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## The Relationship between Emotional Labour and Employee Job Satisfaction: An Investigation of the Front Office Employees in Private Hospitals in Colombo, Sri Lanka

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### Abstract

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#### **Area of the Study**

*As a significant determinant of job satisfaction of an employee, this study is to discuss the relationship between emotional labour and job satisfaction of front office employees in private hospital sector in Sri Lanka. There is an empirical and knowledge gap in the Sri lankan context on the relationship between emotional labour and job satisfaction of employees and its impact.*

#### **Problem of the Study**

*The main objective of this research study is to identify the relationship between emotional labour and job satisfaction of front office employees in private hospitals in Colombo, Sri Lanka. The research problem of this study: Is there relationship between emotional labour and job satisfaction of front office employees in private hospitals in Colombo District of Sri Lanka?*

#### **Method of the Study**

*The data were collected from a convenient sample of 80 front office employees in three private hospitals in Colombo, Sri Lanka with a structured questionnaire consisted of 44 questions with seven point likert scales. Data was analyzed using univariate analysis, correlation and regression analysis with the SPSS 16.0 version and derived the results.*

#### **Findings of the Study**

*The finding at the end of the study was that there is a significant moderate positive relationship between emotional labour and job satisfaction. Also, it was proved that there is a significant strong positive relationship between deep acting and job satisfaction and there is no negative relationship between surface acting and job satisfaction. As per the regression analysis deep acting has an impact of 30.1% on job satisfaction and surface acting has an impact of 4.2% on job satisfaction.*

#### **Conclusion of the Study**

*It is concluded that there is a significant moderate positive relationship between emotional labour and job satisfaction.*

**Key words:** Emotional Labour, Deep Acting, Surface Acting, Job Satisfaction

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### Introduction

Emotion is one of the unique qualities that every human being possess. They are the bounding factors of people to their work, to their lives and other important facts. Over the last decade, emotions at work has been an important area which many researchers have addressed. "Emotional labour" is an emerging concept in today's context in most of the industries especially in the service sector. Emotional labour is a requirement of nearly all jobs that require workers to engage with citizens (Guy, Newman & Mastracci, 2008). Hochschild, (1979) mentioned that emotional labour is a gesture in a social exchange; it has a function there and is not to be understood merely as a facet of personality. Hochschild (1979) emphasized that emotional labour can be performed through surface acting or deep acting. Surface acting refers to the expression of behavior than feelings; through facial expression,

gestures and voice tone. Deep acting involves attempting to actually experience the emotion (Mann, 2005). Job satisfaction is also an important factor to consider when dealing with emotional labour. Kinman (2009) stated that many studies conclude the relationship of emotional labour and job satisfaction. Emotional labour reported as a lower level of satisfaction and as a source of satisfaction (Abraham, 1998; Adelman, 1995, as cited in Kinman, 2009). It is expected that emotional labour would have a stronger relationship with employee job satisfaction.

### **Problem Background and Problem of the Study**

Emotional labour is an important concept used in many industries today and it has a direct impact on employee performance. Further, emotional labour has an impact on employee job satisfaction especially in the service industry (Mann, 1997; Kinman, 2009). There are many western country research studies which were conducted on emotional labour in healthcare industries. Employees in healthcare industries have a direct link on emotional labour since the employees have to deal with patients face to face. In Sri Lankan context it is not known to the researcher whether researches are done on this area in the private hospitals of Sri Lanka. Thus, there is a need to fulfill a knowledge gap in this field. This research therefore, tries to identify the relationship between emotional labour in front office employees' job satisfaction in private hospitals in Colombo Municipal area. The research problem of this study is: Is there relationship between emotional labour and job satisfaction of front office employees in private hospitals in Colombo District of Sri Lanka?

### **Research Framework**

Previous literature has proved that there is a relationship between emotional labour and job satisfaction in front line service employees (Kinman, 2009; Chu, 2002). Also there is empirical evidence that emotional labour has a strong relationship with intrinsic job satisfaction (Kinman, 2009).

*H<sub>1</sub>: There is a significant relationship between emotional labour and employee job satisfaction.*

Deep acting involves attempting to actually experience or feeling the emotion that they wish (Mann, 2005). There is empirical evidence that deep acting has a positive relationship with job satisfaction (Johnson, 2004; Cote and Morgan, 2002).

*H<sub>2</sub>: There is a positive relationship between deep acting and employee job satisfaction.*

Surface acting refers to the expression of behavior than feelings; through facial expressions, gestures and voice tone. As Mann (2005) stated, surface acting focuses directly on outward behavior. It is empirically proven that there is a negative relationship between surface acting and job satisfaction (Grandy, 2000; Hochschild, 1983; Seery and Corrigan, 2009).

