

## **The Effect of Emotional Labor Strategies on Employees Job Performance and Organizational Commitment in Hospital Sector: Moderating Role of Emotional Intelligence in Iran**

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this paper is to investigate the effects of emotional labor strategies on job performance and organizational commitment by considering the role of emotional intelligence. With increasing development of economy and competition among service providers, management of employees, feelings is considered as a vital aspect in providing services to customers and influences organizational outcomes. Thus service organization, based on the results of the present study, would be able to identify and manage feeling and emotions of their employees in providing high quality and superior services to target customers and in addition to promote the spirit of service providing and effectiveness of employees, create some competitive advantages for themselves. Totally, 136 questionnaires were distributed to nurses, serving in a community hospital, which the results from analysis of them based on simple linear regression and multiple hierarchical regression show that emotional labor strategies influences on job performance and organizational commitment and in addition to it, variable of emotional intelligence moderates these influences too.

**Key words:** Emotional Labor Strategies • Job Performance • Organizational Commitment • Emotional Intelligence

### **INTRODUCTION**

Emotions are quintessential to human experience, which influences man's thoughts and actions. In the past, emotions in the workplace were believed to conceal sound judgment and thus were not even perceived as workplace phenomenon [1]. The theme in much of this research is that many service jobs (e.g., customer service, healthcare) have emotional requirements and that well-being and effectiveness in these jobs are damaging, relatively, by a person's ability to meet these requirements [2]. Interpersonal interactions, such as the emotions employees declare to others, can affect important organizational outcomes. The importance of emotions has become even more common with the expansion of the service economy. Oftentimes the products provided by service employees are intangible and the perceived quality of the service is related to the interpersonal interactions between the employee and the customer [3, 4]. For example, Pugh [5] showed that employees' displays of positive emotion were directly related to

customers' evaluations of service quality. The expression of emotions has also been connected to customer mood [6], customer willingness to return and pass positive remarks to friends about the organization [7, 8] and customer overall satisfaction with the organization [9].

This phenomenon is of more necessity in countries having weak legal, commercial and administrative communicational infrastructure and employ face-to-face communication more frequently emotional labor in addition to its influence on customers, coworkers and organization, also influences physical and psychological health of individual service provider. Also in jobs requiring emotional labor, emotional intelligence is considered as key moderator variable in workplace. Thus according to the results from the present study, by identifying spirits and emotions of service employees which communicate in a face-to-face manner, it is possible to promote effectiveness and health of employees simultaneously and reduce job burnout and dissatisfaction. Considering this and also the fact that service job in Iran are performed in a face-to-face manner,

the essential question of the present research is that to what extent an emotional labor influences physical and psychological health of people working in Iranian service industry, especially hospital employees, in terms of work nature and to what extent emotional intelligence influences the relationship between emotional labor strategies and job performance and organizational commitment in this type of jobs?

### **Literature Review**

**Emotional Labor:** In general, researchers agree that that emotional labor assumes emotions are managed at work; whereas, differences in definitions and operationalizations of the construct have result in some confusion [10] (Bono and Vey, 2005). In order to support the current study's conceptualization of emotional labor, I will review the four major ways that past literature has defined the construct.

As stated previously, Hochschild [11] was the first to coin the term emotional labor. She depicted emotional labor as "the management of feelings to create a publicly observable facial and body display" which is sold for a wage. Ashforth and Humphrey [12] explained emotional labor using a more behavioral approach. They suggested that emotional labor is "the act of displaying the appropriate emotion" (i.e., conforming with a display rule). Thus, they concentrated on discernable behavior rather than intrinsic feelings or emotional states, thereby separating the experience of emotion from the expression of emotion.

Morris and Feldman [3] provided a third conceptualization of the construct in which they defined emotional labor as "the effort, planning and control needed to express organizationally desired emotion during interpersonal transactions". They proposed that emotional labor composed of four dimensions: frequency of appropriate emotional display, attentiveness to required display rules, variety of emotions to be displayed and emotional dissonance. Grandey [1] proposed a fourth definition of emotional labor based on her review and integration of previous conceptualizations of the construct. She identified two themes common to most definitions of emotional labor: 1) individuals are able to regulate their emotions at work and 2) surface and deep acting are often admitted as methods for performing emotional labor. She disputed that defining emotional labor as surface acting and deep acting is beneficial for three reasons. First, surface acting and deep acting are not intrinsically positive or negative which allows

emotional labor to have both negative and positive outcomes. Second, if differences exist between the consequences of surface acting and deep acting, training can be applied to teach more effective emotional labor. Finally, surface acting and deep acting can be linked to Gross' [13] established model of emotional regulation [1].

