Available online at www.sciencedirect.com
ScienceDirect
Journal of Vocational Behavior 69 (2006) 222–235
Journal of Vocational Behavior
www.elsevier.com/locate/jvb

The role of self-efficacy in performing emotion work ☆

Ellen Heuven *, Arnold B. Bakker, Wilmar B. Schaufeli, Noortje Huisman

Utrecht University, Department of Social and Organizational Psychology, The Netherlands

Received 16 March 2006
Available online 26 May 2006

Abstract

This study used a sample of 154 cabin attendants to examine the role of self-efficacy in the performance of emotion work. On the basis of the literature, we hypothesized that self-efficacy would have a moderating influence on the relationship between emotional job demands (i.e., feeling rules and emotionally charged interactions with passengers) and emotional dissonance, and on the relationship between emotional dissonance and well-being (emotional exhaustion and work engagement). In addition, we predicted that emotional dissonance mediates the relationship between emotional job demands and well-being. The results of a series of hierarchical multiple regression analyses generally supported these hypotheses. Results confirmed that emotionally charged interactions with passengers are related to emotional exhaustion and engagement through their influence on emotional dissonance. Furthermore, self-efficacy buffers the relationship between emotional job demands and emotional dissonance, and the relationship between emotional dissonance and work engagement (but not exhaustion).

Keywords: Cabin attendants; Emotional demands; Emotional dissonance; Self-efficacy

☆ The authors thank Marisa Salanova for her thoughtful comments on an earlier draft of this article.
* Corresponding author. Fax: +31 30 2534718.
E-mail address: E.Heuven@fss.uu.nl (E. Heuven).

0001-8791/$ - see front matter © 2006 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.
doi:10.1016/j.jvb.2006.03.002

1. Introduction

Flight attendants are among the prototypical type of employees to perform emotion work (Hochschild, 1983). Cabin staff has to deal with emotionally demanding interpersonal interactions, including demanding, drunk, and sometimes even aggressive passengers (e.g., Ballard et al., 2004). An internal assessment within the airline company where this study has been conducted revealed that more than half of the cabin staff had been confronted with violence, discrimination or sexual intimidation by passengers (see also, Swanton, 1989).

In addition, cabin attendants have to attend to organizational prescriptions and requirements with regard to emotional display that can be summoned as *feeling rules*. These (unwritten) rules prescribe when and which type of emotional display is appropriate in specific work environments. Friendliness, empathy, and cheerfulness are among the typical feeling rules that apply to the interactions between flight attendants and their passengers. While the expression of these emotions is in most cases a spontaneous process that does not cost any effort (Ashfort & Humphrey, 1993; Zapf, Vogt, Seifert, Mertini, & Isic, 1999), some situations call for the stimulation or suppression of emotions that may be in conflict with truly felt emotions. This discrepancy between felt and displayed emotions has been referred to as *emotional dissonance* (Zapf, Seifert, Schmutte, Mertini, & Holz, 2001; Zapf et al., 1999). Emotional demands, feeling rules, and emotional dissonance can be considered as the core components of emotion work (Hochschild, 1983).

The central aim of this study is to gain more insight in the relationship between emotion work and employee well-being. Previous studies have produced mixed findings regarding this relationship, with some studies showing positive relationships between emotion work and well-being (Adelmann, 1995; Ashfort & Humphrey, 1993), and other studies showing negative relationships (Abraham, 1998; Brotheridge & Lee, 1998; Heuven & Bakker, 2003; Zapf et al., 1999, 2001). We will argue that self-efficacy, i.e., the belief that one can successfully perform novel or difficult tasks or cope with adversity (e.g., Bandura, 1986; Schwartzer, 1992), can explain these inconsistent findings.

1.1. Burnout and work engagement

Although previous research has demonstrated that burnout is not restricted to human service professions (e.g., Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001), burnout complaints have been found to be more prevalent among "people-workers" than among employees in non-service professions (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998). Apparently, there is something specific about human interactions at work that may cause burnout. In the original definition of the syndrome, burnout was even restricted to people-work: "Burnout is a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and reduced personal accomplishment that may occur among people who do "people work" of some kind" (Maslach & Jackson, 1986, p. 7). Increasing empirical evidence shows that job demands are the most important predictors of the emotional exhaustion component of burnout, while lacking job resources are the most important predictors of depersonalisation (or disengagement) and reduced personal accomplishment (e.g., Bakker, Demerouti, & Verbeke, 2004; Bakker, Demerouti, Taris, Schaufeli, & Schreurs, 2003; Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001). Since the focus of the present study is on emotional *job demands*, we will focus on *emotional exhaustion*. Emotional exhaustion refers to feelings of being emotionally

overextended, drained by contacts with other people one is working with (e.g., customers), and depleted of one's resources.

Work engagement refers to a 'positive, affective motivational state of fulfilment that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption' (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003; Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma, & Bakker, 2002, p 72). Burnout and engagement have been conceptualised as two opposite poles of one continuum (González-Roma, Schaufeli, Bakker, & Lloret, in press). Accordingly, burnout has been defined as an erosion of engagement (Maslach et al., 2001). However, others have claimed that even though burnout and engagement can be considered as each other's opposites, their operationalization merits two distinct constructs (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003).

