

UNEQUAL OPPORTUNITY:
AN INVESTIGATION OF WORKPLACE HARASSMENT
AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH EMOTIONAL EXHAUSTION THROUGH
PERCEIVED ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT

A Dissertation Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of Psychology
University of Houston

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

By
William Ryan King
December, 2012

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ABSTRACT

Workplace discrimination and strain are both linked to decreased job performance, diminished commitment, and reduced organizational citizenship behaviors (Cropanzano, Rupp & Byrne, 2003; Goldman, Gutek, Stein, & Lewis, 2006). Together, they cost U.S. employers over a billion dollars per day (American Institute of Stress, 2012; Center for American Progress, 2012). Surprisingly, despite these high costs and associations with important organizational factors, little is known about how the two constructs are related. Thus, whereas research suggests that individuals who directly experience harassment are prone to some forms of strain (e.g., Goldman et al., 2006), there is a paucity of empirical investigations that examine the impact of workplace discrimination on burnout among individuals who simply work in environments where harassment is present. In order to fill this gap, I apply the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model (e.g., Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004) to explore the potential mediating role of perceived organizational support (POS; Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchinson, & Sowa, 1986) in conjunction with the buffering capability of personal resources. Results supported the majority of predictions by indicating that: (1) EO climate was significantly positively related to emotional exhaustion and (2) POS mediated the relationship between EO climate and exhaustion.

Keywords: Burnout, perceived organizational support, equal opportunity climate, discrimination, harassment, JD-R model, personal resources, emotional stability

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Unequal Opportunity:

An Investigation of Workplace Harassment and its Effects on Emotional Exhaustion through Perceived Organizational Support

Experts estimate that job stress costs U.S. businesses up to \$300 billion dollars annually (American Institute of Stress, 2012). Burnout, originally described as a type of chronic, work-related strain (Freudenberger, 1974) is important to research and practice alike. It is associated with decreased job performance, commitment, and organizational citizenship behaviors as well as increased turnover and withdrawal (e.g., Cropanzano, Rupp & Byrne, 2003; Lee & Ashforth, 1996). Given its inherent importance to organizations, researchers have sought to identify the antecedents of burnout.

Workplace discrimination is also costly for organizations. In addition to the legal fees required to defend lawsuits (James & Wooten, 2006), discrimination at work can also lead to decreased performance, commitment, and organizational citizenship behaviors (see Goldman, Gutek, Stein, & Lewis, 2006). Furthermore, perceptions of discrimination can diminish physiological and psychological well-being (e.g. Pavalko, Mossakowski, & Hamilton, 2003).

However, despite such findings, the impact of this work is limited by at least two factors. First, I am not aware of a single study that has specifically explored the relationship between perceptions of discrimination and burnout. At a broader level, there do not even appear to be any studies that leverage a burnout-centric framework to explore the link between discrimination and burnout. Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989) and the Job Demands Resources (JD-R) model (Bakker, Demerouti, De Boer, & Schaufeli, 2003a; Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004) are among candidates to do so. This disconnect in the literature suggests opportunities

to link perceptions of workplace discrimination with *emotional demands*. Second, examinations of diversity perceptions focus almost exclusively on individuals' perceptions that they are targets of discriminatory behavior. This work has many important contributions but may be less generalizable than research exploring how simply observing acts of discrimination in the workplace may lead to negative consequences in individuals.

To build on this work, I leverage the JD-R model to explain how a non-target focused perception of discrimination construct – Equal Opportunity (EO) climate (Dansby & Landis, 1991) – can operate as an emotional demand when low and theoretically relates to burnout. Beyond this central assertion, I further explore the process by which a lack of EO (Equal Opportunity) climate may lead to burnout by incorporating the critical mediating and moderating role of resources as described by the JD-R model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2007). By doing so, I aim to explain *why* this relationship may exist and for *whom* it is most relevant.

To help explain *why*, I examine the extent to which perceptions of organizational support (POS; Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchinson, & Sowa, 1986) account for the proposed relationship between EO climate and burnout. In line with the JD-R model, I argue that a climate of discrimination is related to burnout, in part because of the influence discrimination has on attributions that employees make about organizations. In regards to for *whom* this effect is strongest, I apply the concept of *personal resources* within the JD-R model to describe how individuals high (vs. low) in emotional stability are less susceptible to the emotionally distressing nature of situations characterized by perceptions of prominent discrimination and limited perceptions of support.

Given the high cost of burnout and aforementioned relationships with a variety of key outcomes, such as job performance and turnover (e.g., Cropanzano, et al., 2003; Lee & Ashforth, 1996), this study is positioned to benefit scholars and organizations alike by describing the psychological process by which discrimination at work yields psychological strain. I emphasize three potential contributions. First, my focus on EO climate (Dansby & Landis, 1991) rather than individual perceptions of self-targeted discrimination may inform theory and practice. Indeed, it is likely that discrimination hurts even those who are not directly discriminated against. Second, the consideration of POS (Eisenberger et al., 1986) as a mediating factor may well describe the process in which EO climate impacts burnout. As a result, managers may be better able to employ practices designed to attenuate this relationship when the complete elimination of discrimination in the environment is impossible. Third, this work expands upon the current state of the JD-R model by explaining how personal resources can alter the manner in which both job demands and job resources relate to burnout.

In the following sections, I first discuss the importance of EO climate and distinguish it from other types of diversity and discrimination research. Next, I briefly review burnout from a stressor-strain perspective. Then, I introduce the JD-R model and elaborate on the basic assumptions linking EO climate to burnout. I further develop this relationship by explaining the mediational role of POS as a job resource. Finally, I describe how personal resources may moderate the relationships between equal opportunity climate and POS and between POS and burnout.

Equal Opportunity Climate

EO climate captures the extent to which discrimination or harassment is present in the work environment (Dansby & Landis, 1991; Walsh, Matthews, Tuller, Parks, & McDonald 2010). It is traditionally studied as a type of psychological climate based on individual perceptions (James & Jones, 1974; Schneider & Reichers, 1983). Although sometimes focused nearly entirely on racist behavior (McIntyre, Bartel, Landis & Dansby, 2002), the most recent incarnations of this construct have been expanded to include discrimination based on age, religion, gender, and disability (see Walsh et al., 2010). This has extended its reach in terms of empirically-associated outcomes. However, it has also raised questions regarding its uniqueness in relation to other domains of research such as diversity climate and perceived workplace discrimination.

As described by Walsh et al. (2010), EO climate is distinct from diversity climate. Whereas EO climate focuses on individuals' perceptions of policy and the perceived fairness of workplace behaviors, diversity climate emphasizes the extent to which individuals believe that the organization understands how to value and manage the strategic advantages associated with a diverse workforce (see Mor Barak, Cherin, & Beckman, 1998). Specifically, in relation to military samples such as the one employed by the current study, EO climate is distinct from diversity climate as a result of its legally mandated nature. Thus, according to Executive Order No. 9981 (1948), all military personnel irrespective of race, color, religion, or national origin must be treated equally. EO climate assesses the extent to which this order is being upheld rather than probe more positive aspects of diversity.

Second, as EO climate captures perceptions of discrimination, some scholars may equate this construct with *perceived workplace discrimination* (see Avery, McKay, &

Wilson, 2008). The difference between these two constructs lies in how perceptions of discrimination are captured. Measures of perceived workplace discrimination typically ask individuals to report the frequency and/or severity of personal experiences of discrimination (e.g., Avery et al., 2008; Pavalko et al., 2003) by asking them directly if they have been discriminated against at work. In contrast, EO climate items ask individuals about discriminating behavior in the workplace (Walsh et al., 2010). These items do not assess whether or not the individual was actually discriminated against and therefore represent the primary conceptual difference between measures of EO climate and perceived workplace discrimination.

Despite this key difference, the focus of EO climate and perceived workplace discrimination literature is not without its similarities. In relation to the current study, the most important of these parallels is that both constructs have been related to some forms of psychological strain (Goldman et al., 2006, Pavalko et al., 2003; Walsh et al., 2010). Interestingly however, examination of perceptions of discrimination and EO climate in relation to burnout is virtually non-existent. Perrewé, Brymer, Stepina, and Hassell (1991) examined burnout and age discrimination in the same sample. However, they neither hypothesized a direct relationship between the two constructs nor provided an intercorrelation matrix; thus they did not offer any empirical information about the relationship.

Consequently, in combination with the fact that much of the EO climate literature has focused on the psychometrics of various EO climate scales and demographic differences in perceptions of EO climate (e.g., Dansby & Landis, 1991; Estrada, Stetz & Harbke, 2007; Truhon, 2008), the current study is well positioned to build on the limited empirical findings

that EO climate may lead to strain. Specifically, I integrate the concept of EO climate with the JD-R model in order to explain why this construct relates to burnout and how the psychological process operates. Before discussing the role of the JD-R model in relation to EO climate, I first briefly review the burnout literature and argue that the JD-R model is the optimal theoretical framework for describing the psychological process proposed in this study.

Emotional Exhaustion

“A prolonged response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors on the job,” burnout is a measure of psychological well-being that is characterized by three primary components - emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001, p. 397). Of the three facets, emotional exhaustion is the best predictor of performance, organizational commitment, turnover, and citizenship behaviors (e.g., Cropanzano, et al., 2003; Lee & Ashforth, 1996).

Described as a persistent state of diminished physical and emotional energy, emotional exhaustion has been examined within the context of Karasek’s (1979) demand-control model, Hobfoll’s (1989) conservation of resources theory, and the JD-R model (Demerouti, et al., 2001; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Although these theories describe similar processes and have all received support (see Bakker, Demerouti, & Verbeke, 2004; Brotheridge & Lee, 2002; de Rijk, Le Blanc, & Schaufeli, 1998), I apply the JD-R model because of its strong empirical backing (see Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), unique discussion of personal resources, and flexibility to incorporate new constructs (Xanthopoulou et al., 2007).

