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The Spillover Effect of Customer Mistreatment on Frontline Employees' Subsequent  
Performance

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## ABSTRACT

Mistreatment by customers is a common occurrence for frontline service employees that is associated with employees' impaired long-term well-being and performance. Theoretical work has attributed the development of these long-term consequences in part to the spillover effects associated with mistreatment, as being mistreated by one customer may compromise the employee's ability to deliver services to subsequent customers. In this paper, we draw from resource depletion theory to conduct two studies testing the spillover effect of customer mistreatment on employees' subsequent performance. In Study 1, we conducted an experiment whereby we manipulated the level of mistreatment. We found that customer mistreatment predicted lower service performance towards the next customer and that the effect was mediated by the loss of regulatory resources. In Study 2, we conducted a field study and examined the role of display rule commitment as moderator of the spillover effects associated with mistreatment. We found that high display rule commitment acted as a buffer to the negative relationship between customer mistreatment and subsequent service performance. Together, our findings highlight how episodes of customer mistreatment can trigger subsequent declines in performance and well-being, and the role of regulatory resources in buffering its associated effects.

*Keywords:* customer mistreatment, service performance, resource depletion, display rule commitment

## **It Went Downhill From Here: The Spillover Effect of Customer Mistreatment on Frontline Employees' Subsequent Performance**

Customer mistreatment, the “low-quality interpersonal treatment that employees receive from customers” (Wang, Liao, Zhan, & Shi, 2011), is associated with a variety of adverse outcomes and can severely impact employees' work performance and attitudes. When employees are mistreated by customers, such experiences can heighten negative emotions (Spencer & Rupp, 2009) and exhaustion (Goldberg & Grandey, 2007), as well as impair cognitive functioning (Rafaeli et al., 2012). Frequent exposure to customer mistreatment over time can even trigger depression and burnout (Dormann & Zapf, 2004; Kern & Grandey, 2009). The impact of customer mistreatment is also felt across the organization and accounts for declining customer satisfaction (Baranik, Wang, Gong, & Shi, 2017; Shao & Skarlicki, 2014; Wang et al., 2011), poorer employee morale, and financial costs to the organization (Harris & Reynolds, 2003).

One potential reason for this array of negative outcomes stemming from mistreatment is its associated spillover effects (Dudenhöffer & Dormann, 2013; Groth & Grandey, 2012; Harris & Reynolds, 2003; Koopmann, Wang, Liu, & Song, 2015). Researchers have discussed how the impact of being mistreated by one customer can spill over from the focal dyad (i.e., between the mistreating customer and the service employee) to affect an employee's *subsequent* performance. This has the potential to create negative spirals whereby initial incidents of mistreatment lead to worsening subsequent service delivery, and this poorer service delivery may further promote mistreatment from other customers (Groth & Grandey, 2012). While the spillover effects stemming from customer mistreatment have been discussed in theoretical models (e.g., Groth & Grandey, 2012; Harris & Reynolds, 2003), empirical evidence examining spillover resulting from customer mistreatment is rare.

Indeed, most studies examining customer mistreatment focus on how the experiences of general mistreatment affect overall performance (e.g., Baranik et al., 2017; Shao & Skarlicki, 2014), which fails to capture immediate performance fluctuations as a result of mistreatment. Studies that have simulated service experiences, where customer mistreatment is manipulated, typically examine how mistreatment affects employees during the mistreatment service episode, rather than measuring any carry-over effects (e.g., Rupp & Spencer, 2006; Spencer & Rupp, 2009; Walker, Jaarsveld, & Skarlicki, 2017). While these studies usually show that performance toward the mistreating customer is compromised, it does not address the question of whether an employee's subsequent performance is also affected (Lavelle, Rupp, & Brockner, 2007).

Methodologically, the spillover effects from customer mistreatment episodes are difficult to capture and to establish causally. Establishing the causal chain in mistreatment research is important as the commonly discussed outcomes of mistreatment also function as antecedents to mistreatment (Groth & Grandey, 2012). For instance, poor service performance is often considered an outcome of mistreatment but can act as the initial driver that causes the employee to be mistreated in the first place (e.g., Rupp, Silke, Spencer, & Sonntag, 2008; Zhan, Wang, & Shi, 2016).

This paper empirically examines the spillover effect of customer mistreatment on service employees' service performance toward subsequent customers in two studies. Specifically, using an experimental study design, we focus on self-control capacity (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Muraven, & Tice, 1998) and argue that the experience of customer mistreatment depletes an employee's limited pool of regulatory resources. This leaves employees depleted and less capable of effectively regulating their service behaviors and emotions in subsequent service interactions. In the second study, we seek to further enhance the generalizability of our findings by investigating mistreatment spillover in a field setting,

using the event sampling methodology. Using such diverse research designs allows for a more thorough exploration of potential spillover effects and yields stronger empirical conclusions.

We further explore how organizations and employees are able to limit the extent to which customer mistreatment is spilt over to influence an employee's subsequent performance by focusing on the role of employee motivation. Motivation has been implicated as playing a key role in limiting the extent of resource depletion (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007; Inzlicht, Legault, & Teper, 2014; Ryan & Deci, 2008), and employees differ in their motivation to regulate feelings and behaviors to convey friendliness and warmth toward customers. The second study focuses on display rule commitment, which captures the extent to which employees persist in displaying desired emotions even under difficult conditions (Gosserand & Diefendorff, 2005). We explore whether display rule commitment can function as a boundary condition that weakens the customer mistreatment spillover effect. In other words, we propose that employees who are highly committed to display rules should be able to maintain quality service to subsequent customers in spite of customer mistreatment.

In sum, the purpose of this paper is to examine the spillover effect of customer mistreatment on service employees' subsequent performances. In Study 1, we use an experimental design to examine whether effects of customer mistreatment can spill over to an employee's interaction with a subsequent customer. We also test the role of self-control capacity in mediating this spillover effect. In Study 2, we test the spillover effect by linking employees' encounters of customer mistreatment during the morning with their service performance during that afternoon. We also examine the role of employee display rule commitment in moderating the relationship between customer mistreatment and subsequent performance. Using both approaches, we provide a more holistic understanding of the impact of customer mistreatment (Koopmann et al., 2015), including a better understanding of its

causal mechanisms and moderators that can assist in the development of organizational interventions that can minimize the detrimental impacts of mistreatment on employees and organizations.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT**

### **Customer Mistreatment**

Customer mistreatment includes low-quality interpersonal treatment such as rude, threatening, or aggressive behavior that customers direct at employees (Wang et al., 2011). While the reason behind customer mistreatment can be attributed to a range of dispositional and situational dynamics (Koopmann et al., 2015; Sliter & Jones, 2016), incidents of mistreatment are unfortunately a pervasive feature of service work (Harris & Reynolds, 2003). For example, Grandey, Dickter, and Sin (2004) show that call center employees report being mistreated by customers 10 times per day on average. The experience of mistreatment is undoubtedly unpleasant for employees and can induce negative feelings during the mistreatment episodes. Some of these negative feelings, including negative mood (Wang et al., 2013), emotional exhaustion (Goldberg & Grandey, 2007), and mental fatigue (Rafaeli et al., 2012), can last beyond the focal dyads and continue to influence behaviors over days. For instance, Wang et al. (2013) reports that an employee's experience with customer mistreatment was associated with elevated negative mood on the subsequent day. Similarly, Rafaeli et al. (2012) shows that the mental fatigue experienced by employees due to customer mistreatment can persist long after the misbehaving customer leaves.

