CHAPTER 10

EMOTIONAL LABOUR AND ITS CONSEQUENCES: THE MODERATING EFFECT OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Catherine Prentice

ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationship between emotional labour and burnout and the moderating effect of emotional intelligence on this relationship. The survey was conducted at several tourism and hospitality organizations in Florida, USA. The results show that both acting strategies of emotional labour relate positively to burnout. Tests of moderation show that emotional intelligence reduces employee burnout. These findings contribute to the literature on emotional labour by incorporating emotional intelligence as a moderator, and provide some guidance for human resource practitioners about potentially beneficial training and recruitment activities. They also have implications for customer relationship management.

Keywords: Emotional labour; emotional intelligence; burnout; task performance and OCB

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INTRODUCTION

The concept of emotional labour (EL) has been discussed extensively in the relevant literature, consistent with the increasing applicability of dramaturgical perspectives to customer interactions and the importance of services to the economy. It particularly applies in the case of frontline service positions dealing with customers (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993). Defined as managing emotions through surface or deep acting by following organisational display rules in return for a wage, EL has been proposed as a means of enhancing task performance and as a strategy for managing service encounters efficiently through appropriate acting (Hochschild, 1983). Despite its likely influence on employee task effectiveness, EL is commonly acknowledged to have negative psychological effects on employees. Such effects include stress (e.g. Mann & Cowburn, 2005), poor self-esteem (e.g. Sakiyama, 2009), job dissatisfaction (Pugliesi, 1999). These negative outcomes ultimately lead to burnout (see Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Erickson & Ritter, 2001; Surana & Singh, 2009).

Burnout has been widely discussed in EL research (e.g. Brotheridge, & Grandey, 2002; Johnson & Spector, 2007; Montgomery, Panagopolou, Wildt, & Meenks, 2006). However, most research has concentrated on a single dimension of burnout, namely emotional exhaustion. Burnout is identified as a multidimensional construct consisting of emotional exhaustion, diminished personal accomplishment, and depersonalisation (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). According to Maslach et al. (2001), exhaustion is a necessary but insufficient condition for burnout. Emotional exhaustion is likely to lead the employee to distance him or herself emotionally and cognitively from work. Depersonalisation is one means of placing distance between oneself and service recipients and distancing is an immediate reaction to exhaustion; whereas diminished personal accomplishment appears to be a function of exhaustion and/or depersonalisation. The three dimensions interact and neglecting any of them may lose sight of the entire phenomenon (Maslach et al., 2001). Hence, the current study includes these dimensions to examine their relationships with EL.

Furthermore, since most of the relevant literature shows that EL is associated with the negative effects of individual outcomes, this potentially prompts a concern about why organizations persist in implementing display rules and 'encourage' employees to 'act' or perform emotional labour. If such EL related 'acting' is required for certain roles and professions, efforts may be needed to minimise any detrimental effects. Researchers have suggested that understanding of the negative consequences of EL may be

improved by incorporating moderators (e.g. Daus & Ashkanasy, 2005). Johnson and Spector (2007) identified gender and autonomy as moderators of EL strategies as well as personal outcomes such as emotional exhaustion and affective wellbeing. As indicated by various researchers (e.g. Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Daus & Ashkanasy, 2005), EL has particular relevance for employees who interact with customers, and such encounters involve a high level of emotional elements (e.g. Mattila & Enz, 2002). Employee emotional management skills may be necessary to facilitate the EL process in order to achieve enhanced results. Consistent with the forgoing discussion, the second aim of this chapter is to propose and test if emotional intelligence is a potential moderator of the EL process leading to the prospect of improved outcomes. The following section formulates hypotheses for the study.

