the job that require sustained [...] effort and are, therefore, associated with certain physiological and psychological costs (e.g., exhaustion)” as well as job resources, i.e., job aspects which help in fulfilling one’s job and/or reduce job demands (Demerouti et al., 2001, p. 501). The present study examines social and/or temporal job demands and job resources which are closely linked to everyday frontline work in tourism. These are emotional labor (surface acting), customer confrontation and time pressure (demands) and colleague and organizational support as well as scheduling satisfaction (resources).

### ***Emotional labor/surface acting***

Since Hochschild’s seminal work “The managed heart,” emotional labor among frontline staff in service industries has become a well-researched topic (e.g., Grandey, 2003). She defines emotional labor as “the management of feelings to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display” (Hochschild, 1983, p. 7). This management of emotions can take place in two ways: “through surface acting, where one regulates the emotional expressions, and through deep acting, where one consciously modifies feelings in order to express the desired emotion” (Grandey, 2000, p. 96). Extant research suggests that of these two approaches, only surface acting has a detrimental effect regarding stress, emotional exhaustion and several other aspects of well-being and performance. Explanations revolve around dissonance and ego depletion resulting from faking emotions which are completely different from one’s actual feelings (Grandey, 2003; Hülsheger & Schewe, 2011). Dissonance and depletion of psychological resources are also invoked as explanations for an (indirect) relationship between surface

acting and turnover intention (Chau, Dahling, Levy, & Diefendorff, 2009; Xu, Martinez, & Lv, 2017). Thus:

*Hypothesis 1a: Surface acting increases emotional exhaustion.*

*Hypothesis 1b: Surface acting increases turnover intention.*

### **Customer confrontation**

The same mechanisms which underlie the hypothesized effect of emotional labor (surface acting) on emotional exhaustion and turnover intention arguably apply to customer confrontation as predictors. Having to deal with overly demanding or even aggressive customer behavior without being able to retaliate or withdraw creates discomfort and depletes employees' emotional resources. This asymmetry is often aggravated by excessive organizational tolerance toward unruly customers (Yagil, 2008). Accordingly, the association between having to deal with unruly customers and both emotional exhaustion and turnover intention has been corroborated empirically in the tourism industry (Han, Bonn, & Cho, 2016; Hu et al., 2017; Kim et al., 2014). Hence:

*Hypothesis 2a: Customer confrontation increases emotional exhaustion.*

*Hypothesis 2b: Customer confrontation increases turnover intention.*

### **Time pressure**

Similarly to the idea of ego depletion cited above in connection with emotional labor as a determinant of emotional exhaustion, time pressure and/or demanding productivity norms result in an increased effort to fulfill one's job which fosters emotional exhaustion (Houkes, Janssen, de Jonge, & Nijhuis, 2001), an assumption corroborated by empirical findings (Kinnunen et al., 2017; Lee & Ashforth, 1996; Syrek, Apostel, & Antoni, 2013). Likewise, experiencing time pressure during work leads to stress which then promotes turnover intention (Duraisingam, Pidd, & Roche, 2009). This association between time pressure and turnover intention has been supported empirically as well (Duraisingam et al., 2009; Liu & Onwuegbuzie, 2012):

*Hypothesis 3a: Time pressure increases emotional exhaustion.*

*Hypothesis 3b: Time pressure increases turnover intention.*

### **Colleague support**

Frequently cited as a resource in the job-demands-resources model, social support by coworkers is often instrumental for task attainment, and

therefore, a straightforward aid (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007, p. 315). On a less task-related level, it can be seen as part of a social network which “can provide the individual with emotional support and instrumental assistance in coping with stressful events and continuing strains encountered in the work-place” (Billings & Moos, 1982, p. 216). Although, this alleviating the effect of coworker support on strain-related outcomes apparently does not materialize in all situations (Beehr, Bowling, & Bennett, 2010), a meta-analysis suggests that coworker support is overall associated with less emotional exhaustion (Halbesleben, 2006). Also, a recent study in the hospitality industry found it to reduce turnover intentions (Bufquin, DiPietro, Orłowski, & Partlow, 2017). Thus:

*Hypothesis 4a: Colleague support reduces emotional exhaustion.*

*Hypothesis 4b: Colleague support reduces turnover intention.*

### **Organizational support**

Like colleague support, organizational support, can be defined as “the extent to which the organization values [employees’] contributions and cares about their well-being” (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986, p. 501) represents an aspect of emotional support and assistance in handling job demands and stressors and should, therefore, reduce emotional exhaustion. Regarding the effect of organizational support on turnover intention, theoretical arguments offered by extant literature revolve around notions of reciprocity/social exchange and the idea that feeling valued and cared about by the organization ties organizational membership more closely to employee self-identity (Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Davis-LaMastro, 1990). Findings from research in tourism settings support the notion that organizational support attenuates both emotional exhaustion and turnover intention (Guchait, Cho, & Meurs, 2015; Karatepe & Kilic, 2015):