Given that customer mistreatment has the potential to influence service employees' psychological states beyond the focal dyads, and indeed over extended periods of time, it seems likely that customer mistreatment can spill over and affect employees' subsequent service performances. This was proposed by Groth and Grandey (2012), who indicate that the negative psychological states and resources used by employees to manage their experience of

customer mistreatment may compromise their performance in subsequent interactions. Groth and Grandey (2012) also suggest that poorer performance due to customer mistreatment can prompt more mistreatment from other customers, thereby creating potential negative spirals in the organization. This reciprocal relationship between customer mistreatment and performance can trap employees in loss spirals (i.e., mistreatment immediately damages subsequent employee performance) that gradually erode an employee's long-term well-being (Hobfoll, 1989).

The loss spirals stemming from customer mistreatment have been implicated in explaining how the short-term effects of episodic customer mistreatment translate to eroding an employee's general well-being, their attitude toward work (Dormann & Zapf, 2004; Kern & Grandey, 2009), and their long-term service performance (Baranik et al., 2017; Shao & Skarlicki, 2014). However, empirical evidence on such loss spirals is rare, and understanding how customer mistreatment spills over to subsequent interactions can provide key insights into how episodic workplace hassles impact general workplace attitudes and well-being. Importantly, it can also highlight how organizations can assist in preventing negative spirals from occurring.

### **STUDY 1: SPILLOVER EFFECT OF CUSTOMER MISTREATMENT AND MEDIATION ROLE OF SELF-CONTROL CAPACITY**

Research has indicated a strong association between customer mistreatment and employee performance, but the causal chain is subject to various interpretations. On one hand, customer mistreatment can lead to poorer employee performance. Mistreatment from customers acts as a social stressor (Dormann & Zapf, 2004) and requires employees to engage in higher levels of self-regulation. Such acts of self-control consume valuable resources, thus making it more difficult for employees to subsequently perform at optimal levels (Rafaeli et al., 2012). During mistreatment encounters, employees often feel a sense of



anger and injustice (Rupp & Spencer, 2006). The experience of these negative emotions makes it difficult for employees to comply with display requirements, and the failure to mask and hide these negative affective states may be interpreted as poor performance by subsequent customers (Sliter, Jex, Wolford, & McInnerney, 2010; Wang & Groth, 2014). Further, the sense of injustice from mistreatment can motivate employees to “get even” with the mistreating customer, other customers, or the organization (Harris & Ogbonna, 2002; Skarlicki, van Jaarsveld, & Walker, 2008; Yang & Diefendorff, 2009). Together, this set of findings indicates a causal flow from customer mistreatment to poorer service performance.

On the other hand, it is well established that poor employee performance can result in mistreatment (McCull-Kennedy, Patterson, Smith, & Brady, 2009; Reynolds & Harris, 2009; Sliter & Jones, 2016). Poor employee service obstructs customers from meeting their service goals, which indicates that a service failure has occurred (Bitner, Booms, & Tetreault, 1990). These service failures resulting from poor performance can trigger negative emotions in customers, such as the experience of anger and rage, which can increase customer mistreatment episodes (Hoffman, Kelley, & Rotalsky, 1995). Therefore, customers may lash out at employees as a result of poor performance to signal that their service goals have not been satisfied (Harris and Reynolds, 2004).

The complex dynamics captured between service performance and mistreatment is highlighted in Groth and Grandey (2012), whereby customer mistreatment and poor employee performance mutually reinforce one another. But, as discussed previously, the causal pathway between customer mistreatment and subsequent poor performance is not well established, leading to difficult interpretations as to the underlying nature of mistreatment and employee performance, which ultimately undermines potential solutions to remedy negative spiral in the workplace. To examine the dynamic relationship, we designed an experiment in which customer mistreatment was manipulated to examine its unique effects on service

performance to subsequent customers. The use of random allocation in experimental designs in a controlled environment allows us to effectively rule out reverse causality (Antonakis, Bendahan, Jacquart, & Lalive, 2014). Thus, we propose the following:

*Hypothesis 1: Customer mistreatment will have a negative effect on employees' service quality towards subsequent customers.*

The use of experimental design also allows us to test for intermediate mechanisms driving the effects of mistreatment on subsequent performance. Study 1 focuses on temporary self-control capacity (Baumeister et al., 1998; Muraven & Baumeister, 2000), which has been implicated as a critical mediator that drives the effects of mistreatment on performance (Groth & Grandey, 2012). When dealing with an abrasive customer, employees are required to exert additional regulatory efforts to meet the demands of the mistreating customer (Rafaeli et al., 2012). Further, employees often need to regulate their own emotional responses to the mistreatment and minimize their displays of irritation and anger (Rupp et al., 2008; Spencer & Rupp, 2009). Although these regulatory behaviors prevent mistreatment episodes from escalating, they bear a cost to the employee. Exerting self-control impairs one's capacity to exert subsequent self-control due to a limited pool of cognitive resources (Muraven, Tice, & Baumeister, 1998; Schmeichel, Vohs, & Baumeister, 2003; and see Hagger, Wood, Stiff, & Chatzisarantis, 2010 for meta-analysis). Once depleted, poorer performance is exhibited on subsequent acts requiring self-control, such as controlling facial expression (Baumeister et al., 1998), resisting distractions (Gailliot et al., 2007), and doing swift arithmetic calculations (Vohs et al., 2008).

As a result of mistreatment, emotionally-depleted employees may therefore be compromised in their subsequent service delivery. Delivering satisfactory services requires employees to exert significant self-control and regulatory effort, and this need for regulation becomes more pronounced after mistreatment episodes whereby employees often experience negative emotions but are nevertheless required to display warmth and happiness (Rupp et

al., 2008; Rupp & Spencer, 2006). Furthermore, as a result of the limited regulatory resources being consumed, employees may also be less willing to engage in additional regulatory effort and “go the extra mile” to help customers (Dewall, Baumeister, Gailliot, & Maner, 2008; Trougakos, Beal, Cheng, Hideg, & Zweig, 2015). Instead, these employees may be more likely to use strategies that conserve their regulatory resources, such as following scripts, avoiding tasks, and maintaining distance (Inzlicht & Schmeichel, 2012; Schmeichel et al., 2003). These behaviors may signal that the employee does not prioritize the customers’ needs and concerns and may be perceived less favorably by customers (Ryan & Ployhart, 2003; Victorino, Verma, Bonner, & Wardell, 2012). Thus, we propose that service employees whose self-control capacity was compromised from previous mistreatment will be impaired in their subsequent service delivery.

