



Review on Emotional Labour — a Case Study of the President's Club Scandal

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Abstract: The research of emotional labour started 20 years ago, and the existing literature is the research mostly covering the influence factors of emotional labour from the micro level. This study is based on a specific case of the President's Club scandal. By using the concepts of emotional labour, the author discusses the relationship between personal factors and emotional labour. In addition, the reasons which result in the scandal in a charity fund-raise party has been illustrated with examples and issues from the case.

Keywords: emotional labour, emotional intelligence, case study

1. Introduction

Emotional labour (EL) plays an important role in impacting the quality of the job being performed, not only in terms of the outcome of work but also from the perspective in motivating individual for completing the assigned work preferably and acquiring the reward they are desired. In fact, emotional labour is quite ubiquitous in the work context. There is no lack of typical examples, especially in the service industry. As for a waitress, for instance, if she was offended by customers, she has to keep her professional smile on her face to cater to the legitimate needs of customers and try to satisfy them. In addition, along with the increasing demand for volatile forms of service, the organizations that provide services pay more attention to service experience and emotional experience of customers. The commercialization of emotion makes emotion a commodity, and the impression and management of emotion become a significant means of motivation.

In this paper, the author attempts to unfold and illustrate conceivable principles behind the phenomenon in the specific case by using the relevant concepts of emotional labour and its strategy of action. For the purpose of explaining interactive reasons which result in the scandal in a charity fund-raise party and trying to draw the possible feasible solutions for the extended phenomenon in work context, this paper mainly focuses on analyzing the relevance of theoretical side of emotional labour and varying emotion that hostesses experienced in the charity fund-raise party.

2. Emotional labour

2.1 Ubiquity of emotional labour

Hochschild (1983) firstly proposed the concept of emotional labour and he implied most of the employees had experienced different forms of emotional labour in varying degrees^[1]. Further research had been conducted by Adelman (1989) divided emotional labour into high EL and low EL on the basis of Hochschild's achievement. However, his assumption of classification has not been used in empirical studies of emotional labour^[2]. Besides, some of researchers believe there is no doubt that emotional labour exists between colleagues, or between superior and subordinate. An increasing number of empirical studies indicate the ubiquity of emotional labour.

2.2 Define emotional labour

2.2.1 Definition

After the concept of emotional labour was put forward by Hochschild, a great number of scholars have begun to notice this field and placed more emphasis on the study of emotional labour.

A typical definition of emotional labour refers to the effort, planning, and control needed to express organizationally desired emotion during interpersonal transactions (A. Morris and D. Feldman, 1996). Morris's concept is more typical to the point of the behaviour which an individual can be perceived in the working process^[3]. Ashforth (1993) defined emotional labour as "to express the emotion appropriately". That is to say, there are standards or rules that dictate how and when emotion should be expressed^[4]. For example, hostesses are normally expected to be cordial and cheerful, whereas TV news anchors are to appear sedate and sober. Ekman (1973) called such norms about appropriate emotional expression "display rules"^[5].

One thing that should be aware of is that emotional labour is easy to be confounded with emotion work. These two concepts differ in work context and private context with varying purposes. Emotional labour has exchange-value so that employees display appropriate emotions in accordance with organizationally desired emotions to earn compensation and reward, whereas emotion work has use-value that employees personally choose to manage their own emotions and get themselves adjusted.

2.2.2 Emotional intelligence

According to Giardini. A and Frese. M (2006), emotional intelligence has a great impact on the employees who are experiencing emotional labour^[6]. Emotional intelligence has been perceived as not only the ability to perceive and express emotions, the ability to think, but also the capacity of self-regulatory, and the ability to comprehend and ratiocinate by integrating emotions^[7] (Mayer. J. D, 2000). It is essential for employees to identify and understand the emotions of their own and others so that the emotional expression display rules can be accurately used while experiencing emotional labour, and emotional intelligence provides that kind of ability (Opengart. R, 2005). Without the basis of emotional intelligence or the ability to identify and monitor their emotions, it is impossible to alter their emotions for the organizational purpose at work, and emotional labour cannot be performed effectively. In the Johnson. M (2004)'s research, he demonstrated that employees with high emotional intelligence were more likely to have positive experiences when the emotional labour increased, while those with low emotional intelligence were less likely to incline the other side^[8]. Numbers of studies have revealed that the higher the emotional intelligence of employees is, the more competent they are for emotional labour.

