

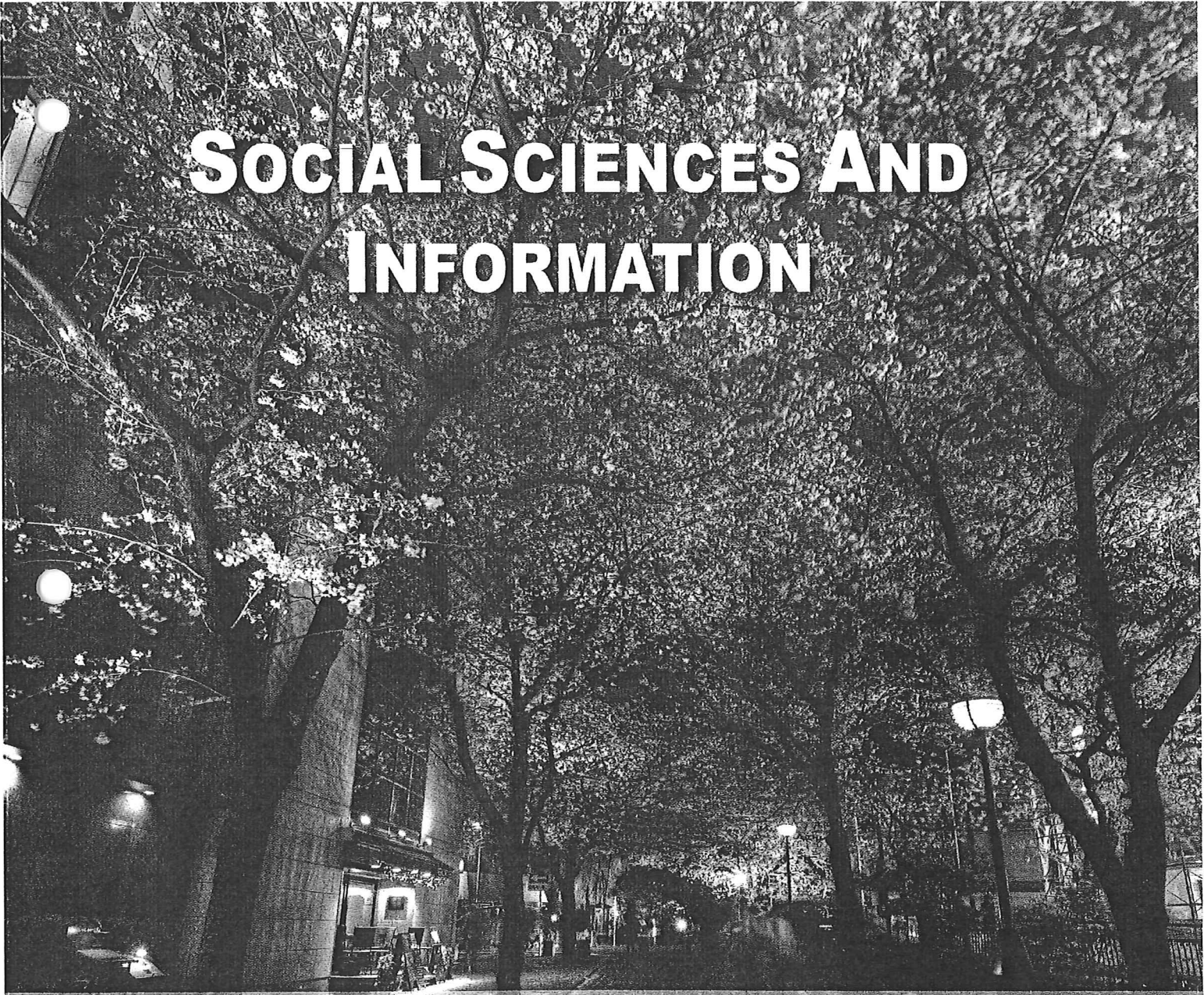
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The Moderating Role of Organizational Identity on Frontline Employee Emotional Labor

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Abstract. Emotional labor is the process of managing emotion in performing tasks. Service employees often employ surface acting and deep acting as emotional labor strategies when interact with the customers. However, the frequency of regulation emotions has a negative impact on service employee well-being i.e. emotional exhaustion, anxiety, intention to leave. Such impacts finally lead to decrease organizational performance. This paper intends to explore the process of emotional labor by developing a conceptual model. The framework draws on the emotion regulation which performs by service employees. The negative affectivity is the antecedent of emotional labor and emotional exhaustion plays an important role as consequence of emotional labor. Additionally, the contingency model of organizational identity is proposed. This paper argues that perceiving organizational identity of FLEs can alleviate and exacerbate the relationship between emotional labor and emotional exhaustion.

