

Customer mistreatment and employee well-being: A daily diary study of recovery mechanisms for frontline restaurant employees in a hotel

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ABSTRACT

Research on customer mistreatment towards frontline service employees in the hospitality industry has been steadily rising in recent years, but little is known about the mechanism underlying its detrimental impact on the non-work life of employees and why some of them could handle it effectively. By integrating conservation of resources theory with the stressor-detachment model, this daily diary study examined the effect of daily customer mistreatment on employees' daily well-being at home (vigor and exhaustion) through daily psychological detachment. Employees' recovery self-efficacy and the trait of resilience, which might mitigate the process were also examined. An experience sampling methodology was applied, and the survey data were gathered from 54 frontline restaurant employees conducted across 5 consecutive workdays. Results of hierarchical linear modeling supported all the hypotheses in this study. Our findings revealed a spillover effect of customer mistreatment and the importance of improving employees' recovery in the hospitality context.

1. Introduction

The hospitality industry attaches great importance to the customer experience, as it may influence customers' satisfaction, their willingness to return, and word of mouth behaviors to others (Karatepe, 2011; Lee and Ok, 2014). To gain a sustainable competitive advantage as part of the experience economy, the hospitality industry strikes to reinforce the motto "the customer is always right" and provide high-quality services. Hence, frontline service employees are required to meet customers' needs and try their utmost to please them (Zhu et al., 2019; Cho et al., 2016), yet such unequal power and superiority of customers can make them become more demanding (Cai et al., 2018; Li et al., 2019). While most interactions are highly civil, some are not. Within the hotel context, guests and employees engage in multiple interactions during the length of stay (e.g., concierge, room service, and restaurant servers; Torres et al., 2016). This exposes frontline service employees to a higher risk of mistreatment from demanding customers, as they have more direct contact with customers than those working in back-office departments. While previous hospitality research dominantly focused on the delivering best service to customers, investigation of customers' misbehaviors is sorely lacking and required for a better understanding of

the industry (Yang and Lau, 2019).

Customer mistreatment is a growing problem that has received extensive attention in the context of the service-based economy (Kern and Grandey, 2009; Rafaeli and Sutton, 1990). Defined as the low-quality interpersonal treatment that employees receive from their customers during service interactions (Wang et al., 2011), customer mistreatment is further broken down into (a) high frequency of occurrence (Shao and Skarlicki, 2014), (b) medium intensity, including some aggressive behaviors with obvious intent to harm (e.g., verbal abuse; Dorman and Zapf, 2004), (c) violation of the social norms of mutual respect in service context (e.g., unfair demands; Wang et al., 2011), and (d) no physical abuse (Andersson and Pearson, 1999). Other terms within the domain of customer destructive behaviors are related to our interest, but are not a perfect fit for this study. *Customer incivility*, while similar to customer mistreatment, is distinct in two aspects (vague intent and mild intensity; Hershcovis, 2011). Perpetrators of customer incivility can easily deny or bury any intent with the excuses of rudeness or the target may be inclined toward misinterpretation (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). *Customer outrage* refers to the fierce reaction of customers when the service employees fail to gratify their needs (Verma, 2003). When compared to customer mistreatment, customer outrage

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represents a more intensive state with apparent intent to harm (e.g., sabotage, verbal or physical acts of aggression; Glomb, 2002). *Customer violence* is the most intense form of customer destructive behavior, and basically in the form of verbal and physical abuse, such as swearing, sarcasm, and insults (Boyd, 2002). Accordingly, it happens less frequently than customer mistreatment. To sum up, as a product of the distorted hospitality industrial context (Cai et al., 2018), customer mistreatment is an inevitable but easily neglected problem, owing to its high occurrence and latent encroachment on frontline service employees' rights. As such, further investigation on this topic is necessary.

Abundant research has demonstrated that customer mistreatment has negative impacts on service employees, such as lower well-being (e.g., Harris and Reynolds, 2003), higher absenteeism (e.g., Grandey et al., 2004), higher turnover intention (e.g., Li et al., 2019), and greater exhaustion (e.g., Dormann and Zapf, 2004). A recent study found that work-related flow – a positive work-related experience – was positively associated with employee well-being at home (i.e., vigor and low exhaustion) (Demerouti et al., 2012). Logically, we may wonder whether negative experiences at work (e.g., customer mistreatment) can spill over to non-work domains. However, extant work on this topic remains incomplete (Song et al., 2018; Zhu et al., 2019).

In the current study, we attempt to extend the work of Demerouti et al. (2012) by focusing on frontline service employees' vigor and exhaustion during non-work time as potential consequences of customer mistreatment during work time. Psychological detachment, defined as "the individual's sense of being away from the work situation" (Etzion et al., 1998, p. 579), is an important recovery experience (Sonnetag and Fritz, 2007). The stressor-detachment model regard it as a key mediating mechanism linking work stressors to outcomes (Sonnetag and Fritz, 2015). Surprisingly, such a recovery mediating mechanism has not been theoretically integrated into the customer service literature to link daily customer mistreatment during work time and employees' daily exhaustion and vigor during non-work time. To address this gap, this study examines how daily negative experiences at work affect service employees during non-work time by integrating conservation of resource theory (COR; Hobfoll, 1989) with the stressor-detachment model (Sonnetag and Fritz, 2015).

