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A Study on Emotional Labour and Its Impacts on the Employees (Nursing Staff) of Health Care Sector

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Abstract:

“Emotional Labour”, a term most common for the service sector is actually the suppression of actual emotions for the fulfilment of job’s purpose and in order to achieve efficiency and productivity at work. The actual psychometric consequences are numerous and are getting rampant by many organizations. Usually the end result of emotional labour is burnout. Moreover, Spending maximum of the life time with fake emotions and surface acting may lead to the disorders like mental dissonance. And why not, it’s just like separating your internal “soul” from your “body” and that literally means that you cannot express your actual feels in order to have proficiency in your work. The gratification of living a life is more in case of those who express their emotions as compared to those who fake them for the fulfilment of their job’s requirements. The output of this emotional labour to the employee is mental dissonance and to the organisation is customer satisfaction. And thus, to know and measure these consequences, the researchers have done a study on the emotional labour and its impacts on nursing staff of the hospitals in the Patiala region of Punjab.

Keywords: *Emotional labour, surface acting, deep acting, emotional consonance, suppression, emotional exhaustion, healthcare sector*

1. Introduction

Emotions are considered to be the most mandatory part of a normal human being. Humans are the social animals and thus to show their compatibility and responses with the surroundings they express themselves through so called emotions. Moreover, the type of emotions a human has for particular situation, thing or the other human, reflects his thinking about it in his internal conscience. The important decisions related to life, work and other aspects are taken according to the flow of emotions. The optimism and pessimism are proved to be the outcomes of the emotions and feelings that a human perceives according to different situations he might have faced in his past life. Moreover, the range of acceptable emotions varies with culture, gender and age.

This research paper revolves all around the most common term of this era of LPG. The accelerating pace of competition has made organisations more concerned about their productivity and efficiency. And, for the players in service industry, the ultimate output is the “customer satisfaction” which can be achieved through in-depth hospitality or in other words, the so known emotional labour. Emotional Labour was the term coined by a sociologist Arlie Russell Hochschild in 1983 in her book *“The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling”*. Emotional labour is actually a technical term used for the phenomena in which an employee suppresses his actual feeling in order to fulfil the requirement of his/her job. The segregation of “what you actually feel” from “what you actually show” is the gap, that has to be elaborated and the consequences of this gap has to be studied by the researcher in this part of study. The emotional labour plays a very important role in the hospitality or service industry. The main focus of the hospitality industry is not only to get the “work done” but to get it done with a positive and amicable attitude as their actual pulse is the way there services are provided and the actual output is the customer satisfaction.

Emotional Labour is one of the mandatory parts of formal zone of organization. The recruitment and selection process of these organisations includes socialization phases. Moreover, Organisations maintain the hospitality skills of organisation through the use of some direct and indirect methods. The direct methods may include the process of training and development, feedback sessions, discussions and rituals whereas indirect methods include modelling and metaphors, stories and myths etc. The Employees usually submit themselves into the organization’s fulfilment and in exchange organizations provide them with intrinsic and extrinsic reward. Moreover, when an individual covers his actual emotions with the mask of hospitality or when the emotional displays are not identical to the actual ones, then that individual is performing surface acting so as to meet the requirements of his job.

Emotional Labour Increases the efficiency of work reduces a direct control and thus decreasing the interpersonal problems, it is being cherished by the organisations. But at the same point, restricting an individual from expressing his actual emotions leads to serious consequences on him. It may lead to various psychometric problems including mental dissonance that an employee may face in his

lifetime. This study is basically done to highlight the emotional labour of nursing staff of Hospitals. According to Maslach's (1982) findings on health care workers, the requirement of attending on and caring for patients continuously imposes an excessive emotional burden on health care professionals. It is being found that the workers who are highly empathetic in their service to the patients are more prone to the attack of burnout. After this disorientation of mindset, they usually cannot perform well in their work although they try to give their best. Thus, the effects of burnouts are the highest to those who do their best to meet the demand of their duty. These workers are trained to maintain a calm attitude around their patients and thus they suppress their real feelings and express the one that organisation wants. It's exactly equal to the separation of internal conscience from brain. This study has been basically conducted in three hospitals of district Patiala of Punjab state of India. The respondents are the nursing staff of the hospital.

