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USE OF EMOTIONAL LABOR IN DAY-TO-DAY INTERACTIONS WITH MANAGERS AND COLLEAGUES

Abstract:

The emotional work has begun to be increasingly studied given some important organizational and personal outcomes such as lower job satisfaction, burnout or emotional exhaustion. In the literature, the construct is connected mainly with client interaction and rarely with leadership or group collaboration. This paper aims to fill this gap by studying the degree to which emotional work is done toward managers and colleagues. The conclusions are based on a survey conducted among employees from different enterprises regarding their experience with managing emotions in the workplace. First, they weighed the extent to which they used emotional work in relation to managers and colleagues, rating some items from the Emotional Labor Scale (ELS) developed by Brotheridge and Lee (2003). The statements were adapted to describe the regulatory processes of surface and deep acting employed by workers in front of their manager and colleagues. The respondents also evaluated themselves on some characteristics such as optimism, self-esteem, charisma, spontaneity, energy, enthusiasm, extraversion. The results of the survey suggest that Romanian employees don't rely too much on surface and deep acting. In general, they show their true emotions to managers and colleagues. The degree to which the employees use the emotional work in relation to managers and colleagues proved to be correlated with some personal characteristics such as optimism, enthusiasm, trustworthiness, self-esteem, spontaneity and age. The manifestation of true emotions in front of colleagues is positively associated with extraversion and negatively associated with age.

Keywords:

Emotional Labor, Surface and Deep Acting, Genuine Emotions, Interactions with Managers and Colleagues

JEL Classification: M10

Introduction

The use of emotions in the workplace has begun to be increasingly studied by researchers in organizational behavior given its striking possible outcomes. Employees' moods and emotions influence important organizational variables such as job performance, decision making, creativity, turnover, teamwork, negotiation, and leadership (Barsade and Gibson, 2007). One essential construct in the literature is the emotional labor is a term proposed and defined by the American sociologist Arlie Russell Hochschild as the „the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display” (Hochschild, 2003, p.7) This management of emotions is done through two types of acting – surface and deep acting (Hochschild, 2003).

Conceptual background and hypotheses

2.1. Emotional Labor Construct

The American sociologist Arlie Russell Hochschild proposed the term *emotional labor* to indicate „the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display” (Hochschild, 2003, p.7). Her influential book, „*The Managed Heart. Commercialization of Human Feeling*” first appeared in 1983 and was republished in 2003 and 2012. Hochschild's construct became a cornerstone in the studies of emotions within an organizational context, especially nowadays when „most jobs call for a capacity to deal with people rather than with things, for more interpersonal skills and fewer mechanical skills” (Hochschild, 2003, p.9).

One of emotional labor underlying assumptions is that the employee has to manage his emotions at work in order to meet some requirements set by the organization. Many employers have feeling rules associated with specific work roles (Hochschild, 2003), rules explicitly declared in selection or training materials or learnt by observation of coworkers (Grandey, 2000). Other authors use the term display rules for these norms because it refers to „what emotions ought to be publicly expressed rather than to what emotions are actually felt” (Ashforth and Humphrey, 1993, p.89).

Many authors consider that this labor is done through two mechanisms or two types of acting – *surface acting* and *deep acting*. People „engage in surface acting when they try to modify their behavior to be consistent with required emotions but continue to hold different internal feelings” while deep acting involves changing the true emotions to match the required emotions for the job (McShane and Steen, 2009, p. 83). Hochschild (2003, p. 33) acknowledges that „we are capable of disguising what we feel, of pretending to feel what we do not – of doing surface acting”. For example, employees use surface acting when they force to smile in front of an impolite person or deep acting when they try to feel differently about a difficult situation and see it as an opportunity to learn. According to Hochschild (2003), emotional labor requires effort and may be hurtful to the employees, generating burnout and job stress.

Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) are others important contributors to the conceptualization of emotional labor. Ashforth and Humphrey (1993, p. 90) define it as „the act of displaying the appropriate emotion (i.e., conforming with a display rule)”, focusing on the behavior rather than on their underlying emotions, decoupling the experience of emotion from the expression of emotion. In their view, Hochschild’s definition does not allow for „the instances whereby one spontaneously and genuinely experiences and expresses the expected emotion” (Ashforth and Humphrey, 1993, p. 94), implying certain deliberateness in managing emotions. But, emotion may be felt and displayed with relatively little effortful prompting Ashforth and Humphrey (1993). In accordance, Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) add a third means of accomplishing emotional labor besides surface and deep acting and that is the *genuine expression of emotion*.