*Hypothesis 5a: Organizational support reduces emotional exhaustion.*

*Hypothesis 5b: Organizational support reduces turnover intention.*

### **Scheduling satisfaction**

Representing “the overall level of satisfaction with one’s working schedule” (Morrow, McElroy, & Elliott, 1994, p. 210), scheduling satisfaction should reduce a negative impact of nonstandard work hours on negative emotional reactions by employees via improved perception of social exchange and relationship between employer and employee (Wittmer & Martin, 2011). Research directly focusing on scheduling satisfaction and its effect on

emotional exhaustion and turnover intention in tourism settings is scarce, but findings on related constructs (satisfaction with scheduling flexibility or a comparison of actual work schedules) suggest that work schedules that align with the employees' preference enhance psychological resources and reduce turnover intention (Kucukusta, Guillet, & Lau, 2014; Lee et al., 2011; Xu, van Hoof, & Nyheim, 2018).

*Hypothesis 6a: Scheduling satisfaction reduces emotional exhaustion.*

*Hypothesis 6b: Scheduling satisfaction reduces turnover intention.*

### **Emotional exhaustion and turnover intention**

From a conservation of resources perspective, emotional exhaustion is a form of resource depletion prompting coping approaches which are often associated with withdrawal tendencies including turnover intentions (Westman, Hobfoll, Chen, Davidson, & Laski, 2004, p. 183). Indeed, this association between emotional exhaustion and turnover intention has been repeatedly corroborated for the tourism industry (Babakus et al., 2008; Hur, Moon, & Jun, 2013; Karatepe & Kaviti, 2016).

*Hypothesis 7: Emotional exhaustion increases turnover intention.*

### **Relative importance of included job demands and resources**

Regarding the relative importance of these predictors, one core assumption of conservation of resources theory is that "resource loss is more salient than resource gain" (Halbesleben et al., 2014, p. 1337). Indeed, a meta-analysis suggests that the effect of job demands on emotional exhaustion is larger than that of job resources (Lee & Ashforth, 1996). For turnover intention, no such direct reasoning or evidence could be found, therefore, the assessment of the relative importance of predictors for turnover intention will be exploratory.

*Hypothesis 8: The included job demands (surface acting, customer confrontation, time pressure) are more important predictors of emotional exhaustion than the included job resources (colleague support, organizational support, scheduling satisfaction).*

Figure 1 depicts the hypothesized relationships. Although, the model contains an indirect path of demands and resources to turnover intention via emotional exhaustion, the analysis of these indirect effects will be only exploratory as specifically developing hypotheses about the nature and extent of a mediating effect by emotional exhaustion is beyond the purpose of this study, and the cross-sectional design (see methods section) is ill-suited to appropriately testing for mediation (e.g., Aguinis, Edwards, & Bradley, 2017, p. 677).

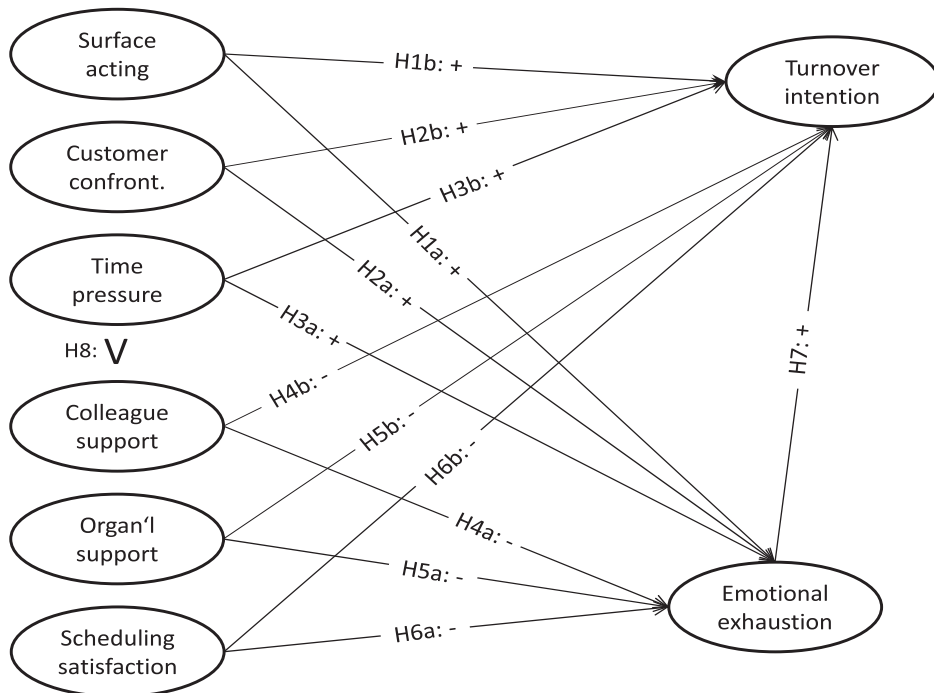


Figure 1. Conceptual model and hypotheses.