*Hypothesis 2: The negative effect of customer mistreatment on employees’ service performance toward subsequent customers will be mediated by employees’ self-control capacity.*

## **Methods**

### **Participants and Procedure**

Data were collected from the student subject pool of a large public university’s business school in Australia. Participants were told that the study aimed to examine service jobs and service performance by having them play the role of a university librarian, whose responsibility was to assist others in finding books. Participation was on a voluntary basis, and those who participated received either course credit or a fixed amount of money. A post-hoc analysis showed that the different payment methods did not influence experimental results and were therefore combined in further analyses. A total of 139 undergraduate students took part in our study, with an average age of 22.54 years.

Upon arrival, all participants were introduced to the simulated library environment and were provided with standardized comprehensive training to familiarize them with the task. Participants were given a basic service script and were introduced to all the documents

necessary to assist customers with their requirements (e.g., explaining library rules and policies to the customers). All participants interacted with three customers, who were played by different research confederates. The first customer encounter was designed to help familiarize participants with the process and to establish the baseline performance of each participant. As such, all participants met with a friendly customer who had a simple request. In the second service encounter, we manipulated customer mistreatment such that participants were met by a confederate who made a difficult request but was either (a) rude and impatient or (b) neutral in their behavior throughout the service episode. In the third service encounter, all participants interacted with a relatively pleasant confederate customer, who behaved similarly to the baseline encounter. Confederates involved in the third interaction were not informed as to whether the participant had been mistreated in the previous encounter.

All confederates were trained in a standardized way to ensure consistency between performances and within experimental groups. To achieve equivalency between groups, we asked all three confederates to rotate across different roles and participants based on a Latin square design. This meant that each confederate played each scenario an equal number of times. Confederates were only told which roles they were going to play immediately before the episode to ensure that they remained blind to the other confederates' roles. This approach minimizes the effects of possible confounding variables and minimizes the extent to which participating employee variance can be attributed to factors outside the manipulation.

Customer mistreatment was manipulated in the second service encounter through the confederate actor. Specifically, participants were randomly assigned to interact with a customer (i.e., a confederate actor) who either engaged in high levels of customer mistreatment or low levels of customer mistreatment. All confederates were trained based on concepts drawn from the customer mistreatment literature. This training consisted of example verbal phrases, behaviors, and nonverbal behaviors considered indicative of mistreatment.

Confederate actors were also provided with a script that was identical in length and content between the high-mistreatment and low-mistreatment conditions. Confederates role-played both conditions until the researchers were satisfied with the quality and consistency of performance across actors. We manipulated mistreatment by asking confederate actors in the high-mistreatment condition to engage in verbal or non-verbal behaviors largely perceived as mildly aggressive and impatient, in line with current conceptualizations of customer mistreatment. In both conditions, confederates would raise a complicated request that normally required a significant amount of time for participants to process. During their waiting time, confederates in the mistreatment condition exhibited their impatience and annoyance, such as tapping on the table, constantly checking the time, or occasionally mumbling dissatisfaction. Confederates in the normal, low-mistreatment customer condition, on the other hand, waited without these behavioral markers.

### **Measures**

To test our hypotheses, we used data collected from the participant employee after the second (i.e., mistreatment manipulation) and third encounter (i.e., subsequent interaction) with the confederate customers. Using both sources of information helps minimize common method variance. Participant employees were asked to complete demographic measures, such as age and previous service experience, upon arrival.

**Customer mistreatment.** To check whether our manipulation of customer mistreatment worked as expected, we asked participants to report their perception of customer mistreatment after all three interactions. We used eight items from Wang et al.'s (2011) customer mistreatment measure. Immediately after each service interaction, participants were asked, "Concerning the customer you just interacted with, what did you think of him/her?" Sample items included "The customer vented his/her bad mood out on you" and "The customer refused to listen to you."

**Self-control capacity.** Immediately after the interaction with the second confederate (i.e., customer mistreatment manipulation), participants were asked to report their level of self-control capacity. We measured self-control capacity by using three items from Christian and Ellis's (2011) scale. Participants were asked, "To what extent do you agree with the following regarding your current feeling?" Sample items included "I feel mentally exhausted" and "I feel like my willpower is gone."

The confederate customer survey asked confederates to report their *perceived service performance* using three items from Tan, Foo, and Kwek (2004) and Susskind, Kacmar, and Borchgrevink (2003) for each interaction. Immediately after each service interaction, confederates were asked, "What do you think about the working staff who has just interacted with you?" Sample items included "Overall, I am happy with the service I just received" and "I feel the employee did a good job in attending to my needs."

## Results

### Manipulation Check

To check our experimental manipulation, we surveyed participants' customer mistreatment perceptions after every round of interaction. Results showed that participants in the high customer mistreatment condition perceived the second customer to exhibit higher levels of customer mistreatment ( $t(110.58) = 15.72, p < 0.01$ ) than those in the low customer mistreatment condition. Participants in both conditions did not report differences in perceived customer mistreatment in the first/baseline encounter ( $t(137) = .11, n.s.$ ). Participants in the high customer mistreatment condition perceived the second encounter as exhibiting higher mistreatment than both the first ( $t(64) = 14.45, p < 0.01$ ) and the third encounter ( $t(64) = 13.97, p < 0.01$ ), with no discernable difference between the first and third encounter ( $t(64) = 1.61, n.s.$ ). Overall, these results suggest our manipulation worked as intended.

### Hypotheses Testing

Means, standard deviations, correlation coefficients, and reliability estimates of all variables are shown in Table 1. The reliability of all scales is satisfactory, with  $\alpha$  scores ranging from .77 to .93.

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Insert Table 1 here  
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To test Hypothesis 1, we examined the effects of our customer mistreatment manipulation (during the second encounter) on confederate-reported service quality during the third encounter. We controlled for the influence of participants' age, previous service experience, and their baseline service performance (i.e., service performance in the first encounter). As shown below in Table 2, participants who had previously interacted with a mistreating customer were reported by confederate customers as performing significantly worse during the third encounter, compared to those who had not previously interacted with a mistreating customer ( $b = -.31, p < 0.05$ ). Thus, Hypothesis 1 was supported in showing that customer mistreatment had a negative effect on employees' service quality towards the subsequent customer.

