

Surface Acting Negatively Mediates the Relation between Trait based Emotional Intelligence and Individual Work Performance: An Empirical Study

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Abstract

This research aims to analyse the role of Surface Acting (SA) as a mediator of the relationship between Trait Emotional Intelligence and Individual Work Performance in the banking sector. In this study the Trait Emotional Intelligence (TEI) is considered as an independent variable, Individual work performance as the dependent variable and surface acting as the mediator. One-way Anova test has been employed to identify the differences between trait emotional intelligence and work experience, it was identified that there is no significant differences between trait emotional intelligence and work experience. The direct relationship between trait emotional intelligence and individual work performance exhibited a positive relationship. The mediating effect (TEI -SA- Individual Work Performance (IWP)) was found to be negatively significant at 0.05 levels. However, Surface Acting (SA) does partially mediate the relationship between TEI and IWP.

Keywords: Bank Employees and Service Industry, Emotional Labor (EL), Individual Work Performance (IWP), Surface Acting (SA), Trait Emotional Intelligence (TEI)

1. Introduction

1.1 Emotions at Workplace

Initially, emotions were never considered in the study of organizational behavior (Arvey, *et al.*, 1998). The understanding was that the workplace was seen as a rational environment where emotions would get in the way that needs a lot of critical analysis/sound judgment. Many researchers proved that regulating emotion for business may influence the organization's growth. Initially, emotions were identified with two major issues Job stress and Job Satisfaction (Muchinsky, 2000). As Calhoun, and Solomon (1984) observed, 'part of the knowledge is surely

an understanding of our emotions, which are, after all, much of what makes life worth living.'

1.2 Emotional Intelligence in Banks

Khalil (2008) study aimed to explore how emotional intelligence helps to deliver high service quality level in foreign and local banks in Pakistan. The result has revealed that emotional intelligence is a strong predictor of service quality in the case of foreign banks. Recent Makkar (2018) study revealed that work conditions of both private and public banks significantly impact emotional intelligence states in employees. Okon Effiong Ekpenyong (2015) study on EI and employee performance among Nigerian bank industry employees and the result revealed

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that there is a significant relationship between Emotional Intelligence and employee performance.

Many empirical researches have shown that Emotional Intelligence helps bankers to perform well in their jobs. But in this study, researchers use “surface acting” as a strategy, if surface acting mediates the relationship what would be the result?

1.3 Trait Emotional Intelligence

There are two major EI definitions 1. Salovey and Mayer (1990) defined Emotional Intelligence as “the subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one’s own and others feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and action”. 2. Goleman (1995) defined “EI as the ability to recognize, understand and managing our own emotions and emotions of others”. Social Intelligence is a distal root of EI; it was coined by Thorndike (1920). In the 1950s at the University of California, eight Ph.D. scholars in science stream completed a series of IQ tests, personality tests and qualitative researches like interviews with a psychologist for the assessment on qualities on emotional balance, maturity, and interpersonal effectiveness. Forty years later, the same study was conducted on the same eight former students. Now it was evaluated by resumes, evaluations by experts in their respective field for identifying each person’s career success. The results were identified that “EI abilities were four times more important than IQ in determining professional success and prestige even for these scientists” Goleman (1998).

Petrides, *et al.* (2006) claimed that measurement of Emotional Intelligence construct has fundamental differences and authors proposed a differentiation between ability EI and Trait EI. Petrides further articulated that there are two different EI constructs, TEI or Emotional self-efficacy and Ability Emotional Intelligence or cognitive emotional ability. TEI concerns “Emotion-related dispositions and self-perception measured via self-report”. While, Ability EI (AEI) concerns “Emotion-related cognitive abilities that ought to be measured via maximum performance test”. Alghamdi (2014) Trait EI (TEI) is measured in the realm of personality, whereas AEI needs the use to the realm of cognitive ability. TEI is one of the best-known predictors of job performance (Joseph & Newman, 2010).