2. Literature Review

As already discussed in former section, emotional labour theory actually deals with emotions that an individual feels or pretend to feel for the fulfilment of his job role. According to Hochschild's definition (1983, pp. 7), emotional labour is the management of feelings to create bodily and facial displays compliant with social requirements. Emotional labour has an exchange value, since it is paid wages for." The definition clearly predicts that this act of emotional labour is beneficial both for employee as well as for the organization. It actually extracts the efficiency of employees as well as the customer satisfaction which is subsequently the main motive of the organisation.

Emotions are feelings that people experience, interpret, reflect on, express, and manage (Thoits, 1989; Mills and Kleinman, 1988). They arise through social interaction, and are influenced by social, cultural, interpersonal, and situational conditions (Martin, 1999). However, it is recognised that emotional labour should be conceptualised as a subjective phenomenon encompassing different dimensions (Mann, 1999; Morris and Feldman, 1996). Emotional labour is generally considered to include an external component (employees' perceptions of organisational emotional display rules, and the demands made upon them to comply with these rules) and an internal component (the effort involved in regulating emotions in order to display emotions that are required by the job role but not genuinely felt, or to suppress inappropriate emotions that are felt) (Grandey, 2000; Morris and Feldman, 1996). Further Studies suggest that it is a fundamental component of service work where a high degree of emotional control may be required to maintain positive relations with customers (Brotheridge and Grandey, 2002)

Increasing attention is given to emotional labour because of its double-edged effects (Kim; Gursoy, Boylu, and Avci) in terms of causing positive/negative organizational outcomes and positive/negative employee well-being. This can be delineated in the following segregated forms

2.1. Literature about Organizational Outcomes

It has been proved that the theory of Emotional Labour if implemented properly can do wonders for the organisation. The higher is the service of belongingness, the more will be the customer satisfaction and loyalty, thus the higher will be the betterment in the efficiency and productivity of the organisation. By no doubt it can be concluded that successful management of emotional labour results in customer satisfaction and loyalty (Ashkanasy, Härtel, and Daus). Individuals respond to authentic emotions much more favourable than to inauthentic ones therefore guests detected authentic/unauthentic emotional expressions through non-verbal communication (Van Dijk, Smith, and Cooper). Different researchers have different views about the effects of emotional labour on organisation. Some say that deep acting causes positive organizational outcomes (Van Dijk, Smith, and Cooper ; Shani, Uriely, Reichel, and Ginsburg) while others do not confirm gaining positive organizational outcomes by deep acting and negative by surface acting but rather by appropriately managing customers' impressions of emotional display. So as to have positive outcomes, the organizations must arrange some effective training programs and counselling sessions for the employees. So that they maintain their "sincere smile" services by converting their personal anger and impatience into empathy and belongingness.

2.2. Literature about Individual Outcomes

Regardless of the fact that emotional labour benefits an employee and organization in numerous ways but there are certain rampant facts which are now mandatory to be considered both by individual and employee himself. Many researchers have given different views on this issue and they agree that besides being surface and deep acting giving a lot to the individuals and organisation, it gives a negative impact in the long run for the individual himself. Therefore employees who engage more in surface acting suffer more negative outcomes such as low job satisfaction as well as poorer service quality (Lam, and Chen; Kim). Moreover, some of the researchers concluded that surface acting does not have any effect on job satisfaction but on the other hand out of the five dimensions of job satisfaction, deep acting was confirmed to have greatest impact on job satisfaction (Yang, and Chang).

