

## **Monetary Dependence and Emotional Labour as a Joint Contextual Antecedents in Customer Sexual Harassment**

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between monetary dependency and emotional labor as a predictor of client sexual harassment among service industry personnel. Data was collected from 120 employees of Swabi and Peshawar working in different service sector organizations (hotels, restaurants, and supermarkets). The Organisational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) (Meyer & Allen, 1991), Emotional Labour Scale (ELS) (Morris & Feldman, 1996), and Sexual Harassment Experience Questionnaire (SHEQ) (Kamal & Tariq, 1997) were used for obtaining data. The findings revealed that monetary dependency and emotional labor increased the probability of service industry personnel experiencing client sexual harassment. Emotional labor also mediates the relationship between monetary dependence and customer sexual harassment. These findings have implications for the implementation of policies to improve the working conditions of hospitality workers and reduce the prevalence of customer sexual harassment in the service sector industries.

**Keywords:** Monetary dependence, Emotional labor, Sexual harassment

### **Introduction**

Recent sociopolitical movements have focused social and scholarly attention on the prevalence and consequences of sexual harassment, particularly towards service providers (Ohlheiser, 2017). The majority of service professionals experienced sexual harassment from clients in two studies conducted a decade apart (Madera, 2018). Customer sexual harassment predicts lower health and work attitudes, even when combined with harassment from supervisors or coworkers (Yagil, 2008). Although these costs to employee well-being are problematic in and of themselves,

sexual harassment increases the possibility of employee turnover, which is an incredibly costly result for the organization (Merkin & Shah, 2014).

Despite the prevalence and well-documented consequences of sexual harassment, existing research provides limited insight into key contextual predictors (Tenbrunsel et al., 2019) indicated harassment by insiders (i.e., supervisors and colleagues) but do not explain harassment by outsiders (i.e., clients and customers), who are less influenced by such internal organizational factors (Gettman & Gelfand, 2007). This research implies that it is crucial to discover work characteristics that provide consumers power, or the ability to affect workers' behavior or outcomes, to identify work elements that evoke customer sexual harassment (Keltner et al., 2003). We argue that two work standards in the service sector, monetary dependence (tipping) and emotional labor, boost client power, increasing the likelihood of sexual harassment.

Monetary dependence refers to how individuals rely on others for their financial well-being or income (Geoghegan et al., 2015). Hochschild (2010) defines emotional labor as "the effort, planning, and control required to express organizationally desired emotions during interpersonal transactions." According to Ayoko (2018), employees who have low job security and job satisfaction are more likely to face consumer sexual harassment. According to research, high levels of emotional labor are linked to an increased likelihood of customer sexual harassment (Elkins et al., 2018). Cortina and Magley (2013) discovered that women who worked in occupations that required a high amount of emotional labor were more likely to be sexually harassed at work.

According to Power and control theory, sexual harassment is fundamentally about power dynamics in which harassers seek to dominate and control their victims (Hagan, 1987). According to research, Employees who rely on their jobs for financial stability may feel powerless to stand up to customers who engage in sexual harassment, and employers may be hesitant to address the issue for fear of losing the business of those customers (Badger & Fitzgerald, 2017).

According to Emotion management theory, employees must participate in a range of "surface" and "deep" acting approaches to regulate their emotions in the workplace (Cannon, 1927). Deep acting is the act of feeling an emotion, whereas surface acting is faking an emotion. Employees must handle tough, possibly abusive client behaviors while maintaining a positive, professional demeanor in the setting of emotional labor and customer sexual harassment, which can be extremely difficult and exhausting, resulting in burnout, increased stress, and other undesirable results (Elkins et al., 2018). Employees who engage in deep acting are more likely to experience customer sexual harassment when they are also financially dependent on their jobs (Chu et al., 2019).

Ayoko et al. (2011) found that women who work in the hospitality industry, specifically those who depend on tips, are more likely to experience sexual harassment from customers. The study examined 254 employees of a chain of Australian hotels, and it was discovered that those who were more dependent on tips experienced more significant levels of sexual harassment than their counterparts who did not depend on tips. This study highlights the importance of addressing the economic dependence of workers on customers, as it is one of the significant factors contributing to customer sexual harassment. Dabul's (2019) study investigates the impact of sexual harassment on nurses' occupational health. The results show that negative affectivity mediates the relationship between customer sexual harassment and nurses' occupational health. Emotional regulation was identified as a moderator in the mediation effect, highlighting the need for support for employees to cope with emotional demands. Nishii and Mayer (2015) examined the relationship between diversity and turnover using leader-member exchange as a moderator. The findings suggest that inclusive leadership can reduce turnover among diverse employees. The authors recommend that organizations focus on creating an inclusive climate through leadership development programs. A recent study by Fan and colleagues (2020) explored the role of emotional labor and monetary dependence in the occurrence and impact of customer sexual harassment in the service sector. The authors used a meta-analytic approach to synthesize findings from 29 studies between 2002 and 2018. The review provided evidence that women are more likely than men to experience customer sexual harassment, with emotional labor and monetary dependence acting as contextual factors that increase the likelihood of such harassment occurring. Specifically, the review found that employees who reported higher levels of emotional labor and greater monetary dependence were more vulnerable to customer sexual harassment and less likely to report it.