## Method

### Sample and data collection

The sample for this study consisted of 767 flight attendants from a DACH-country-based internationally operating airline. Regarding sample size considerations, the aim was an  $n > 500$  to ensure appropriate statistical power even in case of modest factor loadings and given that the number of indicators per latent variable was only three for many constructs (Wolf, Harrington, Clark, & Miller, 2013). Following an announcement letter, the questionnaire was personally distributed in the head and branch offices of the airline in a paper version, with a ballot box installed for anonymously returning the completed questionnaires. Flyers and reminders posted on the company intranet prompted and reminded all cabin crew to participate during the data collection period which lasted about two months in total. In the second month, an intranet survey was offered in addition to the paper version and accounted for 13% of the total response.

### Measures

All construct measures are taken from (or at least based on) extant instruments (e.g., Eisenberger et al., 1986; Morrow et al., 1994) and were translated into the native language of the participants (German) by a



professional translation office. For the questionnaire, response format was always a four-point rating scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” Detailed information on questionnaire items (original and translated version), all literature sources and consistency values can be found in the supplement. Control variables include gender, age, full-time vs. part-time work (degree of employment), position, crewing long-haul flights (yes/no), marital status and number of children.

### **Analysis**

The statistical procedures used include Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and relative importance analysis (Johnson & LeBreton, 2004), with the approach used being most familiar under the label “dominance analysis” (Budescu, 1993; for an application in the field of service quality research, see, e.g., Kumar, Kee, & Charles, 2010). Data analysis was conducted with IBM SPSS Statistics version 20 and R (R Core Team, 2017), using the packages lavaan (Rosseel, 2012), relaimpo (Grömping, 2006) and semTools (semTools Contributors, 2016). Before conducting the SEM analyses, the variance owing to the control variables was removed by running a general linear model on each questionnaire item with the aforementioned control variables as predictors and using the residuals of these analyses as observed variables for the structural equation model. As there were some cases with single missing item responses, a full information maximum likelihood approach (Enders, 2001b) with a robust ML estimator was used. Bootstrapping for obtaining confidence intervals for the relative importance indices and  $z$  and  $p$  values for the indirect effects involved 5000 replications.

## **Results**

### **Demographics**

Of the 767 participating flight attendants, 89% are women, with a mean age of 37 years  $\pm$  7.6, the average seniority is 15.8 years  $\pm$  7.0. Half the sample works part-time, about two-thirds sometimes work on long-haul and 90% on medium-haul flights (and almost all on short-haul flights). 63% are junior crew, 29% senior crew and 8% pursers. One-third of the sample is married, 30% are single and living with a partner, respectively, the rest are divorced or widowed, and 40% have children.

### **Variable measurement**

Cronbach alpha values for the used scales ranged from 0.59 to 0.87 ( $>$  0.7 for all scales but one; see supplement for details). Inspection of skewness

and kurtosis values before conducting maximum likelihood SEM yielded skewness values ranging from  $-1.25$  to  $1.47$  for the items with control variable variance removed ( $-1.26$  to  $1.53$  for the raw items) and kurtosis values from  $-0.95$  to  $1.94$  ( $-1.04$  to  $1.89$ ). These values suggest merely mild non-normality (Enders, 2001a), which should not be a threat to analysis results (also given the considerable sample size; Lei & Lomax, 2005). Regarding construct measurement, most internal consistency values for the used scales are quite satisfactory (see measures section above) except for time pressure, and to some extent colleague support with a Cronbach  $\alpha$  of just slightly above .7. Taking the items with the variance due to the control variables removed yields virtually identical Cronbach  $\alpha$  values within a range of  $\pm 0.01$ .

As this combination of (translated) items has not been used before, an EFA (principal axis extraction, Promax rotation) preceded the SEM analyses. Even the liberal eigenvalue  $> 1$  criterion for number of factors yielded an eight-factor solution corresponding very well to the intended item allocation (see supplement), but the results suggested removing two items from the emotional exhaustion and one from the scheduling satisfaction scale owing to mis- and/or cross-loadings. Cronbach alpha remained 0.86 for the revised emotional exhaustion scale and even increased to 0.80 for the revised scheduling satisfaction scale.

