

Emotional Labor and Self-Efficacy as Foundations of Work Resilience

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Abstract

This study investigates the influence of emotional labor and self-efficacy on work resilience among customer service employees in emotionally demanding roles. The topic was chosen due to the increasing psychological challenges faced by frontline workers, particularly in collectivist cultures like Indonesia, where emotional expression is tightly regulated. It was hypothesized that emotional labor and self-efficacy would both positively predict work resilience. A quantitative correlational design was employed, involving 92 customer service employees from retail companies. Data were collected using validated psychological scales and analyzed using Pearson correlation and multiple linear regression with bootstrapping. Results showed that both emotional labor and self-efficacy significantly predicted work resilience ($R^2 = 0.640, p < 0.001$), with self-efficacy as the dominant predictor ($\beta = 0.217; t = 6.816$) over emotional labor ($\beta = 0.193; t = 4.238$). These findings highlight the dual role of emotion regulation and personal belief systems in sustaining resilience under emotional demands. The study offers practical implications for employee development programs in service industries.

Keywords: Emotional Labor, Self-Efficacy, Work Resilience, Customer Service

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji pengaruh *emotional labor* dan *self-efficacy* terhadap *work resilience* pada karyawan *customer service* yang menghadapi tuntutan emosional tinggi. Topik ini dipilih karena meningkatnya tantangan psikologis yang dialami pekerja garis depan, terutama dalam budaya kolektivistik seperti Indonesia yang menekankan pengendalian ekspresi emosi. Hipotesis penelitian menyatakan bahwa *emotional labor* dan *self-efficacy* berpengaruh positif terhadap *work resilience*. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan desain korelasional, melibatkan 92 karyawan *customer service* dari perusahaan ritel. Data dikumpulkan melalui skala psikologis tervalidasi dan dianalisis menggunakan korelasi Pearson serta regresi linear berganda dengan teknik *bootstrapping*. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa kedua variabel secara signifikan memprediksi *work resilience* ($R^2 = 0,640, p < 0,001$), dengan *self-efficacy* sebagai prediktor dominan ($\beta = 0,217; t = 6,816$) dibanding *self-efficacy* ($\beta = 0,193; t = 4,238$). Temuan ini menekankan pentingnya regulasi emosi dan keyakinan diri dalam mempertahankan ketahanan psikologis. Studi ini memberikan implikasi praktis bagi pengembangan program peningkatan kapasitas karyawan di industri jasa.

Kata kunci: Emotional Labor, Self-Efficacy, Work Resilience, Customer Service

Building upon the foundational conceptualization of emotional labor in service-oriented occupations (Hochschild, 1983; Arvan et al., 2019), evidence from the Indonesian context further demonstrates that emotional labor constitutes a concrete and systematically enacted psychological demand. Consistent with the definition of emotional labor as an emotion regulation process governed by organizational display rules (Tao, 2025), empirical research in Indonesia shows that workers in relational professions are required to continuously manage and adjust their emotional expressions as part of their professional roles. A quantitative study mapping emotional labor among Indonesian early childhood teachers using a Rasch Rating Scale Model confirms that emotional labor is experienced as sustained internal work embedded in daily occupational practices, rather than as momentary emotional display (Elvira dkk., 2025).

The findings further reveal that emotional labor strategies vary in their psychological difficulty. Emotion suppression and surface-level regulation such as hiding genuine emotions or displaying emotions incongruent with internal states are perceived as the most psychologically demanding forms of emotional labor, reflecting emotional dissonance as originally described by Hochschild (1983). In contrast, strategies resembling deep acting and natural emotional expression are more dominant, suggesting that workers tend to internalize emotional display rules rather than merely perform emotional expressions at a behavioral level. These empirical patterns indicate that emotional labor in Indonesia involves prolonged internal emotional adjustment that may accumulate as an invisible psychological burden over time, thereby reinforcing the relevance of global emotional labor theory within the Indonesian service context (Hochschild, 1983; Arvan et al., 2019; Tao, 2025; Elvira et al., 2025).