1.2. Emotion work

The spectacular growth of the service sector has resulted in a growing attention for the consequences of performing emotion work. The majority of studies focus on the detrimental effects of emotion work for health and well-being (e.g., Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Brotheridge & Lee, 1998; Zerbe, 2000). However, some authors have illuminated the *positive* effects of emotion work. For example, Wharton (1993) found employees in emotion work jobs to be more satisfied with their jobs than workers in professions in which interactions with clients were not a central part of the work role. Emotion work offers employees the possibility for self-expression (Adelmann, 1995), for using and developing emotional intelligence and for evoking positive interpersonal encounters with recipients. Hence, it is likely that potentially emotion work may lead to engagement.

Focussing more closely on the three aspects of emotion work that are central to the present study (i.e., emotionally charged interactions with recipients, feeling rules, and the structural discrepancy between felt and displayed emotions), we may notice that emotional dissonance has been consistently and unequivocally related to burnout across a wide variety of human service professions (e.g., Abraham, 1998; Brotheridge & Lee, 1998; Heuven & Bakker, 2003; Zapf et al., 1999, 2001). Emotional dissonance emerges when emotions are expressed that are not truly felt (e.g., Abraham, 1998; Morris & Feldman, 1997). This discrepancy has been studied in work settings in which employees dealing with clients need to conform to certain display rules that may not be in accordance with their true, actually felt emotions. For example, Heuven and Bakker (2003) found that the structural discrepancy between the inner feelings and the positive emotional display rule in the job of cabin attendants was, more than social and cognitive stressors, predictive of burnout complaints.

With regard to emotional job demands, the definition, operationalization, and research findings in relation to burnout are less clear-cut. One should notice that there is inconsistent empirical evidence with regard to the predictive value of emotional job demands for emotional exhaustion (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998). The inconsistency in these findings may be explained by the differential definitions and operationalisations of emotional demands, which are often adapted to the specificities of the research population. For example, Le Blanc, Bakker, Peeters, Van Heesch, and Schaufeli (2001)—in their study among oncology nurses—refer to emotional demands as emotionally charged interactions with cancer patients (i.e., confrontation with suffering or death), while Lewis and Haviland (2003) understand emotional demands as the organizational requirements to comply with certain feeling rules. However, consistent in these operationalisations is that emotional job demands are rooted in the interactions between employees and recipients and that the

frequency of these interactions is crucial. Therefore, in the present study, we propose to extend the concept of emotional demands by including both feeling rules *and* emotionally charged interactions with recipients.

In addition to differences in definitions and operationalizations, the inconsistent findings regarding the relationship between emotional job demands and emotional exhaustion may partly be explained by the mediating role of emotional dissonance. For example, Brotheridge and Lee (1998) argue that emotional demands do not directly result in emotional exhaustion, but only do so through their relationship with emotional dissonance. That is, emotionally charged interactions with clients particularly lead to burnout *if* such demands lead to emotional dissonance. This view is supported by empirical evidence. For example, Lewig and Dollard (2003) found that the relationship between emotional demands (operationalized as feeling rules) and emotional exhaustion among call center employees was fully mediated by emotional dissonance. Bakker and Heuven (submitted for publication) found in their study among both nurses and police officers that emotionally demanding interactions with recipients may result in emotional dissonance which, in turn, leads to job burnout.

On the basis of these findings and theoretical considerations, we expect emotional dissonance to play a mediating role in the relationship between emotional job demands (i.e., feeling rules and emotionally charged interactions) on the one hand and emotional exhaustion and work engagement on the other. Thus, we predict that as a result of emotionally charged interactions with passengers and the need to comply with feeling rules, flight attendants will experience a discrepancy between felt and displayed emotions which, in turn, increases emotional exhaustion and decreases work engagement.

Hypothesis 1. Emotional job demands (i.e., feeling rules and emotionally charged interactions) are related to emotional exhaustion and work engagement through emotional dissonance.

However, this hypothesis still leaves unexplained why some employees experience a discrepancy between felt and displayed emotions as a result of emotional job demands, whereas others do not. The present study aims to explore why emotional dissonance may evoke feelings of emotional exhaustion and decrease work engagement among some flight attendants, but not others. In the present study, we focus on the role of self-efficacy as a possible explanatory factor.

1.3. The present study: Emotion work-related self-efficacy

In this study, we focus on the role of self-efficacy in buffering the negative consequences of emotion work. According to social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1996), self-efficacy, defined as the "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the course of action required to produce given attainments" (p. 3) both reduces stress and increases motivation when facing difficult, novel or threatening tasks such as emotionally charged client interactions. In the present study we will focus on a specific form of work-related self-efficacy, namely the belief in one's abilities to successfully perform emotion work. We call this specific self-efficacy *emotion work-related self-efficacy*.