The JD-R theory uses job demands and resources to describe a *dual* process at work. The motivational process (Bakker, Demerouti, & Euwema, 2005; Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2003a) explains that the intrinsically and extrinsically motivating nature of job resources assists employees attempting to meet work goals. It has been empirically supported by work linking job resources to engagement and commitment (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). In contrast, the health impairment process (Bakker et al, 2005; Xanthopoulou et al., 2007) suggests that job demands requiring physical or psychological effort may lead to health problems and burnout; it too has received considerable empirical support (see Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Although both processes are useful, I focus on the impaired health process as a means of elucidating the potential relationship between EO climate and emotional exhaustion.

Job Demands

Although jobs have unique stressors, risk factors for strain are categorized by the JD-R model into job demands and job resources (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Demands are “physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of the job that require sustained physical and/or psychological (cognitive and emotional) effort or skills” (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007, p.312). They are associated with certain physiological and/or psychological costs (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Job demands, such as work pressures and emotionally taxing interactions, are not inherently negative. However, they can function as work stressors because individuals expend emotional effort to meet these demands (Meijman & Mulder, 1998). Thus, they function similarly to what are called *work stressors* by the stressor-strain literature insofar as they are capable of leading to job-related strain (see Beehr, Jex, Stacy, & Murray, 2000).

Demerouti et al. (2001) found that self-report and observer ratings of job demands primarily predicted burnout. Similarly, Bakker et al. (2003b) found that job demands in the form of computer problems, work pressures, and emotionally demanding situations at a telecommunications company were related to self-reported turnover intentions and absenteeism. These findings were later bolstered by additional evidence that work pressures and emotional demands are key predictors of burnout (Bakker et al., 2004).

I argue that EO climate can be viewed as a job demand within the context of the JD-R model. When EO climate indicates that discrimination in the work environment is present, it functions as an emotional demand driven by perceptions of injustice. These perceptions of injustice are stressful (Judge & Colquitt, 2004). Walsh et al. (2010) examined the relationship between EO climate and strain. However, they measured strain as a type of job-related anxiety with statements like “my job gets to me more than it should.” Emotional exhaustion is a chronic and severe state of depleted physical and emotional energy (Maslach, 2003) that is considerably more serious than anxiety at work. Accordingly, based on the tenets of the JD-R model and prior empirical findings, I propose:

Hypothesis 1: EO climate is inversely related to emotional exhaustion.

Job Resources

To further understand why this relationship may occur, I leverage the resources component of the JD-R model in combination with Organizational Support Theory (Eisenberger et al., 1986) to explain how low levels of EO climate may be associated with decreased perceptions of POS which in turn relate to emotional exhaustion. In contrast to job demands, job resources are “physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of the job” that can help achieve work goals, buffer the associated psychological and physiological

cost of job demands, and facilitate personal development (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007, p. 312). Reflected in such constructs as social support and autonomy, job resources have been considered more theoretically relevant to motivational processes and work engagement than to emotional exhaustion and other negative strains (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Research linking such resources as autonomy, feedback, and supervisory coaching to engagement supports this idea (Bakker et al., 2005). However, predictions based on the JD-R model are not limited to simple main effects among organizational-type resources.

A recent expansion of the JD-R model used personal resources (e.g., self-efficacy) as mediational components to help explain why job resources relate to emotional exhaustion and engagement (Xanthopoulou et al., 2007). This new and novel approach was the result of previous empirical work that suggested resources can facilitate the psychological capital of employees (Luthans, Avey, Avolio, Norman, & Combs, 2006). Hence, as Xanthopoulou et al. (2007) described, job resources can serve as antecedents of personal resources (see Judge, Locke, & Durham, 1997), which in turn mediate the relationship between job resources and exhaustion/engagement.

In the current study, I continue to expand the JD-R model by suggesting that job demands can also influence perceptions of job resources. I am unaware of any study that examines this potentially important connection. Like Xanthopoulou et al. (2007), I leverage prior empirical evidence to expand the JD-R model and consider that demands may actually influence work resources, which when low, may act as powerful psychological stressors. However, before doing so, I first describe the concept of POS, explain its relevance in relation to EO climate, and position it as a job resource within the JD-R framework.

Perceived Organizational Support

Developed by Eisenberger, et al. (1986), organizational support theory emphasizes that in order to ascertain an organization's willingness to reward hard work or support socioemotional needs, employees form perceptions about the extent to which the organization cares about their well-being and values their contribution. This process is critically important given that POS can directly and indirectly influence individuals' attitudes and behaviors at work. Specifically, empirical studies have found that POS is related to a multitude of outcomes from organizational commitment and job related affect to performance, strain, and withdrawal behavior (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002).

Underlying this process are two classical psychological theories. Social exchange theory suggests that individuals are constantly evaluating the worth of relationships based on the perceived costs and rewards associated with each particular relationship (Blau, 1964). The norm of reciprocity suggests that favorable treatment is rewarded in kind (Gouldner, 1960). Thus, individuals that perceive favorable treatment by another party are more likely to treat that party favorably in return.

Organizational support theory expands upon these basic tenets by describing how employees tend to assign humanlike characteristics to organizations (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). In particular, the actions of organizational agents are said to influence employees' perceptions about the organization's intent instead of being attributed exclusively to the personal motives of the agent alone. Together, organizational support and social exchange theories suggest that the degree to which individuals feel the rewards of being an organizational member outweighs the costs is critical in determining the perceived value or worth of the work situation (Blau, 1964; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). In line with the

norm of reciprocity, organizational support theory further predicts that individuals who perceive a high value relationship with the organization are more likely to exhibit desirable work-related attitudes and behavior in an attempt to “give back” what they receive.

This process is highly relevant to the current investigation because an EO climate may influence individual’s perceptions that the organization supports them. Thus, because perceptions of support are driven by the actions of organizational agents which are attributed to the organization itself, when employees or supervisors in the work environment engage in discriminating behavior, those around them may form the impression that the organization does not support or value any employees, not just those being discriminated against. This concept that demands can influence perceptions of support (i.e., a resource) has not been discussed by JD-R theorists. However, empirical findings tested under the JD-R model have found small, significant, negative correlations between demands like emotional demands and resources like social support (Xanthopoulou et al., 2007). Considering these findings and evidence from the POS literature suggesting that such demands as physically or emotionally challenging work environments lead to decreased perceptions of POS (Coyle-Shapiro & Conway, 2005), the current study is well positioned to explore how the relationship between EO climate and emotional exhaustion could be explained in part by POS. However, to fully explicate this mediating proposition, I next describe how POS can be thought of as a resource that directly relates to strain.

Support in general is considered as a resource by the JD-R model for two reasons. First, in relation to the motivational process of the JD-R, perceptions of support can foster employees’ willingness to focus energy on and be engaged with the work environment. This direct effect of support on engagement is supported by both JD-R-centric studies using such

variables as social support as well as studies focusing specifically on POS (Saks, 2006; Xanthopoulou et al., 2007). Second, in relation to the health impairment process, researchers have argued that support is a resource because it helps individuals handle job demands which may otherwise lead to burnout. This classical buffering hypothesis (see Cohen & Wills, 1985) has also been supported by both JD-R and POS literature that reports the impact of demands on strain is moderated by supportive resources (e.g., Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; George Reed, Ballard, Colin, & Fielding, 1993; Leather, Lawrence, Beale, & Cox, 1998).

However, beyond these commonly discussed means by which support can operate in the JD-R model, prior findings suggest that support may also directly impact strain. Hence, in addition to operating as a predictor of engagement and a buffer of demands, a lack or loss of resources causes individuals to experience strain (Hobfoll, 1989, 2002). Because individuals struggle to protect valuable resources, a perceived or actual loss of resources can be stressful (see Hobfoll, 2002) independent of job demands. This notion is not typically discussed in relation to the JD-R model, but studies in the area have provided evidence that resources, such as support, are negatively correlated with exhaustion (Xanthopoulou et al., 2007). Similarly, examinations of POS outside of the JD-R model have often proposed that POS has a direct effect on psychological strains, including burnout and fatigue (Cropanzano, Howes, Grandey, & Toth, 1997), anxiety (Venkatachalam, 1995), and headaches (Robblee, 1998).

Given the aforementioned theoretical and empirical evidence that EO climate may influence the extent to which individuals feel the organization is supportive, and POS may directly relate to the experience of psychological strain, I posit:

Hypothesis 2: POS partially mediates the relationship between EO climate and emotional exhaustion (see Figures 1 & 2).

I propose a partial mediation rather than a full mediation for two reasons. First, it is likely that the emotional demands associated with EO climate have some direct effect on emotional exhaustion (Hypothesis 1) in addition to an indirect effect through POS (Hypothesis 2). Thus, according to the health impairment process of the JD-R model, the physical and psychological efforts needed to combat work demands are directly related to burnout (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). In relation to EO climate, this suggests that discriminating behavior may have some direct effect on emotional exhaustion. Practically, this means that individuals who observe discriminating behavior or are directly discriminated against may experience such emotional duress over time that it leaves them emotionally exhausted regardless of POS. As a result, it is unlikely that POS will fully mediate the relationship.

Second, POS does not fully capture other variables that may mediate this process. According to the logic highlighted by Walsh et al., (2010), low levels of EO climate may result in perceptions of procedural or distributive injustice/unfairness (e.g., Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, & Ng, 2001; Folger & Greenberg, 1985) which may in turn lead to job related anxiety or strain. Similarly, it is possible that other types of supportive resources studied frequently by the JD-R model (e.g., social support and co-worker support) would also mediate the relationship between EO climate and exhaustion (see Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Thus, as EO climate captures behaviors by both coworkers and more direct organizational representatives such as supervisors, it is possible the organizational centric construct of POS will not mediate some of the more peer-related discriminatory behaviors.

Moderating Role of Emotional Stability

The mediational hypothesis helps explain *why* EO climate may impact exhaustion. However, a complete understanding of the psychological process linking EO climate and emotional exhaustion requires some understanding of for *whom* this is most relevant. Hence, I describe the role of personal resources in shaping how employees appraise and react to stressors resulting from high-demand and/or low-resources situations.