Emotional labor is not merely a behavioral demand; it also constitutes an often-invisible psychological burden (Tao, 2025). Previous studies have demonstrated that strategies such as surface acting faking emotions without internal alignment are associated with elevated job stress, emotional exhaustion, and even increased turnover intentions (Hong et al., 2023; De Vries et al., 2022). In contrast, deep acting, which involves aligning internal emotions with expected expressions, is generally perceived as more adaptive, although it still consumes substantial psychological resources (Cho & Lee, 2023). Thus, emotional labor reflects more than just

"pretending" it highlights the intricate process of reconciling personal emotional expression with professional norms, which, over time, can significantly affect psychological resilience at work.

In this context, work resilience emerges as a crucial capacity that enables individuals to endure, recover, and remain productive under chronic emotional pressure (Durmuş et al., 2024). Rather than a passive form of toughness, work resilience entails the ability to actively adapt to demanding workplace circumstances (Shen et al., 2023). It allows employees to maintain mental stability and job performance, even in emotionally taxing social interactions, such as those commonly encountered in customer service professions. In Indonesia, a study conducted by Ghazaly et al. (2024) demonstrates that higher levels of work motivation are associated with higher levels of resilience (Ghazaly dkk., 2024). Empirical evidence suggests that work resilience is strongly related to psychological well-being, job stress, and employee retention (Durmuş et al., 2024; Shen et al., 2023; Cabrera-Aguilar et al., 2023). Even so, not all individuals possess the inherent capacity to develop resilience in response to high emotional labor demands (Wibawa dkk., 2025).

This is where the concept of self-efficacy becomes particularly relevant. According to Bandura (1997), self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to organize and execute actions required to manage challenging situations. Individuals with high self-efficacy are typically more confident in coping with pressure, capable of making effective decisions, and less likely to become overwhelmed in demanding contexts (Yuan et al., 2025). Within the realm of emotional labor, self-efficacy functions as a psychological protective factor that strengthens work resilience (Cabrera-Aguilar et al., 2023; Delgado et al., 2020). This suggests that even in high emotional labor conditions, individuals with strong self-efficacy can remain resilient and adaptive in their roles.

Although emotional labor, self-efficacy, and work resilience have been widely studied as separate constructs, there remains a gap in the literature regarding their integration within a unified conceptual framework particularly in the context of customer service professions, where high-intensity social interactions are common and yet often overlooked in Indonesian occupational psychology discourse. Prior studies have predominantly focused on the impact of emotional labor on burnout, job satisfaction, or turnover intention (Rughoobur-Seetah et al., 2023;

No & Kim, 2021), while limited attention has been paid to the role of self-efficacy as a psychological resource contributing to the development of resilience.

This study aims to examine how emotional labor and self-efficacy contribute both independently and interactively to the development of work resilience among customer service employees. Theoretically, it proposes a psychological model that explains endurance in emotionally demanding occupations. Practically, the findings are expected to inform organizational strategies by highlighting the importance of emotion regulation and self-efficacy enhancement in building employee resilience, particularly in service sectors where emotional interactions with clients are central.

Method

This study employed a quantitative approach with a correlational design to examine the extent to which emotional labor and self-efficacy predict work resilience among customer service employees. The use of a correlational design was deemed appropriate because it allows for the objective assessment of the relationships between variables without the need for manipulation. This is particularly relevant in the context of emotionally demanding work environments, such as the service industry, where customer service roles are known to involve high levels of emotional regulation and psychological resilience.

The study population consisted of customer service employees from three large-scale retail companies, each operating approximately twenty branch stores across Surabaya City and Sidoarjo Regency. The companies were selected due to the high emotional demands of customer service roles and the presence of standardized service procedures and consistent performance targets across branches, which promote homogeneity in job roles and work demands. The wide geographical distribution of branches also enhanced participant accessibility and representativeness of urban retail work conditions. Participants were recruited using a purposive sampling technique, with inclusion criteria of at least one year of experience in a customer-facing role and willingness to complete the questionnaire in full. The minimum sample size was determined using G*Power version 3.1.9.4 for multiple linear regression with two predictor variables. Assuming a medium effect size ($f^2 = 0.25$), a significance level of 0.05, and statistical power of 0.80, the minimum required sample size was 70 participants.

