

THE IMPACT OF SURFACE ACTING, DEEP ACTING AND EMOTIONAL EXHAUSTION ON SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING IN THE EMPLOYEES OF FOOD AND BEVERAGES INDUSTRIES

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Abstract

Given that employees in the food and beverage (F&B) industry are required to interact with customers over long periods, the problems of emotional labor in the industry have long been a concern of scholars and practitioners. To understand the emotional exhaustion and subjective well-being of F&B operation service staff, this study explores the dimensions of surface acting and deep acting. The present study was conducted using a questionnaire survey and the data analyzed using a structural equation model. The results show that emotional exhaustion is influenced by deep acting rather than surface acting. This result indicates that although deep acting can deliver better service performance, it is likely to result in an accumulation of emotions and to produce emotional labor. In contrast, surface acting is less likely to produce emotional labor, but may increase the possibility of service recovery. However, both surface acting and deep acting have a significant positive impact on the subjective well-being of employees, showing that a moderate level of adjustment in service emotions helps improve employees' subjective well-being.

Keywords: Emotional Labor, Emotional Exhaustion, Subjective Well-being, Food and Beverages Industries, Service Recovery

Introduction

Due to the nature of service, which involves an intensive amount of face-to-face interaction between employees and customers, emotional labor has received significant attention both in the organizational and academic literature (Shapoval, 2019). In the food and beverage (F&B) section, frontline service staff are often obliged to hide their real emotions and to perform what is acceptable to members of the public, which involves being polite and smiling to customers (Hochschild, 1979; Kim, 2008). F&B organizations have rules that govern their employees' emotional expressions in order to influence customers' attitudes, behaviors, and feelings during the service interaction. Whilst surface acting refers to simulating emotions that are not actually felt, or faking feeling that are not really felt, deep acting involves attempts to actually experience the emotions one is required to display or aligning one's true feeling with the ones required by the jobs (Chen, 2019). When service staff responding to the rules regulated by their operation, this emotional labor (performing deep acting and surface acting) has a direct impact on employees' interpersonal environment and burnout (Han, Bonn & Cho, 2016). While emotional labor can have a positive impact on company' success through customer satisfaction, it is also suspected to have potential negative influences on employees' subjective happiness (Kranitz et al., 2015).

The paper aims to examine the effect of the deep acting and surface acting of service staff in F&B businesses on emotional exhaustion and subjective happiness. More specifi-

cally, it examines the impact of two types of emotional labor, surface acting and deep acting, on F&B service employees through a quantitative questionnaire research method. Examining emotional labor is important because it could influence the way food service organizations' employees manage themselves and operate within teams, which could lead to better subjective happiness.

Literature Review

Surface Acting

Surface acting: Surface acting in a service provider refers to simulating emotions that are not actually felt, which are exposed with the careful presentation of verbal and nonverbal cues, such as gestures, voice tones, and facial expression. It is a change of one's superficial emotional expression without any change in one's underlying feelings (Grandey, 2000; Hochschild, 1979; 1983). Viewing the service spot as a social interaction arena, in order to please customers, frontline service staff need to expend effort to disguise their emotions and produce a specific outward expression. As with self-presentation on the stage, the objective is to provide a good impression to the customer. Given that this is a result of commoditization, the emotional performance must have an exchange value (Ali, Hussain & Ryu, 2017).

Deep Acting

Deep acting is a cognitive change that occurs in order to display emotions to cope with the desired or expected emotions of customers (Grandey, 2000). For example, deep

acting is when a service provider psyches him/herself into experiencing the desired emotion (like actors psyche themselves on stage). Based on Hochschild's (1983) finding, Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) contend that emotional labor can be enriched by considering the concept of identity, which is some of the service employees are moderated by identification. The greater the identification, the stronger the positive effect on well-being. Empirical studies shown that emotional work has negative effects on emotion dissonance and requires sensitivity to the emotions of others, which had both a positive and negative effect (Zapf, 2002). Much of the research also found that the frequency and duration of customer interaction and displayed rules impacts the development of deep acting and job satisfaction (Lings et al., 2014; Shapoval, 2019).

Emotional Exhaustion

Emotional exhaustion is an important indicator of physical and mental health and is considered an initial symptom of burnout, while also creating depersonalization and a feeling of reduced personal accomplishment (Alola et al., 2019). This indicates that, when interacting with customers, individuals are faced with excessive emotional demands that they are unable to cope with. This can produce phenomena of emotional exhaustion such as emotional overextension and the depletion of emotional resources, which leads to more serious symptoms such as depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment.