To test the mediating role of employees' self-control capacity (Hypothesis 2), we examined the indirect effect of customer mistreatment on employee subsequent service performance (i.e., third interaction) via reported self-control capacity following the second interaction. As indicated in Table 2, customer mistreatment was associated with lower reported self-control capacity ( $b = -.72, p < .05$ ), and self-control capacity had a significant positive effect on customers' perceived service quality during the third interaction ( $b = .21, p < 0.05$ ). A bootstrapped estimate with 5,000 resamples shows that the indirect effect is significant, with its 95% confidence interval excluding zero ( $x = -.15, 95\%$  confidence interval =  $[-0.32, -0.01]$ ). Thus, Hypothesis 2 was supported as well.

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Insert Table 2 here

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### **Discussion of Study 1**

In this study, we examined whether customer mistreatment negatively affects subsequent employee performance, as rated by subsequent customers who were not involved in the mistreatment incident. We found that mistreatment affected the employee's delivery of high quality service to subsequent customers. By using an experimental design, we were able to disentangle the causal pathway between mistreatment and performance. Our findings offer support to the idea that mistreatment impairs subsequent performance, thereby potentially triggering negative spirals in the workplace. Finally, we found that lost in self control capacity following mistreatment mediated the effects of mistreatment on subsequent performance. Together, this set of findings indicates that the effort involved in self regulation stemming from mistreatment incidents acts as a proximal driver of the effects of mistreatment on subsequent customer performance.

Despite these contributions, there were two primary limitations associated with the first study. First, experimental studies may fail to generalize across workplace settings. While the majority of participants indicated that they had service experience, and we controlled for the lack of familiarity and experience using the first performance ratings as the baseline control, student samples may suffer from external validity concerns. Second, participant motivation in delivering quality service performance across interactions may be compromised in student samples. Research indicates that motivation plays a critical role in self-regulation (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007; Inzlicht & Schmeichel, 2012). Specifically, motivated employees may be more resistant to the effects of regulatory resource depletion (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007) and, therefore, should be more able to maintain quality performance when depleted. Bearing these two limitations in mind, we conducted a second study to address these issues.

### **STUDY 2: THE MODERATION ROLE OF DISPLAY RULE COMMITMENT**



In Study 2, we examine the spillover effect of customer mistreatment in a field setting. Frontline service employees typically deal with a continuous stream of new customers and very short intervals between different interactions. After encountering mistreatment, employees often have limited opportunities to take breaks and replenish their lost resources. Therefore, we expected that customer mistreatment compromises subsequent service performance. In this study, we tested the association between customer mistreatment and subsequent performance by linking employee encounters of customer mistreatment in the morning to their service performance in the afternoon.

*Hypothesis 3: Employees' encounter of customer mistreatment in the morning will negatively impact their service performance in the afternoon.*

#### **Moderation Role of Display Rule Commitment**

We also investigate employee display rule commitment as a motivating force that drives performance across mistreatment incidents. Display rules regarding the appropriate facial displays in service settings are both a formal and informal job requirement (Diefendorff, Richard, & Croyle, 2006), but employees differ in the extent to which they are committed to these display rules (Diefendorff & Croyle, 2008). Individual differences—such as agreeableness, extraversion, or neuroticism—can influence the extent to which employees regulate their emotions, which consequently shapes whether display rules are internalized, embraced, and practiced (Diefendorff & Croyle, 2008). Likewise, individual differences in job attitudes can also influence the extent to which employees endorse and practice organization policies. For example, employees who have negative job attitudes may choose not to comply with rules and deviate from both formal and informal policy (LePine, Erez, & Johnson, 2002). Therefore, while display rules that promote “service with a smile” are often an explicit and/or implicit feature of service organizations, the extent to which employees are committed and motivated to comply with these display rules differ within organizations.

We propose that individual differences in display rule commitment act as a motivating force that can moderate the extent to which diminished self-control capacity from customer mistreatment is associated with the decline of subsequent performance, given that motivation can minimize regulatory resource depletion (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007; Inzlicht & Schmeichel, 2012). According to Inzlicht and Schmeichel (2012), diminished self-control capacity may reflect motivational deficits as initial acts of self-control may demotivate people from expending further effort. Thus, the adverse impact of diminished self-control capacity may be minimized when people are motivated to perform (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007; DeWall, Baumeister, Mead, & Vohs, 2011; Inzlicht & Schmeichel, 2012). For instance, monetary incentives can offset the performance decrement typically associated with regulatory resource depletion (Goldberg & Grandey, 2007; Muraven & Slessareva, 2003). According to Baumeister and Vohs (2007), the motivation to excel in a particular domain can dampen the effects of diminished self-control capacity when the stakes are high. In other words, even when self-control capacity is compromised, people may be able to successfully regulate their behaviors provided that motivation is sufficient.

Employee motivation to comply with an organization's display rules may act in a manner that dampens the relationship between mistreatment and subsequent service performance. Being committed to display rules can influence the extent to which employees are motivated to maintain service performance following incidents of mistreatment, despite being depleted (Gosserand & Diefendorff, 2005; Inzlicht & Schmeichel, 2012). Commitment to such display rules provides employees with energy and vitality, which are key for remaining resilient in the face of continuous self-regulation (Ryan & Deci, 2008). On the other hand, employees with low commitment to display rules may not be as motivated to expend further effort to enhance functional performance after having been mistreated by customers (Inzlicht & Schmeichel, 2012). Therefore, we expected that employees who were

committed to display rules would be motivated to manage their feelings and ensure display requirements were met during their subsequent work following customer mistreatment. As such, service performance should be less sensitive to the influence of customer mistreatment when display rule commitment is high.

*Hypothesis 4: The negative relationship between customer mistreatment and employees' subsequent service performance will be moderated by display rule commitment. For employees who are highly committed to display rules, the negative relationship will be weaker.*

## **Methods**

### **Participants and Procedure**

We used experience sampling methods (Beal, 2015) to collect data from cashiers working for a large supermarket franchise in China. Cashiers represent an ideal sample to test our hypotheses, as it is important for them to maintain positivity throughout the day. We invited all 140 employees across three supermarkets to participate in the study, of which 119 agreed to participate. All participants received 100 Chinese Yuan (equivalent to about 16.50 USD) for participating, regardless of the number of surveys they completed.

We collected data in two phases. Participants completed an initial survey asking for demographic information (e.g., age, gender) as well as display rule commitment. Ten days after the initial survey, we briefed all store managers and participating employees on the event sampling process. Participants were asked to complete three short surveys per day over 10 working days. The first survey asked participants about their current mental and physical state (e.g., fatigue, positive affect, negative affect) and was completed before the supermarkets opened. In the second survey, administered midday, participants were asked to report levels of customer mistreatment over the course of the morning. At the end of each work day (approximately 9 p.m.), participants were provided with the final survey, asking them to evaluate the service quality of a nearby, or co-located, employee. Given that cashiers worked at designated registers, co-located employees ought to provide reliable performance

evaluations. We asked participants to evaluate the service quality of two co-workers who worked most closely to their register during the shift. We did not assign designated raters due to the nature of shift work. All surveys were distributed to participants at fixed times by their managers. We asked employees to record the time of completion for each survey.