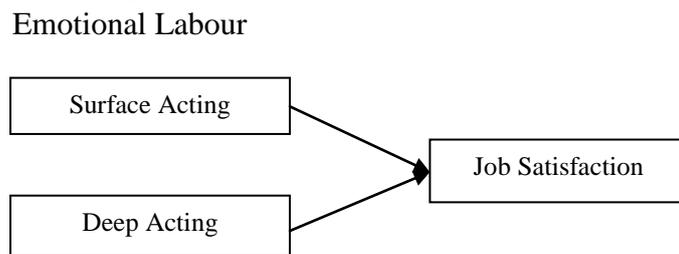
*H<sub>3</sub>: There is a negative relationship between surface acting and employee job satisfaction.*

The two dimensions, surface acting and deep acting relate to job satisfaction negatively and positively. It is stated that there is a higher impact of deep acting on job satisfaction than from surface acting (Torland, 2012).

*H<sub>4</sub>: There is a higher impact of deep acting than surface acting on job satisfaction.*

This conceptual framework mainly highlights the relationship of two variables i. e. emotional labour and employee job satisfaction. Emotional labour can be divided into two variables as Deep acting and Surface acting. In this conceptual model, the independent variables are Deep Acting and Surface Acting whereas; the dependent variable is the job satisfaction. Figure 1 depicts the conceptual framework of the study.

Figure 1: Conceptual Model



**Method**

This study was conducted in a quantitative design by collecting data through a questionnaire and the two variables were identified and tested based on the hypotheses developed. This study focuses on hypotheses testing and identifying correlation between variables. These types of studies usually explain the nature of certain relationships and explain the variance in the dependent variable.

The target population of the study is the front office employees in private hospitals in Sri Lanka. This research study focuses on the non probability sampling as there are many private hospitals in Sri Lanka and for the purpose of the study the researcher only select 80 front office employees from three hospitals in Colombo municipality area. Sampling technique used for this study was the convenient sampling which refers to the collection of information from the members who are conveniently available to provide it.

**Measures**

A questionnaire was selected as the major source of data collection and the researcher gathered first hand data by distributing this questionnaire. It was considered to be the best method to conduct the survey as the front line employees are working on a shift basis duty and it is the most practical way to collect data from a sample of this size.

The questionnaire was equipped with four parts including open ended and closed ended questions. The first part contained four close ended questions to measure demographic factors like age, gender, marital status and years of experience. The second part contained fifteen close ended questions to measure the variable of surface acting (Brotheridge and Lee,

2003; Kruml and Geddes, 2000). The third part contained another fifteen close ended questions to measure the variable of deep acting (Brotheridge and Lee, 2003; Kruml and Geddes, 2000). Fourth part of the questionnaire was used to measure the dependent variable i.e. job satisfaction in ten close ended questions (Hackman and Oldham, 1975; Brayfield and Rothe, 1951). Final part of the questionnaire contained an open ended question to give comments and experiences of employees.

This study used already developed standard questions which test validity and reliability as used by many researchers and scholars. All questions were presented as statements and employees were supposed to rank them according to the scale. Statements on surface acting and deep acting were positive statements. In the statements on job satisfaction 3, 4, 7, and 8 were reversed. Data was gathered through the seven point likert scales which were positive and negative as “Strongly Agree, Agree, Slightly Agree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Slightly Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree”.

***Pilot Survey***

A pilot test was conducted for the study as a prerequisite to identify and to test the reliability of the study. It is an opportunity for the researcher to identify the reliability of the concepts and the questions in advance of the study. Therefore, before the study was carried out a pilot study was conducted with 14 frontline employees to test the reliability of data and to make necessary improvements to the questionnaire.

***Reliability***

According to the table, reliability of the dependent variable i.e. job satisfaction (0.713) and the independent variable, surface acting (0.792) are acceptable where as the other independent variable, deep acting (0.888) is good.

The reliability of the pilot test and the reliability of research data can be compared as follows. It can be identified that the reliability of the dependent variable has decreased with the responses of the final survey. Reliability of independent variables (surface acting and deep acting) has increased when compared with the pilot test.

Table 01: Reliability

	Pilot Test	Survey Data
Job Satisfaction	.765	.713
Surface Acting	.722	.792
Deep Acting	.865	.888

***Techniques of Data Analysis***

With the data gathered in the pilot survey, the researcher conducted a preliminary analysis on descriptive statistics to test the reliability. Data were analyzed using SPSS 16.0 version and correlation analysis and regression analysis were used to analyze data for the research study.