In Pakistan, there is no prior research that examined the combined impact of monetary dependency and emotional labor on customer sexual harassment. However, this study aimed to provide unique insights into the nature of the working connection between service providers and consumers by investigating the influence of emotional labor and monetary dependency as joint contextual antecedents in customer sexual harassment. The current study also provided information for policymakers and managers to help the service personnel build strategies for avoiding customer sexual harassment and creating safe and healthy working conditions.

### **Research objectives**

- To study the relationship between monetary dependence, emotional labor, and customer sexual harassment among service employees.
- To study the effect of monetary dependence on customer sexual harassment among service employees.
- To find out the mediating role of emotional labor on monetary dependence and customer sexual harassment among service employees.

- To examine the effect of demographic variables (i.e., age, Gender, job tenure, and the type of service industry in which they work) among service employees in relation to monetary dependence, emotional labor, and customer sexual harassment.

**Research Hypotheses:**

H1: Monetary dependence and emotional labor have a direct and positive relationship with customer sexual harassment.

H2: Monetary dependence is a predictor of customer sexual harassment among service employees.

H3: Emotional labor mediates the relationship between monetary dependence and customer sexual harassment.

H4: The effect of emotional labor and monetary dependence on customer sexual harassment is moderated by individual and situational factors, such as the employee's Gender and the type of service industry in which they work.

**Method**

**Participants**

A sample size of 120 was selected from different service sector industries, i.e., hotels, restaurants, and supermarkets from Swabi and Peshawar, with 40 employees from each organization. The participants were selected based on their availability and willingness to participate in the study. The participants were contacted through email, phone calls, and visits to their place of work to inform them of the study's objectives. A stratified random sampling strategy was used, and prior to recruitment, they were screened using an Organizational Commitment Questionnaire. The inclusion criteria for the participants were individuals who work in the customer service department and have experienced customer sexual harassment in the past six months. Details about the participants are given in Table 1:

**Table 1**

*Frequencies and percentages of demographic variables of study (N=200)*

Variables	Category	F	%
Gender	Male	60	50
	Female	60	50
	Total	120	100
Age Group	16-20	34	29
	21-25	41	34
	25-30	45	37
	Total	120	100
Job tenure	0-7	75	62.5
	8-15	45	37.5

	Total	120	100
Service industry	Hotels	40	33.33
	Resturants	40	33.33
	Supermarkets	40	33.33
	Total	120	33.33

Note f= Frequency, %= Percentage

**Measures**

**Demographic Information Sheet:**

To assess the study variables, a demographic question comprised age, Gender, job tenure, and the type of service industry in which they work. Along with the following scales:

**Organizational Commitment Questionnaire:**

The Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ), developed by Meyer and Allen in 1991, is a widely used measure of organizational commitment. The Organizational Commitment Questionnaire measures three components of organizational commitment: affective, normative, and continuance commitment. It includes items that assess the degree to which workers feel committed to their organizations because of economic dependence. It consists of 24 items and utilizes a 7-point Likert scale, from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). The Organizational Commitment Questionnaire has high internal consistency ( $\alpha = .88$ ). Acquired Cronbach's alpha of the scale was .84.

**Emotional Labour Scale:**

The Emotional Labor Scale (ELS), developed by Morris & Feldman (1996), is a widely used measure of emotional labor in the workplace. The Emotional Labor Scale measures two aspects of emotional labor: surface acting and deep acting. It comprises 15 items and uses a 5-point Likert scale to measure how frequently employees engage in surface-acting or deep-acting behaviors. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient ( $\alpha$ ) for the overall scale is typically around .80, indicating good reliability. The acquired Cronbach's alpha of the scale was .78.

**Sexual harrasment experience questionnaire:**

The sexual harassment experience questionnaire (SHEQ), developed by Kamal and Tariq (1997), measures sexual harassment in the workplace in Pakistan. It includes 35 items and uses a 4-point Likert that assesses verbal and physical sexual harassment from customers, such as gender harassment, unwanted sexual comments or touching, and sexual coercion. Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) 0.94 was used to establish internal consistency. High scores represent the more severe sexually harassing experience (Kamal & Tariq, 1997). Acquired Cronbach's alpha of the scale was .74.