Personal Resources

According to the JD-R model, individuals have varying levels and types of “personal resources” (Xanthopoulou et al., 2007). These personal resources are “aspects of the self” that reflect resiliency (Hobfoll, Johnson, Ennis, & Jackson, 2003; Xanthopoulou et al., 2007, p. 123). Thus, they capture the extent to which individuals believe they can successfully control and impact their environment (Hobfoll, et al., 2003). Previous empirical work suggests individuals with high levels of personal resources like self-efficacy (Van Yperen & Snijders, 2000), organizational based self-esteem (Pierce & Gardner, 2004), and optimism (Mäkikangas & Kinnunen, 2003) are less likely to experience physical and psychological strain in response to job demands. As a result, recent advances of the JD-R model (Xanthopoulou et al., 2007) have proposed that personal resources theoretically operate in a manner similar to job resources insofar as they are capable of buffering the impact of demands on exhaustion.

Although research has often failed to find significant evidence supporting the moderating role of personal resources within the JD-R framework (Xanthopoulou, et al., 2007), additional exploration of this area is warranted for two reasons. First, only a few studies have tested the assumption that personal resources can buffer the impact of demands

on exhaustion (e.g., Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufel, 2009; Xanthopoulou, et al., 2007). Second, these studies tend to focus exclusively on non-trait based individual personal resources, such as self-efficacy, (Xanthopoulou, et al., 2007), rather than leveraging the five-factor model of personality (Digman, 1990; Fiske 1949). The study addresses these issues by employing emotional stability to test the “buffering hypothesis” within the health impairment process of the JD-R model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

Emotional Stability

Considered as one of the most important individual predictors of burnout (e.g., Bakker, Van der Zee, Lewig, & Dollard, 2006; Cano-Garcia, Padilla-Muñoz, & Carrasco-Ortiz, 2005; Lepine, Lepine, & Jackson, 2004; Maslach & Leiter, 2008; Mills & Huebner, 1998; Zellars, Hochwarter, Perrewé, Hoffman, & Ford, 2004), emotional stability refers to the extent to which individuals are secure, relaxed, and unemotional (Judge & Bono, 2001). In contrast, emotionally unstable individuals at the opposite pole of the trait are typically insecure, anxious, fearful, and easily upset (Hough & Ones, 2002; Zimmerman, 2006). JD-R research has acknowledged the importance of emotional stability / neuroticism in relation to burnout (Langelaan, Bakker, Van Doornen, & Schaufeli, 2006) but has yet to explore potential moderating and mediating mechanisms that may help explain this relationship. As such, I leverage work in personality and social psychology to argue that two key processes inherent to stressor-strain relationships both suggest emotional stability may be an important factor in the psychological process linking EO climate and emotional exhaustion. The first factor focuses on how stressful situations are appraised / perceived, whereas the second deals with how individuals react to stressful situations (Bolger & Zuckerman, 1995). Together,

these processes suggest that emotional stability moderates the relationship between EO climate and POS and between POS and exhaustion.

First, before any demand is considered stressful, individuals engage in a stress appraisal process (Lazarus, 1991; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Formally referred to as the *differential exposure model* (Bolger & Zuckerman, 1995), scholars assert that stressors are “in the eye of the beholder” (Kammeyer-Mueller, Judge, & Scott, 2009, p. 179). This is important because it suggest that individuals differ on factors that influence their appraisal of stressful situations (Blascovich & Tomaka, 1996; Vollrath & Torgersen, 2000). Thus, depending on these individual factors, some employees may experience more stress than others in response to the emotional demands presented by a discriminating work environment or decreased perceptions of organizational support.

The second stress process pertinent to the current study is the *differential reactivity model* (Bolger & Zuckerman, 1995). Occurring after the *differential exposure* process, *differential reactivity* suggests individual characteristics are indicative of the manner in which employees respond to / attempt to cope with stressful situations. As I detail in the following paragraphs, *exposure* and *reactivity* help explain why emotional stability may serve as a resource capable of buffering the impact of EO climate on POS and POS on exhaustion.

In regards to how emotional stability may buffer the relationship between EO climate and POS, I focus on the *differential exposure* process which suggests individuals high (vs. low) in emotional stability are less vulnerable (see Suls, 2001) and less likely to: (1) perceive situations as stressful (Bolger & Zuckerman, 1995), (2) experience negative affect, a factor that can exaggerate perceptions of job stressors (Brief, Burke, George, Robinson, & Webster,

1988; Spector, Jex, & Chen, 1995; Spector, Zapf, Chen, & Frese, 2000), (3) attend to threatening stimuli (Bar-Haim, Lamy, Pergamin, Bakermans-Kranenburg, & Van IJzendoorn, 2007), and (4) ruminate about potentially stressful situations (Muris, Roelofs, Rassin, Franken, & Mayer, 2005; Nolan, Roberts, & Gotlib, 1998). They also tend to report lower levels of threat (Schneider, 2004), experience less “stress” in response to daily challenges (Gallagher, 1990), and have less pessimistic appraisals of their environment (Chang, 1998; Smith, Pope, Rhodewalt, & Poulton, 1989).

According to the JD-R model, personal resources are aspects of the self that are capable of buffering / reducing the psychological costs imposed by demands. Although this buffering process usually acts on the relationship between demands and strain (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), I aim to extend the JD-R framework by examining a buffer in respect to the relationship between demands (EO climate) and resources (POS). Given the evidence described above suggests that emotional stability is associated with an individual’s perception of stress independent of the actual level of stressors (Kammeyer-Mueller, et al., 2009), it appears emotional stability may operate as a buffering resource within the JD-R model. Specifically, emotionally stable individuals should view discriminating behavior as less stressful than emotionally unstable individuals. In turn, given these attenuated stress perceptions, emotionally stable employees should be less likely to attribute stressful / discriminating actions of coworkers or supervisors to the organization itself. Practically speaking, this suggests that individuals high (vs. low) in emotional stability are less sensitive to discrimination in the environment (see Hypothesis 3a).

Shifting attention to the moderating role of emotional stability on the relationship between POS and exhaustion, I draw upon both *exposure* and *reactivity* processes to provide

support for this second buffering scenario. In relation to the *exposure*, given low levels of resources like POS can act as stressors in their own right (Bolger & Zuckerman, 1995; Spector et al., 1995), I align my argument with the work of Bolger and Zuckerman (1995) which suggests that this increased sensitivity to stress helps explain the relationship between neuroticism and psychological distress. Hence, in relation to the current framework, emotionally stable individuals should be less likely than emotionally unstable individuals to perceive a low resource / low POS situation as stressful.

In addition to the *exposure* process, the *reactivity model* also lends support to the argument that emotional stability may buffer the impact of POS on exhaustion. In particular, it suggests that both the coping methods an individual chooses and the effectiveness of those coping methods are contingent upon the personality of the individual (Bolger & Zuckerman, 1995).

Coping refers to the “constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing” (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p. 141). Although many forms of coping have been studied, research has primarily focused on three main types: problem-solving, emotion-focused, and avoidance coping (Folkman & Lazarus 1980; Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2009; Long, 1990; Parkes, 1990). Problem-solving coping refers to strategies that identify stressors and engage in specific behaviors intended to mitigate stress-producing problems. This type of coping is typically viewed as a positive coping strategy that is capable of reducing prolonged strain (Folkman, 1984; Higgins & Endler, 1995). Emotion-focused coping involves strategies to reduce strain without actually affecting the presence of stressors. Avoidance coping focuses on distracting

processes in which individuals attempt to avoid the problem altogether or use alcohol or drugs to distract oneself from the stressful situation (Billings & Moos, 1981).

Among these types of coping strategies, avoidance coping is considered the most maladaptive and has been shown to predict higher levels of chronic strain (e.g., de Jong & Emmelkamp, 2000, Parasuraman & Cleek, 1984). This is important because studies building on Bolger and Zuckerman's (1995) *reactivity model* have found that among other core self-evaluations (CSE; Judge, Erez, Bono, & Thoreson, 2002; Judge et al., 1997), emotional stability was the most strongly related to avoidance coping ($r = -.33, p < .01$) (Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2009). Substantively, this research lends support to the notion that emotionally unstable individuals tend to use "immature coping methods" (see McCrae & Costa, 1986) that may be less effective at mitigating the impact of stress on strain.

Backed by empirical evidence that *exposure* and *reactivity* can explain 40% of the difference in distress among individuals high and low in emotional stability (Bolger, & Schilling, 1991), the aforementioned theoretical processes provide support for the buffering role of emotional stability on the relationship between POS and exhaustion. Specifically, aligned with the definition of personal resources in the JD-R model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), this suggests that emotionally stable individuals will be better equipped to deal with the stressful nature of low POS / resource situations. In turn, this supports the idea that emotionally stable individuals should be less likely to experience high levels of emotional exhaustion than emotionally unstable individuals in similar situations (see Hypothesis 3b).

Having explained how emotional stability should buffer the relationship between EO climate and POS and between POS and emotional exhaustion, I offer the following moderated mediation hypotheses (see Preacher, Rucker, & Hayes, 2007) to capture both

propositions. Furthermore, given I predicted that only a partial mediation would exist (i.e., there would be some remaining direct effect of EO climate on emotional exhaustion after accounting for POS), Hypothesis 3c was included to capture the notion that emotional stability may moderate the direct effect between EO climate and exhaustion. Hence, given emotionally stable individuals are less sensitive to and cope better with stressors in the work environment, if POS does not fully mediate the relationship between EO climate and exhaustion as predicted, is likely that emotional stability will moderate the remaining direct effect that represents the impact of stressors driven by EO climate that are not captured by POS.

Hypothesis 3: Emotional stability moderates the relationship between EO climate and POS (3a), the relationship between POS and emotional exhaustion (3b), and the relationship between EO climate and emotional exhaustion (3c), such that the overall moderated mediated relationship captured by 3a, 3b, and 3c is weaker among workers high (vs. low) in emotional stability (see Figures 3, 4 and 5).

This hypothesis represents a full moderated mediation model. Unlike Hypothesis 1 that tested a single main effect and Hypothesis 2 that examined a simple mediation, Hypothesis 3 captures the moderation of the indirect / mediated and direct effect. Hence, while Hypotheses 1 and 2 were separated because of particular interest in these pieces of the model alone and for conceptual clarity, Hypothesis 3 provides an overall test of the combined moderated mediated model.