1.4 Emotional Labour

Research in Emotional labor is on the rise year by year. Since 2006, almost 12,800 journal articles have been published in the area of “emotional labor”. Also, researchers proved that leaders also use emotional labor techniques in organizations and ample empirical research on how service related workers use emotional labor (Humphrey, 2012). Hochschild (1983) coined the term ‘EL’ which refers to “management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display” (P-7). Ashforth and Humphrey (1995) defined “EL as the act of display appropriate emotions with the goal to engage in a form of impression management for the organization”. Morris and Feldman (1996) defined “EL as the effort, planning and control needed to express organizationally desired emotion during the interpersonal transaction” (P. 987). Walden and Smith (1997) stated that social psychologist used to say that the sociological concept of emotion work is similar to the concept of emotional regulation. Various efforts need to be taken for emotional work to manage emotional display norms. Emotional work strategies involve active strategies to create and modify the felt emotion and express the appropriate emotions in the course of interaction. Many empirical studies have been done among the workers in a specific occupation and it has documented and emphasized the importance of emotional labor in several kinds of jobs (Adelmann, 1995; Hochschild, 1983).

Grandey and Gabriel (2015) states that EL is sold for a wage and therefore has exchange value. Grandey (2000) articulated that there are two types of emotional labor strategies: 1. Surface Acting (Managing observable expression), and 2. Deep Acting (Managing feelings). (Also referred by Hochschild, 1983; Ashforth and Humphrey, 1993). Diefendorff, *et al.* (2005) stated that individuals display appropriate emotions at the workplace, sometimes must hide or fake felt emotions, it is Surface Acting (SA). Individuals display appropriate emotions at the workplace, sometimes we try to experience desired emotion, it is called Deep Acting (DA). Later in this paper authors emphasized Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) research work on Expression of Natural Felt Emotions (ENFE). ENFE was considered to constitute of emotional labor in that individuals still have to put forth conscious effort to meet the organizational emotional display norms. Author’s pointed out that, till 2005 there was no prior

research on ENFE. Later, Diefendorff, *et al.* (2005) study suggested that ENFE is a distinct strategy for displaying emotions at work.

1.4.1. Surface Acting (SA)

It defines to modify and control our own emotional expressions. In the service industry, employees have to show a fake smile even when they are in a bad mood. The surface level of acting may produce a stress, dissatisfaction at job Goldberg and Grandey (2007). People are capable of hiding their true feeling or suppressing their own. Suppression condition affects the results of emotional signs like facial, body response comparable to the non-suppression condition Grandey (2000). SA involves simulating their emotions they are not felt at the time. They have to use facial expression, gestures, appropriate voice tone. Clear to the point 'surface acting' doesn't mean they do not experience any emotion. It simply means to display the different emotion from the felt emotion Ashforth and Humphrey (1995).

In this research paper, author will explore SA as a mediator of the relationship between TEI and IWP.

2. Individual Work Performance

Campbell, *et al.* (1993) defined IWP as "behaviour's or actions that are relevant to goals of the organization". The concept is distinguished by other terms, such as effectiveness – a value of the performance to organization and Productivity- a cost of achieving a certain level of effectiveness. Koopmans, *et al.* (2014) stated that individual work performance is a variable not only researched in the field of management, but also in occupational health and work, and organizational psychology. IWP is an issue that has got the attention of companies across the globe. Parker and Turner (2002) articulated that performance has measured at broader levels i.e. Industry, Organization and Group.

Hui-Hua and Schutte (2015) study examined the relationship between Meta traits of ability and plasticity with Trait EI and task performance. The data were collected from one hundred eighty undergraduate students in a Chinese university and the result showed that the higher trait EI was associated with better task performance. Additionally, EI has mediated the relationship between both stability and performance and

plasticity and performance. The authors also emphasized that emotional intelligence is hugely accepted in the organization Druskat, Mount and Sala (2013) because there is a positive link between EI and task performance. for. eg. O'Boyle, *et al.* (2011) Meta-analysis of 27 studies included three thousand nine hundred and sixty-one participants and the study showed the positive association between Trait EI and job performance O'Boyle, *et al.*, (2011). In the future direction, the authors suggested that the same study may replicate with other populations or employees of different sectors.