Regarding SEM results for the measurement model, average variance extracted (AVE) values fall somewhat short of the recommended 0.5 threshold (e.g., Fornell & Larcker, 1981) for time pressure (0.44), organizational (0.49) and colleague support (0.42). By contrast, all variables satisfy the widely used criterion for discriminant validity by the aforementioned source (AVE higher than the squared correlation with any other latent construct). Despite a significant  $\chi^2$  statistic (which is not surprising given the considerable sample size;  $\chi^2_{(436)} = 1025.7$ ,  $p < .01$ ), the model fit indices are thoroughly satisfactory (Schermelleh-Engel, Moosbrugger, & Müller, 2003): CFI and NNFI are 0.93 and 0.92, respectively,  $\chi^2/df = 2.35$ , RMSEA = 0.045 ( $p = .99$ ), SRMR = 0.049.

### **Hypothesis testing**

The following Table 1 shows descriptives and intercorrelations (for the revised scales in case of emotional exhaustion and scheduling satisfaction). Correlations below the main diagonal are based on observed variables, correlations above the main diagonal are based on the latent variables derived from the scale residuals after controlling for the individual variables listed at the end of the measures section.

**Table 1.** Variable descriptives and intercorrelations.

	Mean	s.d.	EE	TI	SA	CC	TP	CS	OS	SS	gdr.	age	d.e.	pos.	child.	short	med.	long
EE	2.73	0.70	<b>0.71</b>	0.52	0.56	0.52	0.58	-0.19	-0.51	-0.67	-0.02	0.00	0.01	0.00	-0.01	0.04	-0.01	0.00
TI	1.68	0.82	0.48	<b>0.84</b>	0.40	0.35	0.26	-0.19	-0.38	-0.52	-0.01	-0.01	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.05	-0.05	-0.01
SA	1.99	0.80	0.48	0.36	<b>0.74</b>	0.46	0.43	-0.18	-0.30	-0.37	-0.01	0.00	-0.01	-0.01	0.00	0.08	-0.03	0.02
CC	2.00	0.76	0.46	0.31	0.39	<b>0.77</b>	0.48	-0.14	-0.35	-0.47	-0.01	0.01	-0.01	0.01	0.01	0.06	-0.02	-0.01
TP	2.97	0.63	0.41	0.13	0.28	0.35	<b>0.67</b>	-0.10	-0.28	-0.50	-0.02	0.00	0.01	0.01	-0.01	-0.03	-0.04	0.01
CS	3.47	0.47	-0.18	-0.17	-0.14	-0.12	0.00	<b>0.65</b>	0.12	0.22	0.00	-0.01	0.00	-0.01	-0.02	-0.03	-0.02	-0.01
OS	1.74	0.64	-0.44	-0.35	-0.27	-0.29	-0.22	0.12	<b>0.70</b>	0.51	0.02	0.00	-0.02	-0.01	0.00	0.02	0.01	0.00
SS	2.51	0.77	-0.61	-0.46	-0.34	-0.44	-0.36	0.18	0.45	<b>0.77</b>	0.01	0.01	-0.01	0.01	0.00	-0.01	0.01	0.00
gender (f)	.89	0.31	0.01	-0.11	-0.09	-0.01	0.07	0.02	0.01	0.03	0.01	-0.04	-0.20	-0.02	0.12	0.13	-0.02	-0.06
age	36.9	7.59	-0.01	-0.01	0.07	-0.11	0.03	0.06	-0.12	0.02	-0.04	-0.18	-0.18	0.50	0.36	-0.06	0.15	0.31
deg. emp.	81.0	21.3	0.19	0.06	0.11	0.19	0.04	0.00	-0.24	-0.24	-0.20	-0.18	-0.10	-0.10	-0.54	0.03	0.11	0.09
position	1.44	0.63	-0.06	-0.11	0.06	-0.01	0.10	0.09	0.05	0.01	-0.02	0.50	-0.10	0.11	0.10	-0.04	-0.12	-0.07
n children	.63	0.88	-0.17	-0.10	-0.10	-0.18	-0.08	0.09	-0.01	0.14	0.12	0.35	-0.53	0.11	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.14
short	.98	0.14	0.06	0.04	0.07	0.06	0.00	-0.04	-0.01	-0.04	0.13	-0.06	0.03	-0.04	0.01	0.04	0.04	-0.06
medium	.89	0.31	0.03	0.03	0.01	0.02	-0.10	-0.01	-0.06	-0.04	-0.02	0.15	0.11	-0.12	0.02	0.04	0.04	0.40
long	.68	0.47	0.09	0.08	0.10	0.04	-0.10	-0.02	-0.16	-0.05	-0.06	0.31	0.09	-0.07	0.13	-0.06	0.40	