Participants completed 704 morning responses (5.9 samples on average) and 713 mid-day responses (6.0 samples on average). We matched morning and mid-day responses to co-workers' average performance evaluations. Morning and mid-day responses that could not be matched to co-workers' evaluations were discarded. A total of 449 responses from 101 participants were successfully matched, with each participant providing 4.45 responses on average.

## **Measures**

To maintain the psychometric properties of measurement scales, we followed the translation-back-translation method proposed by Brislin (1970). A bilingual Ph.D. student specializing in organizational behavior was used for the initial translation from English to Chinese. The Chinese surveys were translated back to English by a Chinese master's student majoring in English. Differences between the original version and the back translation were discussed between the two translators and the original author to reach consensus.

**Customer mistreatment.** We measured customer mistreatment by choosing five items from Wang et al.'s (2010) original 18-item measure of mistreatment to ensure that the length was appropriate for the event sampling procedure. Respondents were asked to recall the frequency in which customers exhibited mistreatment toward them during the morning shift. Sample items were "demanded special treatment" and "complained without reason."

**Service performance.** We measured service performance using Beal, Trougakos, Weiss, and Green's (2006) 2-item scale of service delivery. Respondents were asked to rate their selected co-workers' performance in the afternoon. We measured the extent to which co-

workers agreed on the following two items: “He/she was very spirited/enthusiastic during work” and “He/she was able to keep a positive/upbeat attitude throughout work.”

**Display rule commitment.** We measured display rule commitment in the initial survey using the scales developed by Gosserand and Diefendorff (2005) and Diefendorff and Croyle (2008). Respondents were asked to what extent they endorsed five items. Two sample items included “I am committed to displaying the organizationally desired emotions on the job” and “It’s hard to take displaying positive emotions seriously.”

**Control variables.** At the between-person level, we controlled for age and gender. At the within-person level, we controlled for the influence of employees’ states at the start of the particular day to partial out possible confounds (e.g., Rothbard & Wilk, 2011). In particular, we controlled for employees’ fatigue, positive affect, and negative affect, all of which were measured in the morning.

### **Analytical Strategy**

Given the hierarchical nature of our data, we used multilevel modeling to test all hypotheses. We estimated all coefficients using Mplus 8.0 (Muthén & Muthén, 2017). All coefficients at the within-person level were estimated using random coefficient models by allowing them to vary at the between-person level. We centered all within-person level predictors on personal means, rather than the general mean. Adopting this method of centering ensured that our within-individual effects did not confound differences between study participants (Dimotakis, Scott, & Koopman, 2011; Preacher, Zhang, & Zyphur, 2016). Since various co-workers reported their fellow employees’ service quality across several days, variation in performance rating may be attributed to rater effects. We minimized the influence of rater effects by mean-centering daily performance evaluations on the rater’s average across all days.

### **Results**

Means, standard deviations, correlation coefficients, and reliability estimates of all variables are shown in Table 1. The reliability of all scales was satisfactory, with  $\alpha$  scores ranging from .76 to .93.

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Insert Table 3 here  
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We first examined the null model and estimated the within- and between-person variances for all study variables to determine whether multilevel methods were appropriate (Bryk & Raudenbush, 1992). As shown in Table 3, the dependent variable (i.e., service performance) demonstrated adequate between-person as well as within-person variance to progress with multilevel analysis.

Below, Table 4 presents the results of the multilevel regression. The random effect of mid-day customer mistreatment on afternoon service performance was not significantly different after controlling for morning fatigue and negative and positive affect ( $b = -.04$ , n.s.). Thus, Hypothesis 3 was not supported. The last row of Table 4 shows the cross-level moderation effect of display rule commitment on the customer mistreatment-service performance relationship. Display rule commitment was significantly related to the random slope ( $b = .33$ ,  $p < .05$ ). To illustrate this moderation effect, we plotted the effect of customer mistreatment on service performance at different values of display rule commitment (Preacher, Curran, & Bauer, 2006). As shown in Figure 1, when display rule commitment was low (-1 SD), the relationship between customer mistreatment and service performance was significantly negative (simple slope =  $-.18$ ,  $p < .05$ ). When display rule commitment was high (+1 SD), the relationship between customer mistreatment and service performance was not significant (simple slope =  $.09$ , n.s.). Together, our findings support Hypothesis 4 in showing that display rule commitment moderated the relationship between customer mistreatment and employees' service performance as rated by their co-workers.

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Insert Figure 1 and Table 4 here  
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## **GENERAL DISCUSSION**

In this paper, we presented two studies examining whether customer mistreatment spills over and impacts employees' subsequent service performance. In Study 1, we focused on delineating the causal mechanisms linking customer mistreatment to employees' interaction with the subsequent customer. By experimentally manipulating customer mistreatment, we were able to establish a causal link between the episodes of mistreatment and poorer subsequent service performance. Specifically, we found that participants playing the role of service employees exhibited poorer service performance toward subsequent customers when they had previously interacted with an unpleasant customer. We established that this decrease in performance was mediated by changes in self-control capacity, lending support to the role of regulatory resource depletion in driving performance declines following mistreatment (Baumeister et al., 1998; Groth & Grandey, 2012).

In Study 2, we focused on spillover in a field setting by examining how mistreatment affected supermarket cashiers. The findings reported in Study 2 highlight the complexity between customer mistreatment and employees' subsequent performance in an actual work setting. Co-worker rated performance only suffered as a result of customer mistreatment when employees expressed low levels of commitment toward display rules. Employees who had stronger commitment to display rules were not impaired in their service delivery following customer mistreatment, highlighting the critical role of motivation in overcoming the performance declines typically associated with mistreatment.

### **Theoretical Contributions**

Our findings contribute to the existing literature on customer mistreatment in multiple ways. First, our findings indicate that the unintended consequences of customer mistreatment

spill over to subsequent interactions and undermine service performance with subsequent customers. The examination of potential spillover effects is important, as it sheds light on the development and escalation of negative spirals in workplaces from customer mistreatment (e.g., Groth & Grandey, 2012). The relationship between customer mistreatment and poor service performance is theorized to be mutually reinforcing, yet the link between customer mistreatment and subsequent poor performance is under-investigated, and causal pathways are seldom explored. Using experimental methods, we were able to establish a causal relationship between mistreatment and poor performance. Therefore, the findings reported in this paper establish how mistreatment and poor performance can be mutually reinforcing. This link potentially explains how episodic customer mistreatment can instigate further mistreatment from other customers (Koopmann et al., 2015). Over time, these employees may be trapped in the mistreatment-poor performance spiral, resulting in poorer employee well-being (e.g., Dormann & Zapf, 2004; Kern & Grandey, 2009), declining customer satisfaction (Baranik et al., 2017; Shao & Skarlicki, 2014; Wang et al., 2011), and financial costs to the organization (Harris & Reynolds, 2003).

