

Effect of Nature of Interaction on Organizational Citizenship Behaviour: Exploring the Mediating Role of Emotional labour

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Abstract— Emotions play a crucial role in service provider and client interactions and understanding of emotional labour will help the organizations manage employee-customer relationship better. Two objectives are to find whether emotional labour in service sectors particularly in hotels and call centers differs based on nature of interaction and to examine the mediating role of emotional labour between nature of interaction and organizational citizenship behavior. Survey method was adopted and standardized questionnaires were used to measure the variables. Correlational analysis and hierarchical step-wise regression was done on 689 responses from hotels and call centers. Consistent with our expectation, nature of interaction has an impact on emotional labour. Important recommendations on managing employee-customer interactions were discussed along with limitations and scope for future research.

Keywords- Emotional labour, Organizational citizenship behaviour, Interactions, hotels, call centers.

1. INTRODUCTION

Globalization and technological advancements has made many changes in the global economy. Service sectors deal with intangible products involving human factor in service delivery to customers. An inevitable effect of the shift from technology to services is more people interaction. Interactions between service providers and clients can either be voice to voice or face to face. In order to be successful it is important for organizations to maintain a healthy relationship between employees and customers. Employees can deliver service as needed by the customers only if they are sound in regulating their emotions as well as that of the customers. Alternatively, we can say that service jobs demand managing one's own emotion and displaying them required by the job to achieve organizational goals.

Emotions in organisations have found increasing interest among academics and practitioners recently (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1995; Ashkanasy, Ha'rtel, & Daus, 2002; Briner, 1999). Emotional labor, the regulation of feelings and expressions at work (Grandey, 2000; Hochschild, 1983), is a critical aspect of many jobs that require employees to interact with customers, coworkers, and the public. The term

“Emotional labour” was originally coined by sociologist Arlie Hochschild over twenty years ago in her work titled “The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling” as a result of her highly influential study on airline flight attendants and debt collectors. Hochschild (1983) defines emotional labour as “the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display, which is sold for a wage and therefore has exchange value.”

According to Hochschild, jobs involving emotional labour (EL) is defined as those that:

- i. Require face to face or voice to voice interactions with public;
- ii. Require the worker to produce an emotional state in another person;
- iii. Allow the employees to exercise a degree of control over their emotional activities.

Service organisations specify emotional display requirements and employees must actively regulate both their emotions and emotional displays to meet these requirements. The central focus of emotional labor research is on how individuals achieve the desired emotional displays. The aforementioned theory (e.g., Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Diefendorff & Gosserand, 2003) suggests that individuals may simply express what they feel; or when this does not produce the desired effect, they may ‘surface act’ (display fake unfelt emotions and/or suppress felt emotions) or ‘deep act’ (modify felt emotions so that genuine displays follow). Thus, Surface Acting (SA) and Deep Acting (DA) may be considered compensatory strategies that individuals use when they cannot spontaneously display the appropriate emotions. Interestingly, research has focused primarily on SA and DA (e.g., Brotheridge & Lee, 2002; Grandey, 2003), while giving little attention to the expression of naturally felt emotions. Hence this study focuses on naturally felt emotions (NFE) as emotional labour strategy.

The concept of OCB was first discussed in the organization research literature in the early 1980s (Bateman and Organ, 1983; Smith et al., 1983). Employees need to interact with customers either brief or prolonged to maintain healthy relationships with them. For this they may need to engage in behaviors (eg. make customers happy) which are not written in their job description. These behaviors which enhance the employee-customer interaction are termed as OCB (towards customers). Diefendorff et al. (2006) conducted a study investigating the relationship between emotional labour and Organizational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB) and concluded that employees who genuinely display more positive behaviours (deep acting) in the workplace are more likely to engage in OCB compared to employees who fake and suppress their emotions (surface acting).

With this background, the following objectives are set for the current study:

- i. To understand the impact of nature of interaction on Emotional Labour and Organisational Citizenship Behaviour.
- ii. To examine the mediating nature of Emotional Labour between the nature of interaction and Organisational Citizenship Behaviour.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Emotional labour occurs in jobs where there is face to face and voice to voice interaction with the clients. But whether the nature of interaction has an impact on emotional labour is not explored much in literature. This study adds to the existing literature by focusing on the antecedents and consequences of emotional labour based on nature of interaction. This section will discuss the empirical and theoretical literature related to the variables studied in this research. This will help us understand the theoretical context and the rationale for the hypothesized relationships.