Method

Survey

A total of 2945 United States military personnel completed the Defense Equal Opportunity Climate Survey (DEOCS) administered by the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute (DEOMI) in the Spring of 2011. The intent of this survey was to capture the current state of equal opportunity practices mandated by Executive Order No. 9981 (1948). After employing listwise deletion to remove individuals that did not have a response for all of the variables needed to test the model, there were 2580 usable responses.

Respondent Characteristics

Among these responses, the majority of participants were male (82.5%). See Table 6 for information about the demographic characteristics of age, race, and military branch. To determine whether or not participants identified themselves as Spanish/Hispanic/Latino, a question separate from the race item was asked. It revealed that 91.8% of individuals were not Spanish/Hispanic/Latino, while the remaining 8.2 % were Spanish/Hispanic/Latino. The majority of participants (69.2%) had never been deployed or were not deployed in the last six months, but the remaining 30.8% had returned from combat or non-combat deployment in the last six months or were currently deployed in a combat or non-combat role within the continental United States or overseas.

Procedure

At the request of individual military unit commanders, the DEOCS was administered in both paper and online formats. It is an updated version of the Military Equal Opportunity Climate Survey (MEOCS; Dansby & Landis, 1991) and is traditionally deployed annually. Participation is not mandatory, and individual responses are confidential. Not even military

commanders who request the report have access to individual level data where participants can be identified. In its entirety, the DEOCS contained 80 self-report items that can be used to form up to 13 separate scales. Seven of these scales are breakouts of the one large EO climate scale, and the nine remaining scales capture various factors related to organizational effectiveness and individual characteristics.

Measures

EO Climate. EO climate was captured by 18 items designed to measure the level of race, age, sex, religion, and disability-related discrimination or harassment present in the work environment. Prior work on the DEOCS and MEOCS both support the internal consistency and factor structure of this scale (Estrada, et al., 2007; Landis, Fisher, & Dansby, 1988; Truhon, 2003). Individuals rated each item on the likelihood that the behavior could have occurred in the last 30 nonconsecutive workdays on a scale ranging from (1 = “There is a very high chance that the action occurred,” to 5 = “There is almost no chance that the action occurred”). As a result, high scores indicate a strong EO climate that is virtually free of discriminating and harassing behavior. Sample items include: “A supervisor did not select a qualified subordinate for promotion because of their race/ethnicity” and “Someone made sexually suggestive remarks about another person.”

Emotional Exhaustion. Emotional exhaustion was assessed using five items from Maslach and Jackson’s (1986) burnout inventory. Individuals responded on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from (1 = Strongly disagree, to 5 = Strongly agree). Example items include: “I feel emotionally drained from my work,” “I feel tired when I get up in the morning and have to face another day on the job,” and “Working all day is really a strain on me.”

Perceived Organizational Support. Individuals' perceptions about the extent to which the organization is supportive was measured with the 8 item POS scale (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchinson, & Sowa, 1986) recommended by Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002). Participants responded on a 6 item scale that ranged from (1 = "Strongly Disagree," to 5 = "Strongly Agree"). Example items include: "This organization really cares about my well-being," and "This organization shows little concern for me."

Emotional Stability. Emotional stability was captured using four items from the International Personality Item Pool (Goldberg et al., 2006). The 5 point response scale ranged from (1 = "Strongly Disagree," to 5 = "Strongly Agree"). Example items include: "I get stressed out easily," "I worry about things," and "I am relaxed most of the time."

Control Variables. Previous work on perceptions of employment discrimination suggests that females and Blacks perceive more discrimination than males and Whites respectively (Avery et al., 2008). Further, this work indicates that individuals in environments with high levels of demographic dissimilarity are also more prone to having high levels of perceived discrimination (Avery et al., 2008). Given that the EO climate scale includes items that capture race, age, and sex-related discrimination or harassment at work, in order to examine the impact of each hypothesis irrespective of individuals' memberships in these protected groups, I will control for race, age, and gender in each analysis. Since an individual's status as Spanish/Hispanic/Latino or non-Spanish/Hispanic/Latino was captured by a variable separate from the other races, it will be entered as a distinct covariate named Hispanic. This choice in covariates is aligned with the current study's aim to examine how workplace discrimination impacts more than just members of a protected class who are personally discriminated against. Whereas EO climate also captures religion and disability-

related discrimination, variables assessing religious preference and disability status were not collected and thus cannot be included as covariates.

Results

Data manipulation and analyses were carried out using SPSS v17.0, AMOS v20.0, and Mplus v6.12. Descriptive statistics, bivariate correlations, and internal consistency estimates are presented in Table 1. All variables demonstrated strong reliability with alphas greater than .85. In relation to the study's hypotheses, EO climate was significantly positively related to POS ($r = .47, p < .01$) and negatively related to emotional exhaustion ($r = -.30, p < .01$). POS was also negatively related to emotional exhaustion ($r = -.57, p < .01$). To formally test the hypotheses, six separate regression analyses were performed that can be broken into two sets of three models each. The first three, Models 1a-3a, were used to examine the main effect of EO climate on emotional exhaustion (Hypothesis 1) and the mediating role of POS on the relationship between EO climate and exhaustion (Hypothesis 2) (see Table 2). The second three, Models 1b-3b, were used to examine the overall moderated mediation predictions (Hypotheses 3a and 3b) (see Table 4).

Both sets of models used method prescribed by Preacher, Rucker, and Hayes (2007) and Baron and Kenny (1986). Specifically, the mediated and moderated mediated hypotheses (Hypotheses 2 and 3a/3b) were evaluated by calculating the a path and the b path to estimate the size of the indirect ($a*b$), direct (c'), and conditional indirect effects (see Figures 1 and 3). A bootstrapping procedure was employed to generate 10,000 (k) bootstrap sample means and estimate the 95% bias corrected confidence intervals to evaluate the significance of the indirect effect captured by Hypothesis 2 (see Table 3) and the conditional indirect effect captured by Hypothesis 3 (see Table 5). Specifically, for the first and second set of models, a

sampling with replacement procedure was used to generate k samples comprised of N units (2580) from the original sample of N units. These samples were then used to estimate all of the coefficients present in each set of models k times. Estimates are then averaged to provide the final coefficient estimates and generate confidence intervals. If the confidence interval of the indirect or conditional indirect effect does not contain 0, according to Preacher et al. (2007), the effect is significant.

Direct effects (c') / the relationship between EO climate and exhaustion after controlling for POS will also be examined in both sets of models to determine if classical mediation exists. Hence, according to Baron and Kenny (1986), if the relationship between the predictor (EO climate) on the outcome (emotional exhaustion) is no longer significant after the introduction of a mediator (POS), it suggests mediation exists.

Hypotheses 1 and 2

The first three models (Table 2 - Models 1a-3a), were used to examine the main effect (Hypothesis 1) and mediation (Hypothesis 2) (see Figures 1 and 2). Specifically, it was found that after controlling for the non-significant impact of gender ($\beta = .01$, n.s.) and Hispanic status ($\beta = -.01$, n.s.) in addition to the significant impact of age ($\beta = -.09$, $p < .01$) and race ($\beta = .06$, $p < .01$), EO climate was significantly negatively related to emotional exhaustion ($\beta = -.29$, $p < .01$) (see Table 2 - Model 1a). This provides support for Hypothesis 1 and suggests that after accounting for covariates, EO climate is positively related to exhaustion.

Building on Model 1a, Model 2a and 3a were used to examine Hypothesis 2 which predicted POS would mediate the relationship between EO climate and exhaustion. In support of Hypothesis 2, it was found that the indirect effect of EO climate on exhaustion through POS ($a*b$) was significant ($b = -.43$, $p < .01$) (see Table 2 - Models 2a/3a and Table

3). Furthermore, the results of Model 3a which suggest that despite EO climate had a main effect on exhaustion in Model 1a, once POS was included as a mediator the direct effect of EO climate on exhaustion was no longer significant ($\beta = -.03$, n.a.) (see Table 2 - Model 3a and Table 3). These results were corroborated by evidence from the Sobel test (Sobel, 1982, 1986) that indicated the difference between the effect of EO climate on exhaustion before and after POS was added as a mediator was significant ($z = -20.11$, $p < .01$). As a result of the aforementioned evidence, I concluded that Hypothesis 2 was supported with the exception that POS fully mediated the relationship between EO climate and exhaustion rather than partially mediating the relationship as predicted. For a graphical version of the results in a simple theoretical and full structural model, please see Figures 6 and 7.

Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis 3 examined the full moderated mediated model captured in Figures 3 and 4. Specifically, it predicted that: (1) The relationship between EO climate and exhaustion would be mediated by POS, (2) The relationship between EO climate and POS would be moderated by emotional stability, (3) The relationship between POS and exhaustion would be moderated by emotional stability, (4) The relationship between EO climate and exhaustion would be moderated by emotional stability, and (5) individuals high on emotional stability would be less sensitive to the impact of harassment at work on strain. The following three regression analyses (see Table 4 - Models 1b-3b) were performed to examine each of these propositions simultaneously.

In regards to Model 1b that captured the relationship between EO climate and exhaustion after controlling for emotional stability, the interaction between emotional stability and EO climate, and all four covariates, it was found that EO climate was

significantly related to emotional exhaustion ($\beta = -.22, p < .01$) (see Table 4). Building on this result, the analyses in Model 2b indicated that the interaction between EO climate and emotional stability predicting POS was significant ($\beta = .11, p < .01$). Similarly, analyses in Model 3b indicated that the interaction between POS and emotional stability predicting exhaustion was significant ($\beta = .05, p < .01$). Together these interactions accounted for a 1% increase in variance explained ($\Delta r^2 = .01$). Although this is not particularly large, it is similar in size to other interactions published in the social sciences. As a result, it provides preliminary support for the interaction component of Hypothesis 3.