Further, it is crucial to understand why some frontline service employees are able to handle such negative experiences at work more functionally than others. Consistent with COR theory, individual resources may be in the form of valuable traits and capabilities, which can help them better cope with stressful experiences (Hobfoll, 1989). Therefore, we examine whether trait resilience and recovery self-efficacy mitigate the within-person relationship between customer mistreatment and psychological detachment from work. Trait resilience and recovery self-efficacy can be considered as recovery-based moderating mechanisms, which have been found to functionally cope with stressors (Mitchell et al., 2018; Park and Sprung, 2015; Waugh et al., 2008). Accordingly, the two recovery-based moderating mechanisms will protect against daily customer mistreatment in the workplace.

In sum, the current study aims to contribute to the customer service research. First, by integrating COR theory with the stressor-detachment model, the current study examines psychological detachment from work during non-work time as a bridge between daily customer mistreatment at work and daily well-being at home. Second, we examine whether the recovery-based mechanisms of trait resilience and recovery self-efficacy diminish the likelihood of dysfunctional outcomes from the stress process, indicating that frontline service employees can better handle the stressful experiences resulting from daily customer mistreatment. Our examination of the two recovery-based moderators provides practical insights into how and when managers and organizations may protect employees from suffering the detrimental consequences of daily customer mistreatment.

2. Theoretical framework and hypotheses

2.1. Daily customer mistreatment and daily well-being at home

According to COR theory, employees are motivated to require and maintain the resources they value (Hobfoll, 1989). Customer mistreatment is widely regarded as a source of resource loss, because for frontline service employees who have experienced customer mistreatment, extra resources would be invested to cope with excessive job demands from customers (Wang et al., 2011). If service employees fail to regain a certain amount of resource, they may suffer from negative impact of resource loss. Further, customers' discourteous and aggressive behaviors would impose more demand on employees' resources for regulating their behaviors in accordance with the service rules (Baumeister et al., 1998; Wang et al., 2011). For example, if customers use condescending language, or vent their bad mood on frontline service employees, these employees might feel hurt and stressed. Therefore, frontline service employees would have to gather more effort to regulate their emotion and continue to offer services. Taken together, customer mistreatment serves as a source of resource loss for frontline service employees, which may, in turn, lead to lasting impacts on other aspects of those employees' life.

When service employees encountered resource loss, they tend to compensate for or minimize the lost resources in the workplace as predicted by the COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989, 2001). Therefore, when experiencing customer mistreatment in the workplace, service employees tend to devote more psychological attention to protect against the depletion at the expense of fewer resources devoted to other activities because of the constraints in time and energy. The state of resource loss would exacerbate until employees replenish themselves. Hence, we propose that the service employees may carry the negative experiences created by customer mistreatment with them when they leave the workplace (Ferguson, 2012). Consequently, the spillover effects take place, as service employees experiencing daily customer mistreatment during the worktime would show a lower level of daily vigor and a higher level of daily exhaustion at home. Supporting this argument, previous research has shown that employees tend to decrease home time to fulfill work demands (e.g., Eagle et al., 1997; Halbesleben et al., 2009).

Hypothesis 1. Daily customer mistreatment is positively associated with (a) daily exhaustion at home and negatively associated with (b) daily vigor at home.

2.2. The mediating role of daily psychological detachment from work

According to the stressor-detachment model, work stressors can be considered as key predictors of poor psychological detachment from work (Sonnetag and Fritz, 2015). It is conceivable that service employees are less likely to detach from work at home when they face frequent customer mistreatment in the workplace, because customer mistreatment will stimulate the recall of negative experiences occurred during the daytime, which may elevate employees' strain level (Bono et al., 2013; Sonnetag and Fritz, 2015). Supporting this argument, social conflicts with customers at work on a daily level were positively correlated with poor psychological detachment from work at home (Volmer et al., 2012).

Consistent with the COR theory, daily customer mistreatment, a "daily stressor" in the workplace, may threaten or cause the loss of service employees' resources. Psychological detachment from work acts as a valuable resource at home for service employees (Park et al., 2015). Therefore, we expect that frontline service employees experiencing frequent customer mistreatment on a daily level tend to sink in poorer psychological detachment from work at home.

Hypothesis 2. Daily customer mistreatment is negatively associated with daily psychological detachment from work at home.

Poor psychological detachment signifies that employees might continue to be involved in work or work-related tasks, and repeatedly thinking about job-related issues during their non-work time (Sonnentag and Fritz, 2007). Based on COR theory, owing to their failures in detaching from the source of demand, frontline service employees would constantly experience resource loss. In considering the limits on the pool of energy and time, these employees would have fewer resources to devote to other activities at home. For example, frontline service employees who have encountered customer mistreatment during work might have to handle the related issues during non-work time. They may recall the memory of being treated badly, introspect, and worry about possible complaints (Sonnentag and Fritz, 2015), and in turn, experience a high level of exhaustion and a low level of vigor at home (Demerouti et al., 2012; Ten Brummelhuis and Bakker, 2012). Given Hypotheses 1 and 2, we expect that psychological detachment from work at home may act a mediating role in the process.

