

Research Article

Emotional Labor an Antecedent of Employees Turnover: A Study of Flight AttendantsArooj Kanwal¹, Tahseen Ajaz²^{1,2}Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad

Abstract: This study was aimed at exploring the relationship of emotional labor with respect to emotional exhaustion on employees' turnover. The sample data of 127 flight attendants was collected through questionnaires. The findings noted that the more the employees perform, the more emotionally exhaust he/she feel and his/her intentions to leave the job increases. The results have proved a strong correlation among three factors.

Keywords: Emotional Labor, Emotional Exhaustion, Turnover Intentions, Flight attendants, Service industry employees

Introduction

The hospitality industry employees are most vulnerable to emotional labor as they encounter demanding and difficult customers. They need to remain polite and patient and wear a smile while dealing with customers. Emotional labor refers to the emotional work carried out by the employees as expected by the position held by them in any job role (Hochschild, 1983). Employee Satisfaction and Commitment has become increasingly challenging in case of jobs which involve 'People work' (Deifendroff, et.al. 2011, Hulsheger & Schewe, 2011) i.e. direct interaction with customers. These employees are continuously involved in planning and controlling the organizationally desired emotions during their interaction with customers (Morris & Feldman, 1996). Thus employees involved in people work undergo emotional labor to contribute to their job to achieve the organizational goals where emotional labor includes management of emotional expression and concealment suitable for the organization well being (Deifendroff, et.al, 2005). Strazdins (2000) projected that besides regulating one's own emotions according to the professional and emotional demands, employees are also involved in regulating others emotions at work.

In 1983, Hochschild introduced the concept of emotional labor as "the management of feelings to create a publically observable facial and bodily display". Organizations usually specify desired emotional expression for any situation that serves as a benchmark for the employees' emotional display (Deifendroff, et.al, 2005). Emotional labor deals with desired emotional display irrespective of how employee actually feels at work. Various theories (Deifendroff & Gosserand, 2003, Deifendroff, et.al, 2005) suggest that individuals express what they feel however when this expression is not supported by the display rules, employees synchronize their felt emotions with the display rules. This regulation can be response-focus (reactionary) or antecedent-focus (anticipatory). In case of employee-customer relations the response focus regulation is also known as Surface Acting where the emotional response of the employee is altered by abating, intensifying or falsifying the emotions (Grandey, 2000; Hulsheger & Schewe, 2011). Individual surface acting cutbacks the personal employees'

well-being, reduced job satisfaction, intensification stress thus emotional exhaustion, which results in employee turnover (Grandey, Rupp, & Brice, 2015; Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2013; Scott & Barnes, 2011).

The antecedent focus regulation, on the other hand, is known as deep acting. In this scenario, to confirm to the display rules, employee modify the felt emotions (Hochschild, 1983; Goodwin et.al. 2011). Grandey (2000) suggested that emotional labor compliments the welfare of individuals and organizations. According to his study, the individual well-being was reflected by increased job satisfaction which ensures employees longer stay with the organization. On the other hand, Organization well-being is exhibited by improved employee performance and reduced turnover. According to social exchange theory, individuals reciprocate the treatment they receive from others (Cropanzano, Anthony, Daniels, & Hall, 2017).

Various studies (Grandey, 2003; Judge, Woolf, & Hurst, 2009) have explored the diverse impact of emotional regulation strategies on the employees' well being where surface acting has more damaging effects in contrast to the deep acting. Grandey (2000) proposed a model for emotional labor based on the Hochschild (1983) which suggest that the employees well-being is affected by the emotional regulation strategies and is reflected in enhanced job performance and lessened turnover and organizational well being through improved employee performance and reduced turnover. Numerous researchers (Brotheridge and Grandey, 2002; Zapf et al., 2001) have conclude that prevalence of emotional labor result in stress at work and burnout.

Halbesleben & Bowler (2007) have defined Emotional Exhaustion (EE) as a state of Fatigue and depletion and is the main reason of burnout. In case of service industry, the outcomes of emotional labor can be more damaging as employees serve as an interface between organization and customers. This exposure result in depletion of emotional energy causing emotional exhaustion (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993). Emotional exhaustion is the physiological response to the emotional labor arouse by regulating emotions at work. Two previous studies discovered that job satisfaction is

negatively related to emotional labor in international service organization (Babakus et al., 1999) and financial institution (Jaramillo et al. 2006).

Employee turnover has been identified as red flag in organizations because of associated costs of attract, train and retain employees (Dalton, Krackhardt, & Porter, 1981). To predict the actual turnover behavior, employees' intention to leave the job remains the key indicator. Various researchers such as Côté & Morgan (2002) and Grandey (2000) have investigated that emotional labor is a reason that put into employees' turnover. As employees involved in extensive emotional labor develop an uncomfortable feeling about the work environment which adds to their turnover intentions (Grandey, 2002). Holtom, Mitchell, Lee, & Eberly, (2008) asserted that the employees engage in performing emotional labor develop a negative attitude about e job and start showing job withdrawal intentions or turnover. Abraham (1999) validated the mediating effect of job satisfaction on the relationship between Emotional dissonance and turnover intentions.

Abraham (1999) has explored during his study that the employees that suppress or modify their feelings to conform to the display rules are more likely to carry turnover intentions. Emotional labor performed at the job contributes to the turnover intentions (Côté and Morgan, 2002). The empirical work contributed by Chau et al. (2009) has not found any direct relationship among emotional labor and turnover intentions however the relationship is bridged by the emotional exhaustion which remains the central reason of turnover.