**Deep Acting:** Deep Acting is an emotional labor strategy wherein the employee makes a cognitive effort to produce the needed emotional display by changing both expressions and feelings that match the particular situation hence aligning their true feelings with the desired emotions possibly by concentrating on positive thoughts or reevaluating the situation [1, 11].

**Surface Acting:** Surface acting is an emotional labor strategy that contains complying to organizational display rules by managing and hence simulating emotional expressions that are not actually felt by the employee. This also contains repression and hiding felt emotions, which would be inappropriate to demonstrate [1, 11].

**Job Performance:** Work organizations seek to optimize the job performance of their human resources in order to achieve high levels of productivity, efficiency and effectiveness and job satisfaction. Chiefly important human resources activities, including job selection, orientation, skill-training, performance appraisal, compensation, human resource planning and career development, are all related to improving and sustaining organizational performance [14]. Performance appraisal has long been recognized as an important personnel function with the potential to greatly improve employee motivation and hence performance and to provide management with the control needed to achieve organizational objectives [15]. To attain a closer understanding of the Western view on performance appraisal, two broad perspectives on performance appraisal were discussed [16]. The research into the objectives of Chinese organizations demonstrated that organizational objectives differ widely from the objectives of Western organizations. Additionally, the researcher [17] pointed out that many overseas Chinese business practices are grounded in the traditions of Chinese family business. Its primary objective is to maintain family control of business. As well, a meta-analysis of correlations between role ambiguity and job performance and role conflict and job performance was conducted by Tubre and Collins [18].

**Organizational Commitment:** The concept of organizational commitment has attracted substantial attention over recent years and has become a central objective of human resource management. The term commitment can be defined in various ways. For example O'Reilly *et al.*, focus on the "psychological bond that ties the employee to the organization". This bond has three forms; compliance, identification and internalization. Similarly Meyer and Allen [19] have proposed a three component model, which highlights affective commitment (individuals want to be attached to the organization), continuance commitment (individuals feel they need to be attached to the organization) and normative commitment (individuals feel they ought to remain with the organization). These different types of commitment will have varying effects on the organization's performance and a person can display aspects of all of them. Generally, organizational commitment is considered a useful measure of organizational effectiveness [20]. Particularly, "organizational commitment is a "multidimensional construct" [21] that has the potential to anticipate organizational outcomes such as performance, turnover, absenteeism, tenure and organizational goals" [19].

**Emotional Intelligence:** Emotional intelligence is concisely defined as "an ability to recognize the meanings of emotions and to reason and problem solve on the basis of them," and it involves "the capacity to perceive emotions, assimilate emotion-related feelings, understand the information of those emotions and manage them" [19]. The theorists' conception of emotional intelligence is based completely within the framework of intelligence therefore it is referred to as an ability model of emotional intelligence. Mayer and Salovey's [22] theory essentially connects the main components of emotions with intelligence at the same time preserving the two distinct terms. As such they proposed that emotional intelligence involves the ability to carry out accurate reasoning about emotions and the ability to use emotions and emotional knowledge to boost thought [23].

### Research Hypothesis

**Surface Acting, Deep Acting and Job Performance:** Generally, research has assumed that happy, smiling employees lead to better performance [10]; however, more recent research by Grandey and colleagues [24] suggested that customers can recognize when employees are just pasting on a smile (surface acting) and these inauthentic displays can lead to negative outcomes. Specifically, Grandey, Fisk, Matilla, *et al.* [24] argued that

surface acting results in insincere expressions and customers may view these false smiles as manipulative.

Consistent with this rationale, they found surface acting led to lower customer evaluations of friendliness and satisfaction. On the other hand, deep acting led to displays that were perceived by customers as more authentic, resulting in increased customer ratings of friendliness and satisfaction [24]. Similarly, Grandey [25] found that surface acting was negatively related to coworker ratings of affective delivery (sincerity, enthusiasm, warmth, friendliness and courtesy of the focal employee during service encounters). Conversely, deep acting was positively related to coworker ratings of affective delivery.