HYPOTHESES FORMATION

EL and burnout

Researchers generally believe that burnout is related positively to the surface acting element of the EL process but negatively related to deep acting (e.g. Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Grandey, 2003; Kim, 2008). Portraying emotions that are not felt (surface acting) may create emotive dissonance that is akin to cognitive dissonance (Hochschild, 1983). Such dissonance may cause the labourer to feel false and hypocritical. Ultimately, such dissonance can lead to personal and work-related maladjustments such as poor self-esteem, depression, cynicism and alienation from work (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Fineman, 1993; Seeman, 1991). Although most EL researchers agree that deep acting is negatively associated with burnout, the opposite view is held by some others (e.g. Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Mikolajczak, Menil, & Luminet, 2007). Such different conclusions may be explained by the fact that the research has been conducted in a variety of contexts. In the case of demanding jobs such as frontline positions, or so-called job-focused emotional labour where the employee has a low level control, both types of acting can lead to negative outcomes (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Pugliesi, 1999).

Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) have argued that EL is a double-edged sword when managing encounters with highly demanding customers. Either type of acting may have negative psychological consequences. Surface acting may cause emotive dissonance and lead to work-related maladjustment; and deep acting may distort employee reactions and impair one's sense of the

1 authentic self (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993). This may ultimately lead to
2 self-alienation and an impaired capacity to recognize or even experience
3 genuine emotions. The reworking of authentic emotions (deep acting) has
4 been found to be positively associated with psychological dysfunctions and
5 overall stress (Parkinson, 1991; Rutter & Fielding, 1988). Such stress may
6 eventually lead to burnout. Indeed, Mikolajczak et al.'s (2007) study
7 demonstrated a positive relationship between deep acting and three
8 dimensions of burnout. On the basis of the above discussion, the following
9 hypothesis is proposed:

11 **H1.** Within the EL process, surface and deep acting by frontline employees
12 will positively influence three dimensions of burnout, namely emotional
13 exhaustion, diminished personal accomplishment and depersonalisation.

15 *Emotional intelligence as a moderator of EL*

17 The concept of emotional intelligence appeared within the professional and
18 academic domains of psychology during the 1990s, and taps into much of
19 the performance variance that was inadequately explained by traditional
20 intelligence (IQ). The construct has particular relevance in the case of service
21 personnel and their job-related outcomes because their employment
22 involves substantial interpersonal interactions that require emotional work
23 (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Ashkanasy & Daus, 2005). Emotional
24 intelligence has been defined as the ability to perceive, respond and manip-
25 ulate emotional information without necessarily understanding it and the
26 ability to understand and manage emotions without necessarily perceiving
27 feelings well or experiencing them fully (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). Mayer,
28 Salovey, Caruso and Sitarenios (2001) have classified these abilities into four
29 hierarchical branches. The first branch is emotional perception. It involves
30 the ability to identify and express emotions, and to discriminate various
31 expressions of feelings. Emotional assimilation, which is the second branch,
32 includes emotion-prioritised thinking by directing attention to important
33 information. Emotional mood swings may, for example change an individ-
34 ual's perspective from optimistic to pessimistic, whereas happiness facil-
35 itates inductive reasoning and creativity. The third branch, emotional
36 understanding, involves the ability to label and recognise emotions and
37 emotional transitions, for instance, the transition from anger to satisfaction,
38 and the ability to understand complex feelings. The fourth branch, emotions
39 management, includes the ability to stay open to feelings, to engage or

1 detach from an emotion, to monitor emotions and to manage emotions
2 in oneself and others by moderating negative emotions and enhancing
3 pleasant ones.

4 Although emotional intelligence is widely acknowledged in the literature
5 as a valid predictor of various criterion variables, it has also been
6 popularised as a moderator. For instance, Jordan, Ashkanasy and Hartel
7 (2003) have proposed it as a moderator of emotional and behavioural
8 reactions to job insecurity. Emotional intelligence can also facilitate coping
9 with workplace-related stress and moderate the relationship between
10 conscientiousness and performance (Ashkanasy, Jordan, & Ashton-James,
11 2003; Douglas, Frink & Ferris, 2004). In the context of services, Gabbott,
12 Tsarenko, and Mok (2011) found that emotional intelligence can shape
13 customer reactions towards service failure. Although few studies have
14 investigated the moderating effect of emotional intelligence in the EL
15 process, it has been proposed as a moderating factor on individual outcomes
16 in the case of the two EL-related acting strategies (Grandey, 2003). Salami
17 (2007) found that emotional intelligence successfully moderated the
18 relationship between surface acting and OCBs and additional empirical
19 research is warranted within the EL literature to extend this finding.