The instruments used in this study consisted of three psychological scales. The emotional labor scale was adapted from the framework and dimensions proposed by Brotheridge and Lee (2003) and comprised eighteen items. The adaptation process included translation, back-translation, and content validation by expert judgment, resulting in a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.861. The self-efficacy scale was developed by the researcher based on Bandura's (1997) theory of self-efficacy. The scale consisted of twenty-four items and demonstrated a reliability coefficient of 0.809. The work resilience scale was adapted from the theoretical framework and dimensions proposed by Connor and Davidson (2003). The adaptation process involved item modification to suit the occupational context, expert review, and pilot testing, yielding twenty-five items with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.814.

To ensure the clarity and readability of the items, the researcher conducted cognitive interviewing with pilot participants using the think-aloud technique. Construct validity for each scale was examined through Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) using AMOS software. The results of the CFA indicated acceptable model fit, with comparative fit index (CFI) values greater than 0.900, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) values below 0.08, and standardized factor loadings exceeding 0.50, thereby confirming the factorial structure of each scale in accordance with the underlying theoretical models.

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS 25. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the characteristics of the data, and the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was performed to assess the normality of the distribution. Multiple linear regression analysis was employed to test the predictive effect of emotional labor and self-efficacy on work resilience. To enhance the accuracy and robustness of the estimates and to control for potential violations of normality, a bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples was applied. This approach yielded bias-corrected confidence intervals at a 95% level of significance, which allowed for more reliable interpretations of the regression coefficients. The results were interpreted using significance values ($p < 0.05$), the coefficient of determination (R^2), and the corresponding confidence intervals, ensuring that the findings were empirically sound and scientifically valid.

Result

Table 1 summarizes participant demographics. The sample comprised 92 customer-service employees (57.6% female). The largest age group was 20–25 years (45.7%). Nearly half of respondents had tenure ≥ 3 years (48.9%), indicating a sample with substantial on-the-job experience.

Table 1.

Respondent Demographics

Demographic	f	%
Gender		
Female	53	57,6%
Male	39	42,4%
Total	92	100%
Age		
20 – 25 year	42	45,7%
Demographic		
f		
26 – 30 year	18	19,6%
≥ 30 year	32	34,7%
Total	92	100%
Tenure		
1 – 2 year	16	17,4%
2 – 3 year	31	33,7%
≥ 3 year	45	48,9%
Total	92	100%

Based on the descriptive analysis indicates high levels of emotional labor ($M = 64.38$, $SD = 6.69$) and self-efficacy ($M = 68.29$, $SD = 7.88$) among respondents, with work resilience also falling in the moderate–high range ($M = 62.18$, $SD = 6.19$). These distributions suggest that employees possess both the emotional regulation capacity and self-belief necessary to withstand occupational pressures. Collectively, the findings reflect a workforce with strong psychological resources for coping with emotionally demanding service interactions.

Table 2.
Descriptive Statistics

Variable	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Emotional Labor	92	55	69	64.38	6.693
Self-Efficacy	92	61	73	68.29	7.884
Work Resilience	92	57	74	62.18	6.188

Correlation analysis (Table 3) reveals significant positive relationships among the variables. Emotional labor correlated moderately with work resilience ($r = 0.632, p = 0.003$), while self-efficacy also showed a moderate positive correlation with resilience ($r = 0.514, p = 0.000$). A weaker yet significant correlation was found between emotional labor and self-efficacy ($r = 0.270, p = 0.000$). These findings indicate that both constructs function as psychological resources that support employee resilience.

Table 3.
Correlation Matrix

		Correlation		
		Emotional Labor	Self-Efficacy	Work Resilience
Emotional Labor	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.270**	.632
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.003
	N	92	92	92
		Correlation		
		Emotional Labor	Self-Efficacy	Work Resilience
Self-Efficacy	Correlation Coefficient	.270**	1.000	.514
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000
	N	92	92	92
Work Resilience	Correlation Coefficient	.632	.514	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	.000	.
	N	92	92	92

Regression analysis (Table 4) shows that both emotional labor ($B = 0.890, p < 0.001$) and self-efficacy ($B = 0.259, p < 0.001$) significantly predict work resilience. Self-efficacy demonstrates a slightly stronger standardized effect ($\beta = 0.217$) compared to emotional labor ($\beta = 0.193$). This indicates that while both predictors contribute meaningfully, self-efficacy serves as the more influential determinant.