Nature of interaction- Hochschild (1983, p. 147) acknowledges that emotional labour may be performed either “face to face” (in person) or “voice to voice” (on the telephone). The nature and impact of face-to-face emotion work has been examined in service organizations such as retail, hospitality, theme parks, banking and transport (e.g. Abraham, 1998; Brotheridge and Grandey, 2002; Heuven and Bakker, 2003; Tolich, 1993; Zapf et al., 2001). Although a high proportion of service sector employees work in call centres where interactions with customers are conducted entirely by telephone, until recently few studies had investigated the nature and outcomes of emotional labour performed over the telephone. (Callaghan and Thompson, 2002; Grandey and Fisk, 2006). Evidence is accumulating that call centre workers are expected to comply with emotional display rules and frequently engage in emotional regulation during their interactions with customers (e.g. Deery et al., 2002; Lewig and Dollard, 2003; Zapf et al., 2003). Nonetheless, emotional labour

performed face to face might be more demanding for several reasons. For instance, employees interacting with customers face to face, greater congruity is required between different modalities (vocal tone, facial expression and body language), whereas over the telephone emotions are conveyed to the customer by voice only. This study aims to investigate whether the strategy and outcomes of emotional labour performed by service sector employees vary according to whether interactions with customers are face to face (hotel employees) or voice to voice (call centre employees).

Emotional Labour- Most emotional labor conceptualizations suggest that to display appropriate emotions at work, individuals sometimes must hide or fake felt emotions (SA) or try to experience the desired emotion (DA). This is because many occupations have the general expectation that positive emotions should be displayed; and DA typically involves trying to experience positive emotions so that positive displays naturally follow. In contrast, SA usually involves faking positive emotions and sometimes suppressing negative felt emotions, so that positive displays will follow. SA has been described as “acting in bad faith” and DA has been described as “acting in good faith” as the former involves going through the emotions and the latter involves trying to experience the emotions (Grandey, 2003). Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) argued that focusing on only SA and DA ignores the possibility that employees can spontaneously experience and display appropriate emotions. Indeed SA and DA may be considered compensatory strategies that help individuals express emotions that do not come naturally. Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) considered the expression of naturally felt emotions to constitute emotional labor in that individuals still may have to put forth conscious effort to ensure that their displays coincide with the organization’s expectations. However, no published research has examined the display of naturally felt emotions as an emotional labor strategy with respect to nature of interaction. Therefore, this study considered naturally felt emotions as a strategy of emotional labour and empirically distinguishes it from SA and DA. In this context, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H1: *Nature of interaction will have an impact on emotional labour.*

Organisational Citizenship Behaviour- The concept of OCB was first discussed in the organization research literature in the early 1980s (Bateman and Organ, 1983; Smith, et al., 1983). Employees need to interact with customers either for brief or prolonged periods to maintain healthy relationships with them. For this, they may need to engage in behaviors (eg. make customers happy) which are not written in their job description. These behaviors which enhance the employee-customer interaction are termed as OCB. OCB is defined by Organ as “individual behavior that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and that in the aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the organization” (Organ, 1988). Smith et al. (1983), in a

report of empirical research on the nature and antecedents of such behaviors, conceptualize these contributions as “organizational citizenship behavior” (OCB). In service settings, the extent to which an employee engages in surface and deep acting may influence whether they perform OCBs or not. The benefits of helping colleagues, for example, may outweigh the energy expenditure. However, employees who undergo considerable effort in surface acting in high emotional demand jobs may be less willing to engage in OCBs due to the perceived energy involved. Deep acting may engender a good mood at work because the person actively tries to feel the emotions that are needed (Johnson & Spector, 2007). The enhanced psychological well-being associated with positive emotions may have a positive effect on employees’ willingness to perform OCBs. Employees who deep act are also thought to have positive intentions towards the organization, suggesting they may also perform more discretionary behaviors (Grandey, 2000). There is also little research into the mechanisms by which nature of interaction influences OCBs, despite the performance of OCBs being critical to organizational effectiveness (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, & Bachrach, 2000). Robyn E. Goodwin, Markus Groth, Stephen J. Frenkel (2011) suggests that the relationship between emotional labour strategies and different facets of performance (customer service outcomes, specific forms of task performance, organizational citizenship behaviours, etc.) is an obvious next step for future theoretical and empirical investigation.