20 From its conceptualisation into four hierarchical branches, emotional
21 intelligence may be capable of adjusting the EL process. For example, the
22 first branch may influence surface acting (simulating emotions that are not
23 actually felt). This may be explained as follows. Emotions can only be
24 simulated effectively in circumstances where the perception is accurate,
25 thereby allowing the simulation to fit the context. A nurse may for
26 example simulate sympathy for a patient who has deep concerns about his
27 or her health. In this circumstance the process of simulation is dependent
28 on the nurse possessing the required perception of the patient's concerns.
29 The fourth branch can facilitate deep acting (attempts to experience or
30 feel the emotions that one wishes to display). Mayer et al. (2001) indicated
31 that the four branches function hierarchically. The perception of emotions
32 acts as both the most basic branch and as a precursor to the other three.
33 Since it occupies the top branch, emotional management may be viewed
34 as the most complex. Once a perception has been acquired, emotions
35 may be transferred to conscious or unconscious thought to facilitate
36 behaviours (Levine, 1997, Mayer et al., 2001). Hence, a hypothesis is
37 made as follows:

38 **Hypothesis 2.** Emotional intelligence will moderate the effects of surface
39 and deep acting in the EL process on burnout.

METHOD

Procedure

A self-report questionnaire was developed to collect information using a paper-pencil test. The questions investigated EL, burnout, emotional intelligence, task performance and OCB. The written instructions provided respondents with an assurance of anonymity. The survey packets included a cover letter introducing the research and explaining its significance and objectives. An expression of thanks was also provided to prospective respondents along with a consent form, a questionnaire, and a pre-paid envelope. Detailed instructions were included to stimulate and guide participation. Research assistants distributed the questionnaire to prospective respondents who were required to respond within two months of receipt.

Participants

The respondent sample was drawn from frontline service employees in several hospitality organisations in Florida, USA. The human resources managers in each of these organisations made announcements to their employees endorsing the study. The paper-and-pencil surveys were either delivered to the participants or made available in the employee break rooms. A reminder was sent to employees two weeks after the first visit and of the 1,000 surveys distributed, 578 usable responses were returned (58%). Of the total usable sample, 260 (45%) were male, and 318 (55%) were female. The participants ranged from 18 to 55 years and above, with most in the age group between 18–25 (56%), followed by the 26–35 group (26%), by 36–55 group (12%), and finally those over 55 (4%). Almost 48 percent of respondents had some college education. Over 65 percent of respondents earned less than \$40,000 a year, indicative that service employees are paid relatively poorly. The various positions occupied by respondents included bar tenders, bellman, cashier, concierge, front desk agent, server, and sales representative. About one-third of the respondents had been employed by their current organization for three to five years, with 5% having more than 20 years of experience.

Measures

EL
Since the present study involved a survey of hospitality organisations, the research used the Hospitality Emotional Labour Scale (HELS) first

developed by Chu and Murrmann (2006). This scale was developed specifically to measure the EL presentation of hospitality employees and consists of three factors: surface acting, genuine acting and deep acting. To be consistent with two acting strategies of the original EL concept, the two items that were developed to measure genuine acting were excluded for the purposes of the present investigation. Some useful items for measuring surface acting include “I fake the emotions I show when dealing with customers”; “my interactions with customers are very robotic”. In the case of deep acting, the sample items are “I work at calling up the feelings I need to show to customers”; “I try to change my actual feelings to match those that I must express to customers”. Values were based on a seven-point Likert-type scale with responses ranging from “1” (strongly disagree) to “7” (strongly agree). Due to the omission of one of the factors from the original HELS, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) will be performed to confirm the factor structure.