Second, we contribute to the service quality literature by highlighting the importance of temporary self-control capacity in determining service employees' performance. The delivery of quality service is often discussed at the organizational level through strategy and culture (Liao & Chuang, 2004; Morrison, 1998), or at the individual level through service employees' personalities and job attitudes (Brown & Lam, 2008; Brown, Mowen, Donovan, & Licata, 2002). Yet service quality can fluctuate within employees (Dalal, Bhave, & Fiset, 2014), and such fluctuations have rarely been approached systematically. In this research, we utilized developments in within-person performance research (Beal, Weiss, Barros, & MacDermid, 2005; Dalal et al., 2014) and the strength model of self-regulation (Baumeister et al., 1998) to provide a more thorough understanding of why and when employees' service



performance changes over time. The findings reported in Study 1 not only highlight the role that customers play in the delivery of service quality but also emphasize the pivotal role of employees' self-control capacity in shaping service delivery. Our study, therefore, contributes to the service quality literature by providing a more holistic understanding of the complex nature of employee service delivery in both interpersonal and intrapersonal dynamics.

In Study 2, we extended our inquiry of the dynamic nature of service quality delivery by investigating the impact of the customer mistreatment context in a field setting using the experience sampling methodology. We investigated the dynamic interaction between individual differences, incidents of mistreatment during the workday, and how this mistreatment subsequently affected employees' service quality, as rated by co-workers. More specifically, we found that customer mistreatment was related to subsequent service performance declines in employees who were low in display rule commitment. Together, both studies highlight the dynamic ways in which interpersonal interactions affect different aspects of service performance, thereby providing a more nuanced understanding of service delivery.

Study 2 also highlighted the role of display rule commitment as a motivating factor in minimizing the impact of diminished self-control capacity on subsequent performance. Display rules represent both formal and informal standards against which service employees' emotional display is compared (Diefendorff & Gosserand, 2003). Such display rules can act as situational cues that remind employees about the importance of maintaining positive expressions. However, the mere presence of formal display rules is not enough to motivate employees to exert effort and regulate emotions (Diefendorff & Gosserand, 2003; Gosserand & Diefendorff, 2005). In service contexts, managers are unable to monitor employees' facial expressions continuously, and so the self-management of emotions becomes crucial. Display rule commitment captures the extent to which employees are committed and willing to

manage their displays at work, especially at challenging times or when external monitoring is lacking (Gosserand & Diefendorff, 2005).

Consistent with predictions, we found that display rule commitment minimized the extent to which service performance suffered following customer mistreatment. We proposed that display rule commitment motivates employees to persist with effective service delivery in spite of depleted resources. Our pattern of findings is consistent with studies investigating the effects of incentives in subsequent self-control tasks (e.g., Goldberg & Grandey, 2007; Muraven & Slessareva, 2003; Stewart, Wright, Azor Hui, & Simmons, 2009) and highlights the role of motivation in alleviating the effects of self-control on subsequent tasks. It is also possible that display rule commitment influences how employees invest their limited pool of resources to sustain adequate performance standards in the face of depletion (Muraven, Shmueli, & Burkley, 2006). While most employees may choose to conserve resources and effort following mistreatment, those committed to display rules may tap into their finite pool of resources for functional performance because of its importance to the self. In sum, our findings highlight the important role of motivation in regulating the effects of regulatory resource depletion.

### **Practical Implications**

Customer mistreatment seems to be an unfortunate reality of working in the service sector (Grandey et al., 2004; Harris & Daunt, 2013). Further, the factors that lead to employee mistreatment are beyond a manager's control (e.g., customers' personality, Fisk et al., 2010). These incidents are no doubt stressful and can prompt employees to withdraw from the organization and be harmful to the employee's well-being (e.g., Grandey et al., 2004; Sliter et al., 2012; see Koopmann et al., 2015 for a review), but little is known on how incidents of mistreatment escalate to affect these employees' outcomes. Our findings highlight how incidents of mistreatment beget further mistreatment via subsequent poor

performance (Groth & Grandey, 2012). This not only provides a potential link between levels of analysis, but in doing so, it also highlights how this link can be broken and avert further harm by preventing the spillover from mistreatment.

Study 1 underscores the importance of self-control capacity in mediating the link between mistreatment and subsequent poor performance, which has the potential to cause further mistreatment (Groth & Grandey, 2012). Presumably, restoring self-control capacity enables service employees to restore their performance following incidents of mistreatment, thereby minimizing the extent of further mistreatment. Self-control capacity has also been implicated in the development of longer-term negative employee outcomes, such as employee withdrawal behaviors (Grandey et al., 2004) as well as employee sabotage (Wang et al., 2011) and, therefore, seems critical in minimizing the impact of customer mistreatment. One potential strategy in restoring self-control capacity is taking a break from work. Management practices can provide employees with more discretion in the use of breaks to recover from self-control resource loss, especially after incidents of mistreatment. Simple acts such as resting (Troughakos & Hideg, 2009) and consuming food (Gailliot et al., 2007) can serve as a restorative function and allow employees to maintain effective self-regulation after depletion.

Our findings from Study 2 indicate that enhanced display rule commitment among employees may also alleviate the spillover effects associated with customer mistreatment. Although it is unclear how employees with high commitment to display rules are able to draw upon their finite pool of resources to prevent the decline of functional performance, doing so can potentially prevent the mistreatment-poor performance cycle from escalating. Organizations may benefit from selecting service employees who are more likely to commit to positive display rules, or those with personalities more likely to commit to display rules (Diefendorff & Croyle, 2008). Furthermore, organizations can also train employees in how to

best manage their emotions, which can enhance employee efficacy and their commitment to such display rules.

### **Limitations and Future Research Directions**

In this study, we theorized that employees' self-control capacity mediated the link between customer mistreatment and subsequent service performance, but alternate mechanisms can also mediate this link. For example, subsequent customers who have observed the mistreating episode may view the victim (i.e., the service employee) unfavorably (Skarlicki & Turner, 2013), and therefore, performance evaluation will be compromised. We minimized the extent to which such confounds affected our findings, especially in Study 1, by using experimental methods. Future research, however, should explore how such observer effects can influence performance ratings so that a more holistic understanding of the spillover of customer mistreatment can be obtained.