Table 4.
Multiple Regression Coefficients

Coefficients ^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1 (Constant)	54.637	3,203			13.979	.000
Emotional Labor	.890	.210	.193		4.238	.000
Self Efficacy	.259	.040	.217		6.816	.000

The F-test confirms that the overall regression model is statistically significant ($F = 122.632, p = 0.000$), indicating that emotional labor and self-efficacy jointly explain a meaningful portion of variance in work resilience (Table 5).

Table 5.
F-Test Regression Model

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	5123.45	2	2561.73	122.632	0.000
Residual	2886.12	89	32.43	.	.
Total	8009.57	91	.	.	.

The t-test results indicate that emotional labor ($t = 4.238, p < 0.001$) and self-efficacy ($t = 6.816, p < 0.001$) significantly influence work resilience (Table 6). Therefore, both variables can be said to contribute independently to the development of employee resilience in emotionally demanding work environments.

Table 6.
Results of t-Test

Variable	t-Value	Sig.
Emotional Labor	4.238	0.000
Self-Efficacy	6.816	0.000

Model summary statistics (Table 7) show strong predictive power, with $R^2 = 0.64$, indicating that 64% of the variance in work resilience is explained by the two predictors. The correlation coefficient ($R = 0.800$) also reflects a robust overall model fit.

Table 7.
Model Summary and Coefficient of Determination

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of Estimation
1	.800 ^a	.640	.631	3,89

Discussion

The results of this study provide empirical evidence that both emotional labor and self-efficacy significantly predict work resilience among customer service employees. These findings are consistent with and extend prior theoretical assumptions and empirical studies, reinforcing the psychological interplay between emotional regulation, perceived competence, and adaptive capacity in high-stress work environments. This adds support to emerging frameworks suggesting that resilience in service work is shaped not only by individual traits but also by the emotional demands embedded in relational labor, as highlighted by Tao (2025) in recent emotional labor reviews.

The positive and statistically significant relationship between emotional labor and work resilience ($\beta = 0.193, p < 0.001$) indicates that employees who successfully regulate their emotional expressions in accordance with organizational display rules tend to exhibit stronger psychological endurance. This finding is consistent with Hong et al. (2023) and De Vries et al. (2022), who argue that emotional labor (particularly deep acting) can foster internal coherence, reduce emotional dissonance, and promote adaptive functioning over time. Because emotional labor comprises both surface acting and deep acting, with deep acting generally associated with more functional psychological outcomes, the current results align with theoretical perspectives that frame deep acting as a constructive coping mechanism. At the same time, by contrasting with studies that highlight the adverse effects of surface acting, the present findings offer a more nuanced understanding: emotional labor, when enacted within manageable demands or supported by other psychological resources, may enhance rather than undermine resilience. This interpretation reflects a growing scholarly recognition that emotional labor can operate as a functional strategy when contextual factors such as autonomy, social support, or cultural norm congruence buffer its potential negative impact.

Interestingly, this finding contrasts with earlier literature Clarke et al. (2024) and Kariou et al. (2021) that consistently framed emotional labor as a psychological burden leading to burnout and emotional exhaustion. The apparent divergence may be partially attributed to the cultural context of Indonesia, where collectivist norms and service-oriented politeness are deeply embedded in workplace behavior (Tambun et al., 2025; Rajiani & Kot, 2020). In such contexts, emotional

display rules may be more norm-congruent with employees' values, thereby reducing emotional dissonance and increasing resilience. Thus, this study offers a culturally contextualized insight into the emotional labor construct, highlighting how its effects are not universally maladaptive but may vary by cultural and occupational norms.

The analysis reveals that self-efficacy exerts a greater standardized influence on work resilience ($\beta = 0.217, p < 0.001$) than emotional labor, underscoring its role as a robust psychological buffer. This supports Bandura's (1997) theory, which posits that individuals with high self-efficacy are more capable of maintaining motivation, regulating emotional reactions, and persisting under pressure. Moreover, these findings are consistent with recent studies such as Delgado et al. (2020) and Yuan et al. (2025), which demonstrate that self-efficacy significantly predicts coping effectiveness, adaptive behavior, and lower stress reactivity in emotionally challenging professions. The stronger predictive power of self-efficacy also echoes resilience models positioning efficacy beliefs as primary drivers of cognitive appraisal and stress reactivity, suggesting that employees who perceive themselves as competent may reinterpret emotional demands as manageable rather than threatening.