2.3 Dimensions of emotional labour

Morris and Feldman (1996) initially conceptualized the emotional labour constructed along four dimensions: frequency of appropriate emotional display, attentiveness to required display rules, a variety of emotions to be displayed, and emotional dissonance. Some researchers such as Zapf (1999), Kruml and Geddes (2000), have provided their own result of research subsequently on the basis of Morris's. Grandey (2000) summarized the commonalities of the above studies and conceptualized two dimensions of emotional labour: "surface acting" and "deep acting". Surface acting refers to imitating emotions that are not actually felt. In contrast, deep acting signifies attempts to experience the emotions actually that is required to display.

3. Background information of the scandal

The scandal was disclosed in an unexpected way after the charity fund-raise party which was held by the President's Club. According to the report of FT investigation, hostesses were fumbled, sexually harassed and teased in a black-tie night: a men-only charity fund-raising party which situated in London. In this black-tie evening, 130 hostesses had been hired to serve 360 of property tycoons, film producers, oligarchs, politicians and chief executives. All these women were told to wear the outfit full of sexual innuendo. Meanwhile, there was an enforcement team to prod slack hostesses to ingratiate themselves with those guests.

Some hostesses described the situation on the scene and expressed their negative feelings about that night in the investigation. The reactions and comments varied from different groups of people.

4. Findings

4.1 Analysis of the issue

From the specific case of the President's Club scandal, it is not hard to find that those hostesses are experiencing emotional labour, in a negative way. This case reveals an inevitable fact in western businesses work context — objectification of women, especially when they undertake the role in service. According to the description in the case, women have been taken for granted to cater those powerful men with cheerful smiles and to tolerate their improper behaviour. To compare with their clients — those gentlemen in black ties who wantonly teasing around, the charity party hostesses have to hide their true emotions to act like "professional" service person that clients desired.

Even the exposure of this scandal floods general public with the discussion of some thought-provoking topic such as sexual misconduct in work context, stereotype of women in service industry and peer-grading of male and female. What really makes the author ponder over is the diversiform of emotional reaction that both male clients and female hostesses display in the case. And surprisingly, there is no obvious evidence in the case shows any of the hostesses storms out that night because of their own negative emotions. From this perspective, the author dissects the phenomenon and comes up with the reasons which cause the issue from four aspects by using the relevant theories of emotional labour:

4.1.1 Gender

The previous researches in gender differences illustrate that there are great disparities between male and female from both perceptibility of the external environment and expression of their own inner emotions. The research results in this area are relatively consistent: Women show greater emotional expressivity than men (La France & Banaji, 1992). Women are clearly expected to smile more often than men and to do so in a wide variety of situations (Rafaeli, 1989). In other words, women are more sensitive to perceive emotions and more easily to capture the real inner emotion of clients, which make them express their emotions as required by the organization more precisely. So, it is normal to find that all the persons who undertake service jobs in the case are women.

In addition, the author are informed from the case that all hostesses “were warned that the men are presented might be annoying or try to get the hostesses pissed and were informed to wear tight black outfits with matching accessories to cater for guests’ entertainment needs”. According to research results that mentioned above, the author believes that most of the hostesses are immediately sense the situation they are going to face after receiving the “instruction”. And some of the hostesses move into the role that the party host wants them to be as soon as possible: acting like cheerful waitress, being prepared to confront the “annoying” situation with smile, and lying to their boyfriend, “It’s a charity dinner.”

Totterdell (2003) states briefly that women are more tend to use surface acting strategy, which means they are more likely simulating emotions that they are not actually felt. Furthermore, Women are more likely to experience negative emotional outcomes when engaging in surface acting (Johnson, 2004). However, the longer emotional labour lasts, the more internalization of roles is needed. In the case, hostesses had been working for almost 8 hours that night, kept simulating positive emotions which they did not feel at all. There is no doubt most of them end up with emotional exhaustion.

4.1.2 Age

Age, to a certain extent, represents the life experience of people, and older people tend to have relatively rich emotional memories and experiences. Under this circumstance, it is easier for them to regulate and control their emotions, especially for implementing the emotional strategies of deep acting. In industries that require emotional labour, older employees are more competent than younger ones. Gross (1997) found that with the growth of age, individuals exert more emotional control and less negative emotional experience^[9]. Consistent with this, the research done by Lockenhoff (2004) indicates young people tend to focus more on emotions instead of solving problems than older people^[10].

A 19-year-old hostess in the case recounted an outrageous conversation with a 70 years old man who treated her as a prostitute. She claimed she has never done this before and she was so, quoted her word, scary. Another 28 years old women with experience of hostess work described this situation as “uncomfortable”. She said this was essentially different to her previous jobs that men try to flirt with her occasionally. Even though two of them both shared similar negative emotions, from the perspective of degree of reaction, there were some discrepancies existed. The younger hostess focused more on express her emotions of resistance and dread while she tried to simulate positive emotions that clients desired whereas the older one tended to use her previous experience to deal with this situation and successfully concealed her negative emotions.