Examination of Model 2b, where POS is the outcome, reveals that EO climate is also significantly positively related to POS ($\beta = .44, p < .01$) above and beyond the influence of the moderator, interaction term, and covariates of age ($\beta = -.00, n.s.$), gender ($\beta = -.01, n.s.$), race ($\beta = -.01, n.s.$), and Hispanic status ($\beta = .02, n.s.$) (see Table 4). Next, in Model 3b where POS was entered as a mediator with emotional exhaustion as the outcome, it was found that once the significant effect of POS ($\beta = -.46, p < .01$) and the associated POS by emotional stability interaction ($\beta = .05, p < .01$) were accounted for, the direct effect of EO climate (c') was no longer significant ($\beta = -.01, n.s.$). In conjunction with results of bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals that suggests the conditional indirect effect is significant at mean levels of emotional stability ($b = -.33, p < .05$), it appears a moderated mediated relationship exists (see Table 5).

Interestingly, despite the simultaneously significant moderated and mediated effects, the pattern of the conditional indirect (moderated mediated) effect at high ($b = -.45, p < .05$), mean ($b = -.33, p < .05$) and low ($b = -.23, p < .05$) levels of emotional stability did not align with the predictions captured by Hypotheses 3a and 3b. Hence, results suggested that

individuals high (vs. low) on emotional stability were more susceptible to the discrimination present in the work environment captured by EO climate (see Table 5). This difference was highlighted after plotting the conditional indirect effect according to the procedures outlined by Aiken and West (1991) (see Figure 10). Here, one can graphically observe that the slope of the line representing the relationship between EO climate and emotional exhaustion through POS is steeper/stronger for individuals high (vs. low) in emotional stability.

Finally, in regards to Hypothesis 3c that was included given only a partial mediation was expected and predicted that EO climate would moderate the direct effect of EO climate on emotional exhaustion after controlling for POS, given neither the direct effect nor the interaction between EO climate and emotional stability in Model 3b were significant ($\beta = -.01$, n.s.; $\beta = -.03$, n.s.), Hypothesis 3c was not supported (see Table 4 – Model 3b). Hence, all of the variance explained by the interaction between EO climate / POS and emotional exhaustion was explained via the indirect effect. For a graphical representation of these results pertaining to Hypotheses 3a, 3b, and 3c / Models 1b-3b, please see Figures 8, 9, and 10.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between harassment and strain at work. Specifically, it was designed to assess the extent to which simply observing discriminating behavior was related to emotional exhaustion. Based on theoretical models and empirical evidence from the strain, discrimination, organizational support, personality, and coping literature, it was predicted that high levels of EO climate (e.g., low levels of discrimination) would be negatively related to emotional exhaustion. In other words, I posited that individuals who reported harassment at work would be more exhausted than

those who reported a strong EO climate. To further explain why this relationship exists and for whom it is strongest, I used the JD-R model to clarify how the relationship between EO climate and exhaustion may be mediated by POS and moderated by emotional stability. Specifically, I expected that EO climate would be related to POS which would in turn be negatively related to exhaustion, and that individuals high on emotional stability would be less sensitive to / cope better with the emotionally demanding nature of harassment at work. Aligned with predictions, the results indicated that there was a significant negative relationship between EO climate and emotional exhaustion. Furthermore, they suggested that POS fully mediated this focal relationship. In regards to the proposed interaction, results confirmed that the conditional indirect effect of EO climate on exhaustion was moderated by emotional stability. However, instead of finding that individuals high on emotional stability were less sensitive to harassment at work, results suggested that in comparison to those low on emotional stability, those high on the trait were actually more sensitive to harassment.

Limitations

The current study has three potential limitations related to common method bias, demographic variability, and the examination of climate at the individual level. The first potential limitation known as common method bias (see Campbell & Fiske, 1959) suggests that the variables collected via a single method may share variance as a result of the method employed and in turn yield inflated correlations between variables. Given this study exclusively utilized a cross-sectional, self-report design; there may be some concern that common method bias influenced the results. In order to examine the potential for this bias, I conducted two tests. In the first test, known as Harman's single factor method, I ran an unrotated exploratory factor analysis in SPSS v17.0 in which only one factor was allowed to be

extracted. The results of this initial analysis suggested that about 32% of the variance among the study variables can be explained by a single “method” factor. However, this technique alone was not enough to properly estimate the amount of common method variance. Past research has demonstrated that it is insensitive to small and moderate levels of common method variance (Kemery & Dunlap 1986; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). As a result, I utilized confirmatory factor analysis technique (see Podsakoff et al., 2003). This analysis conducted in AMOS v20.0 and Mplus v6.12 included 4 primary latent factors (EO climate, POS, emotional stability, and emotional exhaustion) that were measured by a total of 35 observed variables. To estimate the percentage of variance attributable to a “method factor,” a latent method factor was also included. It was measured by all 35 observed variables via paths constrained to be equal and had a variance of 1. Results indicated that only 28% of the variance was explained by the method factor. Given this is comparable to the average amount of common method variance (i.e., 25%) found in other published studies (see Williams, Cote, & Buckley, 1989), it is unlikely that common method bias abnormally impacted the relationships between the study variables. Even if it did, Spector (2006) suggests that the impact of common method bias on results is often very small.

Demographic variability in this study was somewhat limited given the majority of responses were collected from white (71.3%) males (82.5%), and like previous studies on EO climate, a military sample was used (Dansby & Landis, 1991; Edwards, 2001; Truhon, 2008, Walsh et al., 2010). As a result, some may be concerned about the generalizability of this study’s findings. Although these results are not ideal given evidence that the demographic diversity of supervisor-subordinate relationships is related to the increased prevalence of reported discrimination (Avery et al., 2008), the demographics are similar to other military

samples (e.g., Walsh et al., 2010). Furthermore, rather than using demographic variables as predictors or moderators like many diversity-related studies, the current study used these variables as covariates. Hence, given the intent of this study was to explore how harassment at work impacts strain regardless of individuals' membership in a protected class or minority group, rather than probe the prevalence / base rate of discrimination, it is unlikely demographic variability had a major impact on results.

Finally, some may argue that climate should only be examined at the group level (see Clissold, 2006). While it is often important to consider this multilevel aspect of climate when studying the behavioral outcomes of constructs like safety climate (Zohar, 1980; Zohar & Luria, 2005) and service climate (Schneider, White, & Paul, 1998), EO climate has traditionally been explored as a unit-level "psychological climate" construct (James & Jones, 1974; Schneider & Reichers, 1983). Psychological climate is distinct from organizational climate in terms of how it is theoretically defined and empirically measured. Most importantly, psychological climate focuses on the importance of individual perceptions rather than shared beliefs (Koys & De Cotiis, 1991). Hence, it emphasizes the psychological significance of situations to an individual (James, Hater, Gent, & Bruni, 1978). This is especially important when the outcome of interest is an individual factor like burnout.

Although one study has examined the influence of EO climate as a higher order construct (Walsh et al., 2010), the fact that the current study seeks to probe the relationship between EO climate and emotional exhaustion supports a more traditional unit-level investigation. Thus, given some individuals (e.g., minorities) reported directly experiencing more discrimination than others (Avery et al., 2008), in the current study that seeks to link perceptions of discrimination and emotional exhaustion, it is important to preserve

individuals' perceptions that discrimination is present or absent in the work environment. Hence, it arguably does not matter whether or not others in a workgroup on average feel that discrimination is present. It is the extent to which an individual believes that he/she has witnessed discrimination that this study predicted was capable of leading to exhaustion. Had this paper employed a multilevel analysis of climate, it would have aggregated across potentially important individual differences in perceptions of discrimination. Thus, while one individual in a group may have viewed a promotion as racially biased, another individual may not have either: (1) known about the promotion or (2) thought it was discriminatory. Accordingly, to preserve this study's intent to explore how perceptions of discrimination are capable of undermining POS / leading to emotional exhaustion, an individual level of analysis that focuses on perception was deemed most appropriate.

Strengths, Implications, and Future Research

This study has a number of strengths. Empirically, hypotheses were tested using a large applied sample. All measures demonstrated strong psychometric properties and bootstrapped moderated mediation analyses were used to explore the proposed relationships. Theoretically, the integration of the JD-R model (Demerouti, et al., 2001) and discrimination research provides a strong foundation for understanding the basic relationship between EO climate and burnout. In particular, POS acted as a powerful mediator capable of fully explaining the relationship between EO climate and exhaustion. Together these strengths and the study's results yield a number of important implications and foster future research questions.

Practical Implications. The results that revealed EO climate was related to emotional exhaustion may help raise awareness about the importance of a discrimination-free

workplace. It suggests that simply observing or knowing about harassment in the workplace is capable of increasing chronic strain. Furthermore, tying EO climate to burnout that costs business hundreds of billions of dollars per year (American Institute of Stress, 2012) may help practitioners convince others about this construct's importance to the bottom line. The result that POS mediates the relationship between EO climate and exhaustion may also be of interest to practitioners. Particularly, in situations where it may not be possible to completely eliminate actual or perceptions of harassment in the work environment, efforts to foster POS may help attenuate the impact of EO climate and strain. As research on the antecedents of POS (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002) has revealed that supervisor support, opportunities for reward, autonomy, professional training, procedural justice and employee voice are positively associated with POS, efforts to boost POS might focus on building formal support networks, improving feedback processes, and providing additional training designed to facilitate career opportunities.

Theoretical Implications. The finding that EO climate is significantly positively related to exhaustion suggests that simply observing or knowing about discrimination at work is related to exhaustion. This builds upon prior examinations of EO climate that report EO climate is related to some forms of work related anxiety (Walsh et al., 2010) by linking the construct to chronic work-related strain. It also contributes to our understanding of how other psychological climates like violence climate and justice climate related to strain (Judge & Colquitt, 2004; Kessler, et al., 2008). Finally, it provides further empirical support for the relationship between demands and strain described by the health impairment process of the JD-R model (Demerouti, et al., 2001).

Future research on this relationship should consider integrating measures from the perceptions of workplace harassment literature. This literature suggests the extent to which an individual reports they have personally experienced harassment or discrimination is based on the extent to which their supervisor is of the same or different race (Avery et al., 2008). By examining EO climate, supervisor-employee similarity, the prevalence of harassment, and perceptions of harassment simultaneously, researches would be able to ascertain whether or not an individual's previous experiences with harassment influences current perceptions of harassment. If individuals who have experienced harassment in the past are more likely to report they are currently experiencing harassment or are observing discrimination in the workplace, it may suggest that organizations should proactively help prior victims of harassment. This might potentially help further boost employees' perceptions of EO climate in environments that are already virtually free of discrimination.