In addition, Diefendorff and Gosserand [26] proposed that the size of the discrepancy between emotional display rules and actual emotional displays are negatively related to job performance. Employees that regulate their emotions through surface acting may be more likely to reveal their negative moods or reactions to coworkers and customers [25]. Deep acting may have the reverse effect, such that when deep acting employees actually try to feel what is expected, their negative moods and reactions are less likely to leak out [25]. Thus, surface acting may not only result in inauthentic displays, it may also lead to a discrepancy between organizationally desired emotional display rules and employee displayed emotions. Either the inauthenticity of emotional displays or the discrepancy between organizationally desired emotional displays and actual displays may lead to lower ratings of job performance. On the other hand, deep acting may result in authentic displays of organizationally desired emotions, thereby increasing ratings of job performance. Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

H<sub>1</sub>: The surface acting strategy of emotional labor has a negative influence on job performance.

H<sub>2</sub>: The deep acting strategy of emotional labor has a positive influence on job performance.

**Emotional Labor Strategies and Organizational Commitment:** Only one study has investigated the relationship between emotional labor and organizational commitment. This study of frontline bank employees in Greece measured surface and deep acting as well as secondary dimensions of emotional labor (frequency, intensity, variety) [27]. They found unpretentious support for a negative impact on organizational commitment for both deep and surface acting. The zero order correlations between deep and surface acting and organizational

commitment were negative but nonsignificant. A hierarchical regression including interactions stated that surface acting and the interaction between intensity and deep acting were significant negative forecasters of organizational commitment. The measure of emotional labor in this study did not distinguish the target of emotional labor. Thus:

- H<sub>3</sub>: The surface acting strategy of emotional labor has a negative influence on organizational commitment.
- H<sub>4</sub>: The deep acting strategy of emotional labor has a positive influence on organizational commitment.

**Moderating Role of Emotional Intelligence:** The theories and models of emotional labor and emotional intelligence presented served as guiding frameworks in understanding the process and outcomes that arises from it. When such concepts are merged, it captivates the mechanisms essential to cognize the possible theoretical links between emotional labor and employee outcomes in the workplace and the possible moderating role of emotional intelligence. Grandey [1] purported that emotional intelligence may influence whether an individual will engage in surface acting or deep acting or even moderate the outcomes. Brotheridge [28], found a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and deep acting. Particularly, workers with higher levels of emotional intelligence were found to be more likely to discern the need to frequently display emotions as part of their work role and perform deep acting in response to these situational demands. Daus, Rubin, Smith and Cage [29] further established a link between the emotional labor strategies and emotional intelligence with a sample of police officers. Daus, Rubin, Smith and Cage [29] found that all four branches of the ability model of emotional intelligence were meaningfully associated with deep acting strategy of emotional labor while surface acting was associated with one branch of emotional intelligence. Thus:

- H<sub>5</sub>: Emotional intelligence will moderate the relationship between surface acting strategy of emotional labor and job performance.
- H<sub>6</sub>: Emotional intelligence will moderate the relationship between deep acting strategy of emotional labor and job performance.
- H<sub>7</sub>: Emotional intelligence will moderate the relationship between surface acting strategy of emotional labor and organizational commitment.
- H<sub>8</sub>: Emotional intelligence will moderate the relationship between deep acting strategy of emotional labor and organizational commitment.

## **Methodology**

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

**Questionnaire Design:** Surface Acting: Surface acting was measured with Diefendorff, Croyle and Gosserand's [30] seven item scale which evaluated the extent to which employees report they counterfeit unfeelt emotions and/or repress felt emotions. This scale consists of five items adapted from Grandey's [25] surface acting scale and two items based on Kruml and Geddes' [31] emotive dissonance scale. Coefficient alpha values for this scale have ranged from 0.91-0.92 [30]. Sample items include "I put on an act in order to deal with customers in an appropriate way" and "I fake a good mood when interacting with customers".

**Deep Acting:** Diefendorff, Croyle and Gosserand's [30] four item deep acting scale was used to measure the extent to which employees report they modify their felt emotions so that original displays follow. The items for this scale were adapted from Grandey's [25] deep acting scale and Kruml and Geddes' [31] scale of emotive effort. This scale has a reported reliability of 0.82 [30]. Sample items include "I work at developing the feelings inside of me that I need to show to customers" and "I work hard to feel the emotions that I need to show to customers."