4.1.3 Emotional intelligence

“It is a marmite job. Some girls enjoy in it, and for others, it is the nightmare that they will never do it again. You just have to endure the annoying men and if you can do that is fine.” This was told by Caroline Dandridge, founder of Artista agency. MRs Dandridge reveals one of the most important influence factors of emotional labour — emotional intelligence. On the basis of the theory mentioned above, the individual who has higher emotional intelligence is inclined to use the strategy of deep acting. With the ability of understanding and using display rules of emotions, some hostesses successfully regulated emotions of their own and clients’ under this circumstance.

On the other hand, external motivators are also having noticeable influence on emotional intelligence. In the case, one hostess was informed that the final station of the night offered a chance that cannot be missed to drink alcohol that she wanted and chase down those men she found most attractive. If this was regarded as reward that some hostesses keened for, their perception of emotional rules might be different and, they would transform surfacing acting into deep acting, to actually experience the emotions that are required to display.

4.1.4 Identification of emotional expression rules

The extent to which an organization can utilize individuals' emotional resources depends on their recognition and commitment to the role of emotional labour. For emotional labour, the most essential relevance between individuals and organizational work is emotional expression rules that defined by organizational context. On the premise of approving with the emotional expression rules, emotional labour undertakers will display behaviors that not only accord with the

expectations of the organization but also conform to the emotional understanding of individuals (Ashforth, 1993).

Based on the description of the case, it can be seen that most people hostesses do not identify with the emotional expression rules, the management style of Artista Agency was very coercive. There was an enforcement team to urge those hostesses who were less lively to socialize with male guests. There is a monitoring system was in place outside the women's toilets: women who stay in the toilet too long were called out and brought back to the ballroom. A security guard at the door was on call and ready for dealing with any unexpected issues. Indeed, this is an industry where the customer is god. From a business operation perspective, there is nothing wrong with this philosophy, however, from the perspective of human resource management, personal emotions are totally neglected while implementing this philosophy too literally. Furthermore, to regulate individuals' behaviour and emotional expression through mandatory means will result in emotional exhaustion of individual. Most of hostesses were sandwiched between male clients and Artista Agency. Without identification of the emotional expression rules on the role they were playing, the hostesses experienced severe emotional stress.

4.2 Recommended solutions

Based on cause analysis, the author summarizes several possible solutions to reduce the negative outcome of the emotional labour of hostesses in this specific case.

4.2.1 Eliminating the objectification of women

Even though the numbers of women are occupied the majority of the market in the service industry, respect and dignity towards women are still required. Excessive objectification of women and inappropriate behaviour toward women in the work context would arouse women's emotional exhaustion and reduce their sense of identity on the roles they are playing. Individuals should set up a rational perception of job roles and approach colleagues with equity and respect. Those gentlemen that mentioned in the case should envisage their improper views towards hostesses in the party. If they did so, the scandal would not occur and destruct the reputation of charity fund-raise event.

4.2.2 Intensify emotional intelligence

Confronting of the adverse impacts of emotional labour, individuals should be encouraged to recognize and rebuild the role in work context. Before starting the emotional labour, the organization should provide adequate information to help individuals acquire proper perception of job role. Meanwhile, the organization should direct individuals to understand emotional expression rules correctly and encourage them to conduct deep acting as much as possible.

4.2.3 Involving emotional labour expending in compensation

In the case, in addition to providing regular service, the hostesses also need to perform emotional labour and pay emotional energy under the unfavourable situation. Most of them might expect their emotional efforts to be reciprocated by the terms of no matter financial reward or non-financial compensation such as a desirable job opportunity. The organizer should take this into consideration and renovate dissatisfaction and emotional exhaustion the hostesses experienced during conducting emotional labour.

5. Conclusion

Through analyzing the theory of emotional labour, the leading opinion of the author has solid support. In summary, there are 4 conclusions are found in this case study.

Emotional labour could be regarded as a behaviour that both male and female employees are motivated to engage in and earn a reward for in Western businesses. By expressing the emotions appropriately, employees are more easily acquire achievement and extra reward that they are desired.

Women show greater emotional expressivity than men and they are clearly expected to smile more often than men. To compare with men, women are more sensitive to perceive emotions and more easily to capture the inner emotion of clients, which make them express their emotions as required by the organization more precisely. So, it is normal to see women "service with smile" in work context.

Women are more likely to use surface acting strategy and the higher the emotional intelligence of employees, the more competent they are for emotional labour.

Some personal factors like gender, age and cognitive ability of job role have significant influence on emotional labour.

From the perspective of the author, future research on emotional labour would be carried through more widely and be combined with more social issues.

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