Emotional Labor and Emotional Exhaustion in Emergency Medical Service Employees, Pakistan

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Abstract

The work of Emergency Medical Services (EMS) is stressful and drains them emotionally. This research investigates the impact of Emotional Labor Strategies i.e. Surface Acting, Deep Acting and Authenticity or Expression of Naturally Felt-emotions on Emotional Exhaustion of EMS employees in Pakistan. By nature this study is quantitative, and 110 employees (Emergency Medical Technicians) of Punjab Emergency Service Rescue 1122 participated in the data collection process. Primary data was collected through questionnaire. Data was further analyzed by descriptive statistic, correlation and linear regression. Results illustrate that EMS professionals are mostly engaged in deep acting and authenticity or expression of naturally-felt emotions than surface acting. Linear regressions were run to investigate the impact of each emotional labor strategy i.e. Surface acting, deep acting and authenticity or ENFE on Emotional Exhaustion. Results reveal that surface acting has positive impact on emotional exhaustion while deep acting and authenticity or ENFE have negative association with emotional exhaustion. This study adds to the extant literature by giving empirical insight into the relationship between emotional labor strategies and emotional exhaustion. It provides guidance to Emergency Medical Service's (EMS) as how to familiarize and employ the effective emotion's coping strategies.

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1. Introduction

The prime responsibility of Emergency Medical Services (EMS), is the
protection of lives and property of the people (Couper & Karimi, 2013). It is
the elementary characteristic of the community services.   Emergency
Medical Service (EMS) professionals work with a wide range of patients and
fire incidents, including heart attack, fall from height, firearm wounds, road
side and traffic accidents, which commonly need much compassion, kindness
and sympathy for the affected victims. Emergency Medical Service's (EMS)
personnel exert long hours with much stress, emotional drainage both
expected and real, thus need to be familiar with effective emotion's coping
strategies. Employees display appropriate emotions for organizational
wellbeing (Miller, Considine, & Garner, 2007; Tracy, 2005). In many
previous researches, the concept of emotional requirements discussed
especially in service industry like healthcare and customer service, because
of their jobs are highly demanding, by a person's capacity to convene these
requirements (Diefendorff, Croyle, & Gosserand, 2005). However, EMS
professional are highly interconnected with emotion work, in which they can
manage, monitor and regulate their emotions to achieve better client
satisfaction as well as job satisfaction by helping the other people without
any difference and discrimination.

2. Literature Review

Work of employees serving in public sector is emotionally powerful (Guy et
al., 2008). It is observed that employees working in public sector are
committed and motivated by an eagerness to provide assistance to others
(Cacioppe & Mock, 1984). Emotional work illustrates how employees cope
up and display their different emotions in different circumstances

(Ghalandari, Jogh, Imani, & Nia, 2012). In case of emergency situation, victim's lives are primarily dependent on the proficiency and early response by EMS professionals of local emergency medical services. Previous researches on health and emergency medical services supported the assumption that such jobs are naturally stressful (Young & Cooper, 1995). EMS professionals are required to move instantaneously at all hours to emergency, adding their lives into risky conditions and handle relations between irritated/ ill/ stressed people, among other incidents.

2.1. Emotional Labor

The concept of emotional labor was first introduced by the Hochschild (1983) describing how individuals achieve organizational goals by means of using and managing their emotions. Grandey (2000) proposed the emotional labor concept as "the process of regulating both feelings and expressions for the organizational goals". Since the introduction of emotional labor concept by Hochschild (1983), many other researches started focusing on the dimensions of the emotional labor and its impacts on the employees. Employees mainly use two kind of emotional strategies to comply with expectation of emotional display, surface acting & deep acting (Hochschild, 1983 & 2003; Krumel & Geddes, 2000). In later work, researchers argued that a new third dimension "expression of naturally-felt emotions named "Authenticity" must be considered (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993).

Surface acting is defined as a state of "changing emotional expression without changing the inner emotional state". Surface acting further can be explained as employees "faking a smile" in the expression of organizational required emotions (F. Cheung, Tang, & Tang, 2011). Deep acting involves in "attempting to modify felt emotions so that a genuine emotional display follows" to comply with the required organization's emotional display (Hochschild, 2003; Krumel & Geddes, 2000). Hochschild (1983)

conceptualized the two dimensions of the emotional labor, surface acting and deep acting while some other researchers proposed that there must be a third dimension, named authenticity or expression of naturally felt emotion which displays on the spot and genuine emotion during interpersonal interactions (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Ashforth & Tomiuk, 2000). Diefendroff et al. (2005) empirical study also support the three factor model of emotional labor with surface acting, deep acting and expression of naturally felt emotions.

2.2. Emotional Labor's Perspectives

Emotional labor's facet of organizational life to the public attention was introduced in A.R. Hochschild's (1983) book The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Feelings. Emotional Labor's term by Hochschild (1983) refer to "the management of feelings to create a publically observable facial and bodily display". Hochschild's work based on the Dramaturgical perspective of customer interactions in which work environment is like a stage, employees are actors and customers are audience. This perspective exhibits that performance engage impression management of employees in which employees may possibly use "expressive devices" to achieve organizational goals (Grove & Fisk, 1989). It means emotion's management is a tool to achieve desired organizational goals. If employees show unhappy mood or irritation towards the customers or colleagues, it would spoil the performance. Dramaturgical perspective of Hochschild (1983) proposed two main ways for actor to emotion's management: one through surface acting and other through deep acting. In surface acting actors regulates the emotional expressions while in deep acting they change the inner feelings according to desired organizational emotions. Hochschild argues that these conscious efforts of changing emotions may produce harmful effects on employee's wellbeing which leads to stress and burnout.