3. Hypotheses

H1: There is a significant difference between work experience and TEI.

A few researches have examined the relationship between Emotional Intelligence and work experience. Raghavendra and Senthil (2017) study shows that there is no significant relationship between Trait Emotional Intelligence on Business school students with work experience and no work experience. Shipley, *et al.* (2010) study found that Emotional Intelligence and work experience were positively associated.

H2: There is a significant relationship between TEI and IWP with SA as a mediator.

Ashforth and Tomiuk (2000) stated that previous qualitative research has demonstrated that service role engage acting strategy among employees, each service jobs requires different emotional display. Surface acting "may drain cognitive resources because it requires continual monitoring and modification of expressions" Grandey, *et al.* (2005). Chen, *et al.* (2012) study found that surface acting was negatively significant to job satisfaction and positively significant to burnout. The study additionally added that burnout and job satisfaction mediate the relationship between emotional labor and job performance. Some research supports surface acting has a negative influence on service performance. (For ref. Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Grandey, 2003). Trait based EI enhances performance in Management Slaski and Cartwright (2002) and Contextual performance Carmeli (2003). Emotional labor has been conceptualized principally regarding service work; leaders high on EI may perform emotional labor with a specific end goal to impact the states of mind, inspirations, and execution of their colleagues Humphrey (2008). Mikolajczak, *et al.* (2007)

articulates that Trait EI may influence emotional labor process in different ways and it is expected that those who are having higher trait EI need to put less effort to express the required emotions. Also the author's stated that those who are having higher Trait EI scores frequently use more SA than DA. If employees do not feel certain emotions during the interaction with the customer, engaging in surface acting may lead to inappropriate display emotions, resulting into effect of service performance Goodwin, *et al.* (2011). Liu, Liu and Geng (2013) study found that surface acting negatively affects both role-prescribed customer's service performance and extra role customer service performance. Some other previous studies Grandey (2003); Little (2007) also supports this finding, it shown that surface acting negatively influence on customer service performance.

This study, researcher seeks to know, how TEI predicts individual work performance mediates through SA.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Instruments

The research instruments used in the survey questionnaire are:

1. TEI Que-SF – Petrides and Furnham (2006).
2. EL strategies – Diefendorff, *et al.* (2005).
3. IWP – Koopmans, *et al.* (2014).

4.1.1 Procedure

Five hundred questionnaires were distributed for the survey. Out of 500 questionnaires, 414 questionnaires were received of which only 360 were completely filled and it was taken for the study. The respondents were selected based on simple random sampling. The data collected was

subjected to statistical analysis. Only second tier cities like Trichy, Tanjore, Pudukkottai and Sivagangai from the state of Tamil Nadu have been selected for the study. Both private and public banks have been taken for the study, but predominantly the data which we received were from the bank tellers of Private Banks. The data were collected only from the bank tellers (Those who deal directly with customers).

5. Data Analysis

H1. There is a significant difference between work experience and TEI.

In order to know the differences between work experience and TEI, the study has employed One-Way Anova test. Table 1 shows that there is no significant difference on Trait Emotional Intelligence among the respondents with regards to work experience ($F= 2.280$, $P= .104$).

6. Structural Equation and Functional Analysis

There are various factors which could affect Trait Emotional Intelligence and Individual Work Performance. Efforts have been made to build a model with the existing literature to analyse the impact of surface acting between trait emotional intelligence and individual work performance.