Kim (2008) finds that neurotic employees in the lodging industry are more likely to fake their emotions (sur-

face acting), while employees with more cheerful personalities require more deep acting capabilities. In addition, employees who frequently use surface acting are more likely to be exhausted.

Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) suggested that service providers tend to become emotionally exhausted after providing long hours of care and support to needy people because they cannot provide more to themselves. Maslach and Jackson (1981) found that individuals who are more highly involved and committed in jobs and have more empathy for others are more likely to experience burnout at work, simply because they invest too much of their emotions in the service interaction.

Frontline service staff need to constantly regulate their emotions and interact, to display customers' expected behavior or organizations' regulated rules. In doing so, they experience a higher level of emotional exhaustion (Kim et al., 2012).

From the above discussion, we generate the following hypotheses:

- H1: Surface acting has a positive and significant impact on emotional exhaustion.
- H2: Deep acting has a positive and significant impact on emotional exhaustion.

Subjective Well-being

The terms subjective well-being, subjective happiness, and happiness all emphasize cognitive and affective evaluation of one's life. In addition,

Diener, Oishi, and Lucas (2003) suggest that when studying subjective well-being, pleasant and unpleasant effects should be included. This allows us to evaluate an individual's life and work satisfaction, revealing a pleasant mood or smile, or even an unpleasant mood or emotion. The act of smiles from frontline employees might intend to increase tipping or higher purchase volume, while others pursue an increase in organizations' revenue or rate of re-purchase (Guy, Newman & Mastracci, 2014; Hülshager & Schewe, 2011). Successful involvement with people in the workplace makes people happy. Harter, Schmidt, and Keyes (2003) argue that mental health includes emotional, psychological, and social well-being. Subsequent research has also found that work quality and work satisfaction are factors affecting individual subjective well-being (Kim et al., 2018 Lee, Choo & Hyun, 2016).

When workers are "required" to display a particular action or expression due to pressures from their employers or colleagues, the resulting surface acting or deep acting may be a spontaneous behavior performance (normally a positive emotion) or may be "compelled against one's will" (normally a negative emotion) (Grandey, 2000). With the trend toward customer service orientation, expressing positive emotions and restraining negative emotions are common manifestations of emotional labor. Given that these two types of emotional labor methods can improve customer satisfaction with services provided, some scholars advocate that long-term emotional labor will affect job satisfaction and thus harm the physical and mental health of individuals and lead to a decrease in quality of

life (González et al., 2016; Marchand et al., 2015). Other studies have also shown that surface acting can be emotionally exhausting and is detrimental for one's psychological well-being, and may even affect physiological functioning (Han et al., 2016; Yoo & Arnold, 2015).

Faced with long-term work pressure, if individuals are threatened with a loss of resources or encounter an actual loss of resources due to their workload, or are unable to obtain support after investing resources, they will experience psychological distress. Emotional exhaustion is one of the most important manifestations of this distress (Cropanzano, Weiss & Elias, 2004). However, if an individual's personal characteristics include high resistance to stress, this resistance can alleviate the loss of resources. In other words, loss of resources, lack of support, workload, and the interactive effects of personal characteristics are important factors in determining the level of emotional exhaustion (Hur, Moon & Han, 2015; Jeon, 2016; Kranitz et al., 2015). The response to emotional exhaustion and increase in quality of work life and subjective well-being is closely related to organizational function. In addition, some scholars have found that emotional labor has a significant effect on overall life satisfaction and positive emotions. Higher levels of emotional labor are associated with lower levels of well-being. Therefore, emotional labor has a negative impact on the subjective well-being of service providers (Hur et al., 2015).

Based on the above discussion, we propose the following hypotheses:

H3: Surface acting has a positive and significant impact on subjective well-being.

H4: Deep acting has a positive and significant impact on subjective well-being.

H5: Emotional exhaustion has a negative and significant impact on subjective well-being.

Based on the above research purpose, literature review, and hypotheses, this study proposes the following research model (Figure 1).

