

Ignorance is Bliss: The Negative Effect of High Situational Awareness on Emotional Exhaustion



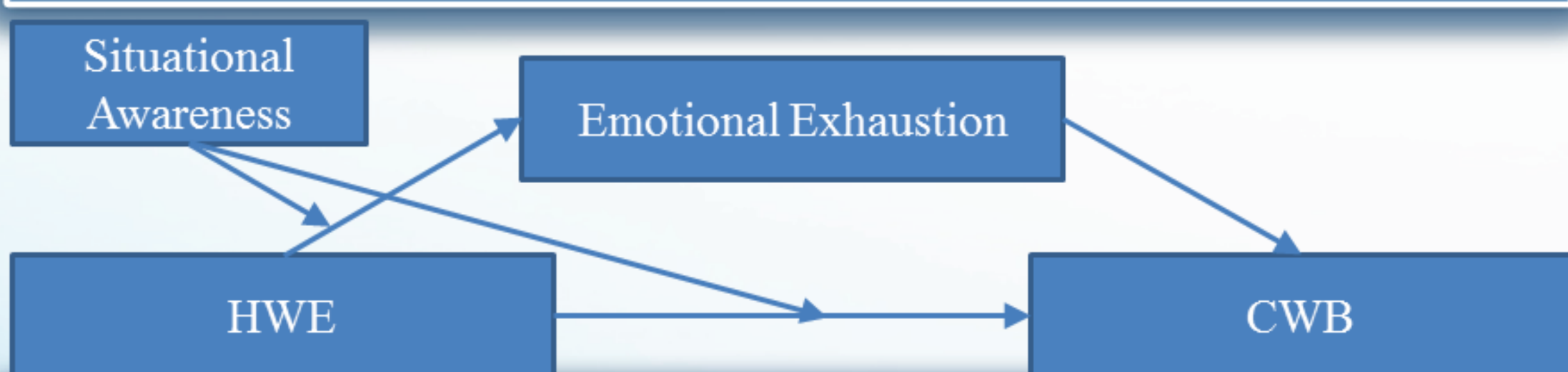
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Background

Force readiness is essential to mission readiness. To that end, we examined the relationship between hostile work environments (HWE; i.e., presence of discriminatory and harassing behaviors) and counterproductive work behaviors (CWB; i.e., behaviors exhibited by personnel that seek to undermine and threaten the efficacy of an organization; Dalal, 2005). CWBs are detrimental to total force readiness. HWE may increase CWB and emotional exhaustion by creating a resource loss spirals (i.e., inability to regain resource equilibrium). Conservation of resources theory suggests that employees seek to acquire, maintain, and preserve resources (i.e., energy, time, and emotions) to decrease stress and potential loss spirals (Hobfoll, 1989). One outcome of resource losses is emotional exhaustion – feeling persistently worn out emotionally and psychologically (Wright & Cropanzano, 1998). We suggest that situational awareness – awareness of the environment, self, and others (Endsley, 1995) – moderates the relationships of HWE with both emotional exhaustion and CWB. Because high situational awareness positions service members to be sensitive to HWE, we hypothesized that HWE is more (less) strongly related to emotional exhaustion and CWB among personnel high (low) in situational awareness.

- H1 • Hostile work environment is positively related to counterproductive work behavior.
- H2 • Hostile Work Environment is positively related to emotional exhaustion.
- H3 • Emotional Exhaustion is positively related to counterproductive work behavior.
- H4 • The effect of hostile work environment on counterproductive work behavior is both direct and indirect through emotional exhaustion.
- H5 • The direct effect of hostile work environment on counterproductive work behavior is moderated by situational awareness, such that the relationship is stronger among workers reporting higher rather than lower levels of situational awareness.
- H6 • The indirect effect of hostile work environment on emotional exhaustion is moderated by situational awareness, such that the relationship is stronger among workers reporting higher rather than lower levels of situational awareness.

Hypothesized Model



Method

Participants

Participants were 1,013 active duty military. Participants completed the DEOMI Organizational Climate Survey (DEOCS 3.3.5, 2012) at one time point (i.e., cross-sectional).

Measures

- Hostile Work Environment (HWE; $\alpha=.62$)
 - Adapted from Walsh, Matthews, Tuller, Parks, & McDonald (2010).
- Counterproductive Work Behavior (CWB; $\alpha=.97$)
 - Adapted from the Counterproductive Work Behavior Checklist (CWB-C; Spector, Fox, Penney, Bruursema, Goh, & Kessler, 2006).
- Emotional Exhaustion ($\alpha=.94$)
 - Adapted from the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI; Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996).
- Situational Awareness ($\alpha=.88$)
 - Developed by theoretical contributions from Endsley (1995).

