

The Impact of Emotional Labour on the Job Performance of Sales Staff: Company A

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Abstract: *The academic and practical circles believe that emotional labour has an important impact on organisational behavior and is a key component of employee performance. Sales employees are a typical emotional labor group, and their sales behaviour directly affects customers' purchasing behaviour and purchasing decisions. Under the prevailing background of emotional marketing concepts, research on them has significant practical significance. A large number of research results on emotional labour have emerged, but existing studies have more to explore the relationship between emotional labour and job burnout, job satisfaction and organisational commitment, and rarely involve research on the relationship between emotional labor and employee performance. In this context, this paper adopts the questionnaire survey method and takes Company A as the survey object. The results of the survey of the sales staff of this company show that emotional labour has a certain relationship with employee performance. This paper uses SPSS25.0 statistical analysis software, using correlation analysis and regression analysis to verify the three hypotheses proposed in this paper: (1) There is a positive correlation between deep acting and job performance; (2) There is a negative correlation between surface acting and job performance; (3) There is a positive correlation between spontaneous and genuine emotion and job performance.*

Keywords: *Emotional labour, Job performance, Sales employees*

1. Introduction

Since the discussion of the 'Hawthorne effect' in 1958, scientists have discovered that there is a close link between work efficiency and emotions among employees. People or employees are now understood to be high-value organisational resources [1]. Emotions are a key psychological factor that affects an individual's activity in life and their work performance and are increasingly gaining the attention of researchers and management theorists. The industrial structure of China has adjusted in tandem with the deepening of China's economic system reform in recent years. The core of the tertiary sector in China is the service industry, and a focus on the service industry has become essential [2] as the service industry continues to see growth within China's total GDP. In 2018, the service industry accounted for a value-added 44.6% of GDP. In several developed countries, the proportion of the service industry has exceeded 70%, such as the United States, Japan, Germany, and South Korea. It is clear that the era of the service economy has begun [3].

With the increasing importance and scale of the service industry, more and more people are engaged in service-oriented work. The nature and reality of service work usually requires employees to express emotions that are inconsistent with their true emotional state, and suppress emotions that conflict with brand image or sales expectations. As a result, emotional labour is now considered the third type of labour alongside physical and mental labour [4]. Thus, creating a better understanding of employee emotions as experienced at work can reap benefits for organisations and making them worthy of theoretical and practical attention. The result has been an "emotional storm" in the field of organisational behaviour research.

Hochschild conducted a detailed study on the job environment of Delta Air Lines flight attendants in 1979. This study focused primarily on the emotional expressions of flight attendants. It noted that smiles, enthusiasm, and thoughtfulness were integral parts of their daily work in the sky or on the ground. Following this study, Hochschild pioneered the concept of emotional labour, which is defined as getting paid and managing emotions to create publicly perceivable facial and body expressions [5]. Nearly two decades later, Morris and Feldman (1996) suggested that emotional labour is another manifestation of interpersonal communication. They also believed that employees will express their expectations of the organisation through hard work, planning and control. They found that the emotions of an individual employee need to be consistent with those that the organisation wishes to express to its customers [6].

Considering these diverse theories of emotional labour and considering the rather recent emergence of the topic in academia, there is no agreed definition of emotional labour. Li (2004) noticed this and did believe that these theories do have one thing in common: emotional labour is related to organisational requirements, involving emotion, experience, regulation and expression [7]. Alternatively, Wen (2005) summarised three dominant factors of emotional labour: employees perform emotional labour when they have face-to-face interaction and voice-to-sound interactions with customers; emotional expression affects the emotions, attitudes and behaviours of others; employees must adhere to pre-set rules concerning emotional performance during its exercise [8].

Since the identification and discussion of the concept of emotional labour, scholars have published many research papers, but most of them focus on job burnout, job satisfaction and organisational commitment, and mainly ignore the relationship between emotional labour and job performance [9]. Some studies on this relationship mainly focus on the negative effects of emotional labour on job performance. Few scholars pay attention to the positive effects or improvement factors of emotional work that can promote work performance. Thus, this paper uses empirical research methods to analyse the relationship between emotional labour and job performance to supplement relevant research on emotional labour [10].