Currently, many jobs require emotional labor or the management of emotions. It has been estimated that half of all jobs and three quarters of women’s jobs imply this type of labor (Grama and Botone, 2009). Meier, Mastracci and Wilson (2006) hypothesized that employers with greater emotional labor expectations of their employees will have more effective interactions with clients, better internal relationships, and superior program performance. In addition, the aforementioned authors admit that emotional labor makes a contribution to organizational productivity, employee turnover and client satisfaction (Meier, Mastracci and Wilson, 2006).

This labor becomes important for a wide range of jobs, even for some not taken into account at the beginning. Currently, not only service workers such as flight attendants, teachers, retail staff which have daily client interactions deal with emotional labor. People with jobs that involve risk deal also to some degree with this management of emotions. For example, chief risk officer might find it difficult to avoid the influence of the emotional state on his decisions. A chief risk officer is responsible “for coordinating all risk management initiatives across the entire organization/entity, guiding the organization’s response to the increasingly regulated and legal environment, keeping the board of directors apprised of risk issues, ensuring that risks taken do not compromise business continuity, and guiding staff” (Nichita, 2015, p.427). This position demands a very good capacity to make decisions and a proper degree of risk tolerance. But, emotions greatly influence risk tolerance and decision making. First, employees’ moods and emotions influence, among other variables, decision making (Barsade and Gibson, 2007). Second, according to Nguyen and Noussair (2014, p.310), more positive emotional valence is associated with greater risk tolerance and positive emotions promote more risk taking. In this context, the management of emotions becomes crucial for so many organizations.

2.2. Hypotheses formulation

In general, emotional labor or the management of emotions has been studied in the context of customer interactions and rarely of work group interactions. Currently, with a pronounced service oriented economy, understanding the regulations of emotions in employee-customers interactions is critical (Grandey, 2003). But, this focus on the client

generated a lack of research on emotion regulation in employee - employee interactions in workgroup setting (Eugene Kim, Devasheesh and Glomb, 2013). The studies in this area are scarce.

Therefore, this paper aims to fill this gap by studying the degree to which emotional work is done toward managers and colleagues. Specifically, the use of surface and deep acting mechanisms will be studied as well as the expression of genuine emotions and will be correlated with some important personal characteristics of employees. The assumption is that people differ in how they manage their emotions in accordance with some of their traits. There are studies that demonstrated that some characteristics have an influence on use of emotional labor. For example, Nixon et al. (2011) mention that labor strategies were related to employee strain such as turnover intentions, job satisfaction, burnout, and mental wellbeing and that gender moderates the relationships such as that women are more likely than men to incur positive consequences when engaging in deep acting.

Eugene Kim, Devasheesh and Glomb (2013) implied that the employee's emotional regulation is related to the age diversity so that in age-diverse workgroups younger employees are more likely to engage in emotion regulation.

Hypothesis 1. Employees use surface acting more than deep acting in their day-to-day interactions with managers and colleagues.

Hypothesis 2. In day-to-day interactions with managers and colleagues, personal characteristics such as charisma, friendliness and trustworthiness influence the management and expression of emotions.

Hypothesis 3. Extraversion has an effect on the expression of emotions in interaction with colleagues.

Hypothesis 4. Age has an effect on emotional labor, on the use of its mechanism (surface acting, deep acting, genuine expression of emotions).

3. Method

This paper rests on a survey conducted among employees from different enterprises regarding their experience with managing emotions in the workplace.

Participants: Employees from different enterprises.

Scale: First, the questionnaire contained measures of emotional labor based on items from Emotional Labor Scale proposed by Brotheridge and Lee (2003) and modified by Grandey (2003). The aforementioned authors used the scale to measure the extent to which the respondents managed their emotions in interaction with the customer by pretending to have unfeeling emotions (surface acting), faking a good mood (surface acting), working at calling up the feelings needed and making an effort to actually feel emotions expected at work (deep acting). However, the items were modified to describe the interactions with managers and colleagues given the fact that the scale proposed by

Brotheridge and Lee focussed only on interactions with customers. We added a few statements to measure the genuine emotions felt on the job. Results were given on a five point scale ranging from never (1) to always (5). The results were summed to create an index for each form of emotional labor: surface acting, deep acting, genuine emotions.