Path coefficients in PLS are standardized regression coefficients Staples, *et al.* (1999). In order to ensure that path coefficients are statistically significant, this study used bootstrap and Jackknife re-sampling procedures to estimate standard errors for calculating T values using PLS 3. The results are examined at 5 percent significance

Table 1. One-way ANOVA and descriptive statistics of variable ((TEI) on Work exp)

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F-Ratio (Sig.)
Less than 5 years	96	4.80	1.032	F=2.280 (.104)
5-10	193	4.99	1.035	
11 above	71	4.72	.993	
Total	360	4.89	1.030	

Table 2. Reliability and convergent validity analysis

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
WB	0.737	0.835	0.562
SC	0.662	0.792	0.539
EMO	0.724	0.844	0.645
SOC	0.688	0.768	0.535
TEI	0.847	0.879	0.572
SA	0.616	0.734	0.596
TP	0.644	0.760	0.515
CP	0.761	0.862	0.677
CWB	0.677	0.735	0.595
IWP	0.757	0.824	0.560

Table 3. Discriminant validity

Construct	CP	CWB	EMO	SA	SC	SOC	TP	WB
CP	0.822							
CWB	0.525	0.771						
EMO	0.052	-0.058	0.803					
SA	0.254	0.140	-0.184	0.772				
SC	0.040	-0.123	0.477	-0.087	0.734			
SOC	0.105	0.103	0.607	-0.245	0.637	0.731		
TP	0.494	0.329	0.058	0.298	0.146	0.213	0.717	
WB	0.094	-0.019	0.638	0.020	0.526	0.552	0.085	0.749

level and the t-statistic value at the 0.05 level is 1.96. If the t-statistic value is greater than 1.96, the path is significant (Efron, 1979; Efron & Gong, 1983) (Table 4).

H2: There is a significant relationship between Trait Emotional Intelligence (TEI) and IWP with SA as a Mediator.

In order to find out the relationship between Trait Emotional Intelligence and Individual Work Performance mediated through Surface Acting, a path analysis in PLS 3 was carried out.

The scale reliability statistics of the Table 2 showed a high composite reliability value. This was recommended level of 0.70 by (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994; Hair 2010). Composite reliability was the internal consistency measure which was developed by Fornell and Larcker (1981). Cronbach's Alpha coefficient should be greater than 0.6 and it is highly reliable according to Dykema, *et al.* (1997). To assess the convergent validity, AVE was used; it was suggested by Fornell & Larcker (1981). The AVE value should be above

0.05 which was recommended by Barclay, *et al.*, (1995); Hair, 2010. Square root of AVE value is Discriminant Validity (Table 3) it is expected more than correlations of the latent variables Hair (2010).

a. Wellbeing, b. Self-control, c. Emotionality, and d. Sociability has a reflection of Trait Emotional Intelligence. Wellbeing measured an alpha value of 0.737, CR value of 0.835 & AVE level of 0.562, Self-Control measured an alpha value of 0.662 CR value of 0.792 & AVE level of 0.539, Emotionality measured an alpha value of 0.724 CR value of 0.844 & AVE level of 0.645 and Sociability measured an alpha value of 0.688 CR value of 0.768 & AVE level of 0.535 which all are above the recommended level. Trait Emotional Intelligence measured an alpha value of 0.847 CR value of 0.879 & AVE level of 0.572. These aspects prove that Trait Emotional Intelligence with its four dimensions is a reliable scale to be used to test the model.

Likewise, a. Contextual Performance, b. Task Performance, and c. Counter Productive Work Behaviour has reflections of Individual Work Performance. Contextual Performance measured an alpha value of 0.761, C.R value of 0.862 & AVE level of 0.677, Task Performance measured an alpha value of 0.644, C.R value of 0.760 & AVE level of 0.515, Counter Productive Work Behaviour measured an alpha

value of 0.677 C.R value of 0.735 & AVE level of 0.595. Individual Work Performance measured an alpha value of 0.754, C.R value of 0.824 & AVE level of 0.560.

These aspects prove that Individual Work Performance with its three dimensions is a reliable scale to be used to test the model.