2. Literature Review

Although emotional labour is different from manual labour and mental labour as a form of labour, emotional labour has a substantial impact on employee behaviour and is a critical influencing factor of job performance [11].

Studies have shown that performing emotional labour can reduce employee performance [12-13]. In the process of performing emotional labour, such as when workers are interacting with customers, excessive levels of emotional disguising or deception may not only bring about the risk of emotional exhaustion but also damage the performance of workers [14-15]. However, some researchers believe that emotional labour can positively influence job performance. Sutton and Rafaeli (1988) believe that showing an employee smiling during a customer interaction can lead to more closures of sales and waiters receiving more or higher tips in service establishments [16]. In other words, showing emotions consistent with the company's values can improve employee performance. Similarly, Gosserand and Diefendorff (2005) particularly emphasised that specific and clear emotional rules are conducive to performance improvement, and the greater the gap between emotional expression and emotional rules, the longer the duration and the more significant the negative impact on employee performance [17].

Some scholars have conducted more detailed studies on the relationship between employee performance and emotional labour. Totterdell & Holman (2003) found that psychological fatigue is more likely to be the result when surface behaviour overwhelms inner emotions. Job performance will be affected by surface behaviours and deep behaviours, but usually deep behaviours have a more significant impact [18]. Among employees in the service industry, the use of surface behaviours can easily lead to emotional exhaustion and performance degradation. However, Yan (et al., 2012) found through research that emotional labour will have a positive impact on employee job performance and job satisfaction.

Moreover, deep and surface acting are indirectly related to employee performance through Task Focus [19-20]. Man (2017) believes that the emotional labour carried out by employees significantly affects instances of emotional exhaustion, overall job satisfaction and employee performance. Man believes emotional labour is disturbed by emotional intelligence and job characteristics. When work integrity is higher, emotional labour and emotional exhaustion are higher, and employee performance is greater. The higher the level of autonomy at work, the greater the level of the emotional labour, and the less emotional exhaustion experienced by the employee. Liao and Yan (2015) believed that the emotional labour of life insurance personnel affects employee performance, turnover tendency and customer satisfaction through job satisfaction. Human resource practices affect in-depth behaviour, in-depth behaviour affects job satisfaction, and satisfaction affects employee performance [21].

Overall, the relationship between emotional labour and employee performance is complicated, and emotional labour has both positive and negative effects on employee performance. However, the relationship between the two concepts faces uncertainties with regards to different cultural backgrounds, differing research fields and research objects within studies [22]. Through the collation of the literature, it is clear that few scholars have studied the relationship between the emotional labour and job performance for sales staff. Considering the above, this paper discusses and analyses the relationship between emotional labour and employee performance for sales employees [23].

3. Research Hypothesis And Methodology

3.1. Research Hypothesis

Surface acting as emotional labour strategy refers to when the employee's emotions are inconsistent with the organisational expression rules, and the individual changes their external performance through external expressions and sounds. The individual's internal emotional feelings do not change with surface acting. Deep acting occurs when emotions that the individual feels are inconsistent with the organization's expression rules are transformed internally so that the employee's emotional state matches the emotions required by the organization [24]. Spontaneous and genuine emotion occurs when an individual's inner feelings and the organization's performance rules coincide precisely, and the individual exhibits emotional behaviour consistent with the organization's performance rules [25]. The theory of emotional events stipulates that this performance is more likely to be immediate, specific, and emotionally driven in its behavioural results [26]. Since the employee's work efficiency and work quality will be affected by the employee's emotional state at any given time, the effects of emotional labour can be profound. When an employee uses deep acting to put themselves into a positive emotional state, they face external stimuli, such as customers, with a positive attitude. Deep acting naturally leads to more friendly and helpful behaviours. To be more specific, employees are more sensitive to the information provided by customers and process these inputs more efficiently [27].