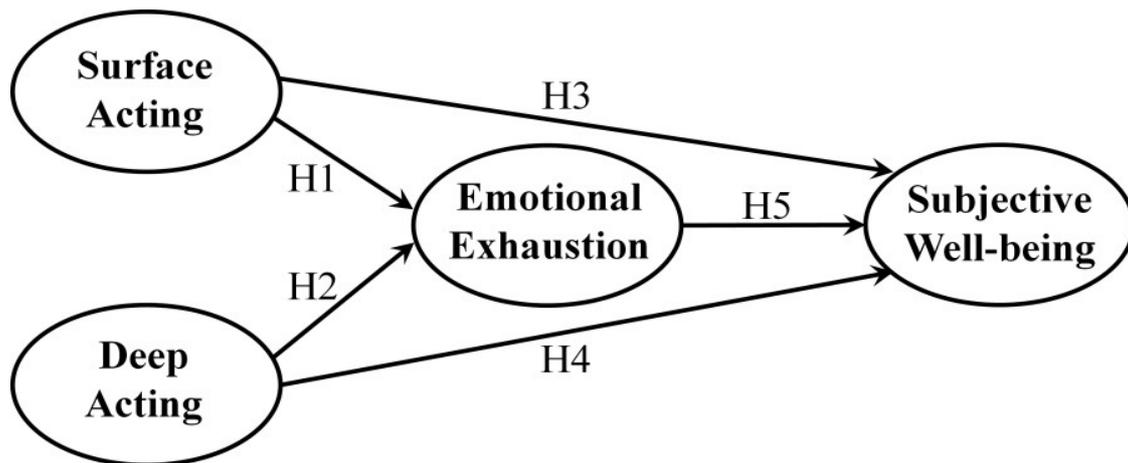


Figure 1. Research Model

Methods

Instrument

Questionnaires were used to measure the views of F&B operation employees on surfacing acting, deep acting, emotional exhaustion, and subjective well-being. The questionnaires for the above four dimensions are independent from one another. The surface acting and deep acting questionnaire is mainly based on Diefendorff, Croyle and Gosserand (2005), with 7 items measuring surface acting and 4 items measuring deep acting. For emotional exhaustion, we use the 5 items proposed by Maslach and Jackson (1981). Subjective well-being is measured using the 4 items designed by Lyubomirsky and Lepper (1999). All questionnaire items have been appro-

priately adjusted to fit F&B operations. We use a seven-point Likert scale, with the response items: “strongly disagree,” “disagree,” “somewhat disagree,” “neither agree nor disagree,” “somewhat agree,” “agree,” and “strongly agree,” producing a score of between one and seven points.

Data Collection, Sample, and Statistical Method

The questionnaire was distributed to individuals involved in F&B operations in Southern Taiwan. We used a random sampling method, distributing a total of 340 questionnaires. After eliminating invalid questionnaires, 312 valid questionnaires were returned, producing a response rate of 91.76%. The composition of respondents was 34.60% male and 65.40%

female. The age group 21-30 made up the largest number of respondents, accounting for 80.40% of respondents. The age group 55 and over made up the smallest number of respondents, accounting for 1.30% of respondents. A total of 81.70% of respondents were lower-level employees in food and beverage sectors, while only 7.37% of respondents were senior managers. This is in line with the composition of employees in the F&B industry. We used structural equation modeling (SEM) for statistical analysis. The analysis process used the Bollen-Stine bootstrap method recommended by Enders (2005) to correct the model fit. The study used Amos 22 as an analytical tool to understand the effects of surface acting, deep acting, and emotional exhaustion on the subjective well-being of employees engaged in F&B operations.

Results

Measurement Model

The measurement model uses observed variables to estimate latent variables or hypothetical structure and confirm that the observed variables show validity and reliability in reflecting the latent variables (Hair et al., 2017). Table 1 lists the observed variables, factor loadings, t-values, average variance extracted (AVE), and composite reliability (CR). These values are required to evaluate the measurement model used in this study. Since all factor loadings exceed .6 and the AVE is .5, the criteria recommended by Hair et al. (2017) are met. The CR values exceed .6, which is also consistent with the recommendations of Fornell and Larcker (1981). This indicates

that the measurements of the observed variables have convergent validity at the item level (Hair et al., 2017).

Table 2 shows the intercorrelations of the four latent variables. The absolute values range from .091 to .439, lower than the recommended threshold of .85 (Kline, 2015). In addition, according to Hair et al. (2017), the correlation coefficient of each dimension should be less than the square root of the AVE to show that the dimensions have good discriminant validity. It can be seen from Table 2 that the correlation coefficients of each dimension are less than the square root of AVE, providing good evidence for discriminant validity.