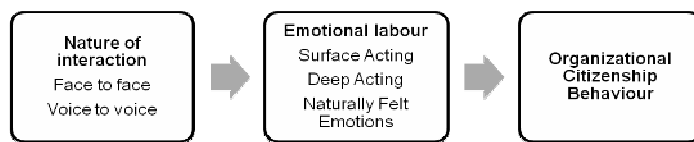
With the support derived from the above literature, we have arrived at the following hypotheses

H2: *Nature of interaction will have an impact on organizational citizenship behaviour.*

H3: *Emotional labour will have an impact on organizational citizenship behaviour.*

H4: *Emotional labour will mediate the relationship between nature of interaction and organizational citizenship behaviour*

Figure 1: Research Framework



III. METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted using Survey method.

Sample

A total of 900 questionnaires were distributed among call centres and hotels in person as well as via online. The

respondents were selected using purposive sampling method. A response rate of 78% was met. Data for survey method were collected from 702 service employees in hotels and call centres. Out of which 13 were not included in this study as they contained invalid data. So the final sample is 689 comprising 30.7% females and 68.7% males. Out of 689 data, 338 were from call centres and 351 were from hotels.

Instruments

The following section lists the instruments used for measuring the variables studied. All the scales are standardized and are adopted from the earlier studies.

Nature of interaction: This variable is measured by asking the respondents whether they belong to hotel (Face-to-face interaction) or call centre (voice-to-voice interaction) industry.

Emotional labour questionnaire: The scale developed and items as adopted by James M. Diefendorff, Meredith H. Croyle and Robin H. Gosserand (2005) were used. The scale has 14 items and used a five point rating scale. The scale measure 3 types of emotional labour namely: Surface acting (7 items), Deep acting (4 items) and naturally felt emotions (3 items). Authors have established validity for the tool and the reliability of the scale ranged from 0.84 to 0.94.

Organizational citizenship behaviour: The OCB scale developed by Coyle-Shapiro (2002) was used to measure the OCB of service employees. The OCB scale is a self-report inventory consisting of twenty two items, which measure five different dimensions of OCB viz. advocacy participation, helping behaviour, functional participation, loyalty and obedience. There are five response categories namely *Not at all, Rarely, Sometimes, Often and to a very great extent*. The test-retest reliability of this tool is found to be 0.86 and the split half reliability is 0.88. These values indicate that the tool possess high internal consistency. The content and face validity are already established in earlier studies. The parallel forms of validity with the OCB scale of Van Dyne et al., (1998) are found to be 0.78

IV. RESULTS

Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations, and inter-correlations of study variables. Table 1. shows that out of the three dimensions of emotional labour, deep acting has got the highest mean scores. This shows that most of the service employees are presenting emotions as they feel inside without faking on the surface level.

Surface acting has high positive correlation ($r=0.877^{**}$) with emotional labour than deep acting ($r=0.712^{**}$) and naturally felt emotions ($r=0.634^{**}$). This is may be because when employees really feel the emotions (deep act) the emotional labour performed by them is less. In other words when they hide true emotions and fake (surface act) the burden to

perform emotional labour is more. As can be noted from the table, Emotional labour has significant negative relationship with OCB ($r=-0.100^{**}$). This implies as employees engage in more emotional labour their intention to perform extra role behaviour like helping their coworkers, participating in functions not related to job role will decrease. To examine Hypothesis 1 and 2, independent t tests were conducted (see Table 2). We examined whether there is a difference between employees who are involved in face to face and voice to voice interaction in terms of their emotional labour and OCB.

Results showed that the two groups differ significantly ($p < .05$) on deep acting and emotional labour based on nature of interaction. Employees interacting with customers by face to face tend to show emotions by modifying their inner feelings. In the similar analysis testing the difference between groups based on nature of interaction for organizational citizenship behaviour, the result showed significant difference.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics and Relationship between Study Variables

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
Surface acting	3.37	0.812	1				
Deep acting	3.83	0.909	0.442**	1			
Naturally felt emotions	3.24	1.099	0.357**	0.220**	1		
Emotional labour	3.47	0.690	0.877**	0.712**	0.634**	1	
OCB	3.45	0.513	-0.222**	-0.071	0.168**	-0.100**	1