**Results**

First the demographic variables of age, gender and marital status were analyzed in relation to the selected sample. In this study, 70% of front line employees were females, while 30% were males. Although all age groups (over the age of 18) were represented, the age group with highest representation was 20 – 29 years. Furthermore, 71.2% were single and only 28.8% were married in the selected sample.

The reliability of the analysis for all three variables i.e. surface acting, deep acting and job satisfaction were accepted as the alpha value was above 0.7. The highest reliability was shown for deep acting which was 0.888.

Based on the respondents’ data, following descriptive statistics can be presented for each variable of the study. The mean value, standard deviation, minimum and maximum values are presented in the following table.

According to Table 02, the mean value of surface acting was 5.1192, which shows that respondents slightly perform surface acting in their career. According to the figures represented in the table, responses for surface acting can vary to 0.75 from the mean value of 5.1192, which represents that there is much dispersion from the mean value. Minimum and maximum values for surface acting are 3.60 and 6.73 respectively which implies that there is not much dispersion from the mean value.

Table 02: Univariate Analysis

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Surface Acting	80	3.60	6.73	5.1192	.75318
Deep Acting	80	3.87	6.93	5.6383	.78048
Emotional Labour	80	3.93	6.63	5.3787	.66909
Job Satisfaction	80	3.10	6.80	5.6362	.66261

The mean value of deep acting was 5.6383, which represented that the respondents often performed deep acting in their career. Deep acting can vary to 0.78 from the mean value of 5.6383 as per the standard deviation value. The minimum and maximum values for deep acting are 3.87 and 6.93 respectively and it implies that there is not much dispersion from the mean value.

When considering emotional labour as a total variable, the mean value of emotional labour represented is 5.3787, which implies that the respondents often perform emotional labour.

As a whole, the independent variable of emotional labour can vary to 0.67 (approximately) from the mean value of 5.3787 which is not a high dispersion and the minimum and maximum values (3.93 and 6.63) approve it.

The dependent variable (Job Satisfaction) has a mean value of 5.6362, which represents that the respondents are often satisfied with their job and it can vary to 0.66 from the mean value of 5.6362 which indicates a lower dispersion or variability and that minimum and maximum values 3.10 and 6.80 provide the same range as per the deviation.

Variable	Correlation	Sig Value
Surface Acting	0.204	0.034
Deep Acting	0.549	0.000
Emotional Labour	0.435	0.000

According to hypothesis 1, it was hypothesized that there is a relationship between emotional labour and job satisfaction which was analyzed based on the 99% confidence level and two tailed test. The Pearson correlation value for emotional labour and job satisfaction is 0.435 which indicates that the relationship is moderately positive since it is close to 0.5. Thus, the alternative hypothesis (H1) is accepted and the null hypothesis is not accepted.

According to hypothesis 2, it was hypothesized that there is a relationship between deep acting and job satisfaction which was analyzed with one tailed test since it was hypothesized as a directional hypothesis. The Pearson correlation value for deep acting and job satisfaction is 0.549 which indicates that the relationship is strong positive. In other words, it implies that the increase in deep acting will increase job satisfaction. Thus, the alternative hypothesis (H2) is accepted and the null hypothesis is not accepted.

According to hypothesis 3, it was hypothesized that there is a relationship between surface acting and job satisfaction which was analyzed with one tailed test since it was hypothesized as a directional hypothesis. The Pearson correlation value for surface acting and job satisfaction is 0.204 which indicates that the relationship is weak. Thus, the null hypothesis is not rejected.

Variable	Coefficients
Deep Acting	0.516
Surface Acting	-0.1

To examine the impact, the researcher has used a multiple regression analysis and it tries to identify which variable has a higher impact on job satisfaction. This section focuses on the combined impact of both deep acting and surface acting on job satisfaction.

Regression coefficient (SA -0.1, DA 0.516) indicates the relative importance of each of the independent variable for the dependent variable. There is an impact of 0.516 from deep acting on job satisfaction. The value of surface acting is -0.1 which indicates that there is no impact from surface acting on job satisfaction. Hence, there is a higher impact on job satisfaction from deep acting and surface acting does not influence job satisfaction. Therefore, the

alternative hypothesis (H4) is accepted and the null hypothesis is not accepted. Quantitative statements given by respondents also prove these results.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

The main objective of this research is to identify the relationship between emotional labour and employee job satisfaction of front office employees in private hospitals in Colombo. In addition, the specific objectives of the study were to examine the extent to which deep acting has an impact on employee job satisfaction and to examine the extent to which surface acting has an impact on employee job satisfaction.