Hypothesis 3. Daily psychological detachment from work at home mediates the association between daily customer mistreatment and (a) daily exhaustion and (b) vigor at home.

2.3. The moderating role of recovery self-efficacy

Recovery self-efficacy refers to “individual’s expectation of being able to benefit from recovery time and recovery opportunities” (Sonnetag and Krueel, 2006, p. 202). Consistent with COR theory, it acts as a key individual resource that could enhance employees’ resistance to resource depletion (Eden, 2001). Specifically, for service employees suffering from daily customer mistreatment, it may facilitate opportunities to relax and unwind from high-stress situations during the non-work time, enabling them to cope with stressful circumstances effectively (Park and Sprung, 2015).

When encountering customer mistreatment, frontline service employees high in recovery self-efficacy have more knowledge of how to prevent its detrimental impacts timely. First, they may try to avoid doing job-related tasks at their non-work time or thinking about related issues at home, keeping a proper psychological distance from the work. Second, they may tend to have strong motivation to seek out activities that allow them to recover from strains brought by misbehaviors of customers (Sonnetag and Krueel, 2006; Park and Sprung, 2015; Demerouti et al., 2009). These employees could effectively refrain themselves from continuous resource loss, and achieve better psychological detachment when facing customer mistreatment.

In contrast, frontline service employees with low recovery self-efficacy may neglect the role of psychological detachment. When encountering customer mistreatment, these employees may tend to spend more resources on job-related issues at the non-work time. For example, they probably sink into contemplation about their task accomplishments (Park and Sprung, 2015). The lack of knowledge and belief in recovery experience may lead to their failures in handling consequent outcomes of customer mistreatment which have already spread to their non-work lives.

Hypothesis 4. Recovery self-efficacy moderates the relationship between daily customer mistreatment and daily psychological detachment from work at home, such that this negative relationship is weaker when recovery self-efficacy is higher.

2.4. The moderating role of trait resilience

Trait resilience is a positive personality enabling employees to enhance adaptation (Wagnild and Young, 1993). Previous studies have demonstrated that trait resilience allows individuals to successfully cope with negative work experiences (e.g., Connor and Davidson, 2003; Glantz and Johnson, 2002; Oshio et al., 2003). Ong et al. (2006) suggest that trait resilience “has relevance not only to those undergoing significant life challenge but also to those experiencing daily stressors that

spontaneously arise and subside in naturally occurring contexts” (p. 742). We thus expect that frontline service employees high in trait resilience tend to disengage from work when faced with customer mistreatment.

Specifically, employees who have high trait resilience tend to maintain a cool head in the face of stressful circumstances (e.g., Waugh et al., 2011) and are less likely to focus on past information about the stressful circumstances (e.g., Charney, 2004; Florian et al., 1995; Kobasa and Puccetti, 1983). Conversely, employees low in trait resilience have less ability to ignore the negative aspects of stressful circumstances and experience a prolonged reaction when faced with threatening information about stressful circumstances. As a result, trait resilience can be seen as an inhibitor against the loss of resources caused by customer mistreatment on a daily level. Fig. 1 depicts our hypothesized model.

Hypothesis 5. Trait resilience moderates the relationship between daily customer mistreatment and daily psychological detachment from work at home, such that this negative relationship is weaker when trait resilience is higher.

3. Method

3.1. Sample and procedure

We employed an experience sampling methodology (ESM) to capture the daily variance in frontline service employees’ experience of customer mistreatment, and how the detrimental effect of it spilled over to their family lives. The daily data were collected from a hotel delivering services to business travelers and tourists in China. Conducting a survey in a single organization could help to control the potential organizational-level confounding variables (Zhang and Bartol, 2010). In considering the high frequency of frontline service employees’ interactions with customers, as well as the arduous tasks of them to satisfy various requirements of customers (e.g., directing customers, communication, recommendation, taking order, detail-focused service; Pettijohn et al., 2004), restaurant frontline service employees bear a high risk of being mistreated by demanding customers. Thus, in the present study, a total of 69 frontline service employees via our invitation e-mail were recruited to participate. The purpose of the research was explained by the first author and all the responses were kept anonymous. Data were collected through Web-based surveys conducted across 5 workdays. The restaurant frontline service employees all agreed to engage in this survey, but 15 of them were not able to complete all three surveys (i.e., a general survey and two daily surveys) during the week. Therefore, 54 restaurant frontline service employees completed all the surveys. In total, participants completed 270 out of 345 total possible daily surveys (69 participants \times 5 days), and the response rate of our study reached 78%. There were 75 daily surveys (15 participants \times 5 days) in which participants dropped out, and the dropout rate was 22%. Among the participants, 64.8% of them were women, the average job tenure was 2.48 years ($SD = .99$), and the average age was 26.41 years ($SD = 2.18$).