**Job Performance:** We administered a five-item scale adapted from McCarthy and Goffin [32] to assess task performance. Supervisors rated employees' (1) effectiveness in displaying job knowledge and skill, (2) effectiveness in verbal and written communication, (3) effectiveness in taking charge when required, (4) degree to which they set high standards and strive to meet them and (5) quickness in learning, on scales of 1, "strongly below average," to 7, "strongly above average."

**Organizational Commitment:** Organizational commitment was measured by Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) developed by Modway, Steers and Porter [33]. They created the OCQ by identifying 15 factors that could be correlated with their definition of organizational commitment: (1) a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values; (2) a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization; (3) a strong desire to maintain membership in the organization. Each item of this instrument asked for agreement or disagreement on a seven point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree"(weighted 1) to "Strongly Agree" (weighted 7), with a statement, which tapped the organizational commitment construct. The average of the 15 items was used as the total scale

Table 1: Results of original regression analysis table

Hypothesis	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
			B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	Surface acting strategy	job performance	3.533-.310	.327.083	-.311	10.807-3.752	.000.000
2	Deep acting strategy	job performance	1.089.392	.364.112	.293	2.9973.505	.003.001
3	Surface acting strategy	organizational commitment	3.344.188	.422.130	.126	7.9341.449	.000.150
4	Deep acting strategy	organizational commitment	1.418.655	.311.079	.588	4.5608.330	.000.000

Table 2: Results of hierarchical multiple regression analysis

Hypothesis	Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics		
						R Square Change	F Change	Sig. F Change
5	1	.293 <sup>a</sup>	.086	.079	.844	.086	12.283	.001
	2	.438 <sup>b</sup>	.192	.179	.797	.106	17.078	.000
6	1	.311 <sup>a</sup>	.097	.090	.839	.097	14.074	.000
	2	.311 <sup>b</sup>	.097	.083	.842	.000	.001	.972
7	1	.126 <sup>a</sup>	.016	.008	.979	.016	2.100	.150
	2	.662 <sup>b</sup>	.438	.430	.742	.423	97.798	.000
8	1	.588 <sup>a</sup>	.346	.341	.797	.346	69.396	.000
	2	.696 <sup>b</sup>	.484	.477	.711	.138	34.853	.000

score for each respondent. The organizational commitment questionnaire has been widely used in previous studies to measure commitment and has demonstrated both convergent and discriminant validity [34]. As a consequence this instrument was adopted in the present study to measure commitment.

**Emotional Intelligence:** The 16-item measure created by Wong and Law [35] is another strive to create a psychometrically sound self-report measure for use in organizational research. The scale is based on the model developed by Mayer and Salovey [36].

**Research Sample:** The main group of the research consists of nurses who work in a community hospital in Tehran in January 2012. In this hospital, there are 453 nurses working. Considering a 5% error margin out of the main group within the 95% reliability boundaries, the size of the sample group was calculated as 208 nurses [37]. In this respect, it was planned to apply questionnaire with convenience sampling method to randomly chosen 250 nurses working in the polyclinics. Of all the 250 questionnaires sent, 145 returned, 136 were found suitable for analysis. Of the participants, 64.7% (n=88) were married, 35.3% (n=48) were single. While the 58.8% (n=80) had no children, 16.2% (n=48) had a single child, 25.0% (n=34) had two children. 58.1% (n=79) had university degree, 35.3% (48) had master’s degree and 6.6% (n=9) had doctorate’s degree. Their job experiences are as follows: 15.4% (n=21) had 1-5 years, 39.7% (n=54) had 6-10 years, 29.4% (n=40) had 11-15 years and 15.4% (n=21) had 16 years or above.

**Data Analysis:** In order to test 4 research hypotheses, considering to significance values and t-value in original regression analysis table (Table 1), it is judged that if sig. value is less than research error coefficient value, i.e. 0.05 and also t-value is more than 1.96 or less than -1.96, then the related hypothesis will be supported with a CI confidence intervals of 95%.

Also in order to identify moderating role of emotional intelligence in hypotheses 5 to 8, research hypotheses will be judged employing hierarchical multiple regression in 2 blocks (Table 2). For each phase, R<sup>2</sup> is calculated and variance extension ( $\Delta R^2$ ) is estimated using R<sup>2</sup> from previous phase. In each R<sup>2</sup> phase,  $\Delta R^2$  represent the influence of the variable being introduced to the analysis in the same phase. In each phase, R<sup>2</sup> will be significant if introducing of variables in each phase leads to increase in R<sup>2</sup> and decrease in standard error which in that case moderating role of the newly introduced variable i.e. emotional intelligence is demonstrated.