Burnout

The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) (Maslach & Jackson, 1986) was used to measure participant burnout. The inventory is a scale consisting of three dimensions, namely emotional exhaustion (9 items), diminished personal accomplishment (7 items), and depersonalisation (6 items). In the case of emotional exhaustion the sample item that was provided is “I feel emotionally drained from my work”; for diminished personal accomplishment “I can’t deal effectively with the problems of my recipients”; and for depersonalisation it is “I have become more callous towards people since I took this job”. Although its original application was for service workers, the MBI has been applied to other occupations including computer professionals and police officers (see Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002). It is the most commonly used scale to measure burnout and has been validated by Cordes and Dougherty (1993). In the present study the items were assessed using a seven-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree) to indicate the extent of participant agreement with the statement. The applicable Cronbach alpha coefficients for the three dimensions were .93 in the case of emotional exhaustion, .86 for diminished personal accomplishment, and .82 for depersonalisation.

Emotional intelligence

To determine emotional intelligence, the present study used the self-report EI Test (SREIT) designed by Schutte et al. (1998), which was based on Salovey and Mayer’s ability model (1990). The 33-item self-report measure

includes items such as “By looking at their facial expression, I recognize the emotions people are experiencing” and “I easily recognize my emotions as I experience them.” Data were collected on a seven-point Likert scale, with 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree. Higher total scores are reflective of greater self-reported emotional intelligence. Factor analysis of the 33-items resulted in one factor representing each of the categories: appraisal and expression of emotion in the self and others, regulation of emotion in the self and others and utilization of emotions in solving problems (Schutt et al., 1998). Petrides and Furnham (2000) have proposed the adoption of a four-factor structure for SREIT. However, the sub-dimensions obtained from CFA in other studies were unstable, and one of the factors had a low Cronbach alpha value (below .70). In light of the incidence of inconsistencies within this scale dimensionality, CFA will be performed and the results and applicable Cronbach alpha coefficient will be reported in the next section.

ANALYSES AND RESULTS

Factor analyses for SREIT

As indicated above, it was determined that CFA should be conducted for the HELS scale to assess its dimensionalities. The CFA analyses were based on a Pearson Covariance matrix and Maximum Likelihood Estimation (MLE) (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The results arising from performing CFA for HELS confirmed the two-factor structure as a good model fit ($\chi^2(561) = 217.32$, $p < .0005$, SRMR = .05 and RMSEA = .05, CFI = .96 and TLI = .95). As indicated in Table 1, this item had a significant loading on the corresponding factor.

Since the previous research had generated inconsistent results exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was used to identify the factor structures prior to undertaking CFA for SREIT. The results which arose from the conduct of factor analysis for SREIT produced a four-factor structure in the component matrix. However, the other three factors have cross loadings with the first factor, and each loaded only with a single item. Cattell’s Scree test indicated that the single factor solution was appropriate, consistent with the result by Schutte et al. (1998). Results from performing CFA also supported the one-factor solution for SREIT, with reasonable model fit indices: $\chi^2(571) = 1762.34$, $p < .0005$, SRMR = .04 and RMSEA = .05, CFI = .98 and TLI = .95. Results from the four-factor solution for SREIT were less optimal. On this basis, the single-factor SREIT was adopted for

Table 1. CFA results for HELS.

HELS Factors and Items	Factor Loadings	Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
<i>Surface acting</i>		.76	.81	.72
I put on a mask in order to express the right emotions for my job	.61			
I have to cover up my true feelings when dealing with customers	.59			
I display emotions that I am not actually feeling	.62			
I fake the emotions I show when dealing with customers	.72			
My interactions with customers are very robotic	.51			
I put on an act in order to deal with customers in an appropriate way	.68			
I behave in a way that differs from how I really feel	.74			
I fake a good mood when interacting with customers	.83			
<i>Deep acting</i>		.78	.79	.69
I work at calling up the feelings I need to show to customers	.64			
I have to concentrate more on my behaviour when I display an emotion that I don't actually feel	.51			
I try to talk myself out of feeling what I really feel when helping customers	.71			
I try to change my actual feelings to match those that I must express to customers	.74			
When working with customers, I attempt to create certain emotions that present the image my company desires	.52			
<i>Fit statistics:</i>				
χ^2 (561) = 217.32, $p < .0005$,				
SRMR = .05				
RMSEA = .05				
CFI = .96				
TLI = .95				
Alpha = Cronbach Alpha coefficients, AVE = average variance extracted				

Table 2. Means, Standard Deviations, Inter-Correlations and Cronbach Alpha Coefficients.