The data collection included a general survey and two daily surveys (afternoon survey and evening survey). Participants completed a general survey providing demographic information (i.e., gender, job tenure, and age) and between-person level variables (i.e., recovery self-efficacy and trait resilience). To motivate employees to participate in the general survey, we offered 50 Chinese Yuan (about 7.65 U.S. dollars) to these participants. Two weeks after the general survey, these participants were requested to complete the afternoon survey around 4:50 p.m. (i.e., daily customer mistreatment, daily state positive affect, and daily state negative affect) for 5 consecutive workdays. These participants were compensated 50 Chinese Yuan (about 7.65 U.S. dollars) for completing afternoon surveys. Participants were also instructed to complete 5 consecutive evening surveys before bedtime (around 21:30 p.m.), including daily psychological detachment, daily exhaustion, and daily vigor. As a token of appreciation, those who completed the evening

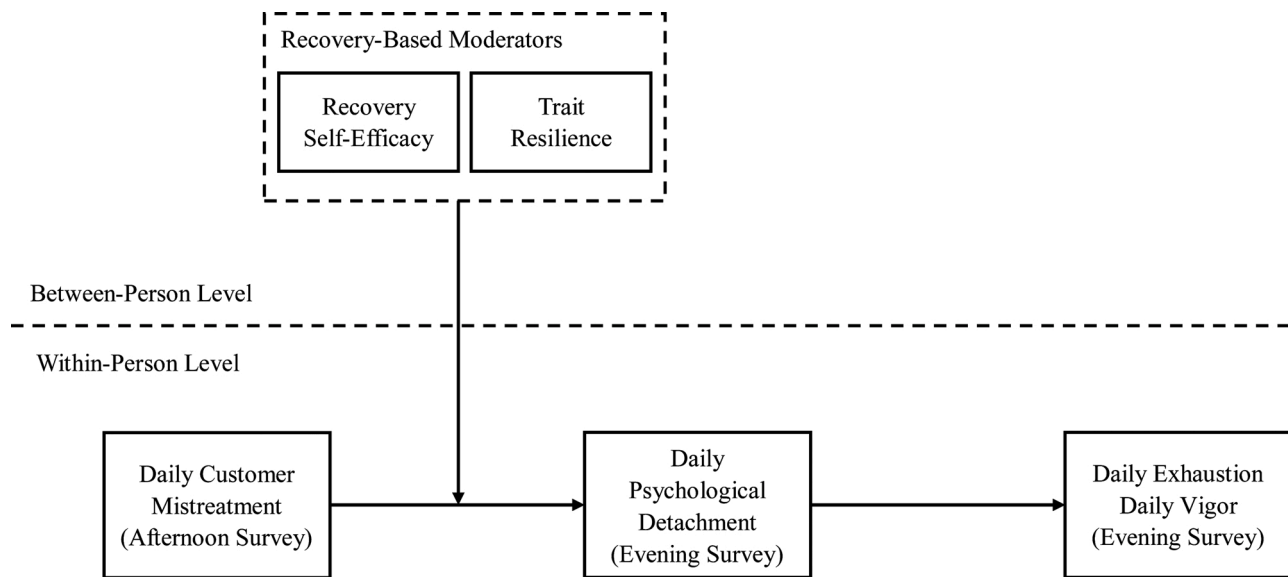


Fig. 1. Hypothesized model.

surveys on all 5 days of the study received 50 Chinese Yuan (about 7.65 U.S. dollars).

3.2. Measures

All the measures were rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*). We followed Brislin's (1986) procedure to translate the measures from English to Chinese. Recovery self-efficacy was measured using six items (Sonnetag and Krueel, 2006; e.g., "I feel confident to be able to recover from stress even when I'm tired"; Cronbach's alpha = .85). Trait resilience was measured using three items (Smith et al., 2008; e.g., "I tend to bounce back quickly after hard times"; Cronbach's alpha = .88). Eight items were adapted to assess daily customer mistreatment (Wang et al., 2011; e.g., "Complained without reason"; the mean of Cronbach's alphas = .82). Daily psychological detachment was measured using four items (Sonnetag and Fritz, 2007; e.g., "When I came home today, I forgot about work"; the mean of Cronbach's alphas = .79). We used Schaufeli (1996) four-item scale to assess daily exhaustion (e.g., "At this moment, I feel emotionally drained"; the mean of Cronbach's alphas = .83). We used Schaufeli et al.'s (2006) three-item scale to assess daily vigor (e.g., "Right now, I feel strong and vigorous"; the mean of Cronbach's alphas = .85).

Following other recent research (e.g., Baranik et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2011; Yue et al., 2017), we included age, gender, and job tenure as between-person level control variables. We also included state positive and negative affect as within-person level control variables, because they might influence employees' daily outcomes (e.g., daily exhaustion and vigor). We used Watson et al.'s (1988) the shortened three-item scale to assess state positive affect (i.e., "Enthusiastic," "Happy," "Energetic"; the mean of Cronbach's alphas = .77) and negative affect (i.e., "Upset," "Angry," "Distressed"; the mean of Cronbach's alphas = .87).