In contrast, when employees face their colleagues, they are happy to spread the knowledge in their minds among the members of the organisation. However, when employees exhibit deep acting behaviours, customers are more sensitive to the sincerity and naturalness of employees' emotional displays, and customers can perceive that employees are sincerely concerned and striving to meet their needs [28]. Thus, positive emotions can positively affect customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Totterdell and Holman (2003) found that employees' deep behaviour has a reliable predictive power on service performance. Brotheridge and Grandey (2002) also found that deep behaviour in emotional labour positively correlates with personal achievement. Similarly, in China, Chen (2008) surveyed employees in the service industry, and the results showed that employees who use deep acting emotional labour strategies experience less emotional exhaustion and higher work performance. The following hypothesis is based on the research above.

H1: There is a positive correlation between deep acting and job performance.

The theory of emotional events holds that there is an innate consistency between emotional experience and external expressions. When there is an inconsistency between emotional expression and emotional experience, this is a result of the acquired, socialization of emotions [29]. The discord between inner emotions and outer performance experienced in surface actors leads to greater negative effects, and it becomes easy for surface actors to accumulate work pressure and psychological tension. This accumulation can cause employees to be emotionally exhausted, leading to a decline in work performance. For example, Chen (2008) surveyed employees in the service industry, and the results showed that employees who adopted the surface acting emotional labour strategy experienced emotional exhaustion and lower job performance [30].

Similarly, Ma and Huang (2010) proved through laboratory research that surface acting reduces subsequent work performance and weakens self-reality. Moreover, Tang et al. (2010) found that deep acting behaviour is not related to work performance through research on telecom employees. On the contrary, surface work behaviour is related to work performance. Therefore, the following is assumed.

H2: There is a negative correlation between surface acting and job performance.

Spontaneous and genuine emotion occurs when an employee maintains a natural emotional state. In this case, emotional labour occurs in an automatic mode; the degree of effort required by the employee is less than deep acting behaviour and surface acting behaviour. Thus, emotional exhaustion is relatively small, and it has a positive impact on work performance. Hu and Yang (2009), through the empirical study of the employees of a call centre, indirectly proved the positive impact of emotional labour on work performance. So, it can be assumed:

H3: There is a positive correlation between spontaneous and genuine emotion and job performance.

3.2. Questionnaire Design and Collection

3.2.1. Survey Sample

Company A is a private, small to middle-sized company in Shandong province. This organisation is a pharmaceutical company focused on medicine sales, and its main business includes medicinal research and development, health care products, pharmaceuticals and cosmetics. Company A has thirty-five branches located in other provinces of the whole country and has more than 3,000 employees, including more than 1,900 sales staff.

Sales staff from Company A completed the questionnaire survey in this paper. The sales employees of Company A are taken as the survey object, and a questionnaire survey is used to collect data. In this study, 120 questionnaires were sent out, and 112 questionnaires were returned, giving a recovery rate of 93.33%. After excluding invalid questionnaires with incomplete information and fixed responses, there were 105 valid questionnaires.

3.2.2. Measuring Tools

The scale of emotional labour. Diefendorff et al. (2005) wrote a questionnaire on emotional labour and proposed that emotional labour strategy includes three dimensions: surface acting, deep acting and spontaneous and genuine emotion. Within the questionnaire, there are seven items relating to surface acting, four items relating to deep acting, and three items relating to spontaneous and genuine emotion. Chinese scholar Bai Qiaoyang (2005) translated this questionnaire into Chinese, and the empirical research carried out has shown good reliability and validity. The internal consistency coefficients of the three are 0.750, 0.721, and 0.718, respectively. In this article, each item adopts the Likert scale, 5 = "strongly agree", 1 = "strongly disagree". Using this scale, the higher the score, the higher the frequency with which the subject adopts the emotional strategy [31].

The scale of job performance. Borman and Motowidlo (1997) proposed a two-dimensional model of job performance. This model surpasses the previous understanding of single-dimensional job performance, or task performance, and is a widely used performance model in current research. Therefore, this article divides job performance into task performance and contextual performance. Task performance consists of six items, and contextual performance consists of three items. Each item adopts the Likert scale, 5 = "strongly agree", 1 = "strongly disagree". The higher the score, the higher the level of employee job performance [32].

4. Data Statistics and Analysis

4.1. Reliability and Validity Test and Factor Analysis of Emotional Labour Scale

This study uses Cronbach's Alpha coefficient to test the reliability of the scale. The overall Alpha value is 0.668, which is close to 0.7. If the Alpha coefficient has good reliability if it reaches 0.7, and 0.6 is the threshold of an acceptable level, the consistency of the scale is acceptable. Table 1 shows the reliability test results of the emotional labour scale.