At a broader level, the finding that EO climate relates to POS and in turn to exhaustion suggests that discrimination impacts individuals' perceptions that the organization is supportive which in turn relates to strain. Hence, as individuals observe harassment in the work environment, this model indicates that these discriminating actions of supervisors and coworkers may undermine the extent to which an individual feels the organization supports them. As these perceptions of support dwindle, individuals may experience emotional exhaustion as they attempt to maintain other resources capable of helping them meet job demands (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Hobfoll, 1989). Beyond providing a mechanism capable of explaining the relationship between EO climate and exhaustion, this mediational finding provides support for the notion that demands do not always directly contribute to strain. Hence, it is possible that demands can also diminish resources that act as stressors

when depleted (Bakker, Demerouti, Taris, Schaufeli, & Schreurs, 2008; Bolger & Zuckerman, 1995; Spector et al., 1995). Finally, the mediational role of POS builds on previous literature's findings that cohesion mediates the relationship between EO climate and job related anxiety (e.g., Walsh et al., 2010). Specifically, these results complement one another given social cohesion also has roots in the social exchange / norm of reciprocity theories I used to explain how harassment in the workplace can undermine individuals' perceptions that the organization supports them (Rolloff, 2008). Hence, given support and cohesion are related to one another (Mulvaney-Day, Alegría, & Sribney, 2007), and both mediated the impact of EO climate on strain, future research on the social exchange process in relation to EO climate may be beneficial. In particular, since prior research on social exchange processes underlying support has demonstrated strong relationships between POS and job performance (e.g., Armeli, Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Lynch, 1998; Shanock & Eisenberger, 2006), future research should seek to determine if EO climate has an indirect effect on job performance through support. This would potentially help EO climate gain prominence as a predictor of critical workplace outcome and strengthen the research on the antecedents of POS that has not previously discussed the role of workplace discrimination (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002).

Perhaps the most interesting finding of this paper is related to the proposed moderated mediation. Although it was found that the relationship between EO climate and exhaustion is simultaneously moderated by emotional exhaustion and mediated by POS, individuals high (vs. low) on emotional stability were not less likely to experience exhaustion in response to low levels of EO climate and POS. Instead, the conditional indirect effects of EO climate on emotional exhaustion through POS indicated it was individuals who were high on emotional

stability who were most sensitive to the level of discrimination at work. This finding does not support the role of personal resources as prescribed by the JD-R model, but alternative explanations raise a number of interesting research questions.

The following paragraphs address three potential explanations of this unexpected finding. First, there is the potential that the avoidance coping strategies more common among individuals low on emotional stability (Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2009) are not always maladaptive components of the stress reactivity process described by (Bolger & Zuckerman, 1995). Thus, despite that avoidance coping is generally considered less effective means of handling stressful situations (e.g., de Jong & Emmelkamp, 2000, Parasuraman & Cleek, 1984), especially over long periods of time (Ingledew, Hardy, and Cooper., 1997; (Koeske, Kirk, & Koeske, 1993), some research suggests that avoidance coping can be adaptive because it helps individuals psychologically remove themselves from stressful situations (see Naswall, Hellgren, & Sverke, 2008; Rotondo et al., 2003). Hence, in contrast to emotion-focused coping where individuals remain psychologically involved in the situation and directly confront their emotions, some work explains that avoidance coping can be beneficial when situations do not permit individuals to directly address or control the problem (Anshel & Wells, 2000). In the present study, it is plausible that neurotic individuals who tend to engage in more avoidance-based coping actually handle the stressful nature of harassment in the work environment better than individuals employing more emotion-focused strategies. Given the discrimination captured by EO climate may come from both supervisors and coworkers, individuals that perceive low levels of EO climate might feel like they are unable to proactively deal with the harassment they observe. If this is the case, avoidance may be more effective at mitigating the relationship between EO climate and exhaustion. Future

research on EO climate and chronic strain should therefore directly measure the avoidance and emotion-focused coping techniques used by employees in response to the presence of harassment at work. Although research on coping with harassment exists (Cortina & Watsi, 2005), like much of the harassment literature it specifically addresses individuals who have been the direct targets of harassment. Coupled with evidence that suggests avoidance coping may be effective in mitigating strain associated with low stress academic testing situations (Stowell, Tumminaro, & Attarwala, 2008), additional work is needed to determine how avoidance coping operates in relation to highly stressful situations where individuals are directly harassed and relatively less stressful situations where individuals simply observe / believe discrimination is present at work.

Second, it is possible that individuals low on emotional stability were less empathetic than those high on the trait. Empathy essentially captures an individual's tendency to feel for another person. Given the current study assumed individuals who observed harassing or discriminating behavior would feel that these behaviors are bad and attribute them to the organization itself, it is conceivable that individuals who were lower on empathy might not identify with the targets of harassment and therefore feel less concerned about the issue. This is particularly relevant since prior research has demonstrated a negative relationship between neuroticism and empathic concern (Lee, 2009). Hence, individuals low (vs. high) on emotional stability might have experienced less strain in response to harassment at work because they did not feel as strongly about the situation as those higher on emotional stability that had more empathic concern. Future research should seek to clarify this study's finding by examining whether or not empathy moderates the relationship between EO climate and strain.

Finally, it is possible that individuals low on emotional stability are more likely than those high on the trait to engage in discriminating behavior. While research that examines the correlation between five factor personality traits and racist / sexist world views or discriminating behavior is virtually non-existent, studies on bullying suggest that workplace bullies tend to exhibit low levels of emotional stability (Coyne et al., 2003). Thus, it is possible that in the current study individuals who were lower on emotional stability were more likely to be engaged in discrimination and harassment at work. Given individuals who are harassing others likely don't experience stress as the result of low levels of EO climate, it is conceivable that the moderating role of emotional stability in the current study was confounded. In general, future research on discrimination in the workplace should control for whether or not each individual has participated in discriminating behavior at work. This would help eliminate the possibility that a systematic similarity shared by individuals who tend to harass others influences the relationships in question.

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Table 1

Descriptive statistics and intercorrelations among variables[†]

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. EO climate	4.24	.64	(.91)							
2. POS	3.21	.92	.47*	(.92)						
3. Emotional stability	3.25	.79	.22*	.31*	(.86)					
4. Emotional exhaustion	3.16	1.06	-.30*	-.57*	-.46*	(.92)				
5. Age ^c	2.45	1.00	.10*	.07*	.13*	-.12*	--			
6. Gender ^a	.17	.38	.02	-.01	-.06*	-.01	.03	--		
7. Hispanic ^b	.08	.28	-.02	.01	.00	.00	-.02	.02	--	
8. Rank ^c	2.40	1.37	.07*	.10*	.11*	-.05*	.44*	.04	-.05*	--

Note. N=2580

[†]Internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) is reported along the diagonal in parentheses

^a0 = Male, 1 = Female

^b0 = Not Hispanic, 1 = Hispanic

^cMean and SD are not meaningful statistics for these categorical variables.

*p < .01

Table 2

Mediation models (Hypothesis 2)

Predictors	<i>b</i> (SE)	β
<i>Model 1a: EE as outcome (no mediator)</i>		
Age	-.10 (.02)	-.09**
Gender	.02 (.05)	.01
Race	.06 (.02)	.06**
Hispanic	-.04 (.07)	-.01
EO climate	-.49 (.03)	-.29**
R ² = .10		
<i>Model 2b: Mediator / POS as Outcome</i>		
Age	.02 (.02)	.03
Gender	-.07 (.04)	-.03
Race	-.03 (.01)	-.03
Hispanic	.08 (.06)	.02
EO climate	.68 (.03)	.47**
R ² = .22		
<i>Model 3a: EE as outcome (with mediator)</i>		
Age	-.08 (.02)	-.08**
Gender	-.03 (.04)	-.01
Race	.04 (.02)	.05**
Hispanic	.02 (.06)	.00
EO climate	-.05 (.03)	-.03
POS	-.63 (.02)	-.55**
R ² = .34		

Note. N=2580

*p < .05

**p < .01

Table 3

Bootstrap results for mediation (estimates^a and standard error^b)

Level of Emotional Stability	a path	b path	Indirect Effect (a x b)	Direct Effect (c')	Total Effect (c)
Mean (CI)	.68* (.03)	-.63* (.02)	-.43 (.02) (-.47, -.39)	-.05 (.03)	-.48* (.03)

Note. N=2580. CI = 95% confidence interval for indirect effect; if CI does not include zero, the indirect effect is considered statistically significant and is displayed in bold

^aUnstandardized *b* coefficients reported

^bStandard error reported in parentheses

* $p < .05$

Table 4

Moderated mediation models (Hypothesis 3)

Predictors	<i>b</i> (SE)	β
<i>Model 1b: EE as outcome (no mediator)</i>		
Age	-.05(.02)	-.05**
Gender	-.07 (.05)	-.03
Race	-.03 (.02)	.03
Hispanic	-.20 (.07)	-.01
EO climate	-.36 (.03)	-.22**
Emotional stability	-.55 (.02)	-.41**
EO climate x emotional stability	-.21 (.03)	-.11**
$R^2 = .27$		
<i>Model 2b: Mediator / POS as Outcome</i>		
Age	.00 (.08)	.00
Gender	-.03 (.02)	-.01
Race	-.01 (.04)	-.01
Hispanic	.08 (.01)	.02
EO climate	.63 (.03)	.44**
Emotional stability	.26 (.03)	.22**
EO climate x emotional stability	.18 (.03)	.11**
$R^2 = .28$		
<i>Model 3b: EE as outcome (with mediator)</i>		
Age	-.05 (.02)	-.05**
Gender	-.09 (.04)	-.03*
Race	.03 (.02)	.03
Hispanic	.03 (.06)	.01
EO climate	-.02 (.03)	-.01
Emotional stability	-.42 (.02)	-.31**
POS	-.53 (.02)	-.46**
EO climate x emotional stability	-.06 (.03)	-.03
POS x emotional stability	-.07 (.02)	.05**
$R^2 = .43$		