We will focus on both the direct and buffering effects of self-efficacy. First, with regard to its direct effect, we expect individuals with high levels of self-efficacy to perceive emotional job demands as less demanding than their low-efficacious colleagues because the first

group is challenged rather than stressed by difficult, new and changing tasks and situations (Gist & Mitchell, 1992). Self-efficacious individuals hold stronger beliefs in their ability to successfully perform tasks situations (including emotion work), set more challenging goals for themselves, invest more, persist longer and are better in dealing with failing experiences than persons low in self-efficacy (Bandura, 1996). Similarly, we expect self-efficacy to be negatively correlated with emotional dissonance. Individuals with high levels of self-efficacy are found to use different and more effective coping strategies than individuals low in self-efficacy (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Conceptualising emotional dissonance as a dysfunctional coping strategy, since it has detrimental effects for health and well-being, we expect to find a negative relationship between self-efficacy and emotional dissonance. Highly self-efficacious individuals are found to be less anxious and frustrated and suffer less from stressful situations (Bandura, 1977, 1986). In sum, we expect self-efficacy to be negatively related to emotional job demands, emotional dissonance, and emotional exhaustion, and to be positively related to engagement.

Second, we expect self-efficacy to have buffering effects on the relationships between our model variables. We draw on Schaubroeck and Merritt (1997) to support this hypothesis. They empirically demonstrated how the contradictory findings of Karasek's demand-control model could be explained using self-efficacy. That is, the predicted demand × control interaction effect was only found for highly self-efficacious individuals (see also De Rijk, Le Blanc, Schaufeli, & De Jonge, 1998; Salanova, Peiró, & Schaufeli, 2002). These individuals use control to successfully deal with demanding tasks which makes them less vulnerable to stress-reactions. Applied to emotion work, Abraham (1998) states that when confronted with emotional dissonance, an employee may or may not effectively exercise the discretion of action provided by the job depending on whether he or she has sufficient confidence in his or her capabilities to effect an appropriate response. In contrast, for individuals low in self-efficacy, high levels of control only resulted in additional stress since they have difficulties coping with challenging and new tasks for which they have the discretory power and responsibility, thereby rejecting the interaction hypothesis of the DC-model. These results were founded in Salanova et al. (2002) were a 3-way interaction effect of job demands, control, and self-efficacy was showed.

Building on these results, we expect self-efficacy to increase the explanatory power of our model. Extending the findings of Schaubroeck and Merritt (1997), highly efficacious individuals are expected to be generally better able to effectively and successfully use and generate resources in their working environment to deal with demanding tasks (Green & Rodgers, 2001; Salanova et al., 2002; Schaubroeck & Merritt, 1997). For example, Bandura (1986) found that individuals with high levels of self-efficacy are better able to solve threatening and difficult situations than low-efficacious persons. If we would translate these findings to the situation on board of an airplane, this would imply that a highly efficacious flight attendant is more likely to successfully solve a conflict situation with a passenger or cope better with other types of emotionally demanding interactions. We thus expect highly efficacious flight attendants to use effective coping strategies and resources to successfully deal with the emotional job demands of their work:

Hypothesis 2. Emotion work-related self-efficacy has a moderating influence on the relationship between emotional job demands and emotional dissonance. More specifically, we predict that emotional job demands will only show a positive relationship with emotional dissonance for low-efficacious employees.

In addition, we hypothesize that self-efficacy will have a moderating effect on the relationship between emotional dissonance and the outcome variables (emotional exhaustion and engagement). Previous research had showed that efficacy beliefs mediated the relationship between job demands and burnout/engagement (Salanova, Grau, Llorens, & Schaufeli, 2001) and task demands and collective engagement (Salanova, Llorens, Cifre, Martínez, & Schaufeli, 2003). Also employees working in the service industry experience some form of emotional dissonance in their client contacts, but this discrepancy between felt and displayed emotions does not necessarily need to result in harmful effects for employee's health, well-being, and motivation (e.g., Heuven & Bakker, 2003). In the current study, we want to examine the role of self-efficacy in explaining the differentiating effects of "healthy" and "unhealthy" forms of emotional dissonance. One may argue that highly efficacious individuals can use emotional dissonance as a functional coping strategy to protect their own health and well-being. That is, expressing positive feelings in client interactions may be consciously used as a professional shield for protecting true and private feelings (see Heuven & Bakker, 2003), or as an emotion-management strategy to actually feel more positive inside (Abraham, 1998). Therefore, we hypothesize that for individuals with high levels of self-efficacy emotional dissonance will not have adverse effects on exhaustion and engagement, while their low-efficacious colleagues will be drained from energy and become disengaged from showing emotions that are not truly felt:

Hypothesis 3. Emotion work-related self-efficacy has a moderating effect on the relationship between emotional dissonance and emotional exhaustion, and between emotional dissonance and engagement. More specifically, we predict that high levels of emotional dissonance will have a positive relationship with emotional exhaustion and a negative relationship with work engagement for those individuals who have low levels of self-efficacy.

2. Method

2.1. Participants and procedure

A survey study was carried out among cabin attendants of a European airline. A newsletter of the management and publication in the intranet magazine explained the aim of the study. Anonymity and confidentiality of the data was emphasized. A total of 154 flight attendants (response = 25%) filled out the self-report questionnaire they had received in their company mailboxes. Regular employee satisfaction and well-being surveys show similar low response rates (internal reports of two Dutch airlines). Importantly, respondents did *not* differ significantly from the total population of cabin attendants regarding relevant demographic characteristics, including gender, age, hierarchical position, years of tenure, and type of contract. This suggests that the sample can be seen as representative for the whole population. The sample included 114 females (74%) and 40 males (26%). Their age ranged from 22 to 53 years with an average of 32.5 years ($SD = 6.1$). Mean organizational tenure was 7.6 years ($SD = 5.7$). Most participants had considerable working experience: 1–3 years (21%), 4–9 years (49%), 10 years and more (30%). Approximately one-third of the respondents (32%) held a position as purser (i.e., person in charge of the team of cabin attendants). Finally, 67% of the participants worked on a full-time basis.