Moreover, respondents were asked to evaluate themselves on different characteristics such as optimism, self-esteem, charisma, spontaneity, energy, enthusiasm, extraversion. Responses were given on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

Last but not least, respondents gave information on their age, gender, status and education.

Data Analysis: The SPSS software was used to analyze the data using descriptive statistics and correlation analysis.

4. Data analysis and results

The results are based on a number of 430 respondents. Of all respondents, 51.6% (n =222) were female. The respondents had been working in the present organization for at least one year, the average tenure being 7 years. Most respondents (89.8%, n =386) were full time employees. 34.9% of respondents (n =150) were between 18 and 25 years old, and 19.8% were between 26 and 35 and 23.7% (n = 102) were between 36 and 45, 18.4% between 46 and 55 and 3.3% over 55 years old. Slightly over half of the respondents (n = 228) had a college degree.

First, as seen in Table 1, employees declare that they generally really feel the emotions they show to their managers (3.61) and do not try to hide them or modify them to correspond to what the manager expects of them. The items that describe the use of surface acting (SA) are among the lowest, but those regarding deep acting (DA) are also low.

Table 1: Emotional labor in interactions with managers

Surface Acting(SA)/Deep Acting(DA)/Genuine Emotions (GE) – some items	
I fake the emotions I show when dealing with my manager (SA).	2.44
Put on an act in order to deal with my manager in an appropriate way (SA).	1.81
I fake a good mood when interacting with my manager (SA).	2.40
I try to actually feel the emotions that I must show when interacting with my manager (DA).	2.85
I work at calling up the feelings I need to show to my manager (DA).	2.09
I make an effort to actually feel the emotions that I need to display to my manager (DA).	2.45
I try to forget my own emotions when dealing with my manager (DA).	2.64
I really feel the emotions that I show to my manager (GE).	3.61

Second, as seen in Table 2, the results are similar in case of colleagues interactions. Employees generally feel the emotions expressed in front of their colleagues (3.43). The use of emotion regulation techniques (surface acting – SA or deep acting – DA) is not prevalent.

Table 2: Emotional labor in interactions with colleagues

Surface Acting(SA)/Deep Acting(DA)/Genuine Emotions (GE) – some items	
I fake the emotions I show when dealing with my colleagues (SA).	2.30
Put on an act in order to deal with my colleagues in an appropriate way (SA).	1.92
I fake a good mood when interacting with my colleagues (SA).	2.47
I try to actually feel the emotions that I must show when interacting with my colleagues (DA).	2.80
I work at calling up the feelings I need to show to my colleagues (DA).	2.12
I make an effort to actually feel the emotions that I need to display to my colleagues (DA).	2.36
I try to forget my own emotions when dealing with my colleagues (DA).	2.30
I really feel the emotions that I show to my colleagues (GE).	3.43

The results were summed to create an index for each form of emotional labor: SA, DA, GE, obtaining I_{SA} of 2.21, I_{DA} of 2.49 and I_{GE} of 3.41 for interactions with managers, and I_{SA} of 2.17, I_{DA} of 2.38 and I_{GE} of 3.46 for interactions with colleagues, as seen in Table 3. Hypothesis 1 is rejected ($I_{SA}=2.21 < I_{DA}=2.49$ for interactions with managers and $I_{SA}=2.17 < I_{DA}=2.38$ for interactions with colleagues). Employees use deep acting more than surface acting in their day-to-day interactions with managers and colleagues, even though the difference is not consistent.

Table 3: Indices of Emotional Labor

In interactions with manager		In interactions with colleagues	
Index SA interactions with manager	2.21	Index SA interactions with colleagues	2.17
Index DA interactions with manager	2.49	Index DA interactions with colleagues	2.38
Index GE interactions with manager	3.41	Index GE interactions with colleagues	3.46

As a first conclusion, employees show their true emotions to managers and colleagues, not relying much on the other mechanisms of emotional labor.

