

# AN ANALYSIS ON THE EFFECT OF DA AS A MEDIATOR BETWEEN TRAIT-BASED EI AND INDIVIDUAL WORK PERFORMANCE AMONG BANK TELLERS

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## ABSTRACT

*This research aims to analyze the role of Deep Acting (DA) as a mediating variable in the relationship between Trait EI and Individual Work Performance. To meet this objective, a study was conducted among the bank tellers. Because bankers need to act and behave according to the situations at bank. Many research findings show that Deep Acting helps individual performance of the employees. Researchers find a scope of using deep acting role in the banks. So, this research has used deep acting as a mediator of the Trait EI and Individual Work Performance (IWP) among bankers. Three hundred and sixty responses were collected from bank tellers. In this study, the TEISF scale was used to measure Trait EI, Emotional Labor Strategy scale was used to measure DA, and the Individual Work Performance scale was used to measure performance. The data was collected from two cities of Tamilnadu, India in 2018 for this study. PLS 3 was carried out to study the relationship between Trait EI and Individual Work Performance mediated through DA. The result confirms that DA fully mediates the relationship between trait EI and individual work performance.*

**Keywords:** Deep Acting (DA), Trait EI (TEI), Emotional Labor (EL), Individual Work Performance (IWP), Bank Employees, and Service Industry.

## INTRODUCTION

Emotion is a very important aspect that helps us to develop relationship and motivates us to act in a particular way and also help us survive when in trouble. Exhibition of emotions helps us to understand how the other person is feeling. In any industry today, customer service is all about meeting or exceeding customer's expectation and communicating effectively. Therefore, one needs to adopt a communication pattern that could respond to the customer's state of mind and for this developing EI could be of great help. Extant research has identified that EI has a positive and significant relationship with performance (Goleman, 1998; Mount, 2006). Few researchers have confirmed that there is a strong connect between EI and work outcomes (see, for example, George, 2000; Lopes et al. 2006; Chong et al. (2020) shows that a positive significant relationship between EI and job performance in higher educational institutions. Several studies have explored the relationship between EI and jobs requiring emotional labor. Brotheridge (2006) examined how EI related to emotional labor and situational demands. Employees with a high level (based on high the score in a EI test) of EI were found to be exhibiting the required emotions at work and perform DA when the situation demands. EI has two facets ability EI and trait EI, trait EI focuses on emotional and social behavior and ability EI focuses on the ability to understand emotions.

The current study adopts the trait-based approach for two main reasons. First, because any service encounter could give rise to a potentially emotion-laden interaction, the authors argue that behavioral dispositions and self-perceived abilities play a critical role in influencing how a service encounter may unfold. Second, trait-based measures afford a more practical means of measuring EI. The measurement of trait EI is straightforward because the construct encompasses self-perceptions and dispositions which accord with the subjective nature of emotions (Petrides et al., 2007), measured through self-report questionnaires.

This study has been carried out with the bank customer service personnel and hence the researchers found the deployment of TEI more apt. As such the service sector has undergone huge changes because of policy changes, technological changes, and intensive competition. This leads to the employees going through high pressure as the customer's expectation and organization expectations in performance are very high. In today's scenario, the employees need to be involved in their work not only physically, but also emotionally and mentally to deliver outstanding performance (Turner et al., 2002). The service provider needs to exhibit the required behavior, especially as a customer service personnel. Organizations focus on how their employees handle their emotions and how good they are at regulating their emotions as the ability to regulate emotions is a positive trait for better organizational performance.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **Trait Ei**

Salovey & Mayer (1990) defined EI as a subset of social intelligence that involves the "*ability to monitor one's own and other's feelings and emotions*". According to Mayer & Geher (1996) to understand the concept of EI, it requires exploration of two dimensions: emotion and intelligence. Mayer et al. (1999) have formulated a revised model of EI that gives more importance to the cognitive components of EI and conceptualizes EI as far as potential for emotional development and intellectual development. EI can prompt to enhance functioning in an assortment of aspects of life, for example, achievement and close relationships. (Goleman, 1995; Salovey & Mayer, 1990). A bank should be aware of the EI and how they should take into account the various elements of EI for improvement in the job performance in banks (Anand et al., 2019).