2.2. Measures

Emotional Job Demands were assessed with three items of the scale developed by Bakker et al. (2004). An example item is: "*Do you encounter situations on board that personally affect you*?" Seven new items were developed for the purpose of this study, and added to the emotional demands scale. The items were constructed using Dormann and Zapf's (2004) instrument as a basis for the manner of questioning regarding this variable. More specifically, the content of the items was derived from the information provided in 20 semi-structured in-depth interviews with cabin attendants from different age groups, rankings, gender, and years of tenure. The interviewees were questioned about the main aspects of emotional job demands. Following the information in these interviews, respondents were asked to indicate in the questionnaire how often they were confronted with demanding, complaining, disrespectful, verbally and physically intimidating, drunk and sexually intimidating passengers. All items were scored on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 "never" to 5 "always."

Feeling Rules were assessed with four subscales of the Frankfurt Emotion Work Scales (FEWS; Zapf et al., 2001) compromising a total of 17 items. The subscales include the requirement to display positive emotions (e.g., "*The airline company expects me to only show positive emotions to passengers*"), the requirement to hide negative emotions (e.g., "*The airline company expects me to never show negative emotions* (e.g., *irritation*) *to passengers*"), the requirement to empathize and place oneself in the situation of the passenger (e.g., "*The airline company expects me to imagine myself in the situation of passengers*"), and the requirement to be authentic in client contacts (e.g., "*The airline company expects me to be sincere and authentic in the contact with passengers*"). Participants could respond to each of the items using a scale ranging from 1 "fully disagree" to 5 "fully agree."

Emotional Dissonance was measured with eight items combining Zapf, Vogt, Seifert, and Mertini's (1998) conceptualisation and operationalization of this construct with that of Erickson and Wharton (1997). The items were modified for the population of cabin attendants, by asking specifically about contacts with passengers. Respondents were asked, e.g., "*How often do you have to show feelings to passengers that do not correspond with the way you feel at that moment*?," and "How often do you have to show positive feelings to passengers, while in fact you feel indifferent?" (1 = never, 5 = always).

Emotion Work-related Self-Efficacy was measured with a seven-item scale that was developed for the purpose of the present study. The items refer to the belief to successfully perform emotion work. Work-related self-efficacy scales (i.e., Gutiérrez-Doña, Jerusalem, & Schwartzer, 2002) and the information derived from the interviews were used to accurately formulate these items. The survey-questions referring to emotion work were transformed to self-efficacy beliefs regarding emotion work. The scale included both questions referring to emotional job demands (e.g., "*I am capable of successfully handling situations with demanding or difficult passengers* (e.g., *drunk or aggressive*)") and to emotional dissonance (e.g., "*I am capable of being cheerful and friendly with passengers, even if I actually do not feel well because of, for example, problems at home*") (1 = never, 5 = always).

Emotional Exhaustion was assessed with the five-item subscale of the Dutch version (Schaufeli & Van Dierendonck, 2000) of the Maslach Burnout Inventory—General Survey (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996). Example items are "*I feel emotionally drained from my work*", and "*I feel tired when I get up in the morning and have to face another day on the job.*" All items were scored on a 7-point rating scale, ranging from 0 "never" to 6 "every day."

Work engagement was assessed with the shortened version of the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) (Schaufeli, Bakker, & Salanova, in press). Each of the three dimensions (vigor, dedication, and absorption) was assessed with three items. Example items are: "*During my work I feel full of energy*" (vigor), "*I am enthusiastic about my job*" (dedication), and "*When I am working very intensively, I feel happy*" (absorption). All these items were scored on a 7-point scale, ranging from 0 "never" to 6 "every day." As recommended by the authors, the scores on the three dimensions of engagement were summed to form one overall score of work engagement.

2.3. Strategy of analyses

The hypothetical model was tested with hierarchical regression analyses. We started with examining whether the mediating variable (i.e., emotional dissonance) met the criteria for mediation (Baron & Kenny, 1986) before analysing the mediating effect in two separate regression analyses for emotional exhaustion and work engagement. Second, we performed a series of stepwise hierarchical multiple regression analyses to examine the interaction effect of self-efficacy on the relationships between emotional job demands and emotional dissonance, between dissonance and exhaustion, and between dissonance and work engagement. Prior to the computation of the interaction terms, we centred the independent measures around their mean scores to deal with problems of multicollinearity that may arise from cross-product terms (cf. Aiken & West, 1991). We entered the demographic (control) variables in the first step of the analysis, the standardized main predictor variables in the second step, and the interaction term in the third step.

3. Results

3.1. Descriptive statistics

The results showed that the internal consistencies (Cronbach's alpha) of all study variables were above the level of .75 for all the multi-item scales. These findings indicate that all scales had an acceptable level of internal consistency.