**Hypothesis Testing and Result**

**Hypothesis 1:** Finding from original regression analysis table (t-value = -3.752, sig = 0.000) in relation to the hypothesis shows that surface acting strategy from emotional labor has a negative effect on job performance; Thus hypothesis 1 is supported.

**Hypothesis 2:** Findings from original regression analysis table (t-value = 3.505; sig = 0.001) in relation to hypothesis 2, show that deep acting strategy performed by emotional labor, has a positive effect on job performance; Thus hypothesis 2 is supported.

**Hypothesis 3:** Findings from original regression analysis table (t-value = 1.449; sig = 0.150) in relation to hypothesis 3 show that surface acting strategy performed by emotional labor does not negatively influence organizational commitment; Thus hypothesis 3 rejected. Results of analysis of data obtained from bank employees in relation to third hypothesis in this study is aligned with results of research performed by William J. Becker in 2010.

**Hypothesis 4:** Findings of original regression analysis table (t-value = 8.330; sig = 0.000) in relation to hypothesis 4 show that strategy of deep acting shown by emotional labor influences positively on organizational commitment; thus hypothesis 4 is supported. Results of data analysis obtained from bank employees in relation to hypothesis 4 in this study are aligned with the results of research performed by Becker [38].

**Hypothesis 5:** Given the results of hierarchical regression  $R^2$  of the first phase in which surface acting was introduced in equation equals 0.086, then by introducing emotional intelligence variable in equation in second phase,  $R^2$  of these 2 variable equaled 0.192 which  $\Delta R^2$  for emotional intelligence variable equals 0.106. Given the increase in  $R^2$  value from 0.086 to 0.192 and also decrease in standard error from 0.844 to 0.797, it can be concluded that emotional intelligence variable may play a moderating role between two variables of surface acting and job performance: Therefore this hypothesis is approved.

**Hypothesis 6:** Given the results from hierarchical regression  $R^2$  for first phase in which deep acting was introduced in equation, equals 0.097, then by introducing emotional intelligence variable in equation in second phase,  $R^2$  of these 2 variables equals 0.097 and  $\Delta R^2$  for emotional intelligence variable was obtained as 0.000 showing that this variable cannot explain job performance variance. Given the fact that  $R^2$  value remained fixed at 0.097 and standard error of estimation increased from 0.839 to 0.842; it may be concluded that emotional intelligence variable cannot play a moderating role between two variable of deep acting and job performance; Thus this hypothesis is rejected.

**Hypothesis 7:** Given the results of hierarchical regression,  $R^2$  value for first phase in which apparent acting introduced in equation equaled 0.016. Then with introduction of emotional intelligence variable in equation in second phase,  $R^2$  value for these two variables equaled

0.438 which given  $\Delta R^2$  for emotional intelligence variable (0.423) and decrease in standard error estimation from 0.979 to 0.742, it can be concluded that emotional intelligence variable may play moderating role between 2 variables of surface acting and organizational commitment, thus this hypothesis is supported.

**Hypothesis 8:** According to results from hierarchical regression,  $R^2$  for first phase in which deep acting was introduced in equation equaled 0.346 and then by introducing emotional intelligence in second phase  $R^2$  value for these two variables equaled 0.484 and  $\Delta R^2$  for emotional intelligence variable was 0.138. According to increase in from 0.346 to 0.484 and also decrease in standard error of estimation from 0.797 to 0.711 it can be concluded that emotional intelligence variable can play a moderating role between 2 variables of deep acting and organizational commitment, thus this hypothesis is supported.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The present study aimed to examine effect of emotional labor on job performance and organizational commitment of employees with respect to role played by emotional intelligence variable based on the results of the present study, by identifying and managing feelings and emotions of employees in providing high-quality and superior services to targeted customers, service organizations would be able to make them committed to organization and create a competitive advantage by reducing work stresses of employees.

Given the results of present research it is expected from employees working in service sector that adopt an appropriate method for providing qualified services to customers by exploiting an emotional labor understanding the way of employing an emotional labor and value of it, provides various methods for correcting negative results and increases positive results for service employees which intern increases effectiveness of organization.

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