Note. N=2580

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

Table 5

Bootstrap results for moderated mediation (estimates^a and standard error^b)

Level of Emotional Stability	a path	b path	Indirect Effect (a x b)	Direct Effect (c')	Total Effect (c)
High (+1SD) (CI)	.77* (.04)	-.59* (.03)	-.45 (.03) (-.51, -.39)	-.07 (.04)	-.52* (.05)
Mean (CI)	.63* (.03)	-.53* (.02)	-.33 (.02) (-.37, -.30)	-.02 (.03)	-.35* (.03)
Low (-1SD) (CI)	.49* (.03)	-.48* (.03)	-.23 (.02) (-.28, -.20)	.03 (.04)	-.20* (.04)

Note. N=2580. CI = 95% confidence interval for indirect effect; if CI does not include zero, the indirect effect is considered statistically significant and is displayed in bold

^aUnstandardized *b* coefficients reported

^bStandard error reported in parentheses

**p* < .05

Table 6

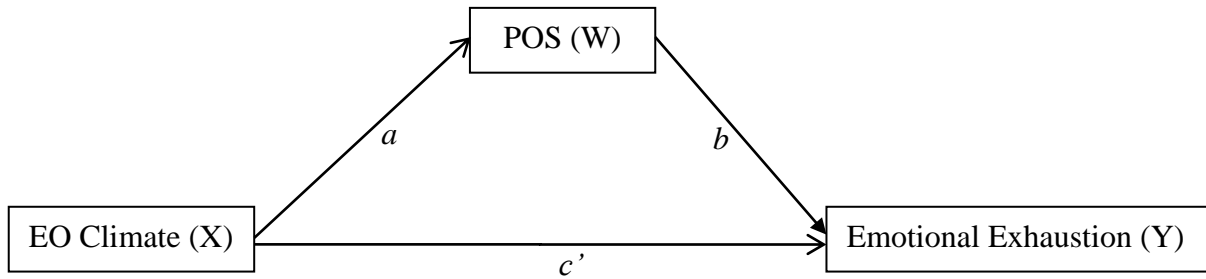
Demographic characteristics^a

Age		Race		Branch	
18-21	15.5%	White	71.3%	Army	60.3%
22-30	43.3%	Black	16.9%	Navy	23.7%
31-40	24.8%	Asian	4.7%	Marines	12.6%
41-50	13.6%	American Indian or Alaska Native	1.7%	Coast Guard	2.4%
over 51	2.8%	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	.02%	Air Force	1.0%
		Multi Race	5.2%		

Note. N=2580

^aPercentage of respondents belonging to each group

Figure 1 - Proposed conceptual model (Hypothesis 2 - Mediation).

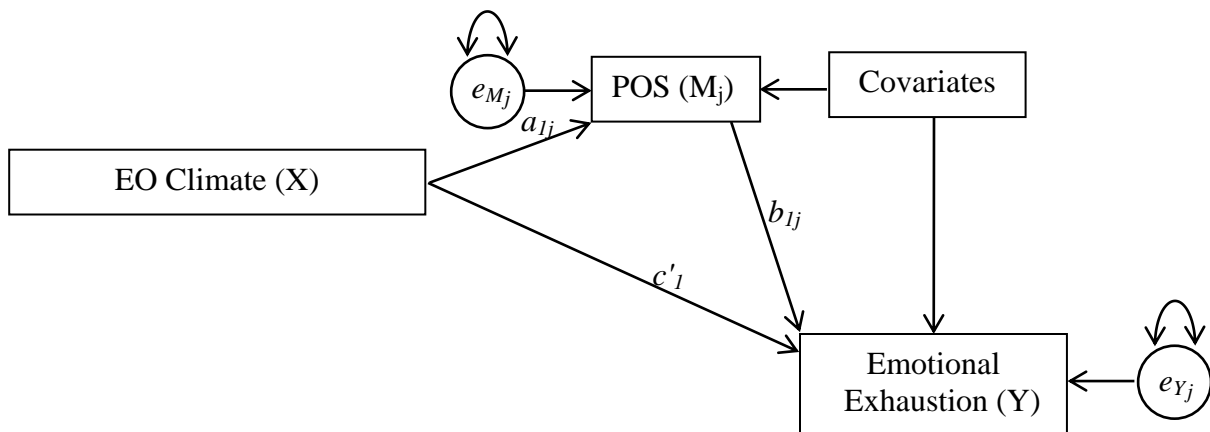


Note.

The total effect (c) is not represented for purposes of conceptual clarity

Total effect (c) = $a*b + c'$

Figure 2 - Proposed structural model (Hypothesis 2 - Mediation).



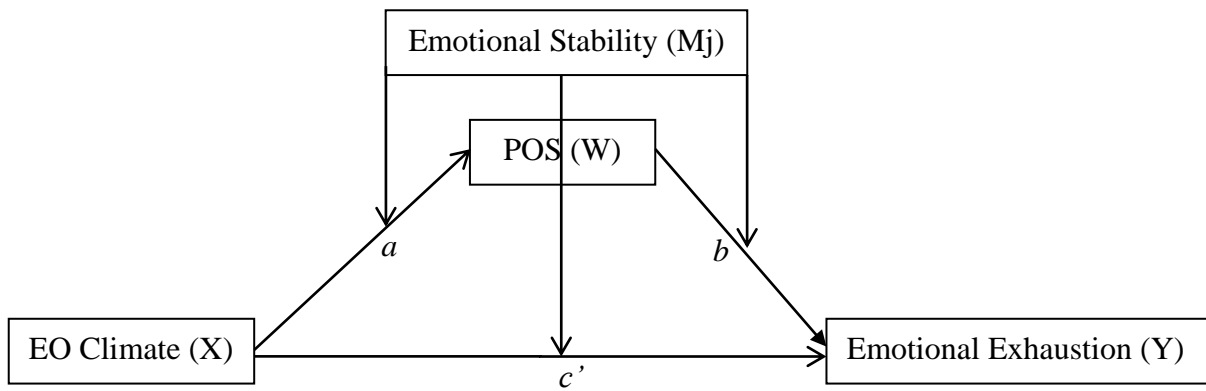
Note.

Indirect effect of X on Y through $M_j = (a_{1j} b_{1j})$

Direct effect of X on $Y = c'1$

Total effect of X on $Y = \text{indirect effect} + \text{direct effect}$

Figure 3 - Proposed conceptual model (Hypothesis 3 - Moderated mediation).

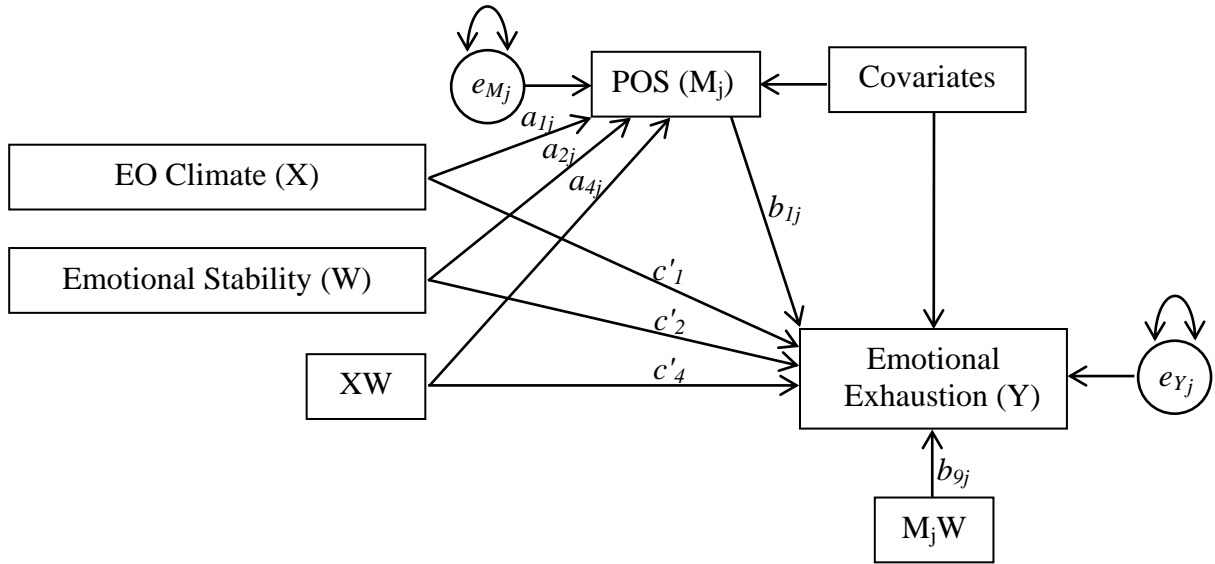


Note.

The total effect (*c*) is not represented for purposes of conceptual clarity

Total effect (*c*) = (*a***b*) + *c'*

Figure 4 - Proposed structural model (Hypothesis 3 - Moderated mediation).



Note.

Conditional indirect effect of X on Y through $M_j = (a_{1j} + a_{4j}W) (b_{1j} + b_{9j}W)$

Conditional direct effect of X on $Y = c'1 + c'4W$

Total effect of X on $Y =$ indirect effect + direct effect

Figure 5 - Proposed conditional indirect effect of equal opportunity climate on emotional exhaustion through POS at high and low levels of emotional stability.