3.3. Analyses

A multilevel confirmatory factor analysis using Mplus Version 6.12 (Muthén and Muthén, 2007) was conducted to test whether our variables were distinct. The hypothesized eight-factor model (i.e., recovery self-efficacy, trait resilience, state positive affect, state negative affect, daily customer mistreatment, daily psychological detachment, daily exhaustion, and daily vigor) showed good fit with the data ($\chi^2 [286] = 377.64$, CFI = .96, RMSEA = .03, SRMR [within] = .05, SRMR [between] = .07). The eight-factor model also yielded a significantly

better fit than a seven-factor model in which recovery self-efficacy and trait resilience loaded on one factor ($\Delta\chi^2 [1] = 76.96$, $p < .01$; $\chi^2 [287] = 454.60$, CFI = .93, RMSEA = .05, SRMR [within] = .05, SRMR [between] = .17), a six-factor model in which state positive affect, daily psychological detachment, and daily vigor loaded on one factor ($\Delta\chi^2 [9] = 399.14$, $p < .01$; $\chi^2 [295] = 776.78$, CFI = .81, RMSEA = .08, SRMR [within] = .08, SRMR [between] = .07), and a six-factor model in which state negative affect, daily customer mistreatment, and daily exhaustion loaded on one factor ($\Delta\chi^2 [9] = 641.73$, $p < .01$; $\chi^2 [295] = 1019.37$, CFI = .71, RMSEA = .10, SRMR [within] = .09, SRMR [between] = .07). Therefore, the results provided support for the discriminant validity of our variables.

We used two-level hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) with HLM 6.0.8 to test our hypotheses, because daily repeated measurements (level 1) were nested within individuals (level 2). Results indicated that there were significant within-person variations at the day level (60% or more of the within-person variance) in state positive affect (85%), state negative affect (93%), daily customer mistreatment (60%), daily psychological detachment (78%), daily exhaustion (89%), and daily vigor (77%), suggesting two-level HLM is proven to be a proper analytical method. Following Hofmann and Gavin's (1998) suggestion, all within-person level variables were group mean-centered and all between-person level variables were grand mean-centered. To show effect sizes for multilevel analyses, we followed Snijders and Bosker's (1999) approach to compute pseudo R^2 . In addition, we adopted Monte Carlo analytical technique using the open-source software R (available at <http://www.quantpsy.org>) to test our mediation Hypotheses 3a and 3b.

4. Results

Table 1 describes the descriptive statistics among all study variables. Results indicated that the values of composite reliability (CR) for each construct were well above the rule-of-thumb value of 0.70 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). All values of the average variance extracted (AVE) were greater than or equal to the cut-off value of 0.50 except for daily customer mistreatment. The possible reasons might lie in the low base rate of negative work experiences (e.g., Tepper, 2000; Bennett and Robinson, 2000; Kwan et al., 2018), the small numbers of participants, and the nature of daily dairy study. Given the relatively low value of AVE makes it difficult to explore relationships involving the harmful effect of daily customer mistreatment, our relationships we developed

Table 1
Descriptive statistics.

Construct	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	Standardized loadings	t-value	CR	AVE
Within-person level								
State positive affect	3.53	.78	-.66	.50			.79	.56
SPA1	3.38	.95	-.31	-.34	.65	11.21***		
SPA2	3.48	.90	-.77	.27	.70	12.80***		
SPA3	3.73	.94	-.71	.30	.87	15.37***		
State negative affect	1.89	.74	1.12	2.10			.89	.74
SNA1	1.96	.83	1.04	1.82	.82	18.49***		
SNA2	1.86	.82	1.15	2.10	.92	31.29***		
SNA3	1.86	.81	1.11	1.70	.83	18.46***		
Daily customer mistreatment	2.05	.54	.70	1.48			.83	.38
DCM1	2.11	.80	.80	.98	.68	12.39***		
DCM2	2.11	.74	.77	1.19	.74	16.60***		
DCM3	2.08	.75	.35	-.09	.62	9.56***		
DCM4	2.20	.93	.57	-.07	.71	14.40***		
DCM5	1.81	.82	.97	1.05	.64	11.10***		
DCM6	1.95	.74	.80	1.35	.52	9.37***		
DCM7	2.07	.83	.69	.76	.53	10.22***		
DCM8	2.10	.86	.51	.01	.44	6.54***		
Daily psychological detachment	3.90	.73	-.43	-.39			.80	.50
DPD1	3.79	.95	-.61	.20	.69	13.46***		
DPD2	3.97	.92	-.78	.16	.77	11.02***		
DPD3	3.91	.93	-.59	-.35	.73	15.36***		
DPD4	3.94	.88	-.85	.85	.62	7.74***		
Daily exhaustion	1.85	.66	1.12	2.27			.86	.60
DE1	1.97	.84	1.06	1.74	.78	13.78***		
DE2	1.96	.85	.90	.68	.78	17.42***		
DE3	1.67	.70	1.28	3.41	.76	18.99***		
DE4	1.82	.79	1.17	2.11	.77	18.05***		
Daily vigor	3.88	.75	-.79	.98			.85	.66
DV1	3.98	.90	-.91	.71	.80	19.39***		
DV2	3.88	.82	-.59	.45	.85	25.83***		
DV3	3.79	.84	-.72	.67	.78	20.78***		
Between-person level								
Recovery self-efficacy	4.11	.65	-.96	.92			.85	.49
RSE1	3.94	.86	-.45	-.38	.77	9.58***		
RSE2	4.06	.81	-.55	-.16	.85	14.61***		
RSE3	4.30	.90	-1.43	2.30	.78	10.50***		
RSE4	4.17	.84	-.53	-.84	.65	6.68***		
RSE5	4.15	.79	-.51	-.47	.49	3.10**		
RSE6	4.06	.96	-1.31	2.23	.60	4.71***		
Trait resilience	3.94	.74	-1.16	3.25			.88	.71
TR1	4.07	.82	-.99	2.18	.87	14.61***		
TR2	3.96	.85	-.90	1.67	.85	13.74***		
TR3	3.78	.82	-.86	1.68	.80	10.16***		

