

“ Emotional labor is important from the employee's perspective because it can lead the employee to suffer stress and ultimately burn out. To display the required emotions employees, must regulate their emotions. ”



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What do you mean by emotional labour? How do you interpret this phenomenon with an example?

Emotional labor is what employees are required to exhibit in ways of facial expression, voice tone, and body language when they are engaged in job-relevant interactions. Emotional labor can be interpreted as managing one's own feelings to show the required or expected emotions to another in performing tasks at work. For example, as a university lecturer in my profession, I have to show pleasantness, and kindness to my students, even if I don't feel like it. I may be annoyed with the students

for their behaviour, but I have to manage my emotions and deal with them professionally.

What are the dimensions of the emotional labor?

There are three popular dimensions of emotional labor: surface acting, deep acting, and genuine emotions. Surface acting means displaying the required emotions even though the person does not feel them, such as being pleasant to an annoying customer. Here most employees suppress actual emotions and fake them to display the required emotions. Deep acting is trying to understand why the other person behaves in

a certain way and feeling that emotion to act in an appropriate manner. It is a way of modifying feelings to meet job expectations. An example would be trying to understand why a customer is shouting at staff. Refocusing the situation by considering that the customer could be in some other distressed mood would enable the situation to be handled with a modified feeling. Genuine feelings are considered to be authentic and there is no need to display or modify emotions. The employee naturally behaves towards showing the required emotions. In other words, there is no acting.

Why the emotional labor is important from the employee and employer perspective?

Emotional labor is important from the employee's perspective because it can lead the employee to suffer stress and ultimately burn out. To display the required emotions employees, have to regulate their emotions. This not an easy task. The faking of emotions can have long-term consequences for employees, especially when they adopt the same strategies in their personal lives in situations that require a more genuine display of emotions. For example, if you have worked for a long time dealing with difficult customers who are annoyed and yelling and you try to deal with them pleasantly, hiding your emotions. This could be applied when you are at home with your children if you see them annoyed and yelling, you may try to deal with them pleasantly as you go back to automatic reaction from your molding at work. This could be a false diagnosis of the child's behavior. From the neurobiological perspective, repetitive actions for a long period can cause stronger neural connections, and identification of the situation will be automatic.

in personal circumstances. Consequently, employees engaging in high emotional effort and inauthentic tasks can lead to emotional exhaustion and personal problems. However, there are positive aspects that employees can enjoy. Showing appropriate emotions to the customers makes them satisfied and appreciative of the services. In addition, employees get satisfaction and rewards from the organization for doing an effective job. From the employer's perspective understanding the nature of the business and the level of employee emotional involvement is important so that the right type of training can be given to employees who are on the front line so that they can handle the situations with less stress. The employer also can launch in-house counselling programs to reduce the stress levels of employees.

What are the determinants/causes of the emotional labor?

Jobs in the service sector mainly face issues of emotional labour. Having to show the appropriate emotions that employees do not feel at the time of handling the situation is the cause of emotional labour issues.

required emotions genuinely, then there is no issue of emotional labour.

How do we measure the emotional labor?

Emotional labor is predominantly measured based on qualitative interviews, observations, and employees' self-reports. In addition, there are quantitative scales developed by scholars to measure emotional labor. One such scale is called the 'Emotional Labour Scale (ELS)' developed by Brotheridge and Lee in 1998 which measures surface acting and deep acting.

What are the positive and negative consequences associated with the emotional labor?

Positives:

- Job satisfaction of the employee
- Customer satisfaction
- Financial rewards (tips or salaries)
- Increased job security
- Increased self-esteem and self-efficacy
- Increased good-will of the organization

Negatives:

- Employee turnover intentions
- Employee stress
- Employee dissatisfaction

Emotional exhaustion
Employee Burnout
Extra cost for the
organization to conduct
training and wellness
programs

How does an employee effectively manage emotional labor for better performance?

Undergoing an effective training program can lead to handling emotional labor more easily. The techniques such as redefining the situation, psychological manipulation (deep breathing, counting up to 10), or shifting perceptual focus could be used to manage emotional labor. Mindfulness programs can be also used to develop employees' emotional intelligence and through that employees can handle emotional labor without difficulty.

What are the key empirical research findings pertain to phenomenon of the emotional labor?

The construct of emotional labor was introduced by the Sociologist Arlie Hochschild in 1981. She presented three main concepts: emotion work or management, emotional labour jobs, and feelings/display rules. Hochschild's (1983) main finding was that emotional labor is useful for the

organization but dysfunctional for the employees. In 1993, Ashforth and Humphrey's research on emotional labor argues that emotional labor does not necessarily require conscious effort. Their findings on emotional labor suggested that it is functional for the organization and employees. However, it can become dysfunctional if the work involves high effort and is inauthentic which can lead to emotional deviance. Based on the findings of Morris and Feldman (1996) and Grandy (2000), the most popular concepts of emotional labor are surface acting, deep acting, and emotional dissonance. Their major findings suggest that deep acting is functional to the organization and employee, but surface acting and dissonance are dysfunctional for both parties.

Do we have the black box or any blurred area pertain to the emotional labor that we need to further explore?

In discussing emotional labor the emphasis has been on employee involvement in directly dealing with the customers/public. At the same time, interpersonal roles in the work environment also have the elements of emotional labor

in dealing with our superiors, subordinates, and colleagues. Personally, I believe we need to explore emotional labor in these other employee interactions.

Additional comments that you'd like to pen down about 'Emotional Labor'

The concept of emotional labor emerges as a result of the rise of the service sector in the 1980s. In most developed countries the majority of employment is in the service sector and it is apparent that most jobs involve emotions when performing. Some jobs may have more emotional involvement than others. For example, jobs such as law enforcement may need to use 'verbal judo' or 'tough talk' or having the 'game face'. Rarely do jobs have no emotional involvement. In the Sri Lankan context, we are highly valued for our hospitality which is part of showing genuine emotions. Yet it would be interesting to see the actual emotions behind the beautiful smiles of Sri Lankans; is it just a habit or a genuine feeling of being happy to do something for others? Is it cultural conditioning? These questions would be well worth exploring.