Generally speaking, the pattern of correlations between the model variables was in line with our expectations. However, contrary to previous findings, (e.g., Zapf et al., 2001) we did *not* find any correlations between feeling rules and the outcome variables. Preliminary analyses revealed that demographic variables (i.e., gender, age, hierarchical position, years of tenure, and type of contract) were only related to emotional job demands and not to other model variables. The results indicate that women show higher levels of emotional job demands than men (Men $M = 2{,}29$, $SD = 0{,}71$; Women $M = 2.63$, $SD = 0.69$), $t(2,47) = p < .05$. Also, pursers show more elevated levels of emotional job demands in comparison to employees lower in rank (Pursers $M = 2{,}68$, $SD = 0{,}71$; non-pursers $M = 2.32$, $SD = 0.69$), $t(-2,77) = p < .01$.

3.2. Emotional dissonance as a mediator

According to Hypothesis 1 emotional dissonance plays a mediating role in the relationship between emotional job demands and the outcome variables (i.e., emotional exhaustion and engagement). To test this hypothesis, we first examined whether all criteria for

mediation were met (Baron & Kenny, 1986). This proved to be the case for emotional job demands. Emotional job demands correlated significantly with both the mediating variable (emotional dissonance), and the criterion variables (emotional exhaustion and engagement). However, feeling rules did not show significant relationships with the outcome variables. Thus, feeling rules were excluded from further analyses. We performed a hierarchical regression analysis to test the hypothesis that emotional dissonance mediates the effect of emotional job demands on emotional exhaustion. We entered emotional job demands in the first step ($\beta = .23$, $p < .05$), and subsequently entered emotional dissonance in the second step ($\beta = .33$, $p < .01$) at which point emotional job demands became non-significant ($\beta = .13$, $p = .20$). In the same vein, emotional dissonance was found to mediate the relationship between emotional job demands and engagement. Regressing engagement on emotional job demands was significant in the first step ($\beta = -.24$, $p < .05$), while entering emotional dissonance in the second step ($\beta = -.31$, $p < .005$) yielded a significant change in the F value ($p < .003$), making emotional job demands non-significant ($\beta = -.14$, $p = .18$). Since all conditions for mediation were met (Baron & Kenny, 1986), our findings are partly consistent with Hypothesis 1: emotional dissonance mediates the relationship between dealing with emotionally charged interactions and the two outcome variables (emotional exhaustion and engagement). However, since the mediating effect of emotional dissonance was not found for feeling rules, the hypothesis is partly rejected.

3.3. Self-efficacy as a moderator

To examine Hypotheses 2 and 3 regarding the moderating effect of self-efficacy on the relationships between the model variables, we performed three separate hierarchical multiple regression analyses. In the first step, we assessed the effect of the demographic variables on the dependent variables. In the second step, the predictor variables were entered, followed by the inclusion of the interaction terms in the third step.

First, we examined the moderating effect of self-efficacy on the relationship between emotional job demands (emotionally charged interactions and feeling rules) and emotional dissonance (Hypothesis 2). Table 1 shows that both emotionally charged interactions and feeling rules have a significant impact on emotional dissonance, after controlling for the demographic variables. In addition, the interaction terms of both emotional job demands and feeling rules with emotion work-related self-efficacy show a significant effect on emotional dissonance ($\beta = .20$ and $\beta = -.20$). These findings are consistent with Hypothesis 2: emotional dissonance is only related to emotional demands and feeling rules for individuals with low levels of self-efficacy, and not for their highly efficacious colleagues.

The second part of the model involved the moderating effect of self-efficacy on the relationship between emotional dissonance and the outcome variables. Two separate regression analyses were performed with emotional exhaustion and engagement as dependent variables (Hypothesis 3). Emotional dissonance and emotion work-related self-efficacy proved to show main effects with respect to emotional exhaustion (see Table 1 for β values) but *no* interaction effects were found, thereby rejecting a part of Hypothesis 3. In contrast, as shown in Table 1 both the main effects of emotional dissonance and self-efficacy and the interaction term proved to be significant with respect to engagement, thereby confirming this part of Hypothesis 3. More specifically, emotional dissonance only undermines work engagement for low (vs. high) efficacious employees.

Table 1
Hierarchical regression analysis predicting moderation of self-efficacy, $N = 154$

	R	R^2 change	F change	Significant F change
A. Hypothesis 2: Predicting emotional dissonance from emotional job demands and self-efficacy				
Main effects model				
β : EB = .32***; FR = .12; SE = .11	.47	.14	7.23	.00***
Interaction effects model				
β : EB × SE = .20*; FR × SE = −.20*	.51	.04	2.88	.05*
B. Hypothesis 3a: Predicting emotional exhaustion from emotional dissonance and self-efficacy				
Main effects model				
β : ED = .35***; SE = −.26**	.48	.21	18.85	.00***
Interaction effects model				
β : ED × SE = −.04	.48	.00	.29	.60
C. Hypothesis 3b: Predicting engagement from emotional dissonance and self-efficacy				
Main effects model				
β : ED = −.32***; SE = .24**	.50	.15	9.43	.00***
Interaction effects model				
β : ED × SE = −.17*	.54	.05	3.26	.05*

EB, Emotionally charged interactions; FR, Feeling rules; SE, Self-efficacy; ED, Emotional dissonance.
* $p < .05$.
** $p < .01$.
*** $p < .001$.