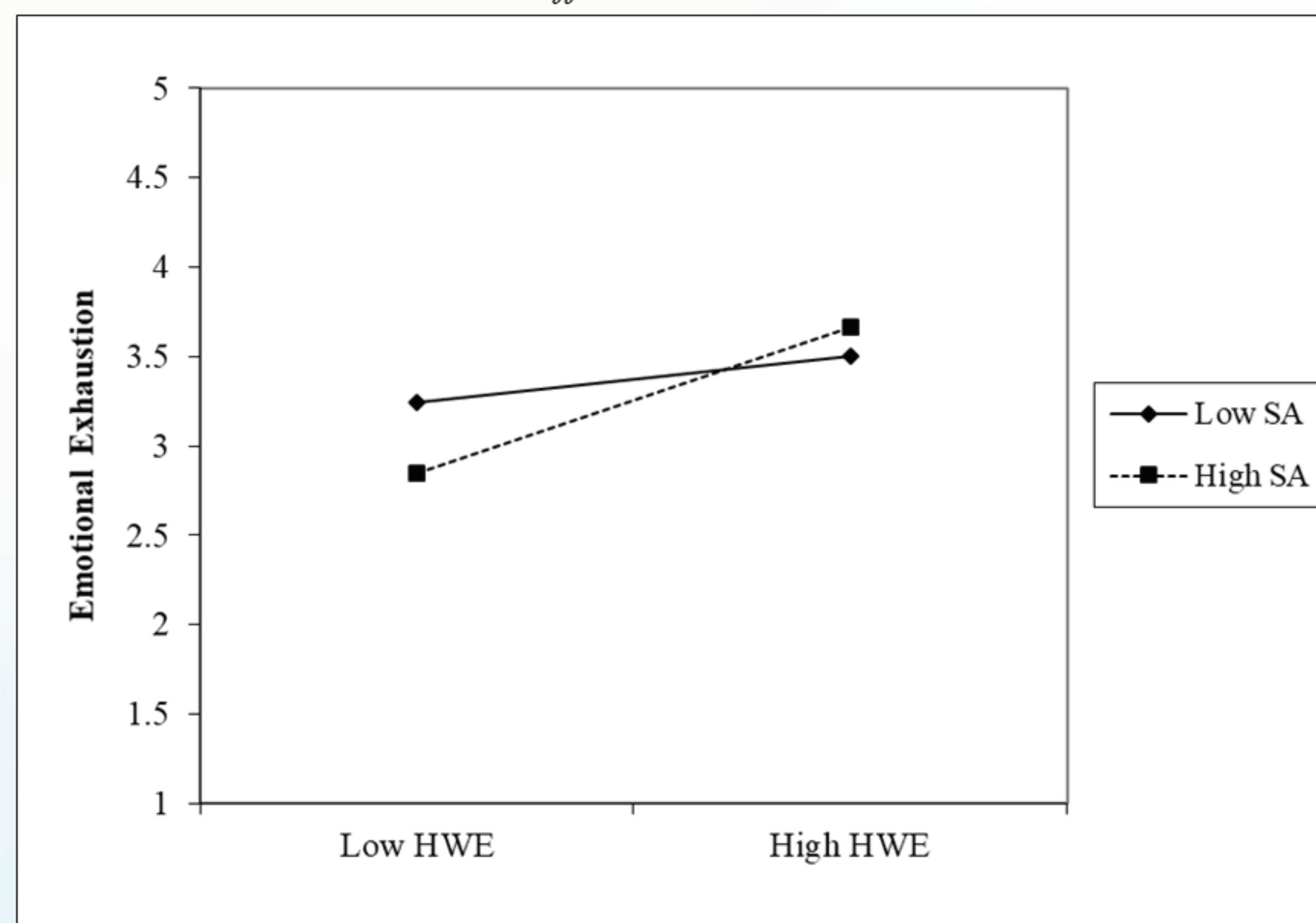
Tables and Figures

Table 2
 Conditional Indirect Effect Regression Results

Independent Variable	b	SE	t	p
Emotional Exhaustion				
Intercept	3.30	.03	100.08	.000
HWE	.37	.05	7.77	.000
SA	-.09	.05	-1.95	.05
HWE X SA	.27	.05	5.07	.000
CWB				
Intercept	1.08	.11	10.05	.000
EE	.21	.03	6.80	.000
HWE	.37	.05	7.68	.000
SA	-.33	.05	-7.02	.000
HWE X SA	-.13	.05	-2.44	.01