Surface Acting is one of the dimensions of Emotional Labor Strategies; it measured an alpha value of 0.616, C.R value of 0.734 and AVE level of 0.596. All the factors are maintained by the recommended values for this research.

TEI has four dimensions. The path linking TEI to Wellbeing was found positive significant at 0.05 level (beta = 0.858, t = 57.814). The path linking TEI to Self-control was found positive significant at 0.05 level (beta = 0.751, t = 29.066). The path linking TEI to emotionality has positive significant at 0.05 level (beta = 0.846, t = 73.500). The path linking TEI to Sociability has positive significant at 0.05 level (beta = 0.829, t = 61.587). In all four dimensions, emotionality has a high significant value compare than others.

IWP has three dimensions. The path linking IWP to task performance was found to be positively significant at 0.05 level (beta = 0.739, t = 25.038). The path linking IWP to contextual performance was found to be positively significant at 0.05 level (beta = 0.895, t = 78.877). The

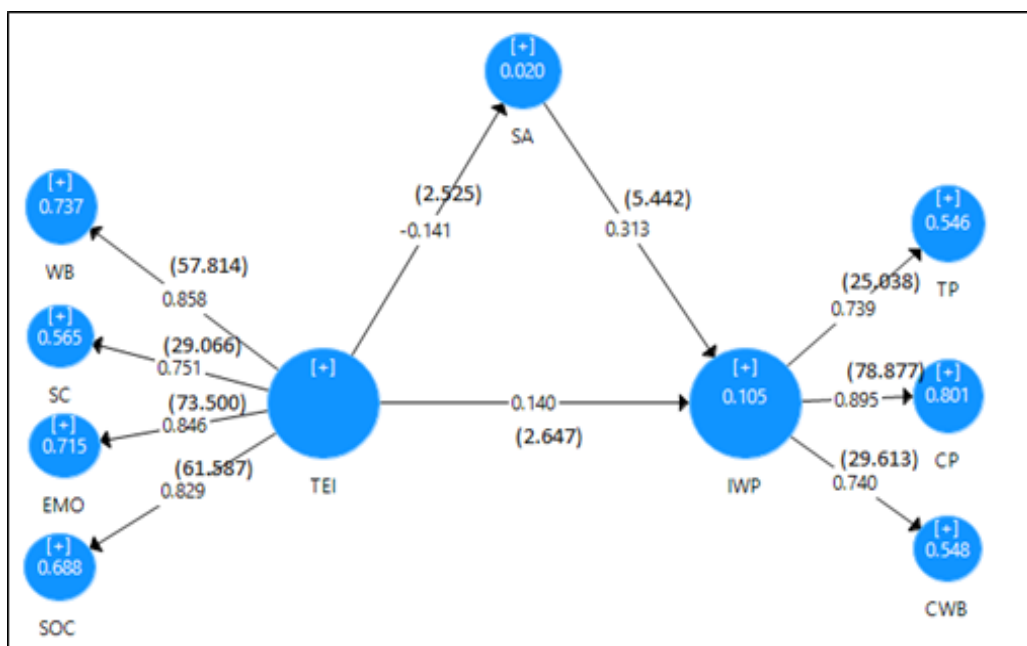


Figure 1. Tested model for SA as a mediator of TEI and IWP.

Table 4. Path coefficient

Construct	Beta value	T Statistics	R Square	P Values	Results
TEI -> WB	0.858	57.814	0.737	0.000	Significant
TEI -> SC	0.751	29.066	0.565	0.000	Significant
TEI -> EMO	0.846	73.500	0.715	0.000	Significant
TEI -> SOC	0.829	61.587	0.688	0.000	Significant
TEI -> SA	-0.141	2.525	0.020	0.012	Significant
SA -> IWP	0.313	5.442	0.105	0.000	Significant
IWP -> TP	0.739	25.038	0.546	0.000	Significant
IWP -> CP	0.895	78.877	0.801	0.000	Significant
IWP -> CWB	0.740	29.613	0.548	0.000	Significant

Table 5. Direct effects

Construct	Beta value	T Statistics	P Value
TEI -> IWP	0.140	2.647	0.008

Table 6. Indirect effects

Construct	Beta value	T Statistics	P Value
TEI -> SA -> IWP	-0.044	2.538	0.011

path linking IWP to counterproductive work behaviour was found to be positively significant at 0.05 level (beta = 0.740, t = 29.613). In all three, contextual performance has a high sig. value compare with the other two.