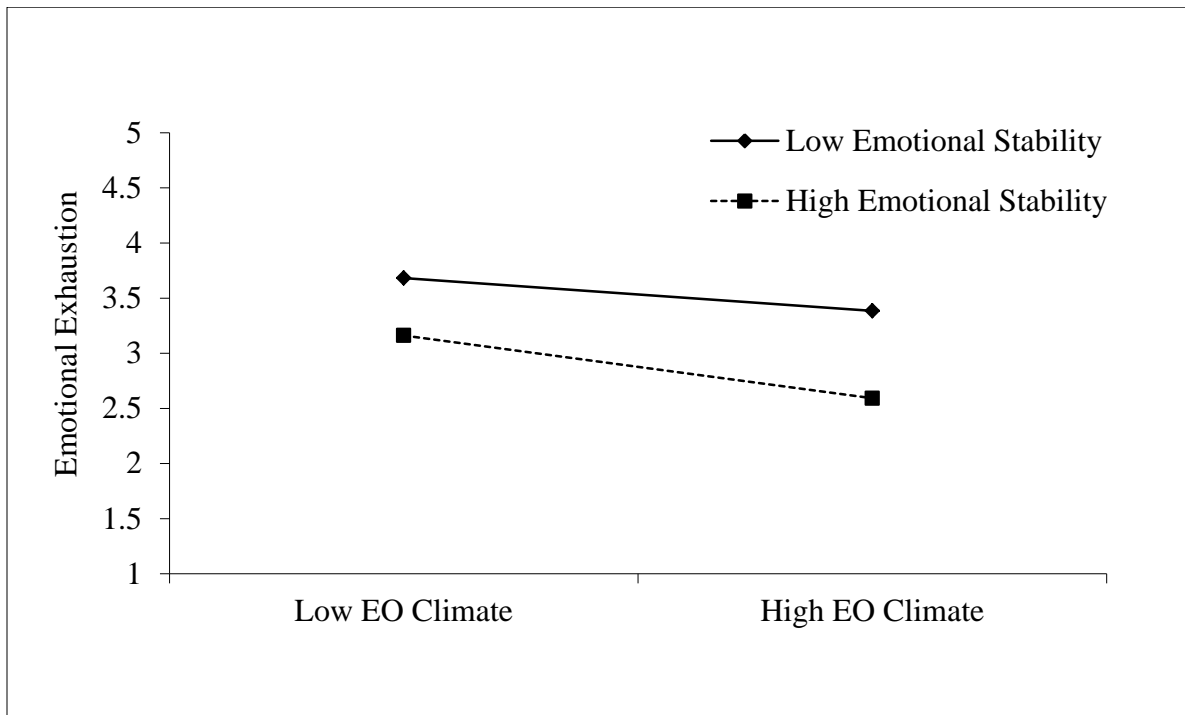
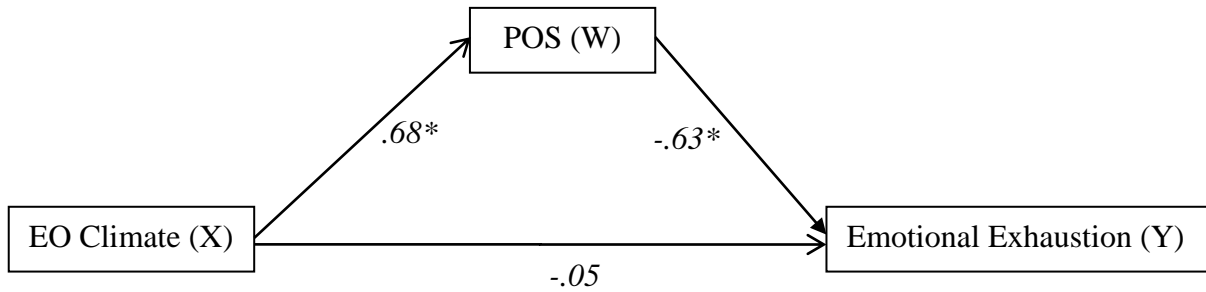


Figure 6 - Conceptual model (Hypothesis 2 - Mediation).

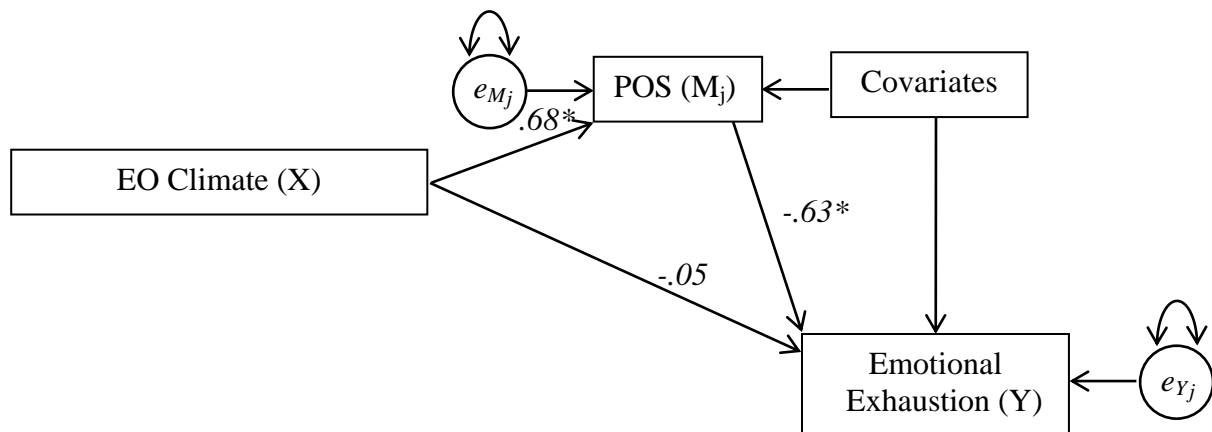


Note. N=2580. Unstandardized *b* coefficients reported. * $p < .05$

The total effect (c) is not represented for purposes of conceptual clarity

Total effect (c) = $(.68*-.63) + -.05 = -.48$

Figure 7 - Structural model (Hypothesis 2 - Mediation).



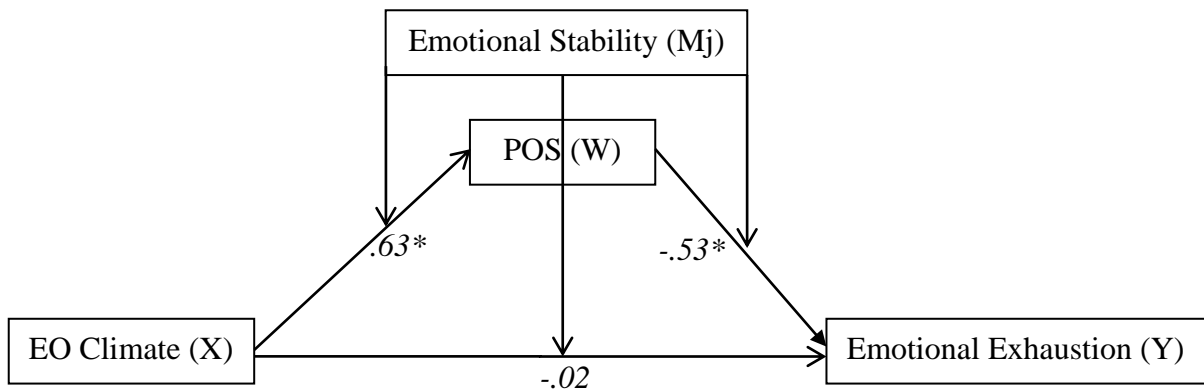
Note. N=2580. Unstandardized b coefficients reported. $*p < .05$

Indirect effect of X on Y through $M_j = .68 \cdot .63 = -.43$

Direct effect of X on $Y = -.05$

Total effect of X on $Y = -.43 + -.05 = -.48$

Figure 8 - Conceptual model (Hypothesis 3 - Moderated mediation).

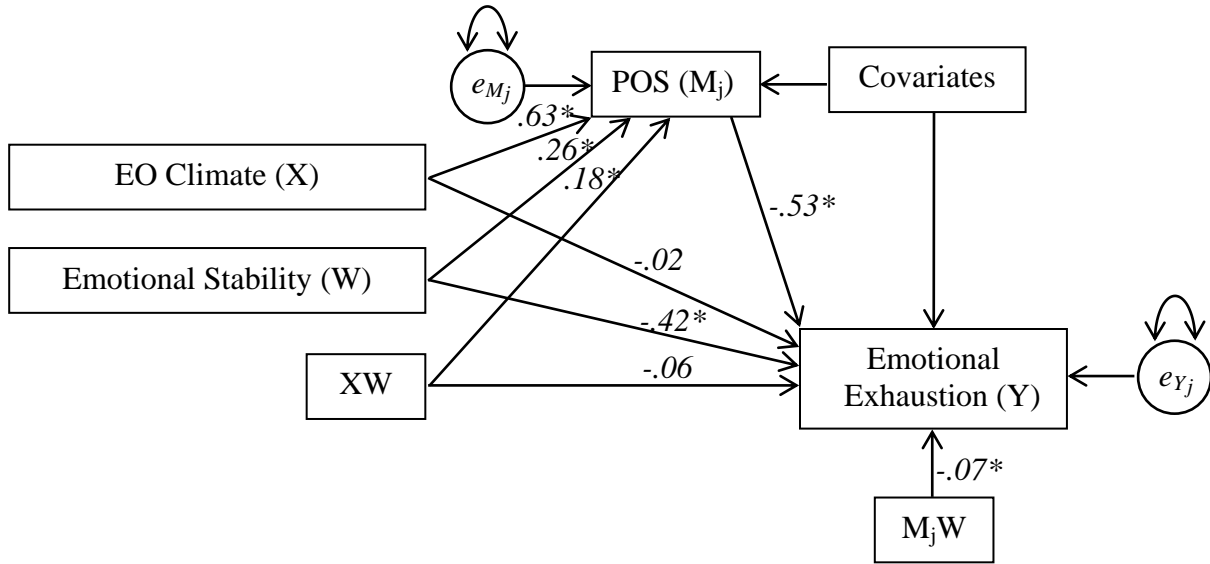


Note. N=2580. Unstandardized b coefficients reported. $*p < .05$

The total effect (c) is not represented for purposes of conceptual clarity

Total effect (c) = $(.63^* - .53) + -.02 = -.35$

Figure 9 - Structural model (Hypothesis 3 - Moderated mediation).



Note. N=2580. Unstandardized b coefficients reported. $*p < .05$

Conditional indirect effect of X on Y through $M_j = (.63 + .18*0) (-.53 + -.07*0) = -.33$

Conditional direct effect of X on $Y = -.02 + -.06*0 = -.02$

Total effect of X on $Y = -.33 + -.02 = -.35$

Figure 10 - Conditional indirect effect of equal opportunity climate on emotional exhaustion through POS at high and low levels of emotional stability.