In this paper, we sought to investigate the impact of general customer mistreatment without distinguishing between different forms of customer mistreatment. Some types of mistreatment, however, may be more severe than others, and this may affect their potential to spill over and affect other aspects of performance. For instance, Walker, van Jaarsveld, and Skarlicki (2017) distinguish between targeted customer mistreatment, where a customer's incivility is directed at particular service employees, and non-targeted customer mistreatment, where a customer's incivility is non-specific to employees and may reflect general grievances toward organizational policy. While we believe that employee self-control will be compromised in both targeted and non-targeted customer mistreatment, the extent to which self-control capacity is subsequently affected may differ. Employees may consume more regulatory resources and exhibit sharper performance declines following targeted customer mistreatment. Thus, future research is crucial and should investigate the types of customer mistreatment most likely to affect employees.

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TABLE 1

*Descriptive Statistics and Correlations of Study 1*

	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
1.Age	21.52	3.98	-	.08	.07	.01	-.01	-.20*	.09
2.Service experience <sup>a</sup>	0.60	0.49		-	-.10	-.11	-.16	-.16	.16
3.Customer mistreatment (manipulation, 2 <sup>nd</sup> encounter) <sup>b</sup>	0.53	0.50			-	.81**	.46**	-.02	-.20*
4. Customer mistreatment (perception, 2 <sup>nd</sup> encounter)	2.50	0.53				(.93)	.56**	.03	-.18*
5. Self-control capacity (2 <sup>nd</sup> encounter)	3.08	0.79					(.77)	.03	.18*
6. Service performance (1 <sup>st</sup> encounter)	3.53	0.92						(.93)	.26**
7. Service performance (3 <sup>rd</sup> encounter)	3.47	0.76							(.91)

Note: <sup>a</sup>1=have service experience, 0=have no service experience.

<sup>b</sup>1=customer mistreatment condition, 0=control condition.

\*p<0.05, two-tailed.

\*\*p<0.01, two-tailed.

TABLE 2

*Coefficient Estimates of Study 1*

	Service performance (3 <sup>rd</sup> encounter)	Self-control capacity	Service performance (3 <sup>rd</sup> encounter)
Age	0.01(0.02)	0.00(0.02)	0.01(0.02)
Service experience	0.15(0.13)	0.15(0.12)	0.12(0.13)
Customer mistreatment (manipulation)	-0.31*(0.12)	-0.72***(0.12)	0.16(0.14)
Self-control capacity			0.21*(0.09)
Service performance (1 <sup>st</sup> encounter)	0.20**(0.07)	0.10(0.07)	0.18**(0.07)

TABLE 3

*Descriptive Statistics and Correlations of Study 2*

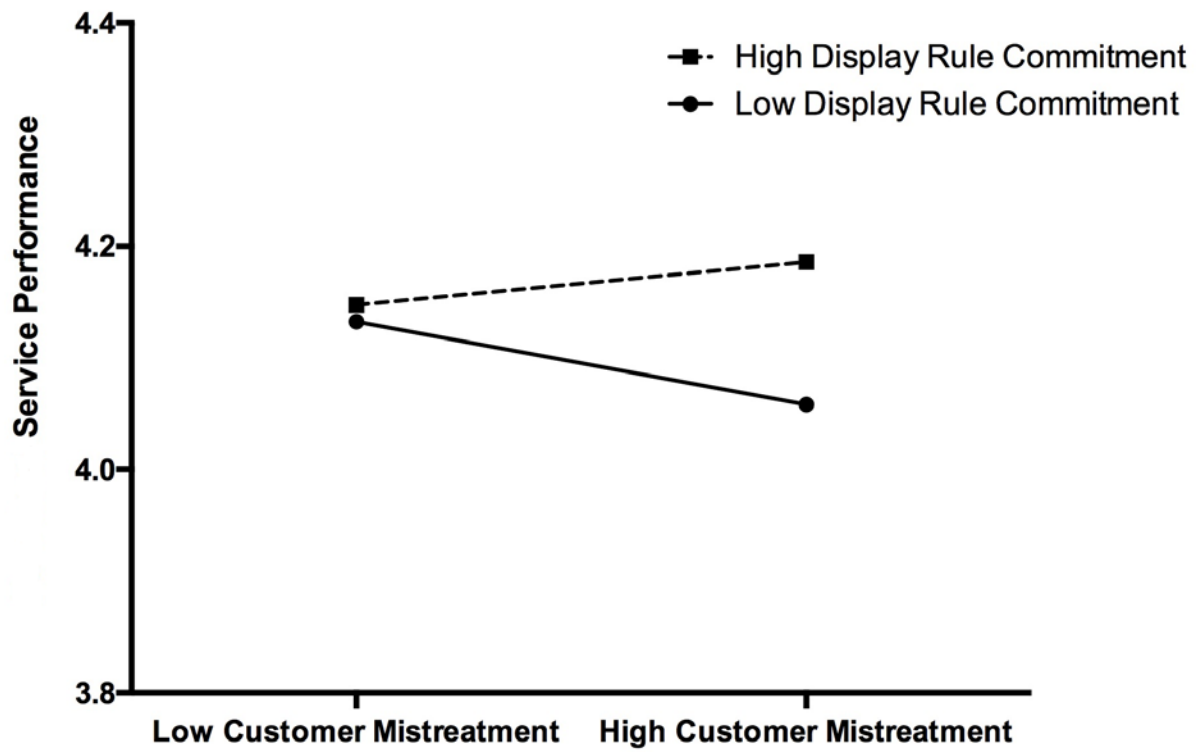
	Mean	Within Variance	Between Variance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1.Age	41.09		53.65	-	.18	-.03	.04	.09	.02	.05	.07
2.Gender <sup>a</sup>	1.95		0.05		-	.03	.01	-.11	.08	-.10	-.02
3.Display rule commitment	4.27		0.18			(.76)	-.20*	-.17	-.04	-.04	.08
4. Fatigue (morning)	1.98	0.18***	0.12***				(.77)	-.46**	.73**	.19*	-.39**
5. Positive affect (morning)	3.82	0.18***	0.17***					(.77)	-.31**	-.07	.37**
6. Negative affect (morning)	1.83	0.23***	0.10***						(.93)	.21*	-.35**
7. Customer mistreatment (mid-day)	1.71	0.21***	0.15***							(.86)	-.13
8. Service performance (afternoon)	4.13	0.13***	0.06***								(.84)

Note: <sup>a</sup>1=male, 2=female.