Kiss et al. (2014) looked at the effects of general intelligence and EI and personality preferences on academic performance. The study revealed that EI, general intelligence, and personality traits are positively associated with students' academic performance. Cook, et al. (2011) focused on finding out whether EI impacts the students' specializing in accountancy. The study stated that future research is required to determine the levels of EI of practicing accountants to find how EI may impact the careers of those with the said skills. At the same time, EI is highly relevant to the development of the organization as well as employees. Davar & Singh, (2014) study suggest that the cooperative banks must take measures like training for EI and recruit persons with higher levels of EI.

### **Emotional Labour**

In the service industry, workers are expected to exhibit positive emotions like a smile on the face and greeting customers pleasantly. Even if the service personnel has a personal problem on a particular day, one has to act in the required or stated manner to the customer; this may have a negative impact on the service personnel's well-being or health. It is here that the emotional labor strategies like surface acting or DA are used by the service personnel. Hochschild, (1983) stated that emotional labor is, managing emotions as part of the work role

and others. She articulated in a dramaturgical perspective of customer interactions, where the customer is the audience, the employee is the actor, and the work setting is the stage (Goffman 1959; Grove et al., 1989). Of late, the use of emotional labor strategies are studied in connection to coworkers and other executives at any level Ashkanasy & Humphrey, (2011); Gardner et al. (2009), and even with married partners (Yanchus et al., 2010). EL is performed through three methods: surface acting (pretending or regulating one's emotional expression), DA (conscious modification of one's emotions to express a desire, emotion), and Expression of natural felt emotions. In this article, researchers intend to use DA as a technique as many studies have proved that DA has a positive influence on job performance.

### **Deep Acting**

Hochschild (1983) states that service employees perform EL in two ways a, surface acting and DA. DA mainly focuses on inner feelings; it projects empathy to the customers. It is a process to control internal thoughts and feelings to provide the needed emotion for that particular situation (Goldberg & Grandey, 2007). Gulsen & Ozmen (2020) study shows that job satisfaction level was higher than the medium level, and there was a negative correlation between DA and Job Satisfaction among Turkish nurses. DA employees perform more vibrant in the workplace, and they feel more satisfied with their jobs Hülshager & Schewe (2011) on the other side Scheele et al. (2014) DA didn't affect "job burnout" or "daily anxiety." The relationship of DA and job satisfaction is also significantly moderated by EI among Libyan bankers (Elganas & Sheppard, 2019).

### **Individual Work Performance**

According to Chaplin (1991), employee performance is defined as an

*"Individual outcomes based on the size and behavioral standards for the related job, and which led to an outcome, especially behavior that can change the environment in certain ways".*

On the other side, Wood et al. (1990) stated that

*"Employee performance is a record of the results produced in a specific job function or activity during a specific period associated with organizational objectives".*

Borman & Motowidlo (1993) recognized two broad classes of employee behavior TP and CP. Both types of behavior are expected to contribute to organizational effectiveness but in different manners (Kiker & Motowidlo, 1999).

*H1: There is a significant relationship between TEI and IWP with DA as a mediator.*

Sy et al. (2006) study found that employees with higher EI scores have higher job performance. Some of the previous research Law (2004); Wong & Law, (2002) also shown the same results, it was suggested that those who are well good at EI can easily regulate their emotions and it will reflex in their job performance. An employee with high EI seems to be more aware, certain positive emotions can influence their behavior and it leads towards the work outcome. Hülshager & Schewe (2011) a study found that DA has a weak relationship between wellbeing and attitude but a positive relationship with emotional performance and customer satisfaction. Author's found that DA was unrelated to the psychological strain of depersonalization and it only slightly related to emotional exhaustion. This study shows that DA improves performance without affecting an employee's wellbeing. Kammeyer-Mueller et al. (2013) articulated that DA was unrelated to emotional exhaustion or stress and it was

positively related to job performance and job satisfaction. In Grandey (2000) the study states that in the service industry, DA should be positively related to job performance. Cheung & Tang, (2009) study was carried out among 486 service employees and the result shown that those who have a high score in EI use DA more often than surface acting. Lee & Ok, (2012) articulated that EI employees always prefer to choose DA over surface acting in their interaction with the customers and clients. There are ample numbers of research evidence shown that DA is a strong predictor of job performance. E.g. (Grandey, 2003; Groth et al., 2009). Mesmer-Magnus et al (2012) found that DA was positively related to work performance, TP, and emotional performance. Becker & Cropanzano, (2015) suggested that a meso-level approach may be more appropriate to find the relationship between DA and performance. In conclusion, a research found that there is a positive relationship between DA and performance.