Based on the above mentioned theoretical grounds, the proposed theoretical framework showing the knitted relationship of various variables under study is as under;

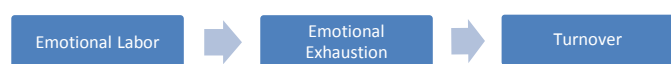


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

Methodology

The study sample composed of flight attendants, selected from the twin cities of Pakistan. Mainly flight attendants from various airlines were requested to contribute in the study by sharing their responses against a questionnaire. A sample of 170 self administered questionnaires was collected from airhostesses from twin cities of Pakistan. The Employee's voluntary participation was ensured by informing them about the research topic and its potential impacts. The confidentiality of the respondents was ensured by keeping the responses anonymous. Researcher seek informed consent from the participants for their volunteer participation in the study. The first part of the questionnaire consisted of the demographics of the employees including data on gender,

level of education and number of months in the job. The main data collection tool was sub-divided into three scales. Emotional labor scale consisted of 9 items adopted from Grandey (2003), Kruml & Geddes (2000), and Diefendorff et al. (2005). Deep acting and surface acting were considered for the data collection on dimensions of emotional labor. Emotional exhaustion scale was adopted from Maslach and Jackson (1981) consisting of 8-items. Turnover intention subscale was adopted from Cammann, Fichman, Jenkins, and Klesh (1979) consisting of 2-items. Likert Scale was used to plot the responses of the research participants (1=strongly disagree, 2= Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=strongly agree) was used to record the responses. The Data obtained from the questionnaires was analyzed using SPSS 16.

Data Analysis

The data received by the respondents consisted of 143 questionnaires. Out of which only 127 were complete in all aspects. The study response rate was 84% out of which the usable response rate was 74%. The data cleaning was conducted as a first phase to ensure that the results obtained from the data yield momentous results.

The descriptive analysis was done to track the data arrays (Refer to table 1). From the value of standard deviation, it can be seen that the turnover intention values are widely dispersed from the mean value which shows the diversity in the responses of the respondents. Moreover, the value of the Skewness show that all the variables are negatively skewed on the normal distribution which shows that most of the responses were on the lower side of the scale as compared to the positive side.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
EL	13.5340	1.36350	1.859	-1.114	.238	1.812	.472
EE	12.8932	2.10933	4.449	-.336	.238	-.247	.472
TOI	25.0971	4.59862	21.147	-.194	.238	-.496	.472
Valid N (listwise)							

Source: Derived by data analysis

After the descriptive analysis, reliability test was conducted in order to ascertain the reliability of the scales employed to measure variables under study. The results show that scales used in the study Emotional Labor scale has $\alpha = 0.83$, Emotional Exhaustion $\alpha = 0.89$ and Turnover Intentions $\alpha = 0.77$. The benchmark value for the Chronbach's alpha is 0.7. Hence, the values obtained for all the sub scales used in the

study are higher than the benchmark value of 0.7 thus it can be concluded that all the sub-scales used in the study were reliable and measures the intended variable to an acceptable level of satisfaction.

Table 2: Correlation Matrix

	EL	EE	TOI
EL Pearson Correlation	1		
Sig. (2-tailed)			
N	127		
EE Pearson Correlation	.817	1	
Sig. (2-tailed)	.788		
N	127	127	
TOI Pearson Correlation	.762	.546*	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	.446	.012	
N	127	127	127

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Derived by data analysis

The value for the Pearson Correlation indicates the magnitude of connection among variable and the sign of the Correlation shows the direction of the relation (directly or inversely related). It is evident from the table that the values for the correlation among all the variables are above 5 which represents the medium correlated variables. Especially in case of emotional labor and emotional exhaustion, there is a strong positive correlation among two variables. In case of turnover intentions, it has a strong moderate relationship with emotional labor which means the more the employee performs emotional labor, his intentions to leave the job increases.

Regression Analysis was conducted to ascertain the mediating affect of EL on the relationship between EE and TOI. The results show that the relationship between EL and employees' turnover is strengthened by the (R-squared =0.341) inclusion of EE (R-squared =0.6425). The value of R-squared shows the model fit which in this case means that the inclusion of EE better explains the relationship between emotional labor and turnover intentions. Moreover, the value of f-test is also significant (f=18.761) as compared to the f-test value of the first model (f=1.349) which checked the relationship among EL and TOIs.

From the results above, the relationship between EL and TOIs could be easily established. The role of EE remains central to this relationship by creating negative emotions about the job environment (Jackson, Schwab, & Schuler, 1986; Firth & Britton 1989). The results have revealed the significant positive relation among EL, EE and TOIs which are in conformity with the conclusions derived by Schaufeli and Enzmann (1998) and Shi Xu, Larry R. Martinez & Qin Lv (2017). These results confirm that the flight attendants that are involved in the service delivery and people work, need to

frequently perform emotional work as a part of their jobs. While trying to ensure compliance to display rules, they usually suppress their felt emotions (Grandey, 2000) and their turnover intention increases.

The limitations related to this study includes limited sample size from limited geographical coverage in terms of sample distribution. For a better generalizability of the results, the study should be conducted on a larger scale including flight attendants from various localities. This study could explore the aspect of the turnover intentions and actual turnover, if conducted over a long period of time to explore the better insights. The interesting aspect could be explored by studying various management levels to ascertain the level of emotional labor faced by employees in various cadres of management evoking their turnover intentions.

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