4. Discussion

The present study among cabin attendants was designed to investigate the role of self-efficacy in the performance of emotion work. More specifically we examined: (1) whether emotional job demands (i.e., emotionally charged interactions with passengers and feeling rules) are related to emotional exhaustion and engagement through their influence on emotional dissonance; (2) whether self-efficacy has a moderating effect on the relationship between emotional job demands and emotional dissonance; and (3) whether self-efficacy has a moderating effect on the relationship between emotional dissonance and outcome variables (i.e., emotional exhaustion and engagement). Most of these hypotheses were supported by the results of a series of multiple hierarchical regression analyses.

First, the pattern of intercorrelations between the model variables was largely as expected. Contrary to our expectations, the relationships between feeling rules and the outcome measures as found by Zapf et al. (2001) was not replicated in the present study. However, this is in line with findings by Lewig and Dollard (2003) who did not find empirical support for this relationship in their sample of call center employees either. The lack of empirical support for the relationship between feeling rules and emotional exhaustion and engagement may be explained from the functional, positive qualities these rules offer to employees, varying from the facilitation of client contacts and self-expression to positive feedback effects both within the person (displaying positive feelings will make a person feel positive inside) as in the contact with recipients (displaying positive feelings will evoke a more positive attitude in recipients) (e.g., Adelmann, 1995; Ashfort & Humphrey, 1993; Côté, 2005). Feelings rules make interpersonal interactions more manageable and predictable, and offer employees a (sometimes much-needed) shield to protect their personal

feelings (Ashfort & Humphrey, 1993; Heuven & Bakker, 2003). Future research should provide additional information on the differential effects of feeling rules. An important question is whether these differential findings may be may be explained through differences in the type of emotional display (negative vs. positive) that is required from employees as part of the work role.

Second, the relationship between emotionally charged interactions with recipients with both emotional exhaustion and work engagement is fully mediated by emotional dissonance. That is, as a result of emotionally charged interactions with passengers, flight attendants experience a discrepancy between felt and displayed emotions which, in turn, leads to emotional exhaustion and reduced engagement. These results are in line with previous findings by Bakker and Heuven (submitted for publication) and Brotheridge and Lee (1998) who found that emotional demands do not directly lead to emotional exhaustion, but rather through their relationship with emotional dissonance. These findings offer a possible explanation for the lack of empirical evidence with regard to the predictive value of emotional demands for job burnout (see Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998 for an overview). The high prevalence of burnout among human service workers may not be directly explained from emotionally charged interactions with recipients, but rather through the structural discrepancy between felt and expressed feeling that these interactions evoke. Our findings contribute to the theoretical discussion on the position of emotional dissonance in the strain-stress-chain by demonstrating that its mediating role proves to best fit empirical reality.

Third, highly efficacious cabin attendants are clearly better able to cope with emotionally charged interactions with passengers and to comply with feeling rules compared to cabin staff that has low scores on self-efficacy. Self-efficacy may help individuals in not experiencing a discrepancy between felt and expressed emotions in reaction to drunk, demanding, and aggressive passengers. Also, highly efficacious cabin attendants do not become emotionally dissonant from strict and severe display rules, while low-efficacious individuals clearly experience a discrepancy between displayed and authentic feeling when confronted with strict (vs non-strict) rules for display of emotions. These findings form a fruitful start for a further exploration of the role of personal resources in buffering the detrimental consequences of emotion work.

Fourth, the results of our study show that self-efficacy not only buffers the detrimental effects of performing emotion work, but also plays a crucial role in maintaining and enhancing its positive effects. High levels of emotional dissonance do not affect the levels of work engagement of high (vs. low) efficacious cabin attendants. In contrast, low-efficacious individuals clearly loose their vigor, absorption, and dedication when they cannot express their true feelings. This shows that highly efficacious persons are better able to deal with emotional dissonance, which is often considered to be an intrinsic part of human service work, than individuals with low levels of efficacy since it does not affect their feelings of vigor, absorption, and dedication. This is in line with the interaction effect found by Jex and Bliese (1999) who showed that highly efficacious individuals remained committed in response to high job demands. The differential findings for the two outcome variables can be explained drawing on the theoretical perspective of the Job Demands—Resources (JD-R) Model (Demerouti et al., 2001). Self-efficacy can be considered as a personal resource that enables employees to deal with job demands (e.g., Salanova et al., 2002; Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, submitted for publication). The JD-R model predicts that resources mainly predict motivational effects, while job demands rather evoke

negative health effects (such as emotional exhaustion). This is in line with our finding that self-efficacy, as a personal resource, does have an effect on the motivational outcome measure (i.e., engagement) and not on emotional exhaustion.

Self-efficacy proves to be promising in decreasing the negative consequences of performing emotion work, and in enhancing its positive effects on employee's work engagement. We therefore suggest including this personal resource in future studies on emotion work to gain further insight in the role of self-efficacy. For example, it would be interesting to understand how self-efficacy may help individuals to better cope with the emotional demands in their work. Highly efficacious persons are not only better equipped to cope with threats or demands in their working environment, but are also better able to generate available resources, such as social support, which, in turn, may lead to positive effects on health and well-being (e.g., Hobfoll & Shirom, 2001; Salanova, Bakker, & Llorens, in press). Future research may further clarify the role of self-efficacy in effectively using resources in the working environment.