Some researchers (Grandey; Zapf; Mikolajczak, Menil, and Luminet) claim that both surface and deep acting are related to burnout and ill health whereas surface acting being more detrimental. Others report positive outcomes by claiming that emotional labour does not only make interactions more predictable and help avoid embarrassing caused by inter-personal relations (Yang, and Chang) but also positive individual's psychological outcomes like job satisfaction, enhanced self-development and self-esteem (Shani, Uriely, Reichel, and Ginsburg; Yang, and Chang) and that deep acting does not lead to burnout but rather conveys benefits to employees and to customers (Kim). Following is the framework that has been designed through ethnography and sociology literature on emotional labour, and industrial and organizational psychology on personality, emotion management and stress management, this study proposes a theoretical model (Figure 1) (Kay Hei-Lin Chu)

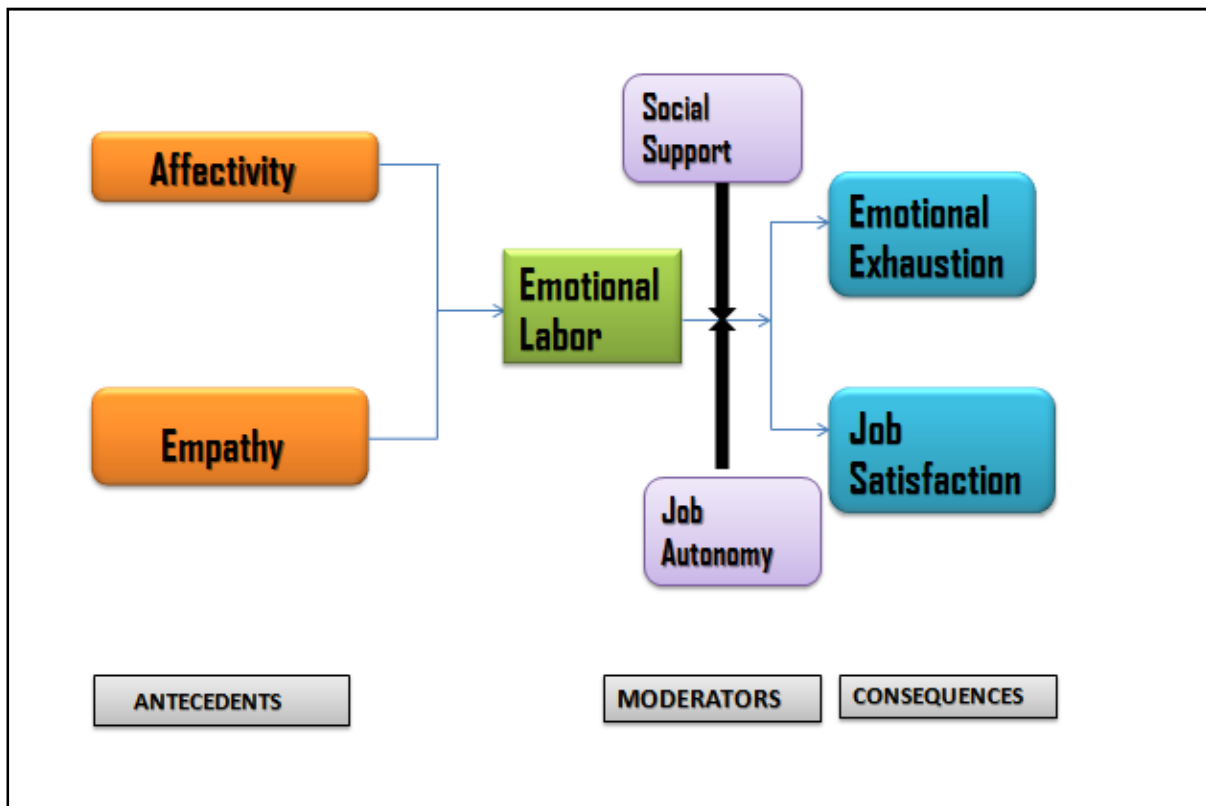


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework of the Antecedents and Consequences of Emotional Labour

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Objectives

1. To study the emotional labor in the employees (Nursing staff) of healthcare sectors.
2. To study the consequences of emotional labor on them.