* Significance at 0.05 level **Significance at 0.01 level

Table 2: Results of t-tests for group differences on Emotional labour and OCB based on nature of interaction

Variables	t value	df	Mean scores	
			Face to face interaction	Voice to voice interaction
Surface acting	1.13	687	3.41	3.34
Deep acting	24.68*	687	4.44	3.19
Naturally felt emotions	0.471	687	3.26	3.22
Emotional labour	7.92*	687	3.67	3.27
Organizational citizenship behaviour	8.33*	687	3.45	3.45

* Significance at 0.05 level

For an additional support for Hypothesis 1 and 2, two linear regressions were conducted with the nature of interaction as independent variable (coded as 1 and 2) and emotional labour, OCB as dependent variables in two separate regression equations. (see Table 3). Nature of interaction has a significant impact on emotional labour ($p < .05$) as well as on OCB. Hence Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2 supported. Similarly Hypothesis 3 is tested using emotional labour as independent variable and organizational citizenship behaviour as dependent

variable. Table 3 shows emotional labour has a significant negative impact ($\beta=-0.100^*$) on OCB ($p < .05$). Therefore, Hypothesis 3 is supported.

Table 3: Effect of Nature of interaction on Emotional labour and Organizational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB).

Independent variables	Dependent variables (Beta values)	
	Emotional labour	OCB
Nature of interaction	0.289*	-0.287*
Emotional labour	-	-0.100*

* Significance at 0.05 level

To examine Hypothesis 4, we did mediation analysis using the steps illustrated by Baron and Kenny (1986) (see Table 4). The mediating effect of Emotional labour between nature of interaction and OCB is tested using four hierarchical regressions. Nature of interaction has a negative impact on OCB and this is reduced further as we introduce emotional labour as mediator, which indicates emotional labour acts as partial mediator. Hence hypothesis H4 is supported.

Table 4: The Mediating Role of Emotional Labour between Nature of Interaction and Organizational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB).

Regression equations	Beta values	Adjusted R ²	F
NOI on emotional labour	0.289*	0.082	62.83
Emotional labour on OCB	-0.100*	0.008	6.872
NOI on OCB	-0.287*	0.091	60.01
NOI on OCB (in the presence of emotional labour)	-0.167*	0.021	7.721

* Significance at 0.05 level

V. DISCUSSION

According to Grandey (2000), emotional regulation is necessary in service settings because employees are required to express emotions that are consistent with norms, or organisational rules, about the appropriate emotional display for the situation. Recent research primarily focuses on understanding the emotion regulation strategies of surface and deep acting (Brotheridge & Lee, 2003). Surface acting occurs when individuals modify their outward emotion and body language to conform to rules without changing their inner feelings, while deep acting involves efforts to change internal feelings to match the display (Grandey, 2000; Hochschild, 1983). Surface acting may still be needed when deep acting to

prevent any remaining negative feelings from showing in an employee's facial expression (Grandey, 2003). This study however focuses on antecedent and consequence of naturally felt emotions for better understanding of the third strategy introduced by Diefendorff et.al. (2005). To date, the existing empirical research on emotional labour does not tell us much about *how* nature of interaction is linked to emotional labour. Our research addresses this gap by providing a theoretical framework for emotional labour, mediating the relationship between nature of interaction and Organisational citizenship behaviour.

Performing emotional labor does not merely lead to negative consequences but also positive effects (Wong and Wang, 2009). Even though the previous studies tend to emphasize only on the damages caused by emotional labor, emotional labor appears to have positive consequences when it is experienced as self-enhancing or when workers are in control of their emotions (Pugliesi, 1999). Emotional labor can be used to create and maintain relationships between employees and customers and thus facilitate in task effectiveness (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993). Most emotional labor research has been concerned with its potentially negative impact on service employees (e.g., Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Totterdell & Homan, 2003). Emotional labor has recently received tremendous attention because of its double-edged effects. It could have a negative influence on employees' well-being, but it creates a positive impact on company success. Hence the study focuses on organisational citizenship behaviours rather than any negative consequences.