Table 1: Reliability Test of Emotional Labour Scale

Cronbach's Alpha	Item
0.668	14

Table 2: KMO test and Bartlett spherical test results of the emotional labour scale

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		0.970
Bartlett Test of	Approx. Chi-Square	1950.949
	df	91
	Sig.	0.000

The validity test confirms whether the scale is suitable for EFA, the KMO test and Bartlett spherical test were carried out. After performing the KMO test and Bartlett spherical test on fourteen items of the emotional labour scale, it is found that the KMO value is 0.970, which is close to 1, and Bartlett spherical test was significant (Sig. < 0.001). These conditions mean that questionnaire data meets the prerequisite for factor analysis. They also show that the options are relevant and suitable for factor analysis. Table 2 shows the results of the KMO test and Bartlett spherical test of the emotional labour scale.

SPSS 25.0 is then used to conduct factor analysis on fourteen items of emotional labour. This study uses principal component analysis to extract factors and uses the maximum variance convolution method to perform the rotation. The three factors extracted were surface acting, deep acting, and spontaneous and genuine emotion. The explained variance ratio is 81.518%, which means that these factors cover

most of the information in the measurement indicators and have adequate representation within the questionnaire. This phenomenon further shows an adequate structural validity of the scale. Table 3 shows the factor analysis results of the emotional labour scale.

Table 3: Factor analysis of emotional labour scale

Item	Component		
	F1 deep acting	F2 surface acting	F3 spontaneous and genuine emotion
Q8	0.801		
Q11	0.844		
Q13	0.837		
Q15	0.821		
Q6		0.755	
Q7		0.867	
Q9		0.827	
Q10		0.815	
Q12		0.767	
Q14		0.801	
Q18		0.785	
Q5			0.810
Q16			0.870
Q17			0.812
Explained Variance ratio	81.518%		

4.2. Reliability and Validity Test and Factor Analysis of Job Performance Scale

This study uses Cronbach's Alpha coefficient to test the reliability of the job performance scale. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient value is 0.971, higher than 0.8, which means the reliability of this scale is very good, and the internal consistency of the items is very high. Table 4 shows the reliability test results of the job performance scale.

Table 4: Reliability Test of Job performance Scale

Cronbach's α	Item
0.971	9

The validity test also uses the KMO test and the Bartlett spherical test to confirm whether the scale is suitable for EFA. Table 5 shows the result of the KMO test and Bartlett spherical test, and it shows that the KMO value is 0.964, higher than 0.7. The Bartlett spherical test is significant (Sig. < 0.001), which means the options are relevant and suitable for factor analysis. Table 5 shows the KMO test and Bartlett spherical test results of the job performance scale.

Table 5: KMO test and Bartlett spherical test results of the job performance scale

Kaiser-Meyor-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	0.964	
Bartlett Test of	Approx. Chi-Square	1115.884
	df	36
	Sig.	0.000

SPSS 25.0 is used to perform factor analysis on the nine items of work performance, extract the factors through the principal component analysis method, and use the maximum variance method to rotate the shaft. Two factors were extracted: task performance and contextual performance. The explained variance ratio is 82.001%, which shows that these factors cover most of the information in the measurement indicators, and the scale has good validity. Table 6 shows the factor analysis results of the job performance scale.

Table 6: Factor analysis of job performance scale

Item	Component		
	F1 Task performance	F2 Contextual performance	
Q19	0.804		
Q20	0.795		
Q21	0.820		
Q22	0.784		
Q23	0.844		
Q25	0.801		
Q24			0.835
Q26			0.867
Q27			0.830
Explained Variance ratio	82.001%		

4.3. The Results of Correlation Analysis

As in previous papers, validity and reliability analysis determined the structure of dimensions for further analysis. After this process, a difference analysis determined the impact of four demographic variables on emotional labour and job performance. Then, a correlation analysis studied the correlation between variables. This paper uses the Pearson correlation analysis method to describe the closeness of each variable and verify the relationship between emotional labour and job performance stated in the hypothesis. The correlation coefficient ranges from -1.0 to +1.0. In this analysis, a higher absolute value indicates a stronger correlation between variables. Table 7 shows the results.