In this study, the researcher seeks to know, how TEI helps IWP mediates through DA.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Instruments

The research instruments used in the survey questionnaire are

1. Trait EI (TEIQue-SF) -Petrides & Furnham (2006).
2. Emotional Labor strategies (EL) – Diefendorff et al. (2005).
3. Individual Work Performance (IWP) – Koopmans et al. (2014).

### Procedure

Five hundred questionnaires were distributed for the survey. Out of 500 questionnaires, 414 questionnaires were received of which only 360 were filled and it was taken for the study. The respondents were selected based on simple random sampling. The data collected were only second-tier cities like Trichy, Tanjore, Pudukkottai, and Sivagangai from the state of Tamilnadu, India in 2018 for this study. Both private and public banks have been taken for the study, but predominantly the data which we received was from the bank tellers of Private Banks. The data were collected only from the bank tellers (Those who deal directly with customers).

*H1: There is a significant relationship between Trait EI and IWP with DA as a Mediator.*

To find out the relationship between Trait EI and IWP mediated through DA, a path analysis in PLS 3 was carried out Table 1 and Table 2.

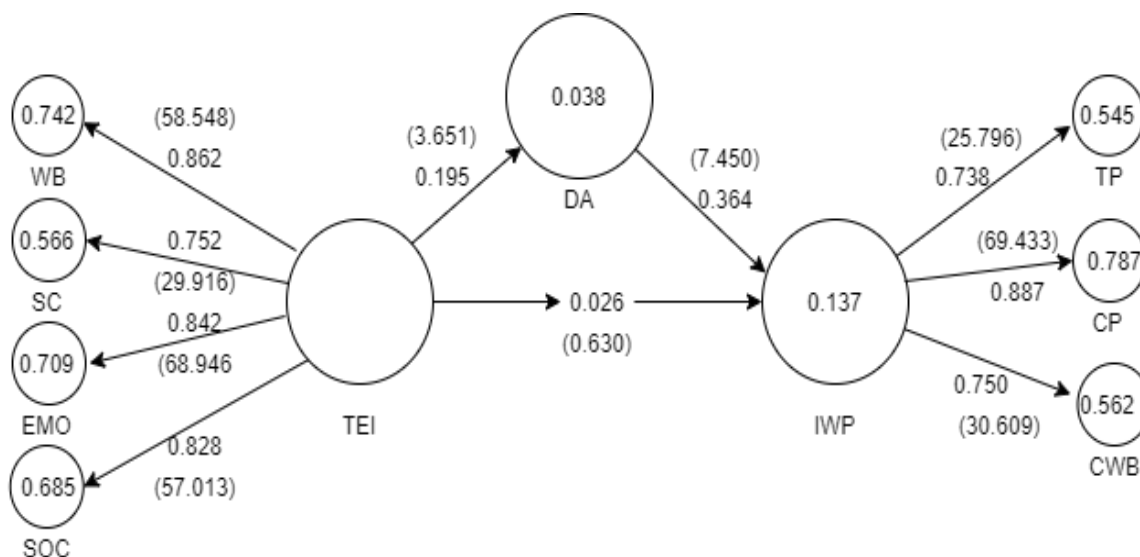
<b>Construct</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>	<b>Composite Reliability</b>	<b>Average Variance Extracted (AVE)</b>
WB	0.737	0.836	0.562
SC	0.662	0.792	0.538
EMO	0.724	0.844	0.645
SOC	0.688	0.768	0.536
TEI	0.847	0.879	0.572
DA	0.697	0.785	0.554
TP	0.644	0.761	0.515
CP	0.761	0.862	0.676
CWB	0.677	0.736	0.596
IWP	0.757	0.825	0.560