Addressing the above objectives, the study was conducted in three private hospitals in Colombo area focusing the front office staff employed in hospitals.

The independent variable was the emotional labour and the dependent variable was job satisfaction for the study. Emotional labour has been divided to two sub variables as surface acting and deep acting. The relationships of these variables have been tested and analyzed in this study.

### **Emotional labour and job satisfaction**

The main purposes of the research related to hypothesis 1 of the study indicates the correlation between each independent variable and job satisfaction. This relationship has been tested using the correlation analysis. As stated in the previous chapter when tested emotional labour as a whole, it implies that there is a statistically significant positive moderate relationship between emotional labour and job satisfaction.

### **Deep acting, surface acting and job satisfaction**

The survey findings showed that front office employees 'often' performed deep acting on the job, 'slightly' performed surface acting on the job, and were 'satisfied' with their job. Furthermore, deep acting had a statistically significant strong positive effect on front office employees' job satisfaction which proves the Hypothesis 2 of the study. It indicates that higher they perform deep acting in their career, higher they get the job satisfaction.

Even though surface acting was hypothesized to have a negative effect on front office employee's job satisfaction, as predicted in Hypothesis 3, this effect was not statistically significant and the null hypothesis was proved indicating that there is no negative relationship between surface acting and job satisfaction. This implies that front line employees have to have surface acting to a certain extent in the hospital environment but is not negatively related to their job satisfaction.

### **Impact of deep acting and surface acting on job satisfaction**

Hypothesis 4 of the study is directly related to the specific objectives of this study. It examines whether deep acting has a higher impact than surface acting on job satisfaction. This impact was analyzed using a multiple regression analysis and Hypothesis 4 is accepted with its results. It is stated in the previous literature that there is a higher impact from deep

acting on job satisfaction than from surface acting (Torland, 2012). According to the findings, it is concluded that there is a higher impact on job satisfaction from deep acting and surface acting does not influence job satisfaction.

Therefore, it is highlighted that in a hospital environment performing deep acting has a higher impact on job satisfaction of a front line employee. This means that deep acting is a safer way of performing emotional labour for front line employees than surface acting because it involves planning and thoughtfulness which enhances their performance on the job. Also, deep acting is a less harmful form of emotional labour than surface acting as it can result in many other consequences as well if performed frequently. Thus, the performance of deep acting is a better option for front office employees in private hospitals in Sri Lanka.

### **Recommendations**

The main finding of the research is that emotional labour has a moderate positive correlation with job satisfaction of employees. Therefore it is important to note even though companies do not pay much attention on emotional labour it can affect to employees' job satisfaction to a certain extent. Therefore, it is recommended to analyze the impact of emotional labour when evaluating employee job satisfaction.

As per the analysis and conclusion, respondents often perform emotional labour. Therefore, the management has to pay more attention on this concept and promote performing emotional labour.

When recruiting employees, it is important to consider their emotional suitability to work in the front line of a hospital environment. In the recruitment and selection process this has to be highlighted.

It is concluded in the previous section that deep acting has more impact on job satisfaction than surface acting. Therefore, it is important to note that employees need to be trained on different tasks duties and responsibilities of the job so that they can pre - plan and perform their job in a proper manner. It will result in high performance of the job.

Providing training and development is another important aspect when considering emotional labour and job satisfaction. Since there is a moderate positive relationship, by providing training the organization can increase the relationship and it will result in achieving the goals and objectives of the organization.

Performing emotional labour can be interrelated with many HR functions like, recruitment, selection, training and development, performance evaluations and pay management.

### **Limitations and Suggestions**

The research only selected a sample of three private hospitals in Colombo district due to the difficulty of accessibility of data and the limitation of time. This can be expanded to other private and government hospitals as well to measure the effectiveness of emotional labour.

The data was collected through a questionnaire given to the sample. More accurate and reliable information can be gathered if the research is conducted using other methods like interviews as well. It is better to use a mix of data collection methods to gather exactly correct data.

Time used to research on the topic and the conceptual model might be limited. Therefore it may not generate the true picture of the relationship. In order to have a thorough understanding more variables can be developed and analyzed.

Throughout this research only the relationship between emotional labour and job satisfaction is tested but, moderating and mediating variables can also affect this relationship. These variables have to be identified and taken in to consideration in future research.

This study focuses only on the private hospital sector in Colombo, Sri Lanka. Therefore, future research should extend these preliminary efforts to identify the relationship between emotional labour and job satisfaction in other industries and in other districts as well.

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