EE: Emotional exhaustion; TI: Turnover intention; SA: Surface acting; CC: Customer confrontation; TP: Time pressure; CS: Colleague support; OS: Organizational support; SS: Scheduling satisfaction; deg. emp.: degree of employment (full-time = 100%); position: 1 = junior, 2 = senior, 3 = purser; short, medium, long (haul): 1 = y, 0 = n; bold figures on main diagonal show AVE square root; n below main diag [729.767] n above main diag [762.654], correlations  $\geq 0.08$  are statistically significant at the 5% level (two-tailed)

**Table 2.** SEM path coefficients, relative importance results and indirect effects.

Criterion: EE (R <sup>2</sup> = .64)							
	$\beta$	r.i. (%)	r.i. range				
SA (Hypothesis 1a)	0.26**	19.9%	bcd				
CC (Hypothesis 2a)	0.05	12.7%	de				
TP (Hypothesis 3a)	0.25**	20.6%	bcd				
CS (Hypothesis 4a)	-0.01	1.4%	f				
OS (Hypothesis 5a)	-0.16**	14.8%	cde				
SS (Hypothesis 6a)	-0.35**	30.6%	a				
Criterion: TI (R <sup>2</sup> = .38)				r.i. (%)	r.i. range	ind. eff. on TI via EE	proportion mediated
	$\beta$	r.i. (%)	r.i. range	(%) incl. EE	incl. EE		
SA (Hypothesis 1b)	0.18**	21.5%	bcd	14.8%	cde	0.066**	26.8%
CC (Hypothesis 2b)	0.05	11.2%	bcde	8.2%	cdef	0.014	21.9%
TP (Hypothesis 3b)	-0.18**	5.2%	ef	5.1%	efg	0.064*	26.2%
CS (Hypothesis 4b)	-0.04	3.6%	def	2.9%	efg	-0.002	4.8%
OS (Hypothesis 5b)	-0.06	15.8%	bcd	11.1%	cde	-0.042*	41.2%
SS (Hypothesis 6b)	-0.32**	42.8%	a	29.9%	ab	-0.091**	22.1%
EE (Hypothesis 7)	0.26**			28.0%	ab		

EE: Emotional exhaustion; TI: Turnover intention; SA: Surface acting; CC: Customer confrontation; TP: Time pressure; CS: Colleague support; OS: Organizational support; SS: Scheduling satisfaction  
 n = 720 for SEM, n = 660 for relative importance analysis; \* p < .05; \*\* p < .01.  
 "r.i." percentages indicate relative importance of predictor (summing up to 100%). Reported range of relative importance ranks (a–g/a–f) is based on 95% confidence intervals of relative importance values.

Table 2 below shows the results of the SEM (standardized path coefficients) and relative importance analyses based on the scale residuals after controlling for the demographic variables (see Analysis section). The percentages indicate the relative importance of the respective predictor (without and with emotional exhaustion for turnover intention). The letter(s) represent the importance rank(s) of the predictor based on the calculated confidence intervals (a–g for turnover intention, a–f for emotional exhaustion and turnover intention without emotional exhaustion as predictor). For instance, based on these confidence intervals, colleague support is the least important predictor of emotional exhaustion, and among the three least important predictors for turnover intention. The final two columns show the (standardized) indirect effect of the predictor on turnover intention via emotional exhaustion and the proportion of this indirect effect in relation to the total effect within the model, i.e., the respective standardized path coefficient to turnover intention (direct effect), plus the respective standardized path coefficient from predictor to emotional exhaustion times 0.26, the standardized path coefficient from emotional exhaustion to turnover intention.

***Hypothesis 1a: Surface acting increases emotional exhaustion/Hypothesis 1b: Surface acting increases turnover intention***

Both hypotheses are supported by the bivariate as well as the SEM results: employees with a higher level of surface acting on average also report a

higher level of both emotional exhaustion (EE) and turnover intention (TI), as shown by the positive coefficients. In addition, surface acting is among the “top three” predictors for both criteria according to the relative importance analysis (see Table 2).

***Hypothesis 2a: Customer confrontation increases emotional exhaustion/***

***Hypothesis 2b: Customer confrontation increases turnover intention***

Even though the bivariate correlations (see Table 1) are positive and statistically significant, when viewed in conjunction with the other predictors (see Table 2), there is virtually no connection between the reported level of customer confrontation and either outcome, lending no support to Hypothesis 2. In addition, the relative importance analysis suggests that it is one of the less important predictors.