The path linking TEI to SA was found to be negatively significant at 0.05 level (beta = -0.141, t = 2.525) which is considered as 95% significance level. This can be confirmed by the t-value given in the schematic diagram (Figure 1). The path linking SA to IWP were found to be positive significant at 0.05 level (beta = 0.313, t = 5.442). The path linking TEI to IWP was found to be positive significant at 0.05 level (beta = 0.140, t = 2.647) (Table 5).

In order to find out the significant relationship between TEI and IWP through SA, the researchers

calculated the beta as: $-0.141 * 0.313$ which measured -0.044. Since this value is negative; it indicates that TEI is negatively significant to IWP through SA. However, a direct relationship between TEI and IWP is positively significant (Table 6).

7. Discussion

H1: Table 1 helps us to identify that there are no significant differences between work experience and trait emotional intelligence. This finding is contradictory to the finding of Shipley, *et al.* (2010), that Trait EI was positively associated with work experience. Further, the authors suggested

that future research should examine Trait EI and work experience in different field of work. This is because the Shipley, *et al.* (2010) study was among the academics but here the researcher has collected data from the service industry with references to the bank teller employees. The inference for this study is due to performing the same task again and again on a daily basis which could lead to monotonous in the job. Over a period of time employees may have learned the necessary behaviour pattern and exhibit the same trait again and again. This may have a chance that among the different work experience groups has no significant differences in Trait EI.

H2: The structural equation model results confirm the statistical association between Trait Emotional Intelligence and Individual work performance. Trait Emotional Intelligence has four dimensions, of which Emotionality has exhibited high t-value (73.500) and beta value (0.846) and Individual work performance has three dimensions, among that Contextual Performance (CP) has shown the high t-value (78.877) and beta value (0.895). The t-value of Trait Emotional Intelligence and Individual work performance showed 2.647, which indicates there is a strong relationship between both these variables at 95% significance level. The beta value of Trait Emotional Intelligence and Individual work performance measures 0.140. It shows that the relationship between TEI and Individual work performance has a positive relationship and is statistically significant. Joseph, *et al.* (2015) the author stated that the recent empirical studies proved that Trait EI has a strong relationship with job performance.

Surface Acting mediates the relationship between TEI and IWP. The t-value of the relationship showed 2.538, which indicates a strong relationship at 95% significance level but the beta value of the relationship showed a negative value (-0.044), which indicates surface acting negatively mediates the relationship.

Past studies, including two meta-analyses, revealed that surface acting is harmful to the employee well-being Bono and Vey (2005) because many of empirical studies have predicted that surface acting is positively related to emotional exhaustion Halbesleben, *et al.* (2013). Durán, *et al.* (2004) Emotional Intelligence contributes to minimizing the negative outcomes of Emotional labor and it enhances employee performance and wellbeing. Karimi, *et al.* (2014) study revealed that nurses with higher

emotional intelligence have shown higher wellbeing and lower level of work stress. Mesmer-Magnus, *et al.* (2012) stated that Emotional Intelligence is positively related to deep acting and negatively related to surface acting. Grandey, *et al.* (2013) study stated that emotional dissonance is an important concept in emotional labor theory. There are two emotional dissonance concepts in the literature: a. Surface acting, and b. "emotional-rule dissonance (when feelings do not match display norms). Bartram, *et al.* (2012) study has shown that emotional labor (SA and emotional rule dissonance) has a positive relationship with the intention to leave work among the nurses. Person-level survey studies have upheld that workers who are abused by customers tend to utilize surface acting but not necessarily deep acting (Grandey, *et al.*, 2004; Rupp, *et al.*, 2008; Sliter, *et al.*, 2010). Rupp, *et al.* (2008) articulated that previous literature reveal that surface acting affects job performance, job stress, and job dissatisfaction.