<b>Construct</b>	<b>CP</b>	<b>CWB</b>	<b>DA</b>	<b>EMO</b>	<b>SC</b>	<b>SOC</b>	<b>TP</b>	<b>WB</b>
CP	<b>0.822</b>							
CWB	0.522	<b>0.772</b>						
DA	0.220	0.341	<b>0.744</b>					
EMO	0.053	-0.059	0.022	<b>0.803</b>				
SC	0.041	-0.124	0.136	0.477	<b>0.733</b>			
SOC	0.106	0.106	0.146	0.606	0.638	<b>0.732</b>		
TP	0.492	0.329	0.356	0.057	0.144	0.213	<b>0.717</b>	
WB	0.095	-0.019	0.297	0.637	0.526	0.551	0.085	<b>0.749</b>

a. Wellbeing b. Self-control c. Emotionality d. Sociability has a reflection of Trait EI. Wellbeing measured an alpha value of 0.737, CR value of 0.836 & AVE level of 0.562, Self-Control measured an alpha value of 0.662, CR value of 0.792 & AVE level of 0.538, 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 0.536 which all are above the recommended level. Trait EI measured an alpha value of 0.847 CR value of 0.879 & AVE level of 0.572. These aspects prove that Trait EI with its four dimensions is a reliable scale to be used to test the model.

Likewise, a CP b. TP c. CWB has a reflection of IWP. CP measured an alpha value of 0.761, C.R value of 0.862 & AVE level of 0.676, TP measured an alpha value of 0.644, C.R value of 0.761 & AVE level of 0.515, Counter-Productive Work Behaviour measured an alpha value of 0.677 C.R value of 0.736 & AVE level of 0.596. Individual Work Performance measured an alpha value of 0.757, CR value of 0.825 & AVE level of 0.560.

These aspects prove that IWP with its three dimensions is a reliable scale to be used to test the Figure 1. DA is one of the dimensions of EL Strategies; it measured an alpha value of 0.697, C.R value of 0.785 & AVE level of 0.554. All the factors are maintained by the recommended values for this research.



**FIGURE 1  
TESTED MODEL FOR DA AS A MEDIATOR OF TEI AND IWP**

<b>Construct</b>	<b>Beta value</b>	<b>T Statistics</b>	<b>R square</b>	<b>P Values</b>	<b>Results</b>
TEI -> WB	0.862	58.548	0.742	0.000	Significant
TEI -> SC	0.752	29.916	0.566	0.000	Significant
TEI -> EMO	0.842	68.946	0.709	0.000	Significant
TEI -> SOC	0.828	57.013	0.685	0.000	Significant
TEI -> DA	0.195	3.651	0.038	0.000	Significant
DA -> IWP	0.364	7.450	0.137	0.000	Significant
IWP -> TP	0.738	25.796	0.545	0.000	Significant
IWP -> CP	0.887	69.433	0.787	0.000	Significant
IWP -> CWB	0.750	30.609	0.562	0.000	Significant

Trait EI has four dimensions. The path linking TEI to Wellbeing was found positive significant at 0.05 level (beta = 0.862, t= 58.548). The path linking TEI to Self-control was found positive significant at 0.05 level (beta = 0.752, t= 29.916). The path linking TEI to emotionality has a positive significance at the 0.05 level (beta=0.842, t=68.946). The path linking TEI to Sociability has a positive significance at the 0.05 level (beta=0.828, t= 57.013). In all four dimensions, emotionality has a highly significant value compared to others.

IWP has three dimensions. The path linking IWP to TP was found to be positively significant at the 0.05 level (beta= 0.738, t= 25.796). The path linking IWP to CP was found to be positively significant at the 0.05 level (beta=0.887, t= 69.443). The path linking IWP to CWB was found to be positively significant at 0.05 level (beta= 0.750, t= 30.609). In all three, CP has a high sig. value compare with the other two in Table 3.

The path linking TEI to DA was found to be positively significant at 0.05 level (beta = 0.195, t= 3.651) 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 DA to IWP were found to be positive significant at 0.05 level (beta = 0.364, t= 7.450). The path linking TEI to IWP was found to be positive but not significant at 0.05 level (beta= 0.026, t= 0.630) in Table 4 & 5.