Table 7: Correlation Analysis

	Surface acting	Deep acting	Spontaneous and genuine emotion	Emotional labour	Job performance
Surface acting	1				
Deep acting	-0.952**	1			
Spontaneous and genuine emotion	-0.944**	0.937**	1		
Emotional labour	-0.030	0.296**	0.284**	1	
Job performance	-0.972**	0.960**	0.951**	0.157	1

Notes: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

As seen in Table 7, emotional labour positively correlates with job performance, but it is not significant ($r = 0.157$). The relationship between each dimension of emotional labour and job performance is quite different. To be more specific, the correlation coefficient between surface acting and work performance is -0.972, which is negatively significant ($p < 0.05$), indicating that surface acting has a certain degree of negative correlation with work performance. In other words, the more surface acting is used, the lower the work performance. However, deep acting and spontaneous and genuine emotion are significantly positively related to each dimension of job performance. Spontaneous and genuine emotion has a significant positive correlation with job performance ($r = 0.951$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that the expression of genuine emotions at work results in an increase in job performance. Also, deep acting has the strongest correlation with work performance, with a coefficient of 0.960 ($p < 0.05$). This strong correlation indicates that greater job performance occurs when employees adopt deep acting as an emotional labour strategy. The results of this correlation analysis prove hypothesis 1, hypothesis 2 and hypothesis 3.

This analysis shows that deep acting and spontaneous and genuine emotion are significantly positively correlated with work performance, and surface play behaviour is significantly negatively correlated with job performance. This disparity shows that sales staff in Company A hiding incongruent emotions at work, adopting deep playing strategies or showing true emotions that are in line with the company's will complete work tasks more efficiently, have better interpersonal relationships and a stronger dedication to work [33]. The theory of emotional contagion (Pugh, 2001) also plays a role in the positive effects of this type of employee behaviour. When sales employees perform deep behaviours, customers are also infected, and they experience and display positive emotions, consciously or unconsciously. Customer loyalty and satisfaction are affected by this use of emotional labour strategy. Positive emotions from employees is likely to attract more customers, and ultimately promote the improvement of sales employees' work performance in Company A.

4.4. The Results of Regression Analysis

Correlation analysis indicates whether there is a relationship between factors and explores the closeness of that relationship. Regression analysis further analyses the direction of the relationship and explains the causality that may exist between the factors [34]. The relationship between emotional labour and job performance is verified by a hierarchical regression analysis method.

The previous correlation analysis found that there is a significant correlation between emotional labour and job performance and that the relationship between each dimension and job performance is inconsistent. In order to better verify the predictive effect of each dimension of emotional labour on job performance, a hierarchical regression analysis method is undertaken. Four demographic variables are considered as control variables in the regression equation: gender, age, educational background, and working years. The independent variables, or predictors, in the regression equation are the three dimensions of emotional labour: surface acting, deep acting, and spontaneous and genuine emotion. Table 8 shows the results.

Table 8: Regression Analysis

Variables	Job performance			
	Model 1		Model 2	
	β	Sig	β	Sig
Gender	0.083	0.428	-0.032	0.127
Age	0.134	0.31	-0.048*	0.07
Education background	0.026	0.796	-0.017	0.392
Working years	0.051	0.71	0.015	0.598
Surface acting			-0.556***	0.000
Deep acting			0.25***	0.001
Spontaneous and genuine emotion			0.201***	0.002
R ²	0.031		0.964	
F	0.790		372.251	

Notes: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

These regression analysis results show that after controlling for demographic variables, deep acting and spontaneous and genuine emotion have a significant positive and predictive effect on job performance. Among them, deep acting has the highest predictive effect on job performance ($\beta=0.25$, $p=0.001$). If employees engage in deep play behaviour, the employee's performance level is higher. Spontaneous and genuine emotion also has a predictive effect on job performance ($\beta=0.201$, $p=0.002$). If employees express real behaviours at work, then employees will significantly improve their job performance. However, surface acting has a significantly negative predictive effect on job performance ($\beta = -0.556$, $p = 0.000$). If an employee adopts surface acting behaviours, the employee's performance level is lower.