Many empirical studies have found that emotional labor takes a bad effect on service providers, in the form of Job dissatisfaction Grandey (2003), negative symptoms of health Schaubroeck and Jones (2000) and emotional exhaustion Brotheridge and Grandey (2002). Song and Liu (2010) study found that the relationship between surface acting and emotional exhaustion was positively significant. Goodwin, *et al.* (2011) study found that the relationship between surface acting and job performance was not statistically significant and the study was among the call center employees. Duke, *et al.* (2009) study has examined the relationship between emotional display norms and job performance and the relationship were found significant in case perceived organization support of employees was high. Bursalı, *et al.* (2014) study found that the surface acting and task performance has a negative relationship and no significant relationship between surface acting and contextual performance among the bank employees.

Nowadays, banks focus more on customers. Banker's intention's to provide conveniences, quality services, quick services and innovation in the banks. Bank employees play an important role in the service quality and service delivery of customers. A few previous studies have revealed that bank employees were facing problems like lack of job satisfaction, stressed at work, job burnout, etc. Chen and Lien (2008, October); Bajpai and Srivastava

(2004). In 2017 Economic Times article states that public sector banks also focuses employee's performance in banks. The individuals entering into the banking sector are not professionals. They enter into the bank profession and then they professionalize themselves so, initially they may face it difficult in their respective roles.

The various major roles for any of the bank employees are: a. New account opening, b. Account cash deposit, c. Account cash withdrawal, d. Cheque clearing, e. Giving loans to eligible customers, and f. Loan follow-ups.

All these roles need different types of laboring strategies during interaction with the customers in banks. For instances, if the counter queue is long, the employee must work fast at the same time they provide expected service of the customers. Suppose if the employee is not good at emotional intelligence, suddenly he/she cannot regulate their emotions based on the situation. If the situations are tough either employee exhibit surface acting or natural expression to the customers. Both these strategies are not good for the bank employees because customers showed their trust over the banks at the same time they expect authentic behavior from the employees. Definitely surface acting would not satisfy the customer as well it will not influence individual performance.

This study finding could support some of the previous research results; Surface acting outcomes include a positive relationship with Turnover intention Wessel and Steiner (2015) and emotional exhaustion Grandey (2003). Hülshager and Schewe (2011) the study found that surface acting have a negative relationship with performance. This hypothesis finding shows that bank tellers those who are using surface acting as a strategy while interacting with the customers have a negative influence on their individual performance even though they are good at emotional intelligence.

8. Conclusion

The focus of the study is to identify how Trait EI and Emotional Labor influence Individual Work Performance in banking sectors. First, researchers tested the direct relationship between Trait EI and Individual Work Performance. Second, researchers also tested the indirect relationship; surface acting mediates the relationship between Trait EI and Individual Work Performance. Results of the current study show that there is a positive

significant relationship between Trait EI and Individual Work Performance. But when surface acting mediates the relationship it becomes negatively significant between Trait EI and Individual Work Performance. This result supports the previous studies results. Rupp, *et al.* (2008) study results shows that surface acting affects job performance, job stress, and job dissatisfaction. Goodwin, *et al.* (2011) study result found that surface acting and job performance were not positively significant among the call center employees. One more finding of this study shows that Trait EI has no significant differences among those who have less than 5 years of work experiences, 5-10 years and 10more years of work experience. The limitations of the study are that data has collected only from southern part of Tamil Nadu. Researchers may conduct comparative study between public and private banks, so that we understand how Trait EI and emotional labour differs on private and public banks. Also, researchers explore different service sectors.

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