Variables	Mean	SD	Alpha	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Surface acting	44.13	5.21	.77						
2. Deep acting	23.16	3.94	.78	-.01*					
3. EE	30.96	2.12	.93	.42**	.10*				
4. DPA	38.91	8.06	.86	-.07	.17**	.37**			
5. Depersonalisation	27.16	6.51	.82	.40**	.15**	.71**	.26**		
6. EI	167.80	19.44	.95	.17**	.06	-.31**	-.72**	-.30**	-

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
* Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed). Listwise N=578.
EE=emotional exhaustion, DPA=diminished personal accomplishment, EI=emotional intelligence, affective.

further analyses. The Cronbach alpha coefficient for SREIT was .95. The means, standard deviations, inter-correlations and Cronbach alpha coefficients for the study variables are summarised in Table 2. All of the scales demonstrated good internal consistency reliability, where .70 is the minimum alpha acceptable (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

Measurement Validity and Structural Model

Structural equation modelling was conducted to test the propositions. Following the two-step approach suggested by Anderson and Gerbing (1988), the construct validities were tested prior to testing the proposed relationships between the variables. Because every construct in this study was measured using multiple items, the inclusion of all indicators in the testing would add excessive complexity for the purposes of making accurate estimations. Consistent with the approach recommended by Park and Holloway (2003), the items for each construct were summed into a single indicator measure. The shared variances among these variables do not exceed 40 percent, which indicates that they are empirically distinct constructs, and supports discriminant validity. The coefficients values indicate that all items have a significant loading on their corresponding constructs, demonstrating adequate convergent validity.

To test the hypotheses, the information that arose from the assessment of measurement validity was used to estimate the overall structural model. The errors for each construct were set at .85 (see Williams & Podsakoff, 1989).

To examine the structural relationships, the proposed main effect model was estimated. The interaction terms were used for testing the moderating effect of emotional intelligence. Lance’s (1988) residual centring approach was followed and obtained interaction terms for surface or deep acting. Emotional intelligence was achieved by partialing out the influence of main effects. These interaction terms were then included in the path analysis. The overall goodness-of-fit statistics suggest that the proposed model is acceptable with CFI and TLI values around .95, and SRMR and RMSEA values below .06.

The results for Hypotheses 1 and 2 are displayed in Table 3. Specifically, both surface acting and deep acting had significant effects on three dimensions of burnout: the beta values for surface/deep acting – emotional exhaustion are .39 ($p<.0005$) and .08 ($p<.05$), .11 ($p<.05$) and .12 ($p<.0005$) for surface/deep acting - diminished personal accomplishment, and .37 ($p<.0005$) and .14 ($p<.05$) for surface/deep acting - depersonalisation. These results indicate that H1 was confirmed.

The analyses of the moderating effect of emotional intelligence generated mixed results (as displayed in Table3) for H2. Specifically, emotional intelligence significantly reduced the levels of surface/deep acting – emotional exhaustion ($\beta=-.36$, $p<.0005$; $\beta=-.18$, $p<.05$), surface/deep acting – diminished personal achievement ($\beta=-.16$, $p<.0005$; $\beta=-.09$, $p<.05$),

Table 3. The Relationships Between EL and Burnout, and The Moderating Effect of EI on EL and Burnout.

Variables	EE(β)	ΔR^2	DPA(β)	ΔR^2	DP(β)	R^2
		.15***		.05***		.15***
SA	.39***		.11*		.37***	
DA	.08*		.12***		.14**	
SA*EI	-.36***	.11***	-.16***	.07***	-.19***	.08***
DA*EI	-.18***	.06***	-.09*	.00	.19***	.08***
<i>Overall model fit statistics for the analyses</i>						
χ^2					663 ($p<.0005$)	
CFI					.99	
TLI					.96	
SRMR					.05	
RESEA					.03	

* $p<.05$, ** $p<.01$, *** $p<.0005$.
EE=emotional exhaustion, PA=diminished personal accomplishment, DP=depersonalisation, SA=surface acting, DA=deep acting, EI=emotional intelligence.