Notes: n (Within-person level) = 270; n (Between-person level) = 54. CR = composite reliability; AVE = average variance extracted. The values of standardized loadings and t-value were based on a multilevel confirmatory factor analysis. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

can be regarded as conservative tests of our hypotheses.

As indicated in Table 2, daily customer mistreatment was positively associated with daily exhaustion ($\gamma = .27, p < .01$ in Model 2) and negatively associated with daily vigor ($\gamma = -.37, p < .01$ in Model 5),

suggesting Hypotheses 1a and 1b were supported. The results in Table 3 demonstrate that daily customer mistreatment was negatively associated with daily psychological detachment ($\gamma = -.40, p < .001$ in Model 2), providing support for Hypothesis 2. With 20,000 repetitions

Table 2
HLM regression results predicting daily exhaustion and vigor.

Variables	Daily Exhaustion						Daily Vigor					
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5		Model 6	
	γ	SE	γ	SE	γ	SE	γ	SE	γ	SE	γ	SE
Intercept	1.85***	.06	1.85***	.05	1.85***	.05	3.88***	.06	3.88***	.06	3.88***	.06
<i>Control variables</i>												
Age	.02	.02	.02	.02	.02	.02	-.01	.04	-.00	.04	-.00	.04
Gender	-.12	.09	-.13	.09	-.12	.10	.05	.11	.05	.11	.05	.11
Job Tenure	-.04	.05	-.04	.05	-.04	.05	-.01	.07	-.01	.07	-.02	.07
State Positive Affect	-.00	.05	.01	.06	-.01	.05	.07	.06	.06	.05	.09	.05
State Negative Affect	.31***	.07	.26***	.06	.25***	.06	-.34***	.08	-.32***	.08	-.29***	.07
<i>Independent variable</i>												
Daily Customer Mistreatment			.27**	.10	.19*	.09			-.37**	.11	-.29*	.11
<i>Mediator</i>												
Daily Psychological Detachment					-.22**	.06					.21***	.05
Pseudo R ²	.11		.12		.18		0.14		0.18		0.20	

Notes: n (Within-person level) = 270; n (Between-person level) = 54. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Table 3
HLM regression results predicting daily psychological detachment.

Variables	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	γ	SE	γ	SE	γ	SE	γ	SE
Intercept	3.90***	.06	3.90***	.06	3.90***	.05	3.90***	.05
<i>Control variables</i>								
Age	-.01	.03	-.01	.03	-.03	.03	-.03	.03
Gender	.33**	.10	.35**	.10	.33**	.10	.32**	.10
Job Tenure	.02	.06	.05	.06	.08	.06	.07	.06
State Positive Affect	-.07	.07	-.11	.07	-.10	.07	-.10	.07
State Negative Affect	-.17*	.07	-.11	.07	-.11	.07	-.11	.07
<i>Independent variable</i>								
Daily Customer Mistreatment			-.40***	.10	-.42***	.10	-.38***	.10
<i>Moderators</i>								
Recover Self-Efficacy					.19	.10	.18	.09
Trait Resilience					.04	.06	.04	.06
<i>Interaction terms</i>								
Daily Customer Mistreatment \times Recover Self-Efficacy							.22*	.10
Daily Customer Mistreatment \times Trait Resilience							.14*	.07
Pseudo R ²	.11		.15		.16		.17	

Notes: n (Within-person level) = 270; n (Between-person level) = 54. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

(Preacher and Selig, 2010), results revealed that after including the control variables (i.e., age, gender, job tenure, state positive affect, and state negative affect), the indirect effects of daily customer mistreatment on daily exhaustion (95% confidence interval (CI) [.01, .15]) and daily vigor (95% CI [-.15, -.03]) though daily psychological detachment were significant, supporting Hypotheses 3a and 3b.