Emotional labor indices for interactions with managers and colleagues were correlated with some characteristics of respondents such as optimism, trustworthiness, friendliness, charisma, energy or enthusiasm. Tables 4 and 5 show the Pearson Correlation Coefficient for several relationships tested between surface acting, deep acting and expression of genuine emotions and such traits.

Table 4: Correlations of Emotional labor in interactions with manager with other variables

Variables	Coefficient	Signif.
Index of Surface Acting vs. Optimism	.273(**)	.000
Age	.125(**)	.010
Trustworthiness	-.114(*)	.018
Index of Deep Acting vs. Spontaneity	.180(**)	.000
Self-esteem	.103(*)	.033
Index of Genuine Emotions vs. Friendliness	.187(**)	.000
Trustworthiness	.169(**)	.000
Charisma	.151(**)	.002
Enthusiasm	.137(**)	.005
Energy	.134(**)	.006

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level, * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

Table 5: Correlations of Emotional labor in interactions with colleagues with other variables

Variables	Coeff.	Signif.
Index of Surface Acting vs. Trustworthiness	-.222(**)	.000
Age	.147(**)	.002
Enthusiasm	-.142(**)	.003
Index of Deep Acting vs. Trustworthiness	-.135(**)	.005
Age	.110(*)	.023
Index of Genuine Emotions vs. Extraversion	.269(**)	.000
Friendliness	.195(**)	.000
Charisma	.173(**)	.000
Age	-.149(**)	.002

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level, * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

Based on these results, there is support for Hypothesis 2 which is accepted. In day-to-day interactions with managers and colleagues, personal characteristics such as charisma, trustworthiness and friendliness influence the management and expression of emotions. First, charisma is correlated with the expression of genuine emotions in front of managers (coeff. of .151, $p < .01$) and colleagues (coeff. of .173, $p < .01$). Second, trustworthiness proved to be negatively correlated with the index of surface acting with managers (coeff. of -.114, $p < .05$) and colleagues (coeff. of -.222, $p < .01$) and the index of deep acting in front of colleagues (coeff. of -.135, $p < .01$) and positively correlated with the index of genuine emotions in front of managers (coeff. of .169, $p < .01$). Third, friendliness is positively associated with the expression of genuine emotions in front of managers (coeff. of .187, $p < .01$) and colleagues (coeff. of .195, $p < .01$).

There is also support for Hypothesis 3 which is accepted. Extraversion has a significant effect on the expression of emotions in interaction with colleagues with a correlation

coefficient of .269 ($p < .01$). The extraverts show to a higher degree their real emotions to their colleagues.

Last but not least, optimism is positively correlated with the use of surface acting and spontaneity and self-esteem with the use of deep acting in front of managers, enhancing the use of these sides of emotional labor. Age is associated with some mechanisms of emotional regulation in interactions with managers and colleagues, as seen in Table 4 and 5. Age positively influences the use of surface acting in front of managers and colleagues, the higher the age the more they use this mechanism (they disguise what they feel). Age is negatively associated with the expression of real emotions in front of colleagues, meaning that the younger employees display more their true emotions in front of their colleagues. Therefore, Hypothesis 4 is accepted, concluding that age has an effect on emotional labor, on the use of its mechanism (surface acting, deep acting, genuine expression of emotions).

Even though the correlations are not very strong, they are significant. The use of emotional labor in interactions with managers and colleagues is determined, to some degree, by some personal characteristics such as optimism, enthusiasm or the friendly nature of the individual. Trustworthiness positively influences the display of real emotions to managers and negatively influences the use of surface acting (disguising what we feel, pretending to feel what we do not). Older people use more surface acting while younger employees display their true emotions. Last but not least, extraverted people are prone to show their genuine emotions to colleagues.

Conclusions

The results of the survey suggest that Romanian employees don't rely too much on surface and deep acting. In general, they show their true emotions to managers and colleagues in day-to-day interactions. The degree to which the employees use the mechanisms of emotional work in relation to managers and colleagues proved to be correlated with some personal characteristics such as optimism, enthusiasm, trustworthiness, self-esteem, spontaneity and age: surface acting correlated with age and optimism and inversely with trustworthiness and deep acting with spontaneity, self-esteem and age. The manifestation of true emotions in front of colleagues is positively associated with extraversion and negatively associated with age.

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