1 surface/deep acting - depersonalisation ($\beta = -.19$, $p < .0005$; $\beta = -.19$,
3 $p < .0005$).

5 DISCUSSION

7 This study has examined the relationships between EL and three dimensions
9 of burnout. Emotional intelligence was proposed as a potential moderator
11 in EL strategy. The testing from structural equation modelling yielded some
13 interesting results. Conforming to H1, both surface and deep acting were
15 strongly associated with all dimensions of burnout. The testing of
moderation has shown that emotional intelligence reduced the levels of
burnout (all three dimensions) through surface or deep acting. Discussion of
these findings is as follows.

17 *EL and burnout*

19 As predicted, surface and deep acting related positively to all three
21 dimensions of burnout. Although some studies have reported that only
23 surface acting is related to burnout, this finding supported Ashforth and
25 Humphrey's (1993) proposition and the finding of and Mikolajczak et al.'s
27 (2007) study. The inconsistency may lie in the different sampling frames.
The present investigation focused on hospitality service employees. Given
the intensifying competition in recent years and organizational restructuring
in the industry, these service employees face the threat of retrenchment as
well as excessive job demands (see Lo & Lamm, 2005). In order to keep their
jobs, they have to follow organizational rules to "act". Lack of spontaneity
and unwillingness in their acting may eventually lead to job dissatisfaction
and burnout (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Pugliesi, 1999). If these
employees perceive it as necessary to act genuinely (deep acting) but are
unable or unwilling to do so (due to low wage), they may suffer low self-
esteem or self-alienation, eventually leading to burnout. The current study
provides new insights into deep acting strategies and suggests that
researchers should be cautious about promoting deep acting. This finding
is consistent with Ashforth and Humphrey's argument that EL is
dysfunctional and that ultimately "deep acting may ultimately lead to
self-alienation ... the masking or reworking of authentic emotions that one
would otherwise prefer to express has been linked to psychological and
physical dysfunctions (see Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993, p 97).

The moderating influence of emotional intelligence

The results from the moderation analyses indicate that the incorporation of moderator can be a remedy for reducing EL-caused burnout. Emotional intelligence successfully moderated the relationship between the two EL acting processes and burnout. This finding is consistent with the Daus and Ashkenasy (2005) assertion that emotional intelligence plays a significant role in jobs which demand high EL such as customer service representative. The service encounter between employees and customers often involves a strong emotional component due to unpredictable situational factors and demanding customers (see Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993). Employee emotional intelligence may facilitate service transactions through managing the emotions of oneself or others. Smooth transactions lead to fewer customer complaints and therefore less employee stress. Stress is a precursor of burnout.

Theoretical Implications and future research

This study has provided a contribution to the EL and emotional intelligence literature. Firstly, the finding that there is a positive relationship between deep acting and burnout should alert EL researchers of the need to deepen their understanding of genuine acting or reassess its consequences. Equally, researchers should take account of the study population as a possible case of inconsistent findings. Future studies should test this relationship in different contexts with a view to verifying the findings. Secondly, the significant moderating effect exhibited by emotional intelligence in the EL–burnout relationship supports Grandey’s (2000) proposition and extends its moderation role into the EL process. It is notable that the use of an one-factor solution for the emotional intelligence measure in this study has resulted in better model fit indices when undertaking CFA. The result of the single-factor emotional intelligence also conforms to Schutte et al.’s (1998) study. The findings are a reminder to researchers about the importance of undertaking a factor-analysis of these measures before undertaking further analysis.

Managerial Implications

In the context of the present study, the capacity of emotional intelligence has been shown as a means of reducing burnout acquired through acting. Since

it is trainable and developable (see Boyatzis, Cowan, & Kolb, 1995; Slaski & Cartwright, 2002), relevant training should be provided for existing frontline employees, particularly in the case of those who perform emotional labour but are unable to act appropriately. It is evident that possession of a high level of emotional intelligence can reduce the likelihood of burnout and may improve performance. As indicated in the literature, service employee performance has implications for customer satisfaction and loyalty. Emotional intelligence testing can also be used for recruitment and selection purposes. The conduct of such testing could help human source managers in identifying suitable candidates.

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