What distinguishes this study is the integrative approach to examining how self-efficacy functions not only as an independent predictor but also as a complementary factor to emotional labor. The moderate correlation ($r = 0.270, p < 0.001$) between emotional labor and self-efficacy further suggests that individuals who believe in their competence may be better equipped to engage in emotional regulation strategies effectively. This interaction reinforces the idea that self-efficacy modulates the impact of emotional labor on outcomes such as burnout or resilience, as proposed by Cabrera-Aguilar et al. (2023).

This study contributes to the growing literature by offering a multi-variable explanatory model of work resilience that integrates emotional labor and self-efficacy constructs often studied in isolation. While prior research has predominantly focused on how emotional labor predicts burnout or job dissatisfaction (Rughoobur-Seetah et al., 2023; No & Kim, 2021), the current study shifts the focus toward positive psychological adaptation, highlighting how these psychological mechanisms support rather than undermine employee functioning.

Moreover, the model explained 64% of the variance in work resilience ($R^2 = 0.64$), indicating substantial explanatory power. This suggests that interventions aimed at improving emotional regulation skills and enhancing self-efficacy beliefs could have practical value in fostering resilience within emotionally demanding work environments. In light of this, organizations are encouraged to provide training programs that not only address technical competencies but also emphasize emotional intelligence, coping strategies, and self-belief enhancement. Such interventions may be especially impactful in customer service roles where emotional display rules are explicitly defined, enabling organizations to cultivate resilience not merely as an individual trait but as a supported competency.

Despite its contributions, this study is not without limitations. The use of self-report measures may be subject to social desirability bias, especially in collectivist cultures where expressing emotional strain may be stigmatized. Additionally, while the findings indicate a strong relationship between the predictor variables and work resilience, causal inferences remain limited due to the correlational design. The reliance on cross-sectional data also restricts the ability to capture the temporal dynamics of emotional labor and resilience, which are likely to fluctuate across varying service interactions.

Future research could explore these relationships using longitudinal or experimental methods, and examine moderating variables such as gender, emotional intelligence, or organizational support, which may influence the emotional labor–resilience dynamic. It is also recommended that comparative studies be conducted across different cultural or organizational settings to assess the generalizability of the findings and refine theoretical models further. Investigating multilevel factors such as team climate or leadership emotional norms may also illuminate how structural and relational contexts shape the adaptive or maladaptive consequences of emotional labor.

Conclusion

This study concludes that both emotional labor and self-efficacy significantly contribute to the development of work resilience among customer service employees in emotionally demanding work environments. The findings suggest that the ability to regulate emotional expressions in

accordance with organizational expectations traditionally perceived as burdensome can serve as an adaptive mechanism that fosters psychological endurance, especially when accompanied by a strong sense of self-efficacy. This study offers a nuanced perspective by showing that emotional labor is not inherently detrimental; rather, in collectivist cultural contexts such as Indonesia, emotional regulation aligned with social and organizational values may enhance resilience. Furthermore, self-efficacy emerged as a more dominant predictor of work resilience, affirming Bandura's theory that belief in one's own capability is a key resource for managing occupational stress. By integrating emotional labor and self-efficacy into a unified explanatory model, this study makes a novel contribution to industrial and organizational psychology, particularly in understanding how personal and contextual resources interact to sustain psychological resilience in service roles characterized by high emotional intensity.

Recommendation

Based on the findings, it is recommended that organizations especially those in the service sector implement psychological interventions that focus on enhancing employees' self-efficacy and emotional regulation skills, such as emotional intelligence training and confidence-building programs. Future research should consider employing longitudinal or experimental designs to explore causal relationships, and investigate potential moderating variables such as organizational support or emotional intelligence to deepen the understanding of the interplay between emotional labor, self-efficacy, and work resilience across different cultural and organizational contexts.

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