3.2. Population

The population being chosen for the study of emotional labour, comprises of nursing staff of healthcare sector

3.3. Sample Design

3.3.1. Sampling Element or Unit of Analysis

It refers to the unit from which information is collected and that provides the basis of the analysis. Here it refers to the nursing staff of healthcare sector

3.3.2. Sampling Technique

- Non probability sampling/ Convenience/purposive sampling have been used.
- 60 questionnaires were being distributed to different respondents in hospitals situated at Patiala city of Punjab as per the accessibility and availability
- 52 questionnaires served as sample as some of them were never returned back and some went incomplete.

3.3.3. Sampling Size and Instruments

Total 52 responses were taken as a sample of study. The segregation can be shown as follows

| S.No. | Organization | No of Respondents |
|-------|------------------------|-------------------|
| 1 | Deep Hospital | 5 |
| 2 | Rajendra Hospital * | 30 |
| 3 | Columbia Asia Hospital | 17 |

Table 1

* represents a government entity

4. Research Instrument

4.1. Measures of Emotional Labour

Dutch Questionnaire on emotional reliability (D-QEL) has been used for the study of emotional Labour. All questions are answered on the scale range of 1 to 5 where 1 means "Never" and 5 means "always". There are four subscales being used for the description of emotional labour.

Surface acting is expressing an emotion without feeling that emotion (Hochschild, 1983). Surface acting is the change of behaviour, the managing of observable emotions to fit a role. For example, in hospitals front desk employee may put on a smile and cheerfully greet a customer (patient) even if she is feeling down. Surface acting then is a discrepancy between felt and displayed emotions. This subscale comprises of five items.

Deep acting is another type of acting. It occurs when employees match their inner emotions with their roles exactly which is required for a particular situation. In deep acting or called as "faking with good intentions", she is actually matching her inner feelings with the display norms and this seems veritable to the customer as well (Mittal & Chhabra, 2011). For example, the theatre actors described how they uses the deep acting technique to perform for the audience, so that the audience can actually feel that role in the actor. This subscale consists of three items

In the case of emotional consonance the employees felt that same emotions which are exactly required for the job. Hochschild (1983) called it as passive deep acting. Zapf (2002) used the term automatic regulation. Automatic regulation is defined as employees' subjective feeling when they do not experience mismatch between the naturally felt emotions and emotions that is required by the display rules (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1983). This subscale consists of 2 items

Suppression is the term used for suppressed emotions which we deliberately or consciously hide in our conscience. For example when a nurse gets annoyed from a patient who continuously shouting on her but she remains calm and suppressed her anger. The ability to suppress emotions and thoughts varies considerably from one individual to another (Werman, 1983). "suppression is not simply an ineffective tactic of mental control; it is counterproductive, helping assure the very mental state one had hoped to avoid" (Wenzlaff & Wegner, 2000, p. 59). This subscale consists of 3 items.

4.2. Measures of Burnout

Burnout is being measured through the Dutch version of Maslach Burnout Inventory which consists of three subscales Emotional Exhaustion, Personal Accomplishment and Depersonalization represented with seven scales. Emotional exhaustion is a panic state of physical and emotional burnout that results from excessive job and personal demands and continuous stress. It describes a feeling of being emotionally overload and exhausted by one's work. It consists of nine items to describe the same

Depersonalization refers to "the stereotypical perception of the self as an example of some defining social category". It consists of a feeling of watching oneself act, while having no control over a situation. Five items has been used to represent this subscale

Personal accomplishment is the degree to which an individual is rewarded and recognized for meeting organizational goals. Reduced personal accomplishments are emotionally manifested in forms of feelings of ineffectiveness, incompetency, lack of productivity, and reduced motivation as being suggested by some researchers. Eight items has been used to represent this subscale.

