

## **Emotional Labor in China: Relationships with Burnout, Job Satisfaction, and Perceived Group Membership as Predictors**

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### **1. Introduction**

With the prevalence of service jobs, researchers have begun to pay attention to emotional labor in the workplace. Emotional labor refers to spontaneous manipulation of one's feelings or/and expressions, in order to induce expected reaction of others (e.g. customers) or meet the organizational norms (Hochschild, 1983). Employees in service jobs commonly use emotional labor through two different strategies: surface acting and deep acting. Surface acting means the manipulation of the appeared expression; in contrast, deep acting refers to the adjustment of the internal feeling.

### **2. Research Findings**

In current study, we investigated the relationship between different acting strategies and burnout as well as job satisfaction. We also examined whether employees' perceptions of customers' social economic status and in-out group membership would affect their use of emotional labor strategies. Participants were employees from a jewelry store in China, who completed surveys and interviews. Results showed that surface acting was positively correlated with emotional exhaustion, while deep acting was positively correlated with personal accomplishment. Employees used more deep acting if they perceived their customers as in-group members, indicating group membership as a predictor of deep acting. No correlation was found between acting strategies and depersonalization, job satisfaction, or perceived social economic status of customers. Several themes emerged from the interview responses. First, employees reported using emotional labor commonly at work and took it as a duty or a shaped habit. Second, despite that some employees stated emotions should be left at home or with more intimate relationships, faking or hiding their emotions at work tended to put them in a worse mood and more stressed. Different ways of emotion management were mentioned, including diverting attention, self-persuasion, etc.

### **3. Conclusion**

The project aimed to learn about the use and effect of emotional labor in different culture. We chose China because fewer related studies were conducted there, and Chinese culture is quite distinctive with American culture. In addition, as the researcher, I am a native Chinese having the access to the culture and advantage in communicating with participants. Both survey and structured interview were used. We successfully contacted a jewelry store in China and got their consent to conduct the study on their employees. The survey and interviews were launched during two weekdays in June. With support from the managers of the jewelry store, about 81% of the employees in sales, customer service, security and management participated and returned the questionnaires. Twenty sales clerks participated in group interviews; four participants were

set in each group. Interviewees were active in answering questions about how they managed their emotions at work.

Through the study we aimed to find the relationship of acting strategies and burnout, job satisfaction as well as the perceived status and group membership of customers. As hypothesized, we found significant positive relationship between surface acting and emotional exhaustion, as well as between deep acting and personal accomplishment. These findings showed consistency with previous studies (Brotheridge and Grandey, 2002). Moreover, we found perceived in-group membership of customer by employee predicted deep acting, as we hypothesized based on the cultural studies in the future.

One set of hypotheses about perceived status of customer and emotions of employees was forgone due to its less relatedness and lack of appropriate scale. All other three sets of hypotheses were examined. To sum up, the study was smoothly conducted, and the results suggested meaningful future directions.

### References

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