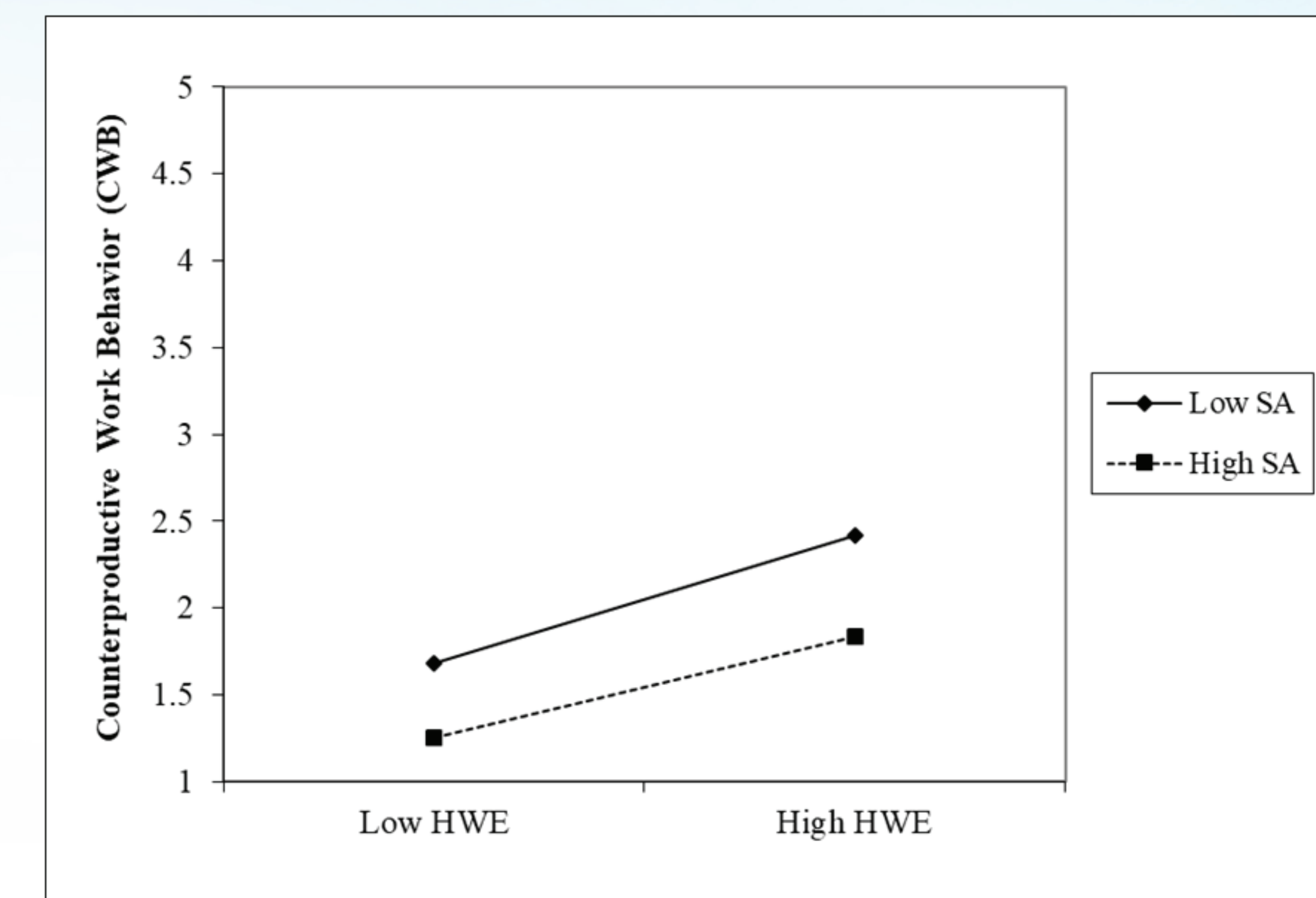
Note. HWE = Hostile Work Environment, SA = Situational Awareness, CWB = Counterproductive Work Behavior, EE = Emotional Exhaustion.

Figure 1
 Situational Awareness Moderation Effect on Path a



Note. HWE=Hostile Work Environment, SA=Situational Awareness.

Figure 2
 Situational Awareness (SA) Moderation on Path c'



Note. HWE=Hostile Work Environment, SA=Situational Awareness.

Results

Hypotheses 1-3 were supported via bivariate correlations ($r = .39, p < .001$; $r = .25, p < .001$; $r = .28, p < .001$, respectively). We tested the hypothesized model using Hayes (2012) Model 8 of the PROCESS macro for SPSS. The first model tested the conceptual model with emotional exhaustion as the outcome variable (figure 1); the second model tested the conceptual model with counterproductive work behavior as the outcome variable (figure 2). We assessed moderated mediation according to Preacher, Rucker, and Hayes (2007) two recommendations: 1) the interaction must be significant in both tested models and 2) the bootstrap confidence intervals cannot include zero. Both assumptions were met for both interaction terms (i.e., path a and path c', respectively; $b = .27, SE = .05, p < .001$; $b = -.13, SE = .05, p = .01$). Additionally, all direct and indirect paths through emotional exhaustion were significant. Hostile work environment is positively related to both emotional exhaustion ($b = .37, SE = .05, p < .001$) and counterproductive work behavior ($b = .37, SE = .05, p < .001$). Emotional exhaustion is positively related to counterproductive work behavior ($b = .21, SE = .03, p < .001$). Therefore, hypothesis 4 is supported.

The interaction term (i.e., hostile work environment x situational awareness) is significant in both the dependent variable model ($b = .27, SE = .05, p < .001$) and mediator model ($b = -.13, SE = .05, p = .01$). Despite significance, the direction of the interaction term for the direct path is inconsistent with hypothesis 5. The data suggest that high situational awareness decreases the amount of counterproductive work behavior exhibited after being exposed to a hostile work environment. Therefore, we reject hypothesis 5. However, hypothesis 6 is supported. The data suggest that when unit members high in situational awareness experience a hostile work environment, they are more likely to experience emotional exhaustion.

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