***Hypothesis 3a: Time pressure increases emotional exhaustion/Hypothesis 3b:***

***Time pressure increases turnover intention***

Results are mixed for this hypothesis pair: respondents who report higher levels of time pressure report higher levels of EE, too, lending support to Hypothesis 3a. For EE, time pressure is also the second most important of all predictors considered here. By contrast, the correlation with TI is considerably smaller, and the sign of the beta coefficient even changes for the multivariate analysis, where time pressure is the second least important predictor, too. Overall, the results, thus, suggest that differences in perceived time pressure between respondents are not systematically associated with their TI, contrary to Hypothesis 3b.

***Hypothesis 4a: Colleague support reduces emotional exhaustion/Hypothesis***

***4b: Colleague support reduces turnover intention***

The results for this pair of hypotheses resemble those for customer confrontation: although, the bivariate correlations are statistically significant (and have a negative sign as posited), the multivariate model suggests that there is no association between employees' reported level of colleague support and their emotional exhaustion and/or turnover intention, as also evidenced in the lowest of all relative importance values. Hypothesis 4 is, therefore, not supported by the data.

***Hypothesis 5a: Organizational support reduces emotional exhaustion/***

***Hypothesis 5b: Organizational support reduces turnover intention***

Similar to time pressure, despite the bivariate results being in accordance with both hypotheses, the multivariate model suggests that a higher level of

organizational support is only associated with a lower level of EE, but not with TI, lending support to Hypothesis 5a but not to Hypothesis 5b, even though – unlike for time pressure – its estimated relative importance is considerable even for TI.

***Hypothesis 6a: Scheduling satisfaction reduces emotional exhaustion/***

***Hypothesis 6b: Scheduling satisfaction reduces turnover intention***

Both hypotheses are clearly supported by the data: respondents with a higher degree of scheduling satisfaction report lower levels of both emotional exhaustion and turnover intention. Scheduling satisfaction also exhibits the largest relative importance estimates for both EE and TI.

***Hypothesis 7: Emotional exhaustion increases turnover intention***

This hypothesis is clearly supported by both the bivariate and multivariate results: a higher degree of EE is associated with a higher degree of TI. In addition, EE is the only determinant of TI with a relative importance comparable to scheduling satisfaction.

***Hypothesis 8: The included job demands (surface acting, customer confrontation, time pressure) are more important predictors of emotional exhaustion than the included job resources (colleague support, organizational support, scheduling satisfaction)***

Judging by the relative importance analysis results, scheduling satisfaction has the largest effect on both EE and TI (almost one-third of the total effect of all six predictors taken together), followed by time pressure and surface acting for EE. This is clearly at odds with Hypothesis 8, which is, therefore, not supported by the data.

For surface acting, time pressure, organizational support and scheduling satisfaction there is a statistically significant indirect effect on TI via EE. Proportion mediated is mostly about a quarter of the total effect except for perceived organizational support with a larger and colleague support with a smaller indirect effect.

Job-related variables like position, degree of employment or crewing long-haul flights, but also variables concerning private life like marital status and/or number of children might not just be potential confounders but also potential moderators of the effect of demands and resources on EE and TI. Probing for interactions of these variables with the predictors yields the following results: For EE, the effect of scheduling satisfaction is larger for flight attendants crewing long-haul flights. Crewing long-haul flights also increases the effect of colleague support on TI. The effect of EE on TI

is larger for junior than for senior crew or pursers. Finally, number of children reduces the effect of EE on TI.

As the data are based on a cross-sectional survey, common method bias (CMB) (e.g., Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003) is a potential issue regarding the validity of the results. With a Harman one-factor test as a first diagnostic tool, one unrotated factor from all observed variables accounted for 28% of the variance with principal components analysis and 26% with principal axis or maximum likelihood extraction, a value well below the 50% threshold (Podsakoff et al., 2003, p. 890). A second CMB analysis based on the SEM approach consisted in including an unmeasured latent method factor, i.e., all observed indicators do not only load on their respective theoretical constructs, but also on a latent common methods variance factor, and the significance of the structural parameters is examined both with and without this method factor (Podsakoff et al., 2003, p. 891). A model with such a method factor added showed slightly better fit than the model without the method factor ( $\Delta\chi^2_{(8)}=76.8$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $\Delta\text{CFI}=0.007$ ), but except for the path from time pressure to TI which dropped to zero, all other coefficients remained within a margin of .04 compared to the original coefficients, and statistical significance corresponds to the original results, too. Overall, these analyses suggest that some CMB might be present, but not to an extent that would threaten the validity of the findings.