4.1. Limitations

One limitation of the present study is the low response rate. Only one-quarter of the questionnaires was returned. However, a comparison of demographic variables such as years of tenure, gender, age, and hierarchical position of the sample group with the total population of cabin attendants revealed no significant differences between these two groups. This suggests that the sample can be seen as representative for the whole population. Nevertheless, it seems important to replicate the current findings in future research, using larger groups (and from other occupations) to confirm the external validity of our findings.

Another limitation of the current study is that the data from this study were derived entirely from self-report questionnaires. This can result in problems such as common method variance. Besides, it can be argued that constructs such as self-efficacy and work engagement can only be assessed through self-reports. Also, this problem of common method variance would lead to a general inflation of associations, rather that particular ones.

Another limitation is the cross-sectional nature of our study. This implies that the postulated relationships in our research model are based on theory and previous empirical findings, and cannot be interpreted causally. For example, the position of emotional dissonance in the stressor-stress chain is object of discussion among scholars in the field of emotion work. For example, Zapf et al. (1999) have suggested that emotional dissonance can be considered both as an external organisation demand as well as a stress reaction that is strongly interrelated with emotional exhaustion. To further validate the hypothesized causal relationships in our study, longitudinal studies, diary studies and quasi-experimental research designs are needed.

Finally, the study was conducted among a homogeneous sample of workers in one single airline company. Future research might explore the external validity of our findings among other human service professionals. Also, a cross-cultural comparison of emotion work in future research would be a valuable contribution to our knowledge in this domain.

References

Abraham, R. (1998). emotional dissonance in organizations: antecedents, consequences an moderators. *Genetic, Social, and General Psychology Monographs, 124*, 229–246.

Adelmann, P. K. (1995). Emotional labour as a potential source of job stress. In S. L. Sauter & L. R. Murphey (Eds.), *Organizational risk factors for job stress* (pp. 371–381). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Aiken, L. S., & West, S. G. (1991). *Multiple regression: Testing and interpreting interactions*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Ashfort, B. E., & Humphrey, R. H. (1993). Emotional labour in service roles: the influence of identity. *The Academy of Management Review, 18*, 88–115.

Bakker, A. B., Demerouti, D., & Verbeke, W. (2004). Using the Job Demands-Resources model to predict burnout and performance. *Human Resource Management, 43*, 83–104.

Bakker, A.B., & Heuven, E.M. (submitted for publication). Emotional dissonance and in-role performance among nurses and police officers.

Bakker, A. B., Demerouti, E., Taris, T., Schaufeli, W. B., & Schreurs, P. (2003). A multi-group analysis of the Job Demands—Resources model in four home care organizations. *International Journal of Stress Management*.

Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review, 84*, 191–215.

Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Bandura, A. (1996). *Social learning theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Ballard, T. J., Corradi, L., Lauria, L., Mazzanti, C., Scaravelli, G., Sgorbissa, F., et al. (2004). Integrating qualitative methods into occupational health research: a study of women flight attendants. *Occupational and Environmental Medicine, 61*, 163–166.

Baron, R. M., & Kenny, D. A. (1986). The moderator-mediator variable distinction in social psychological research: conceptual, strategic, and statistical considerations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 51*, 1173–1182.

Brotheridge, C. M., & Grandey, A. A. (2002). Emotional labour and burnout: comparing two perspectives of "people work". *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 60*, 17–39.

Brotheridge, C.M., & Lee, R.T. 1998. On the dimensionality of emotional labour: Development and validation of the emotional labour scale. Paper presented at the first conference on emotions in organizational life, San Diego.

Côté, S. (2005). A social interaction model of the effects of emotion regulation on work strain. *Academy of Management Review, 30*, 509–530.

De Rijk, A. E., Le Blanc, P. M., Schaufeli, W. B., & De Jonge, J. (1998). Active coping and need for control as moderators of the job demand-control model: effects on burnout. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology, 71*, 1–18.

Demerouti, E., Bakker, A. B., Nachreiner, F., & Schaufeli, W. B. (2001). The Job Demands—Resources model of burnout. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 86*, 499–512.

Dormann, C., & Zapf, D. (2004). Customer-related social stressors and burnout. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 9*, 61–82.

Erickson, R. J., & Wharton, A. S. (1997). Inauthenticity and depression: assessing the consequences of interactive service work. *Work and Occupations, 24*, 188–213.

Gist, M. E., & Mitchell, T. R. (1992). Self-efficacy: a theoretical analysis of its determinants and malleability. *The Academy of Management Review, 17*, 183–211.

González-Roma, V., Schaufeli, W.B., Bakker, A., & Lloret, S. (in press). Burnout and engagement: Independent factors or opposite poles?*Journal of Vocational Behaviour*.

Green, B. L., & Rodgers, A. (2001). Determinants of social support among low-income mothers: a longitudinal analysis. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 2*(3), 419–440.

Gutiérrez-Doña, B., Jerusalem, M., & Schwartzer, R. (2002). *The work-related self-efficacy scale*. Berlin: Freie universität.

Heuven, E., & Bakker, A. B. (2003). Emotional dissonance and burnout among cabin attendants. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology, 12*, 81–100.