Structural Model

Although from the SEM statistical analysis there are many approaches to measuring then goodness-of-fit of the structural model, typically methods such as GFI, AGFI, RMSEA, TLI, and CFI are used (McDonald & Ho, 2002). In the present study, we use the maximum likelihood method to measure the structural equation model. From Table 3, we find that a comparison of the goodness-of-fit indicators and corresponding recommended values shows a good goodness-of-fit ($\chi^2 = 159.300$, $df = 126$, GFI = .942, AGFI = .910, RMSEA = .029; TLI = .984; CFI = .987). From the path analysis in Table 3, we find that although the relationship between surface acting and emotional exhaustion is not statistically significant, rejecting H1, the two paths of surface acting to subjective happiness and deep acting to subjective happiness are both statistically significant, establishing H3 and H5.

Table 1. Confirmatory Factor Analysis and Scale Reliability

Item description	Loading	Factor loading	t*	C.R.**	AVE***
Surface acting (SA; $\alpha = .766$)				.892	.544
SA1: I put on an act in order to deal with customers in an appropriate way.	.634		-		
SA2: I fake a good mood when interacting with customers.	.615		9.020		
SA3: I put on a “show” or “performance” when interacting with customers.	.723		10.075		
SA4: I just pretend to have the emotions I need to display for my job.	.825		10.787		
SA5: I put on a “mask” in order to display the emotions I need for the job.	.866		10.994		
SA6: I show feelings to customers that are different from what I feel inside.	.799		10.578		
SA7: I fake the emotions I show when dealing with customers.	.660		9.289		
Deep acting (DA; $\alpha = .866$)				.866	.618
DA1: I try to actually experience the emotions that I must show to customers.	.833		-		
DA2: I make an effort to actually feel the emotions that I need to display toward others.	.733		9.093		
DA3: I work hard to feel the emotions that I need to show to customers.	.827		9.428		
DA4: I work at developing the feelings inside of me that I need to show to customers.	.745		8.669		
Emotional exhaustion (EE; $\alpha = .917$)				.918	.693
EE1: I feel emotionally drained from my work.	.770		-		
EE2: I feel fatigued when I get up in the morning and have to face another day on the job.	.865		16.418		
EE3: Working with people all day is really a strain for me.	.867		16.450		
EE4: I feel burned out from my work.	.794		14.816		
EE5: I feel frustrated by my job.	.861		16.326		
Subject well-being (SW; $\alpha = .880$)				.858	.602
SW1: In general, I consider myself is a very happy person.	.799		-		
SW2: Compared to most of my peers, I consider myself is happier.	.785		12.306		
SW3: I enjoy life regardless of what is going on, getting the most out of everything.	.761		11.989		
SW4: Although I sometimes feel unhappy, I don't feel depressed.	.757		11.937		

Note: * *t*-value is significant at $p < .05$ when the *t*-value exceeds 1.96;

** C.R.: composite reliability;

*** AVE: average variance extracted.

Table 2. Correlation Matrix and Discriminant Validity Analysis

Variables	Mean	S.D.	SA**	DA	EE	SW
SA	5.714	.787	.738*			
DA	4.940	1.182	.439	.786		
EE	4.434	1.359	-.091	.106	.832	
SW	4.965	1.174	.340	.208	-.299	.776

Note: * The diagonal is the square root of AVE;

** SA: Surface acting; DA: Deep acting; EE: Emotional exhaustion;
 SW: Subjective well-being

Table 3. SEM Path Coefficients

Path	Standardized estimate	t*	Significant
H1: SA** → EE	-.098	-1.334	N
H2: DA → EE	.156	2.174	Y
H3: SA → SW	.255	3.524	Y
H4: DA → SW	.139	2.015	Y
H5: EE → SW	-.354	-5.611	Y

Fit indices:
 $\chi^2=159.300$, $df=126$, $GFI=.942$, $AGFI=.910$, $RMSEA=.029$; $TLI=.984$; $CFI=.987$

Note: * t-value is significant at $p < .05$ when the t-value exceeds 1.96;

** SA: Surface acting; DA: Deep acting; EE: Emotional exhaustion; SW: Subjective well-being.

*** Fit indices are the values corrected by Bollen-Stine's method.

In addition, the paths of deep acting to emotional exhaustion and subjective happiness are both statistically significant, establishing H3 and H4.

Discussions and Implications

The purpose of this study is to explore the effect of the surface acting and deep acting on the emotional exhaustion and subjective well-being of employees in the food and beverage industry. Due to the current fierce

competition in the restaurant industry, in addition to attracting customers with their products, providing excellent service is also one of the ways that businesses try to win customers and increase revenue (Ko & Jeng, 2016).