Further robustness checks involved calculating the SEM with the raw items instead of the residuals with the variance due to the aforementioned control variables removed and running the analyses with standard MLR estimation, and thus, listwise case deletion instead of the full information ML approach, as well as using a WLSMV estimator to check for potential bias from the indicator variables being merely ordinal data. All led to results virtually identical with those reported above (even with slightly higher path coefficients when using the raw values). Five items had standardized factor loadings  $<0.6$  (two from colleague support, two from time pressure, one from organizational support). Removing these items and running the SEM analyses again led to virtually the same results in terms of model fit indices and path coefficients in the structural model. Finally, there are no differences worth mentioning in responses between the paper and the online version.

## Discussion

Regarding the effects of the examined job demands and resources on emotional exhaustion and turnover intention, the results of this study are largely in accordance with extant literature, but there are some

discrepancies, too. The considerable association between surface acting and emotional exhaustion (and to a somewhat lesser extent turnover intention) corresponds to previous findings (Hülshager & Schewe, 2011). The same applies to the effect of organizational support on emotional exhaustion and (considering the total effect) turnover intention (Armstrong-Stassen, 2004). The result that colleague support has no effect on either outcome in the SEM analysis and merely low correlations in the bivariate analysis appears somewhat surprising, despite extant similar findings in the tourism industry (Kim, 2014). One possible explanation is that peer support does not always reduce emotional strain (Beehr et al., 2010). Given that, by contrast, organizational support does have a mitigating effect on emotional exhaustion and turnover intention, it is also conceivable that social support “from above” trumps peer support (cf. Lee & Ashforth, 1996, p. 127). The small and nonsignificant effect of customer confrontation on both outcomes in the SEM analysis seems at odds with prior findings but might be due to a suppressor effect as the bivariate association between customer confrontation and the two outcome variables is considerable.

The result that scheduling satisfaction is the most important of the included predictors of both outcomes, and time pressure the second most important predictor of emotional exhaustion (albeit with surface acting practically on the same level), is somewhat unexpected. Scheduling satisfaction has hardly been examined as a predictor of emotional exhaustion and turnover intention, and despite considerable evidence for the detrimental effect of time pressure on both outcomes (e.g., Duraisingam et al., 2009; Syrek et al., 2013), the authors are not aware of any investigation of its relative importance compared to other job demands in tourism and hospitality.

Rest periods generally contribute to a replenishment of resources, reducing strain and withdrawal intention (Westman & Etzion, 2001). A timing of these rest periods that aligns well with the employee’s preferences seems to enhance this mitigating effect on exhaustion considerably. Likewise, not feeling too hurried during work arguably reduces resource depletion and emotional exhaustion. Regarding turnover intention, an additional explanation for the importance of scheduling satisfaction involves the notion of reciprocity/social exchange mentioned in the hypotheses section. Convenient and considerate work schedules represent organizational goodwill which increases emotional attachment and reduces turnover intention. For time pressure, this effect is arguably less pronounced as work pace in frontline tourism jobs cannot be determined by the employing organization to the same extent as work schedules. This might be one reason for the smaller observed effect of time pressure on turnover intention compared to emotional exhaustion.



## Conclusion

Examining determinants of emotional exhaustion and turnover intention that have so far not been frequently looked at (i.e., customer confrontation, scheduling satisfaction and time pressure) revealed that time pressure and scheduling satisfaction emerged as the most important predictors of emotional exhaustion, more so than the well-established determinants emotional labor and organizational support. Scheduling satisfaction was the most important predictor of turnover intention, too. Temporal aspects, thus, appear to be a promising “pressure point” for reducing emotional exhaustion and turnover intention of frontline tourism staff.

## *Practical implications*

For the social demands associated with frontline work in tourism (emotional labor and customer confrontation), the potential influence by the employing organization is arguably limited. Organizational support as a social resource, by contrast, is basically subject to managerial influence. The present results suggest, though, that it is mainly the demands and resources related to time management which determine emotional exhaustion (and in case of scheduling satisfaction also turnover intention).

To a certain extent, time pressure is arguably part and parcel of frontline jobs in tourism, but there are some ways in which HRM can reduce it directly as well as attenuate its detrimental effects. One important measure is simply to provide sufficient staffing levels, especially avoiding permanent understaffing (Hudson & Shen, 2015, p. 251). Signs of (or even explicit complaints about) frontline staff being in a permanent hurry to fulfill their tasks should, thus, not be dismissed by management but rather accommodated by increasing operational capacity, i.e., hiring and training additional staff as necessary. A second approach which reduces time pressure directly consists in fostering knowledge transfer on efficient task fulfillment among staff, especially from experienced members to newcomers as the latter face particularly high levels of time pressure if “thrown in at the deep end” (Lansisalmi, Peiro, & Kivimaki, 2000, p. 539). This can include mentoring and/or training schemes (both newcomer and refresher training) as well as explicitly reserving dedicated debriefing time.