4.3. Research Method

Karl Pearson Correlation has been used to compare the relation between subscales of emotional labor and burnout. The response from each item of the subscale has been merged to get a common mean value for each respondent corresponding to each subscale. Thus the values were loaded to SPSS. Each subscale was thus analyzed through correlation. Regression has been employed to know the overall relation between emotional labor and emotional exhaustion.

5. Results and Discussion

- The Karl Pearson correlation coefficient between Surface acting (subscale of Emotional Labour) and Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization and Personal accomplishment (Subscale of Burnout) comes out to be 0.545, 0.34 and 0.012 respectively. This clearly predicts that surface acting leads to emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. And comparatively low consequences on personal accomplishments have been recorded
- The Karl Pearson correlation coefficient between Deep acting (subscale of Emotional Labor) and Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization and Personal accomplishment (Subscale of Burnout) come out to be 0.12, 0.45 and 0.072 respectively. This can be interpreted as the low correlation between deep acting and emotional exhaustion. This shows that the employees who are good at deep acting do not feel emotional exhaustion whereas personal accomplishment has considerably low relation between deep acting. Depersonalization has positive correlation with deep acting. That is, as the pace of deep acting increases, depersonalization also increases.
- Further, it has been found that Karl Pearson coefficient between Emotional consonance (subscale of Emotional Labor) and Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization and Personal accomplishment (Subscale of Burnout) comes out to be 0.03, 0.25 and 0.01 respectively. It has been noticed that emotional consonance has a very low correlation between the subscales of burnout.
- Suppression has been found to be the key factor which has considerable correlation between the subscales of burnout. This clearly predicts that the suppression has caused more exhaustion and depersonalization leading to low personal accomplishments.

- The overall regression coefficient between emotional labor and emotional exhaustion comes out be 0.525 without considering the impact of residuals (errors). This clearly predicts that emotional labor leads to emotional exhaustion thus fulfilling the objectives of the study mentioned previously in the paper.

5.1. Limitations of the Study

This study had certain limitations which are required to be considered.

- The shortage of time and resources can be highlighted as the main limitation of the study as due to this only one region of Punjab has been considered for the study
- The respondents were not easily available due to their busy schedules with respect to their Job roles
- The language of questionnaire was a barrier as the researchers had to consume a lot of time to explain the contents of the questionnaire
- Lack of awareness can be another limitation
- Lack of cooperation from hospital management and staff

5.2. Conclusion

This study is basically conducted to know the consequences of emotional labour on the nursing staff of healthcare sector. Through the statistical values, we came to know that the major consequences of emotional labour are depersonalisation and emotional exhaustion which may lead to long term impact on the life cycle of the individual. This may lead to the decrease in the efficiency and performance of the employee. Future, it was found that the emotional exhaustion is the consequence of deep acting whereas depersonalisation is the result of suppression. Moreover, additional information was extracted that employee do feel the consequences but it took a long time to delineate the term “emotional labour”. So basically, researcher found that the employees are themselves not aware of this very fact and this is why the employers cannot notice its existences and thus consequences. Eventually, there are certain measures that are required to be taken by the organisation so as to decrease the harsh consequences on the personal professional life of the employees. The measures can be a counselling session, Meditation, various mind relaxing therapies, apart from the human resource rewards which can be financial and non- financial. Further, the mental support from organisation would add deserts to the meal. The organisations have to think both on employee and customer point of view. The balance between the two sides can bring wonders while the slight disequilibrium might give some detrimental effects in the long run.

It's being hoped that this study will delineate how the emotional labour is being performed and how it affects the employees through scientific interpretations. The results of the study clearly predict the psychometric impacts of emotional labour on the actual conscience of the employees. After all, emotional Labour depends upon how it is performed. And thus, it should be performed according to the goodwill of the organisation as well as the employees himself and that's where both would be successful meticulously!

6. References

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