TABLE 4  
*Coefficient Estimates of Study 2*

		Service performance
<i>Within-Person Level</i>		
Fatigue (morning)	Slope Intercept	-0.06(0.07)
	Slope Variance	0.05(0.06)
Positive affect (morning)	Slope Intercept	0.06(0.07)
	Slope Variance	0.08(0.09)
Negative affect (morning)	Slope Intercept	0.03(0.05)
	Slope Variance	0.00(0.12)
Customer mistreatment (mid-day)	Slope Intercept	-0.04(0.05)
	Slope Variance	0.01(0.03)
<i>Between-Person Level</i>		
Age		0.00(0.01)
Gender		-0.07(0.27)
Display rule commitment		0.09(0.08)
<i>Cross-Level Interaction</i>		
Customer mistreatment*		0.33*(0.14)
Display rule commitment		





*Figure 1: Moderation Effect of Display Rule Commitment on the Relationship Between Customer Mistreatment on Service Performance.*

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Welcome: Yumeng Yue

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### The Spillover Effect of Customer Mistreatment on Frontline Employees' Subsequent Performance (10650)

**Submitter Name:** Yumeng Yue

**Decision:** Division Paper Accepted

**Comment from Reviewer 1 (OB)**

Dear authors, this has been one of the more well written papers i have read in a while. The methods was well executed. That you were able to combine an experimental study with event sampling in the field gave compelling results for the spillover effect of customer mistreatment.

I really liked how the experiment was set up for S1, with much attention to stimulus presentation. One minor comment though is whether participants in any of the interactions with 3rd confederate revealed what condition they were in. That is, did they for example say something like 'the last guy was a jerk'. Related, while 3rd confederate is always blind to condition, were they able to guess the condition? Because it was not clear if confederates were blind to hypotheses. If they were not it remains a possibility that confederates were biased. But this is something easily clarified.

While I appreciate that you followed the data in S2, i would have liked to see some discussion on why the main effects for S1 (h1 and h2) did not seem to replicate here (in h3). One of the arguments made for conducting s2 is that s1 student sample is not generalizable to actual workers. This seems to somewhat be shooting yourselves in the foot since the results in S2 do not support h3(which is expected to be similar to h1 and h2).

Overall a high quality paper. Good luck and i hope to see a version in press soon!

**My Feedback to the Reviewer**

**How useful is this review comment in helping you improve upon this submission?**

- Not useful at all
- Somewhat useful
- Fairly useful
- Useful
- Extremely useful

**How constructive was the tone of this review?**

- Not constructive at all
- Somewhat constructive
- Fairly constructive
- Constructive
- Extremely constructive

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**Comment from Reviewer 2 (OB)**

**My Feedback to the Reviewer**

<p>Review for 10650:</p> <p>This paper includes two studies – one experimental and the other survey – that examined the spillover effects of customer mistreatment. Both studies showed that being mistreated in one service encounter impaired service representative’s effectiveness in the subsequent service encounter. Study 1 further showed that this effect was mediated by individuals’ impaired self-control ability, and Study 2 showed that only employees low on commitment to display rules experience the drop in performance after being mistreated.</p> <p>Strength:</p> <p>There are many things to like about this paper. First, it is well written and carefully prepared. Second, the paper includes 2 studies with complimentary design and collected data from two different cultures. These efforts increase the robustness of the findings. Third, the question of spillover effects of customer mistreatment is both important and timely and has not received much research attention. Forth, both studies are well designed with appropriate care and control. The lab study involves real interactions as opposed to scenario; the field study uses third party ratings of performance. Taken together, I think this is a strong paper for the conference and I trust conference attendees will find the paper both informative and interesting. I focus my review below on issues that could potentially further improve the contribution of the paper.</p> <p>1. Although Study 2 replicated the main finding of Study 1, Study 2 did not test the mediating mechanism of depletion. To me, this is an important omission because the mediating mechanisms for the two studies may not be the same. The rationale proposed in Study 1 about depletion seems very plausible in the experimental context in which the effect was measured immediately following the mistreatment. But in Study 2, the idea of depletion may or may not hold given how much time passes between the two episodes (morning and afternoon). This time interval creates challenge for the depletion mediation in two ways. First, after people become depleted from dealing with an abusive customer in the morning, there are likely ample opportunities for them to replenish their resources before the afternoon encounter (unless of course the morning encounter was very traumatic). If so, why would these replenishing opportunities not help? Second, it is plausible that there are some nice customers between the morning abusive episode and the afternoon episode. If dealing with difficult customers are depleting, why would dealing with nice customers not help offset the depletion problem? I think clarifying these issues will improve the theoretical clarity of this paper.</p> <p>2. This brings me to my second point which is whether it is possible that the immediate effect and the longer-term effect of customer mistreatment are not the same. That is, the immediate drop in performance may be very much related to a temporary loss of resources from the experience of being mistreated. But in the longer run, would this temporary experience transform into something else more enduring that is responsible for the drop in performance later (e.g. such as some sort of attitude change). It would be very interesting to explore this possibility.</p> <p>3. I also find the arguments for why committed employees don’t experience depletion less convincing. Is the reason they are not depleted having to do with their skills in managing difficult customers, better recovery strategy after the encounter, or they just try harder because they are so committed? If it’s the last reason, wouldn’t this eventually cause them to experience depletion too? In other words, the effect on them is just as devastating as the non-committed employees but the committed employees just last longer?</p> <p>4. On a more methodological note, it would be helpful to also include reports of standardized effect sizes in both studies.</p>	<p><b>How useful is this review comment in helping you improve upon this submission?</b></p> <p><input type="radio"/> Not useful at all</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Somewhat useful</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Fairly useful</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Useful</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Extremely useful</p> <p><b>How constructive was the tone of this review?</b></p> <p><input type="radio"/> Not constructive at all</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Somewhat constructive</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Fairly constructive</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Constructive</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Extremely constructive</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Post Feedback</p>
<p>Comment from Reviewer 3 (OB)</p> <p>Nicely done work. The research purpose is clear, methods taken look adequate, and findings are somehow interesting. I appreciate it for the authors trying to demonstrate spill-over effects with experimental method.</p> <p>Nonetheless, there are concerns on theoretical contribution and practical applicability. On theoretical contribution, the findings of this study seem to largely depend on context of customer service. The experimental settings used in experiments are similar to face to face customer service in casual shops and fast food restaurant. However, there are variety of customer service contexts besides this experimental situation. The authors do not clearly address the contextual issue where spill over effect may or may not happens. They should specify the situations where they are targeting and discuss theoretical implication of the specificity of the context.</p> <p>Because of lack of contextual specification, practical contribution looks not very clear to me.</p>	<p><b>My Feedback to the Reviewer</b></p> <p><b>How useful is this review comment in helping you improve upon this submission?</b></p> <p><input type="radio"/> Not useful at all</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Somewhat useful</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Fairly useful</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Useful</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Extremely useful</p> <p><b>How constructive was the tone of this review?</b></p> <p><input type="radio"/> Not constructive at all</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Somewhat constructive</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Fairly constructive</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Constructive</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Extremely constructive</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Post Feedback</p>

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