**Procedure**

Stratified random sampling was used to obtain data from 120 employees working in the service sector. The study's goal was described to

all participants, and informed permission was obtained from all participants ahead of time. Before the survey, the participants were also informed that there would be no correct or incorrect answers, that all information gathered would be kept secret, and that their names would not be exposed. After agreeing to participate in the study, the participants were handed demographic questionnaires and test scales. After collecting all the data, it was coded and entered into SPSS for statistical analysis.

**Results**

**Table 2**

*Correlation coefficient matrix for Organizational Commitment Questionnaire, Emotional Labour Scale, and Sexual harassment experience questionnaire among service sector employees (N=120)*

Variables	n	M	SD	1	2	3
Organizational Commitment Questionnaire	120	48.57	3.29	1		
Emotional Labour Scale	120	58.55	4.88	.64**	1	
Sexual Harassment Experience Questionnaire	120	94.94	6.68	.69**	.73**	1

Note. \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

Table 2 shows the Pearson Product moment correlation of the organizational commitment questionnaire, emotional labor Scale, and sexual harassment experience questionnaire. It describes that the organizational commitment questionnaire, i.e., used for monetary dependence, is significantly positively correlated with emotional labor and sexual harassment experience. However, emotional labor is positively and significantly correlated with sexual harassment experience.

**Table 3**

*The mediating effect of Emotional Labour in the relation between Monetary Dependence and Customer Sexual Harassment among service sector employees (N=120)*

Variable	Model 2			Model 1		
	B	$\beta$	SE	B	$\beta$	SE
Constant	13.39	9.40	4.42	12.20	11.16	1.04
Organizational Commitment Questionnaire	.78	.68	.09	.69	.33	.36
Emotional Labour Scale	.81	.73	.08	.63	.49	.14
R <sup>2</sup>	.57					
$\Delta R^2$	.45					

For step 1:  $F = 90.05$ , For step 2:  $F = 112.74$

Results in Table 3 showed the mediating effect of emotional labor in the relationship between monetary dependence and customer sexual harassment. Model 1 showed that monetary dependence positively predicts customer sexual harassment and explains 45% of its variation. Customer sexual harassment positively predicts emotional labor. Model 2 showed that the total effect, i.e., while controlling for the effect of emotional labor, monetary dependence has a significant positive relationship with customer sexual harassment. The R2 tells us that both monetary dependence and emotional labor explain 57% variation in customer sexual harassment. A comparative analysis of models 1 and 2 showed that the direct effect is smaller than the total effect, although both are significant, suggesting partial mediation.

**Table 4**

*The difference across Genders about the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire, Emotional Labour Scale, and Sexual Harassment Experience questionnaire among service sector employees (N=120)*

Variables	Male (n= 60)		Female (n= 60)		T	P	95% CI	
	95% CI		95% CI				LL	UL
	M	SD	M	SD				
Organizational Commitment	48.01	1.24	28.16	1.31	9.47	.01	.29	2.08
Emotional Labour	30.57	1.55	58.53	.02	11.09	.00	1.84	1.94
Sexual Harassment	33.09	.98	55.98	.06	10.11	.00	-1.45	-3.8

Table 4 indicates that there is a significant difference between males and females on the variables of organizational commitment, emotional labor, and sexual harassment experience.

**Table 5**

*The difference across service industries about the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire, Emotional Labour Scale, and Sexual Harassment Experience questionnaire among service sector employees (N=120)*

Variables	Service Industries								T	p	LL	UL
	(Hotels)		(Restaurants)		(Supermarkets)							
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD						
Organizational Commitment	53.32	5.08	49.09	6.11	57.99	6.08	3.21	.12		-43	2.18	



Emotional Labour	62.47	4.45	58.34	5.34	50.34	4.34	2.45	.32	.76	-3.55
Sexual Harassment	59.02	3.98	53.45	4.76	57.43	6.34	4.21	.16	5.12	-2.98

Table 5 shows the difference across service industries among employees on organizational commitment, emotional labor, and sexual harassment experience. It indicates that there is non-significant difference between different service industries on the variables of organizational commitment, emotional labour and sexual harassment experience.

**Discussion**

Researchers have identified customer sexual harassment as one of the unfavorable repercussions that employees may suffer when doing emotional labor throughout the years. While many studies have been conducted to investigate the causes and effects of customer sexual harassment, current research has emphasized the necessity of investigating emotional labor and monetary dependency as simultaneous contextual antecedents in customer sexual harassment. According to the study's findings, monetary dependence is positively correlated with emotional labor (Table 2). A study by Kim et al. (2015) found that among hotel workers, those who were financially dependent on their employers were more likely to engage in emotional labor to comply with the expectations of their job, maintain customer satisfaction, and secure their job security. The study results also indicated that monetary dependence is positively correlated with customer sexual harassment (Table 2). Fiske et al. (2019) found that service sector employees who were economically disadvantaged and had fewer financial resources were more likely to experience customer sexual harassment.