The result of “t” test shows that the two groups based on the nature of interaction differ significantly with respect to the emotional labour. Nature of interaction also have an impact on organisational citizenship behaviour. The employees who perform voice to voice interaction with the customers tend to show lesser helping behaviour than those who interact face to face. Emotional labour is correlated positively with surface acting, deep acting and naturally felt emotions. Service employees may either differ in deep acting or emotional labour based on how they interact with customers. In service settings, the extent to which an employee engages in surface and deep acting may influence whether they perform OCBs. So depending upon the strategy handled by the employees, they perform organisational citizenship behaviour (Diefendorff, 2005). The study showed emotional labour has significant negative impact on organisational citizenship behaviour. This implies as employees engage in more emotional labour their tendency to engage in OCB will decrease. This may be due to the emotional exhaustion employees face when they engage in intense emotional labour. Moreover, they are not likely to possess enough energy to indulge in extra role behaviours which are not even considered for rewarding by formal reward system.

Halbesleben and Bowler (2007) suggest that, as employees become emotionally exhausted from surface acting, they may increase their performance of OCBs as a way to obtain social support. Contradictory to this, the current study showed OCB has negative correlation with Surface acting. The more the employees engage in surface acting, the less likely will be their OCBs. Salami (2007) found a negative relationship between surface acting and OCB and a positive relationship between deep acting and OCB in a study of public servants. Inigo and colleagues (2007) found that one of the emotional labour namely, deep acting was associated with performing organisational citizenship behaviour. Employees who feel emotions from inside and show pleasant emotions (deep acting) enjoy doing their jobs. They are more likely to engage in behaviours which are not described in their job descriptions. For example, they would like to help their co-workers, spread positive note about their jobs outside the organisations, etc. Halbesleben and Bowler's (2007) found that employees who deep acted were also those who were more likely to perform discretionary behaviours like organisational citizenship behaviour. Contrary to the previous findings, OCB and deep acting are negatively related in this study.

Employees who show naturally felt emotions are more likely to engage in organisational citizenship behaviour or employees who engage in OCB are those who exhibit naturally felt emotions. This is well evident from the correlation table where naturally felt emotion is correlated positively with organisational citizenship behaviour. From this result, it can be implied that an employee who is trained to show natural emotions are more likely to engage in helping behaviour or employees who engage in extra role behaviour are more likely to empathize with customers and thus exhibit naturally felt emotions. Hence organisations must reward employees who engage in naturally felt emotions and train employees who engage in surface acting to adopt a better strategy to satisfy their customers.

There are a number of limitations to this study that need to be acknowledged. Self-report measures of emotional labour and citizenship behaviors were used, which may have over (Organ & Ryan, 1995) or underestimated the results (Organ, 1994). A further limitation of this study is that it focused on occupations in which employees were primarily required to express positive emotions (e.g., happiness) or suppress negative emotions (e.g., anger) during interactions. Another limitation of this study is the fact that our data (non-experimental, cross-sectional) do not enable us to test causal pathways among study variables.

In spite of these limitations, its findings have significant managerial and theoretical implications. It provides insights on how nature of interaction impact emotional labour and organisational citizenship behaviour. While research has focused on the antecedents and consequences of emotional labour as a whole, very few have examined the antecedents and consequences of different jobs based on nature of

interaction which mean how interaction influences the way an employee perform emotional labour. The results will help human resource managers to tailor the training needs of the individuals depending on the emotional labour strategy used by them. One of the practical implications of this study is training ‘at risk’ employees in how to deep act so that they can proactively manage emotional labor as required. Grandey (2000) suggested attentional deployment and cognitive change are two ways a person may deep act. Training programs that incorporate these cognitive strategies, along with increased awareness of the possible adverse health effects associated with surface acting, may help to reduce service employees’ emotional exhaustion.

A good person-job fit in hotel and call center therefore should mean there is less need for an employee to surface or deep act, as they are more likely to spontaneously experience the required emotions. Employers should consider selecting employees who are high in organisational citizenship behaviour to improve performance in customer service jobs. If employers focus on the suggested selection practices, they also need to allow employees greater autonomy in how they manage the emotional demands involved in interacting with their customers (Johnson & Spector, 2007). Work re-design at the job level could help to improve performance directly as well as indirectly, through increased citizenship behaviors and reduced exhaustion. We suggest that researchers continue to study emotional labor to help increase service quality and citizenship behaviour of service employees. Future research should incorporate multiple data sources (e.g., supervisors, customers) to reduce the possible influence of percept–percept inflation. Also, future research might assess and control for social desirability when testing the relationships of emotional labor strategies with other variables.

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