1. Introduction

In service work, the management of emotion is pervasive. During the service encounter the frontline employee (FLE) is required to put the mask on face by showing a good mood to the customer [1, 2]. Thus to meet the demand of thier jobs, frontline employees (FLEs) need to regulate thier emotion by restrain the true feeling and express the positive emotion to the public or some FLEs can alter emotion to conform to the circumstance. The emotional labor concept has received attention in service encounter and industrial psychologies [3]. Emotional labor was coined by Hochschild in 1983. The extensively forms of emotional labor are deep acting and surface acting. Deep acting refers to employees modifying their feelings to match the required situation. It is called "faking in good faith" [2]. Surface acting refers to employees modifying their displays of emotion without actually altering their inner feelings. It is called "faking in bad faith" [2]. Literatures demonstrate that emotional labor has a negative and dysfunctional consequences on service providers. The effects of emotional labor on FLEs well-being, job dissatisfaction, burnout, and withdrawal behaviors [2, 4, 5].

Moreover, a few studies have known to investigate the individual character construct as the moderator in diminishing the negative impact of emotional labor consequence [6]. This paper argue that even though the connection of emotional labor and emotional exhaustion is reliant, it is, to some extent, depent upon other factors. This paper attempts to address this gap by proposing the organizational identity construct to moderate emotional labor and its outcome. Organizational identity is dispositional factor that explain the individual sense of belongingness to an organization which the person is a member [7]. Previous studie shows that organizational identity associate with employee psychological well-being constructs [8]. Additionally, organizational identity was found to

relate to employee job satisfaction, job involvement and turnover intention [9]. Given to the literature review, the organizational identity is potentially to be the moderator of emotional labor and its consequence.

The purpose of this study is to extend the theoretical perspective of emotional labor by developing a contingency conceptual model. This paper argues that FLEs employ emotional labor to response to negative affectivity and consequently lead to emotional exhaustion. In particular, perceiving organizational identity of FLEs can exacerbate and alleviate the relationships between emotional labor and emotional exhaustion.

2. The proposed conceptual model

Following the emotional labor literature, this paper draws on the emotion regulation framework which service employees employ to perform their tasks [3]. During the service transaction, FLEs may need to manage their feelings to response to the customers through favorable facial and bodily displays [10]. The managing emotion is called as 'Emotional Labor'. In the service context, deep acting and surface acting are the two strategies of emotional labor that are employed mostly. In brief, this paper argues that individual will response to the negative affectivity experience by using deep acting and surface acting in the service work, and finally turns to emotional exhaustion. Moreover, the organizational identity is crucial to aggravate or attenuate the impact of emotional labor on emotional exhaustion of FLEs (see Figure I).

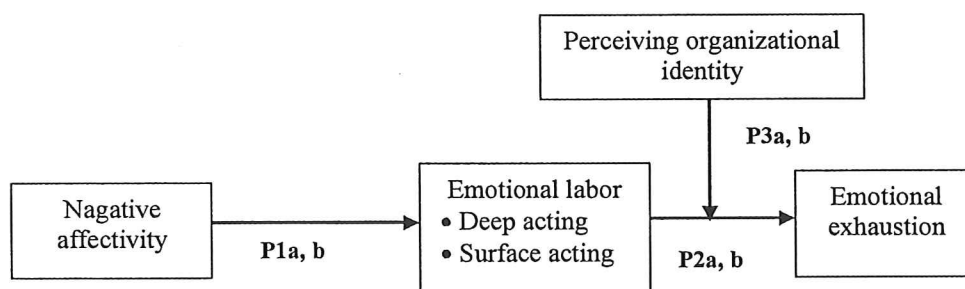


Fig. 1. The proposed conceptual model of emotional labor process

2.1 Negative affectivity and emotional labor

Negative affectivity (NA) refers to the experience of negative emotion and poor self concept [11]. Since the FLEs are the public face of the organization, so when they contact to the customers, they need to control their emotions. In service work, organization expects the FLEs to follow the display rules by expressing the positive emotion and suppressing negative emotion [12]. However, FLE with different affect will experience and perceive the same display rules differently [13]. FLE who has high negative affectivity (NA) tends to have a negative world view and interpret the messages as negative [11] and react to the event intensively when engaging the negative events. It means that they are not likely to alter their inner feelings. Previous studies demonstrates that NA is positively related to surface acting [12, 14] while the relationship between NA and deep acting is various. [15] revealed the positive relationship of NA and deepacting, whereas [16] reported the opposite sign. Recently, [6] confirmed that NA is positively associated to emotive effort. Thus this paper proposes the proposition 1 as:

Proposition 1a: Negative affectivity is negatively related to surface acting

Proposition 1b: Negative affectivity is positively related to deep acting

2.2 Emotional labor and emotional exhaustion

Emotional exhaustion refers to the feeling of being overextended and the depletion of one's emotional and physical resource [17]. Emotional exhaustion is one of three dimensions of burnout. Burnout comprises of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduce sense of personal accomplishment. Emotional exhaustion is crucial in service setting in several ways; it is a quality of life index [18], and it frequently happens in service work that requires the interaction between the customers and FLEs [19]. Literatures demonstrate that service organizations always provide the rules for FLEs to perform, for example, FLEs need to put smile on their faces even they are dissatisfied. This situation may lead to emotional depletion. Previous studies show that overload, job autonomy, display rules and role ambiguity relate to emotional exhaustion. [20] investigated the relationship between emotional labor and emotional exhaustion with 418 insurance sale representatives in China. Results are found that service employee who employs surface acting is more likely to engage with more emotional exhaustion, whereas FLE who engages with deep acting is more likely to experience with less emotional exhaustion. Thus this paper proposes that:

Proposition 2a: Surface acting is negatively related to emotional exhaustion

Proposition 2b: Deep acting is positively related emotional exhaustion

2.3 The moderating of perceiving organizational identity

The impacts of emotional labor on emotional exhaustion may vary depend on the characteristics of employees. This paper addresses that organizational identity is a robust construct that can weaken or exacerbate the emotional labor-emotional exhaustion relationship. According to Hofstede's cultural dimension [21], Asian countries are collectivism culture. In this cultural aspect, individual is embedded in the group. The extreme values of this dimension describe 'we mentality' and focus on the belonging to an organization. Therefore, the way of performing task, individual makes decision due to what is the best for social group. This is consistent with the social identity theory which posits that the social identity encompasses the group classification such as organizational role [22]. Hence, the member of the organization will think, act, share norms and responsibility [23]. The organizational identity originated from social identity theory which proposes that individuals identify themselves with the others in society as a means of self-reference [24]. The organizational identity refers to "perceived oneness with or belongingness to an organization which the person is a member" [7]. Based on theory of social identity, individuals who strongly put themselves in the organization roles is more likely to be willing in fulfilling such role [25]. Additionally when they perceive oneness and belongingness to organization, they may perform their tasks well and their resource will not drain out.

2.3.1 *Organizational identity as a moderator of emotional labor and emotional exhaustion relationships*

Organizational identity is a factor that relates to the employee's well-being in the organization [8]. The employees who engage with organizational identity tends to be loyalty to such organization and view it as being prestigious [26]. When someones criticize the organization, employees feel as they are insulted. This indicates that employees support organization and intend to entail tasks for organization. In deep acting, employees may attempt to change feelings of annoyance to pity or empathy, which is the appropriate emotion for service tasks [27]. During the work, FLEs who employs this strtegy, they will experience desired emotion. They express authentic emotion, so thier emotion doesn't deplete. However, FLEs with high levels of perceiving of organizational identity tend to perceive less emotional exhaustion when engaged with deep acting strategy. Organizational identity can therefore be predicted to decrease the negative impact of deep acting on emotional exhaustion, thus the proposition 3a of this study is:

Proposition 3a: Organizational identity moderates the relationship between deep acting and emotional exhasution. Particularly, the higher level of organizational identity, the stronger the relationship.

In the service encounter, the display rules require FLEs to suppress the negative feelings, but prefers to express the favor emotions. The emotion restraint will lead to unpleasant feeling, consequently emotional resource is consumed. Given that when FLEs perceive belongingness to an organization, they will consider that they are one of the organization. They agree to participate organization functions [26] such as being brand representative of the organization. Even if they have to put more effort to be authentic to the customers, since they may think that they perform their tasks for organization. Thus the negative feeling will dissipate. Therefore the negative impact of surface acting on emotional exhaustion will be diminished if FLEs perceive with high level of organizational identity. So this paper proposes that:

Proposition 3b: Organizational identity moderates the relationship between surface acting and emotional exhaustion. Particularly, the higher level of organizational identity, the weaker the relationship.

3. Conclusion

In service work, concept of emotional labor is prevalent. Deep acting and Surface acting are the strategies that FLEs mostly use in their jobs. The previous studies show that negative affectivity influences on emotional labor and subsequently leads to emotional exhaustion. Moreover, this paper is proposing the organizational identity construct as the moderator of the relationship between emotional labor and emotional exhaustion. The focal is the organizational identity plays an important role as the factor that buffer or exacerbate emotional labor-emotional exhaustion relationship

Notably, this paper is a conceptual model, thus no experiment and data to verify the model. However, the propositions of this paper should be investigated in frontline service employees context. The self-administered questionnaire is recommended. According to the proposed model, the structure equation modeling is appropriate to analyze the paths of hypotheses. The moderating effects of organizational identity can be tested by using the moderator regression.

4. Implications

According to the literatures review, the proposed model in this paper may have a theoretical contribution as the organizational identity plays an important role in exacerbating and weaken the relationship of emotional labor and emotional exhaustion. Furthermore, no evidence has been found that the moderating effect of organizational identity on emotional labor and emotional exhaustion. This can extend the theory of emotional labor. The model also suggests the practical implication to the manager in service organization by understanding the process of emotional labor. Moreover, the manager needs to provide training to frontline employees in expressing emotion during the service transactions.

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