In order to cater to customers, F&B service staff must hide their true emotions, and perform as if standing on stage, delivering a posture that "meets" the needs of consumers. Therefore, staff frequently hide their

true emotions through surface acting or deep acting. However, the constant hiding of emotions is likely to create emotional exhaustion among employees (Yagil & Medler-Liraz, 2017). The present study finds that employees' deep acting significantly affected emotional exhaustion (Table 3; H2). This finding is consistent with the findings of Shapoval (2019), showing that this is a common problem in the hospitality industry. However, this study did not find a relationship between surface acting and emotional exhaustion. This finding is consistent with the findings of Raman, Sambasivan and Kumar (2016). Raman et al. (2016) argue that F&B service staff who make use of deep acting are more likely to manage their own and customers' emotions at the workplace, such as by taking the initiative to give a good impression or actively building relationships with colleagues and customers. However, this is likely to cause an accumulation of emotions, leading to emotional exhaustion. Given that the creation of emotional labor is often associated with managers in the workplace (Sohn, 2017), aside from their revenues and products, restaurant operators should decentralize management, proactively enhancing the self-confidence of employees, to promote positive interactions between employees and consumers, in order to appropriately reduce employees' emotional exhaustion caused by deep acting.

In contrast, employees who adopt a surface acting attitude in the workplace are more likely to experience a situation of powerlessness because they need to wear a mask when dealing with customers (pretending to interact). Although this is less likely to produce emotional exhaustion, it may

increase the chance of service recovery, reduce job performance and job satisfaction, and increase turnover likelihood. For these reasons, its impact on the organization cannot be ignored. Sohn (2017) also found that deep acting will increase customer orientation of service provision, benefiting the business performance of organizations. At the same time, extroverted employees usually have better deep acting skills. In other words, in jobs involving high levels of interpersonal contact, if employees are able to cognitively recognize the emotional investment in the service process, this will deliver good work performance, benefiting the business performance of organizations, but also increasing the likelihood of emotional exhaustion.

Subjective well-being is a multifaceted psychological concept (Harter et al., 2003). Work quality and satisfaction play important roles in subjective well-being (Kim et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2016). Past research shows that emotional labor manifested through surface acting or deep acting can help improve job satisfaction, thereby increasing subjective well-being (González et al., 2016; Marchand et al., 2015). This phenomenon was also confirmed in the present study (Table 3: H3 and H4). In addition, the present study also found that effective control of employees' emotional exhaustion helps improve employee's subjective well-being (Table 3: H5). The main reason for this phenomenon is that effective control of emotional labor will reduce the work stress of employees, increasing positive affect and intrinsic motivation, while also clarifying the content of jobs and reducing role ambiguity, thereby delivering improvements in the subjective well-

being of employees (Karatepe, 2006; Hur et al., 2015). On this basis, even if employees in the F&B industry have long been under emotional stress from providing customer service, effectively reducing emotional labor at work has a positive effect on the stability of the organization and employees' subjective well-being.

Conclusion and Suggestions

Workers in the F&B industry are required to be polite and to smile at customers at all times, leading to emotional exhaustion. Past research has shown that both surface acting and deep acting can cause emotional exhaustion in employees (Hoffmann, 2016; Hur et al., 2015). However, the present study finds that employee emotional exhaustion is associated with deep acting. The main reason for this is that deep acting involves a cognitive change (Grandey, 2000). During the service process, a constant accumulation of emotional stress is likely to cause emotional exhaustion. In contrast, because surface acting is typically not from the heart, the accumulation of emotional stress will be limited. Therefore, its impact on emotional exhaustion is small, but it might lead to other negative issues such as more service failures and higher job turnover. In addition, from the perspective of overall employee well-being, both surface acting and deep acting can help improve the subjective well-being of employees. This is because any method that employees use to reduce the occurrence of service recovery can help create happy employees.

Interestingly, the present study found that reducing emotional labor helps increase the subjective well-

being of employees. However, in terms of an organization's service performance, it is expected that employees will adopt a deep acting strategy to manage their own and consumers' emotions when engaged in service provision.

This approach will lead to employees having to perform significant emotional labor, which is not beneficial to subjective well-being. This presents a conundrum. However, Sohn (2017) has considered a solution to this problem, pointing out that employees' emotional labor mainly comes from customers, managers, and colleagues. According to Sohn (2017), resolving the accumulation of negative emotions from the customer's perspective is not easy to achieve. However, we can try to improve the issue of emotional labor caused by deep acting from the cognitive beliefs of managers and colleagues. A growing literature has focused on changing work attitudes within organizations by applying internal marketing (Joung et al., 2015; Nart et al., 2018). Therefore, in order to reduce the accumulation of emotional labor caused by deep acting in the future, the perspective of internal marketing may offer a potential way forward.

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