Overall, the relationships between the three dimensions of emotional labour and job performance are not consistent. This lack of harmony also explains why the existing research on the relationship between emotional labour and job performance is not consistent. These inconsistencies are most likely due to the diversity of categorisations of emotional labour dimensions in various studies. Each study then reaches disparate conclusions.

The results of the regression analysis confirm hypothesis 1, hypothesis 2 and hypothesis 3 proposed in this paper. Therefore, if Company A wants to improve their sales performance through staff performance, the company should focus on how its staff engages in emotional labour. Company A should consider scrutinising the emotional labour strategy choices of its staff members and encourage employees to choose deep acting behaviour and spontaneous and genuine emotion behaviour when communicating with customers.

5. Research Analysis and Limitations

5.1. Discussion and Analysis

5.1.1. Main Conclusion of This Research

This study conducted a questionnaire survey on the emotional labour and work performance of Company A's sales staff. It used SPSS 25.0 statistical analysis software to explore the relationship between these two factors through descriptive statistics, difference testing, correlation analysis,

regression analysis and other statistical analysis methods. Through the above discussion and analysis, the results are shown in Table 9, a summary table of hypothesis testing conditions.

Table 9: Summary table of hypothesis testing conditions

Research Hypothesis	Result
H1: There is a positive correlation between deep acting and job performance.	Proved
H2: There is a negative correlation between surface acting and job performance.	Proved
H3: There is a positive correlation between spontaneous and genuine emotion and job performance.	Proved

5.1.2. The relationship between emotional labour and job performance in Company A

There is a significant correlation and regression effect between the emotional labour and job performance of Company A's sales employees. The specific relationship between the two obtained from the research confirms that emotional labour is related to work performance. Specifically, deep acting, and spontaneous and genuine emotion, are positively related to work performance, and surface acting behaviour is negatively related to work performance. One possible explanation for the negative impact of surface acting is that the behaviour may lead to poor emotional performance, resulting in lower job performance.

On the contrary, employees who adopt deep acting behaviours make their emotions and the emotions expected by the organisation consistent not only in appearance but also in heart. These employees adopting deep acting behaviours and employees expressing genuine emotions show a more "real" aspect of themselves to their customers. These customers perceive the efforts of sales staff as genuine, which enhances customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction is linked to increased sales or repeated sales, which improves work performance. The same effect holds for interaction with stakeholders, colleagues or leaders. When employees behave authentically and show their true emotions, misunderstandings are diminished, and understanding is improved. Overall, harmonious employee relationships eventually bring improvements in employee performance.

5.2. Limitations of This Research

The emotional labour and employee performance survey questionnaire used in this article was based upon a combination of theories from many scholars and the author's collation of the literature. It is likely that the validity and rationality of the questionnaire requires further exploration and research. One facet to consider is that the employee performance questionnaire is general and not tailored to any industry sector or job function. For future studies, the questionnaire will require development specifically for sales staff to improve the relevancy and applicability of the empirical results.

6. Conclusion

This article began by illustrating the background of emotional labour and job performance, presenting definitions of each and emphasising the importance of these topics and their interrelation. Following this, dimensions for emotional labour strategies (surface acting, deep acting and spontaneous and genuine emotion) and job performance (task performance and contextual performance) were analysed, which created a foundation for the construction of a suitable theoretical framework. Based on these dimensions and previous literature, this dissertation further proposed three research hypotheses about the relationship between emotional labour and job performance. By using the methods of qualitative analysis, such as literature review, and quantitative analysis, the questionnaire, this paper collected information from sales employees at Company A and then generated results from a detailed analysis. This research provides evidence of the positive correlation between deep acting and spontaneous and genuine emotion and job performance, as well as the negative correlation between surface acting and job performance. The research results of this article have a significant enlightening effect on the development of theory. It can also serve as a resource for the development of sales staff in private enterprises. Finally, due to the small sample size and the limited knowledge and resources of the author, the study still has some shortcomings. The completion of future studies adhering to the proposed follow-up actions may enrich the results of this study.

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