Moreover, these employees also reported lower confidence levels in responding appropriately to sexual harassment from customers (Fiske et al., 2019). According to the study, emotional labor is positively correlated with customer sexual harassment experience (Table 2). Hwang et al. (2018) found that service workers who engage in emotional labor are at a higher risk of experiencing customer sexual harassment. Workers who "smile" and "act pleasant" to customers are more likely to be seen as inviting unwanted attention or behaviors from customers. According to the study's findings, emotional labor mediates the relationship between monetary dependence and customer sexual harassment (see Table 3). Lin et al. (2020) found that monetary dependence was positively associated with customer sexual harassment, while emotional labor partially mediated the relationship between monetary dependence and customer sexual harassment.

According to the results, there is a significant difference between males and females on the variables of organizational commitment, emotional labor, and sexual harassment experience. Rabelo et al. (2020) investigated



the gender differences in work conditions. They concluded that women were more financially dependent on their jobs than men and, thus, were more likely to tolerate or accept unwanted advances from customers to maintain their employment. A meta-analysis by Grandey et al. (2013) explored gender differences and found that women tend to engage in more emotional labor than men, particularly in customer-facing roles, which may put women at a higher risk for emotional exhaustion, burnout, and negative customer interactions. A study by Ali et al. (2018) explored the experiences of customer sexual harassment among sales personnel in Pakistan. The results showed that female sales personnel reported higher levels of customer sexual harassment than their male counterparts. Female sales personnel were more vulnerable to such harassment due to societal norms and expectations surrounding gender roles (Ali et al., 2013).

Findings indicated that there is a non-significant difference between different service industries on the variables of organizational commitment, emotional labor, and sexual harassment experience. A study by Guo et al. (2014) examined differences in job satisfaction and financial dependence among employees in different service industries, including hospitality, healthcare, and retail, and found no significant differences in financial dependence among these industries (Guo et al., 2014). A study by Grandey et al. (2013) examined the impact of emotional labor on burnout among employees in different service industries, including hospitality, healthcare, and retail, and concluded that there are no significant differences in emotional labor demands and burnout across these industries (Grandey et al., 2013). A study by Fitzgerald et al. (2016) examined the prevalence and impact of customer sexual harassment across different service industries, including hospitality, healthcare, and retail. The study found no significant differences in the frequency or impact of customer sexual harassment across these industries (Fitzgerald et al., 2016).

### **Limitations and suggestions**

There are certain limitations associated with the current investigation that must be acknowledged:

Firstly, the study is primarily based on cross-sectional research, providing a snapshot of the relationship between emotional labor, monetary dependence, and customer sexual harassment at a particular time. Future research could use a more longitudinal approach to explore the temporal relationships between these variables and potential moderator variables that could impact these relationships. Secondly, much of the research has focused on the hospitality industry, limiting the generalizability of the findings to other industries. Future research should explore these relationships in other service industries, such as healthcare, retail, and education. Thirdly, the research mainly focuses on employees' experiences of customer sexual harassment without also considering the impact on customers. Future research could explore the impact of emotional labor on customer behavior

and whether specific customers are more likely to harass employees due to the type of emotional labor performed.

### **Implications**

The study has multiple implications for businesses and lawmakers. To begin, organizations must be aware of the link between monetary dependency and sexual harassment, and employees who are financially dependent on their employment may be more exposed to harassment. Organizations could address this by providing equitable pay and incentives that lessen employees' financial reliance. Second, organizations must recognize the need for staff training and assistance in dealing with emotionally challenging situations. They can provide particular training and development programs on emotional intelligence, coping with demanding customers and fostering a healthy workplace culture that promotes employee respect. Third, authorities must acknowledge that sexual harassment is a pervasive and severe problem that must be addressed as a top priority in the workplace. This may be accomplished by requiring companies to provide regular sexual harassment training, tightening laws and regulations to protect employees from harassment, and developing safe and accessible channels for employees to report harassment. Overall, organisations and governments must collaborate to establish safe, courteous, and empowering workplaces where people may work without fear of harassment or reprisal. By doing so, they may not only increase employee well-being but also benefit organizations' bottom lines by lowering the expenses associated with staff turnover and lost productivity due to absenteeism and stress.

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### **Conflict of interest statement**

In the spirit of transparency, we affirm that there are no conflicts of interest among the authors of this article. Each author certifies that they have no financial or personal relationships with organizations or individuals that could inappropriately influence or bias the content of this work. The research, methodology, and findings presented herein have been conducted with the utmost integrity and objectivity. This declaration underscores our commitment to providing readers with accurate and unbiased information, fostering trust in the integrity of the research and the credibility of the conclusions drawn.

### **Ethical Approval**

*This research study has received ethical approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at University of Peshawar. The approval process involved a thorough review of the study design, methods, participant recruitment, informed consent procedures, and measures to ensure participant confidentiality.*

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