The results in Table 3 also show that recovery self-efficacy ($\gamma = .22, p < .05$ in Model 4) and trait resilience ($\gamma = .14, p < .05$ in Model 4) moderated the relationship between daily customer mistreatment and daily psychological detachment. As shown in Figs. 2 and 3, the relationship was negative and significant when recovery self-efficacy ($\gamma = -.53, p < .001$) and trait resilience ($\gamma = -.57, p < .001$) was low, whereas the relationship became nonsignificant when recovery self-efficacy ($\gamma = -.24, ns$) and trait resilience ($\gamma = -.23, ns$) was high. Thus, Hypotheses 4 and 5 were supported.

5. Discussion

This diary study revealed that the relationship between daily customer mistreatment at work and daily well-being at home was mediated by a recovery experience such as psychological detachment from work. We further found that employees' recovery-based resources mitigated the harmful impact of daily customer mistreatment.

5.1. Theoretical implications

Our findings make several contributions to the literature. First, our

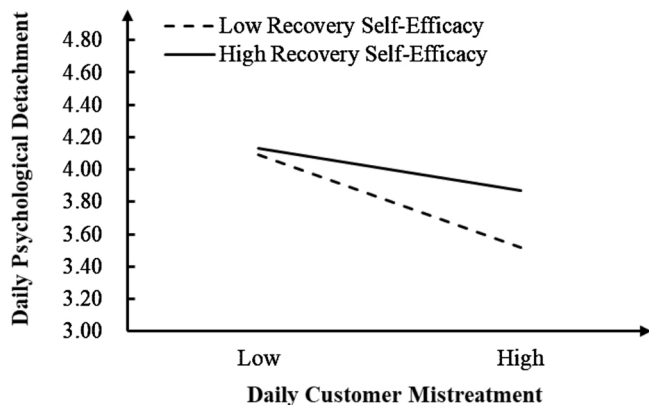


Fig. 2. Interactive effect of daily customer mistreatment and recovery self-efficacy on daily psychological detachment.

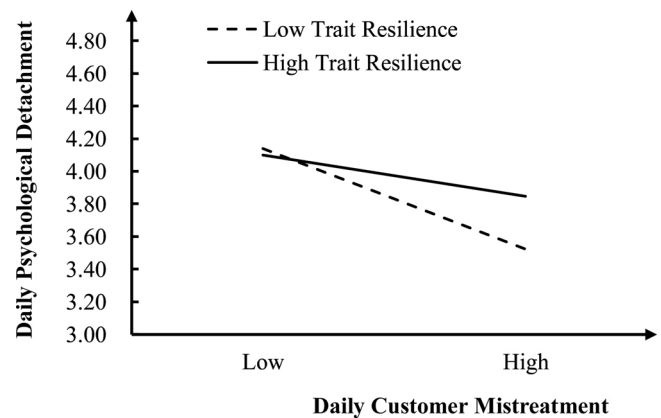


Fig. 3. Interactive effect of daily customer mistreatment and trait resilience on daily psychological detachment.

findings extend the existing research of work-to-nonwork spillover by linking daily customer mistreatment in the workplace to daily well-being at home. Although previous studies have found that daily work stressors can influence employee interpersonal interactions and behaviors during non-work time (e.g., Park et al., 2015), less attention has been paid to whether daily customer mistreatment at work can affect employee well-being at home. We identified daily customer mistreatment as a daily work stressor that can overflow the non-work domain by exerting a negative influence on daily well-being at home (vigor and low exhaustion). Our study is an active effort to answer the recent call for more attention to the spillover consequences of daily customer mistreatment (Chi et al., 2018; Song et al., 2018).

Second, our findings uncovered a recovery mediating mechanism to explain how daily stressors in the work domain influence interpersonal interactions and behaviors in non-work domain. It is consistent with the stressor-detachment model, which explains that poor well-being is caused by stressors in the workplace through a lack of psychological detachment from work at home (Sonnentag and Fritz, 2015). Although previous studies have examined psychological detachment from work at home as a key mediating mechanism linking stressor to strain at work (e.g., Kinnunen et al., 2011; Safstrom and Hartig, 2013; Sonnentag et al., 2010; Ten Brummelhuis and Bakker, 2012), little research has been extended to the customer service literature to explain the relationship between daily customer mistreatment at work and daily well-being at home. Extending this line of research, our findings suggest that resource depletion at home (i.e., poor psychological detachment from work at

home) triggered by daily job stressors (e.g., customer mistreatment) led to high exhaustion and low vigor at home.

Finally, our research contributes to stress-coping literature by identifying recovery self-efficacy and trait resilience as two recovery-based personal resources that provide protection from daily customer mistreatment in the workplace. Drawing from COR theory, our study highlights the impact of employee personal resources, such as recovery self-efficacy and trait resilience, in buffering the negative effect of daily customer mistreatment at work on daily psychological detachment from work at home. Our findings are in line with the stressor-detachment model, which suggests that an employee's personal resources may be regarded as buffer factors for the harmful impact of job stressors on psychological detachment from work at home (Sonnentag and Fritz, 2015). The protective effect of recovery self-efficacy and trait resilience is also in line with prior empirical findings regarding stress-coping (e.g., Mitchell et al., 2018; Park and Kim, 2019; Park and Sprung, 2015), employees are more effectively able to cope with work stressors when they have sufficient personal resources.