Two more indirect approaches that do not reduce time pressure directly but alleviate its detrimental effect on employee outcomes are giving frontline employees a certain amount of leeway regarding how they perform their duties rather than imposing overly rigid and detailed SOPs, especially when the going gets rushed (Kühnel, Sonnentag, & Bledow, 2012), as well as emphasis on (hiring and training for) positive leadership, which has been shown to attenuate the effect of time pressure, too (Syrek et al., 2013).

Probably the best leverage point for managerial intervention among the demands and resources examined in this study is scheduling satisfaction, though. It is not just the factor which can be most effectively shaped by management, but also the one with the largest impact on both emotional exhaustion and turnover intention. Currently, scheduling for frontline staff in tourism is apparently regarded as a pure logistics and optimization issue with little if any regard for idiosyncratic preferences of employees (Pullman & Rodgers, 2010).

A different approach which might tap the potential gains from increased scheduling satisfaction might be so-called self-scheduling/self-rostering schemes where staff declare their preferences regarding their working days/shifts, which are then incorporated into the staffing schedules. Despite some potential challenges associated with this tool (such as the risk of conflict over (un)popular work times, incentivizing the choice of unhealthy schedules by bonus payments, reduced (long-term) predictability of work schedules or disruption of well-rehearsed crews; Beckers, Kompier, Kecklund, & Härmä, 2012, p. 295), extant evidence suggests that staff “benefit from control over when they work, regardless of the actual clock times they work” (Fenwick & Tausig, 2001, p. 1194; Hansen et al., 2015; Nijp, Beckers, Geurts, Tucker, & Kompier, 2012). An increased focus on time management from an employee perspective, both on the level of work pace and work schedules might thus be a promising way to obtain a more energized and committed workforce.

### ***Limitations and future research***

Besides the issue of common method bias discussed at the end of the results section, some other limitations of this study have to be acknowledged. Even though survey anonymity should reduce biases like social desirability, relying on self-reported data is associated with some methodological shortcomings (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986), and the cross-sectional research design hampers causal inferences. The present study was conducted within Central Europe (DACH region) and its findings might not apply in the same manner to other regions and/or cultures. Beyond any cultural differences, the generalizability to other frontline jobs in tourism is debatable, too. The sample for this study consists of flight attendants, whose jobs feature some idiosyncrasies compared to other frontline jobs in the tourism industry (Chen & Chen, 2012). For instance, they are in charge of passenger safety, work in a very confined space (with the additional burden of cabin air and radiation) and suffer from jet lag and being away from home for extended time periods in case of long-haul flights.

Then again, their jobs arguably share many aspects with other jobs in “high contact” service businesses such as hotels, restaurants and airlines in

general (Bitner, Booms, & Tetreault, 1990), and in times of airline deregulation and mass tourism by air travel, any former glamor factor of being cabin crew is mostly a thing of the past (Baum, 2012). In terms of job demands, they are the “formal representatives” during the service encounter (as also evident by the uniform which serves as a cue to the customer; Kerry, 1996) with the associated need for emotional labor, and they are the first (and often only) ones to be confronted with customer incivility. Even in the absence of any emergencies, their daily work mostly involves a rushed pace with limited discretion regarding time management, and long and irregular work hours involving night and weekend shifts are prevalent in other frontline jobs in tourism, too. Regarding the stressors included in this research, work characteristics are thus arguably sufficiently similar for flight attendants and other frontline jobs in tourism to warrant a certain generalization of the findings to tourism frontline work at large (cf. Zhao & Ghiselli, 2016). Nonetheless, future studies investigating the importance of temporal job demands and resources in other settings and/or countries and with other groups of frontline tourism staff (and using a longitudinal design and measures that do not rely exclusively on self-report data) might be worthwhile.

In terms of further theory development, the finding that schedules (and work pace) which are perceived as suitable by frontline employees are apparently important predictors of exhaustion might suggest that resources related to employee time (management) be given more consideration in conservation of resources theory and the job-demands-resources model. Although, extant research on conservation of resources theory already lists resources which might be considered as loosely pertinent, such as autonomy/control, recovery experiences or family-friendly policies (Halbesleben et al., 2014), suitable schedules do not yet figure as a potential resource. To the authors’ knowledge, the same applies to research on the job-demands-resources model. Further research from this theoretical perspective might involve investigating a potential interaction between job demands and job resources (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), specifically regarding work pace-and schedule-related demands and/or resources. Another avenue for future research consists in further investigating the indirect effect of temporal and scheduling aspects on family life: job demands and resources do not only affect the employee him-/herself but also her/his spouse (Westman & Etzion, 1995), as illustrated in a recent qualitative study in the hospitality industry (Yam et al., 2018).

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