<b>Construct</b>	<b>Beta value</b>	<b>T Statistics</b>	<b>P-Value</b>
TEI -> IWP	0.026	0.630	0.529

<b>Construct</b>	<b>Beta value</b>	<b>T Statistics</b>	<b>P-Value</b>
TEI -> DA -> IWP	0.071	3.801	0.000

To find out the significant relationship between TEI and IWP through DA, the researchers calculated the beta as  $0.195 * 0.364$  which measured 0.071. Since this value is positive; it indicates that TEI is positively significant to IWP through DA. However, a direct relationship between TEI and IWP is positive but not significant. Further, it has been noticed that between TEI and IWP, DA has full mediation of the relationship.

## **DISCUSSION & IMPLICATION**

There is a significant relationship between TEI and IWP with DA as a mediator. The structural equation model results confirm the statistical association between Trait EI and IWP. Trait EI has four dimensions, of which Emotionality has exhibited a high t-value

(68.946) and beta value (0.842) and IWP has three dimensions, among that CP has shown the high t-value (69.443) and beta value (0.887). The T-value of Trait EI and IWP showed 0.630, which indicates that there is no strong relationship between both these variables at a 95% significance level. The beta value of Trait EI and IWP measures 0.026. It shows that the relationship between TEI and IWP has a positive relationship but not statistically significant. DA mediates the relationship between TEI and IWP. The t-value of the relationship showed 3.801, which means there is a strong relationship at 95% significance level and a beta value of the relationship showed a positive value (0.071), which indicates DA fully mediates the relationship.

Employee's actions and behaviors contribute to the goals of the organization Rotundo & Sackett, (2002). In customer service, EL strategies are important because employee behavior during interacting with customers and deliver the service is often perceived by the customer as the most important aspect of service quality. Both *'interpersonal and emotional display'* and tangible service delivery have been referred to as employee performance in the service industry (Bitner et al., 1990). Goodwin et al. (2011) stated that in the service industry DA is considered as genuine emotions, and customers perceived this as sincere expressions. The author suggested in the study that *"the extent to which employees engage in EL is positively related to task-oriented performance"* and the study found that DA was not significantly related to job performance among the call center employees.

In both private and public banks expect certain skills form the employees like

1. Punctuality
2. Numeric proficiency
3. Polite personality
4. Impressive communication skills
5. Ability to stay alert and attentive at all times
6. Good work ethics
7. Ability to create a good word of mouth

So, the employee must be very conscious of the work throughout a day. Many previous empirical studies have shown that DA is one of the best strategies for the employees, especially those who are in the service industry. For instance, in banks, customers expect authentic responses, as well as, expect clarity interaction. Suppose if the employee is not responding properly, obviously the customer might feel bad. If the same thing continues, the bank may lose a customer; just think if it happens across the nation how many customers a bank may lose both in private and public. So, the employees must have good interpersonal skills and show kind gestures to all the customers. Suppose if the banks are in the tier 3 cities, most of the customers may not know to fill up the challan properly even today. So, the employees should have patience and should do the needful. The researcher feels that if the employees are good in DA, he/she can do well of all those listed skills above. Today the banks have come to a point to provide service at the door step of the customers. This may also require the service personnel to exhibit the importance of the customer by exhibiting the right emotion and provide responses which will make the customer feel important. While providing this sort of a service the customer service personnel make have more time to deploy DA as a technique which may bring out the authenticity of the service.

This finding could add to the existing literature that DA mediating the relationship between trait EI and individual work performance in the bank sector. A few of the previous studies found the same result but in different sectors. For.eg. Hülshager et al (2010); Totterdell & Holman, (2003) showed that DA is influential in increased job performance. van Gelderen et al. (2017) showed that DA was positively related to daily service performance, whereas surface acting was negatively related to daily service performance.

Hence, Figure: 1 shows that DA fully mediates the relationship between trait EI and IWP.

## FUTURE DIRECTION AND CONCLUSION

The focus of this study is to explore the relationship of DA as a mediator of the relationship between TEI and IWP. The limitation of this study is that data was collected from tier 2 and tier 3 cities without no separate focus on public and private banks. It would be interesting to see the difference between the customer service personnel of public bankers and private bankers using DA as a strategy to retain and satisfy customers. Hence the researchers recommend to replicate this study to compare private and public bank customer service employees.

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