5.2. Practical implications

This research offers insights on how to improve employees' recovery from customer mistreatment. First, to avoid the potential detrimental impacts of customer mistreatment, managers of the restaurant department are performing an important role in the process. A previous study has suggested that managers should interview frontline service employees frequently to receive more information about customer mistreatment and anticipate those reported customer mistreatment patterns would likely re-occur (Cho et al., 2016). When customer mistreatment occurs in the restaurant, they are supposed to offer proactive management intervention to prevent further harm to frontline service employees, helping them to detach from it physically. For example, instead of leaving the issues to frontline service employees alone, managers could receive demanding customers themselves, listening to them, and offering proper solutions with courtesy. As a visible authority figure of the restaurant, customers might show a cooperative attitude towards those managers and easily receive a possible solution. Restaurant managers should understand that not all customer mistreatment means service failure and offering support to frontline service employees at this very moment to prevent further harm is of great importance (Cho et al., 2016).

Second, the mediation findings highlight the need for mentally detaching from work for service employees at home. It is worthwhile for organizations to enhance recovery experience at home (psychological detachment from work) for their service employees by limiting work e-mails during non-work time (e.g., Bennett et al., 2018), setting goals for segmenting workplace and home domains (e.g., Sonnentag and Fritz, 2015), and providing training that teach them how to psychologically detach from work (e.g., Hahn et al., 2011). Furthermore, individual-based interventions, such as high-quality sleep and learning new hobbies, may help service employees to detach from work by devoting time to their personal life (e.g., Fritz and Sonnentag, 2006; McCarthy et al., 2016; Sonnentag et al., 2008).

Third, our findings indicate that organizations should alleviate the negative effect of daily customer mistreatment by increasing recovery self-efficacy and employing high trait resilient employees. Specifically, organizations could provide recovery-specific training for existing service employees on how to foster high levels of recovery self-efficacy (Sonnentag and Krueger, 2006; Hahn et al., 2011). For example, organizations could hold regular experience-sharing sessions, encouraging frontline service employees to tell their experience of successfully handling such work stress. As for the trait of resilience, in considering the special job requirements of frontline service, organizations should pay more attention to person-job fit (Wang et al., 2011). They could use systematic assessment via personality tests to exactly understand employees' levels of trait resilience in hiring and screening processes

(Mitchell et al., 2018).

5.3. Limitations and future research

Despite the above theoretical and practical implications, several potential limitations should be noted. First, all the variables examined here were self-reported by employees, which might raise the potential concern of common method variance (Podsakoff et al., 2003). However, we adopted several ways to address the concern. First, we measured the predictor (daily afternoon survey) and criterion variables (daily evening survey) at different times. Second, we included positive and negative affect as within-person control variables in our analysis, mitigating concerns with common method variance. Third, we applied a multilevel CFA to test the construct validity of our measures. Results supported the factorial validity of our constructs. Additionally, our significant interactive effects also attenuate the potential concern of common method variance (Siemsen et al., 2010). We still encourage future researchers to replicate and extend our findings using objective measures (e.g., objective indicators of daily customer mistreatment) and other-reported measures (e.g., family members rated daily psychological detachment from work at home).

Second, we used an experience sampling methodology (ESM) to collect data in the present study. Owing to the difficulties in the process (e.g., completing multiple daily surveys can be onerous for participants; Dimotakis et al., 2013), the sample size of the present study is relatively small, and the robustness of the cross-level effects might be questioned (Mathieu et al., 2012). Although our sample size is comparable to other ESM studies published recently in top tier journals (e.g., Madrid et al., 2015, $N = 44$ participants; Zhou et al., 2017, $N = 45$ participants; Rosen et al., 2019, $N = 48$ participants), and the results of the present study manifested that the moderating effects were statistically significant, we still encouraged future ESM studies to collect more detailed data to avoid potential issues.

Finally, the Chinese sample we used might limit the generalizability of our findings. For instance, the Chinese culture is regarded as high on collectivism, which emphasizes the significance of close alignment and harmony in interpersonal relationships (Hwang, 1978; Yang, 1986). Compared with North American employees (i.e., Canada), East Asian employees (i.e., China) tend to respond to customer mistreatment in target-general, passive, and indirect ways (Shao and Skarlicki, 2014). Therefore, Chinese employees who mistreated by their customers might be less likely to detach from work due to target-general, passive, and indirect reactions. These employees may experience lower levels of well-being at home triggered by customer mistreatment. Future researchers should replicate and extend our findings using different cultural background samples.

6. Conclusion

Based on an integration of COR theory and the stressor-detachment model, we examined how the negative effect of customer mistreatment in the workplace can spillover to non-work domains. The results provided strong support for a recovery mediating mechanism underlying this process. The results also supported the recovery-based resource perspective in buffering the negative effects of customer mistreatment.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors report no declarations of interest.

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