Hobfoll, S. E., & Shirom, A. (2001). Conservation of resources theory: Applications to stress and management in the workplace. In R. T. Golembiewski (Ed.), *Handbook of organizational behavior* (2nd ed., pp. 57–80). New York: Marcel Dekker.

Hochschild, A. R. (1983). *The managed heart. Commercialization of human feeling*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Jex, S. M., & Bliese, P. D. (1999). Efficacy beliefs as a moderator of the impact of work-related stressors: a multilevel study. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 84*, 349–361.

Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S. (1984). *Stress, appraisal, and coping*. New York: Springer.
Le Blanc, P., Bakker, A. B., Peeters, M. C. W., Van Heesch, N. C. A., & Schaufeli, W. B. (2001). Burnout in oncology care providers: the role of individual differences. *Anxiety, Stress, and Coping, 14*, 243–263.
Lewig, K. A., & Dollard, M. F. (2003). Emotional dissonance, emotional exhaustion and job satisfaction in call centre workers. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology, 4*, 366–392.
Lewis, M., & Haviland, J. (Eds.). (2003). *Handbook of Emotions* (2nd ed). Guilford Press.
Maslach, C., & Jackson, S. (1986). Patterns of burnout among a national sample of public contact workers. *Journal of Health and Human Resources Administration, 7*, 189–212.
Maslach, C., Jackson, S. E., & Leiter, M. P. (1996). *The Maslach Burnout Inventory* (3rd ed.). Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists Press.
Maslach, C., Schaufeli, W. B., & Leiter, M. P. (2001). Job burnout. *Annual Review of Psychology, 52*, 397–422.
Morris, J. A., & Feldman, D. C. (1997). Managing emotions in the workplace. *Journal of Managerial Issues, 9*, 257–274.
Salanova, M., Bakker, A. & Llorens, S. (in press). Flow at Work: Evidence for a Gain Spiral of Personal and Organizational Resources. *Journal of Happiness Studies*.
Salanova, M., Llorens, S., Cifre, E., Martínez, I., & Schaufeli, W. B. (2003). Perceived collective efficacy, subjective well-being and task performance among electronic work groups: an experimental study. *Small Group Research, 34*, 43–73.
Salanova, M., Peiró, J. M., & Schaufeli, W. B. (2002). Self-efficacy specificity and burnout among information technology workers: an extension of the job demands-control model. *European Journal on Work and Organizational Psychology, 11*, 1–25.
Salanova, M., Grau, R., Llorens, S. y., & Schaufeli, W. B. (2001). Exposición a las tecnologías de la información, burnout y engagement: el rol modulador de la autoeficacia relacionada con la tecnología [Exposure to information and communication technologies, burnout and engagement: the moderating role of technology related self-efficacy].. *Revista de Psicología Social Aplicada, 11*, 69–90.
Schaubroeck, J., & Merritt, D. E. (1997). Divergent effects of job control on coping with work stressors: the key role of self-efficacy. *The Academy of Management Journal, 40*, 738–754.
Schaufeli, W. B., & Bakker, A. B. (2003).UWES, Utrecht Work Engagement Scale Utrecht University; Department of Social and Organizational Psychology.
Schaufeli, W.B., Bakker, A.B. & Salanova, M. (in press). The measurement of work engagement with a short questionnaire: A cross-national study. Educational and Psychological Measurement.
Schaufeli, W. B., & Enzmann, D. (1998). *The burnout companion to study and practice: A critical analysis*. Washington, DC: Taylor & Francis.
Schaufeli, W. B., & Van Dierendonck, D. (2000). *UBOS: De Utrechtse Burnout Schaal Handleiding* UBOS: The Utrecht Burnout Scale. Manual. Lisse: Swets & Zeitlinger.
Schaufeli, W. B., Salanova, M., Gonzalez-Roma, V., & Bakker, A. B. (2002). The measurement of burnout and engagement: a confirmatory factor analytic approach. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 3*, 71–92.
Schwartzer, R. (Ed.). (1992). *Self-efficacy. Thought control of action*. Washington, DC: Hemisphere.
Swanton, B. 1989. Violence and public contact workers. Violence Today. Australian Institute of Criminology.
Wharton, A. S. (1993). The Affective Consequences of Service Work. *Work and Occupations, 20*, 205–232.
Xanthopoulou, D., Bakker, A.B., Demerouti, E. & Schaufeli, W.B. (submitted for publication). The role of personal resources in the Job Demands-Resources model.
Zapf, D., Seifert, C., Schmutte, B., Mertini, H., & Holz, M. (2001). Emotion work and job stressors and their effects on burnout. *Psychology and Health, 16*, 527–545.
Zapf, D., Vogt, C., Seifert, C. & Mertini, H. (1998). FEMA.*Fragebogen zu emotionalen Arbeitsanforderungen.*
Zapf, D., Vogt, C., Seifert, C., Mertini, H., & Isic, A. (1999). Emotion work as a source of stress: the concept and development of an instrument. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology, 8*, 371–400.
Zerbe, W. J. (2000). Emotional Dissonance and Employee Well-being. In N. M. Ashkanasy, C. E. J. Hartel, & W. J. Zerbe (Eds.), *Emotions in the workplace. Research theory and practice*. Westport C.P.: Quorum Books.