Following the social identity theories, several researchers argue that emotion's management involves the conceptualization of self and construction of identity (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Krone & Morgan, 2000). Organizational communication scholars propose that organizational entity and roles affect the emotional management (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Tracy, 2005). According to social identity theories which consider identity construction is a product of social categorization (Turner, Maryanski, & Fuchs, 1991). People are categorized in a number of social groups like age, gender, race, and organizational membership, political and religious affiliations (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). On the basis of interactions of such group members, social identities are constructed which affect the individual's attitudes, beliefs and behaviors. When social identities are strong with organizational roles then individuals may feel most reliable (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993). Intercultural communication scholars proposed that in identity construction and emotion's management, cultural identity is central (Imahori & Cupach, 2005). Understanding of self and construction of identity is affected by cultural variance (Ting-Toomey, 2005). Oatley (1993) stated that different cultures have different emotional patterns with distinctive meanings and effects on their people. (Oatley, 1993)

2.3. Emotional Exhaustion

Emotional exhaustion is defined as "the state of depletion and fatigue or low level of energy", and it is the main component and dimension of the burnout (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Wright & Cropanzano, 1998). Emotional exhaustion may be a potential risk for EMS professionals. Innstand et al. (2002) noted emotional exhaustion is "feeling of overextended and depleted of energy" which leads to job burnout (Blau, Bentley, & Eggerichs-Purcell, 2012). Literature refers burnout a "psychological syndrome in response to chronic interpersonal stressors on the job" and there are three dimensions of

burnout, emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and lack of accomplishment (Jackson & Maslach, 1982).

Maslach et al. (2001) described that burnout is a multifaceted syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of accomplishment. It is also proved in past studies that lack of accomplishment has relatively least correlation as compared to other dimensions of burnout, and emotional exhaustion is highly exterminating dimension of burnout (Green, Walkey, & Taylor, 1991). So in this research, only the core dimension (emotional exhaustion) of burnout has been examined which is considered and recommended by the researchers e.g.(Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

2.4. Emotional Labor and Emotional Exhaustion

Hochschild (1983, 2003) refers emotional labor as managing the feelings to comply with display rules. In service industry emotional labor leads to burnout which is syndrome of emotional exhaustion (Céleste M Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; A. A. Grandey, 2003; Maslach et al., 2001). Researchers refer surface acting as "changing expression without changing the inner emotional state" (F. Cheung et al., 2011). Emotional exhaustion occurs when emotional resources become exhausted due to lack of impulse and even a fear of work. In relationship between emotional labor strategies and emotional exhaustion, there is no unified finding. Emotional exhaustion leads by the surface acting approach of emotional labor (Totterdell & Holman, 2003). So it is believed that emotional labor and emotional exhaustion have positively correlation. In a study of frontline employees, it is observed that employees who use surface acting strategy of emotional labor resulting in lower service quality (Abraham, 1998). Hence on the basis of aforementioned literature the following hypothesis is proposed.

H1: surface acting is positively associated with emotional exhaustion

Although both surface acting and deep acting strategies of emotional labor make employees enable to display desired emotions, but their essence is totally different. According to Miller et al. (2007) deep acting strategy of emotional labor refers to changing inner emotions according to the desired emotions. The employees who deal with their emotions through surface acting may experience high level of intrinsic tensions while employees who use deep acting to manage their emotions may have not such kind of issues because they are expressing the inner feelings of their self. So, deep acting might not too much related with emotional exhaustion, but it may relate to lower depersonalization and more personal accomplishment sometimes (Céleste M Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Arlie R Hochschild, 1983). Regarding deep acting it is proposed that there is negative relationship between deep acting and emotional exhaustion.

H2: Deep acting is negatively associated with emotional exhaustion

As third dimension of emotional labor, Diefendorff et al. (2005) suggest authenticity or expression of naturally felt emotions as alternative strategy of emotional labor. It refers to spontaneous expressing the felt emotions at work. Previous literature on emotional work found that authenticity or expression of naturally felt emotions is positively associated with good quality of work life (F. Y. l. Cheung & Tang, 2010). Thus it can be proposed that authenticity or ENFA has negative impact on emotional exhaustion.

H3: Authenticity or ENFA has negative association with emotional exhaustion.

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants and Procedure

This study is quantitative in nature. The data was collected from 110 Emergency Medical Technicians of Rescue 1122 through questionnaires. For

accessible population size a sampling framework was constructed. Four districts were selected on the basis of highest number of emergencies dealt by EMS employees on daily basis. It is because the EMS personnel of these districts have much interaction with victims and emotional work display. A total number of 120 questionnaires were distributed and response rate was 92%. Only aggregated responses were considered for further analysis. Data was analyzed by using reliabilities, descriptive statistics, correlation and linear regressions in SPSS 21. In this project 110 full-time EMS employs (all males) participated with age ranged from 23 to 40 years (M=28.66, SD=3.08), and the job tenure ranged from 3 to 9 years (M=5.55, SD=1.61). Along with the questionnaire, participants received an invitation letter in which the aim of the study was explained and participant's confidentiality was assured.

3.2. Theoretical Framework

The following model as shown in figure 1 is proposed on the aforementioned literature review. Zhang and Zhu's (2008) theoretical model is adopted and used for this study. But only one dimension, emotional exhaustion is measured because literature suggests that burnout is chronic syndrome of emotional exhaustion which is much significantly related to emotional labor than other burnout dimensions (A. A. Grandey, 2003; Green et al., 1991).
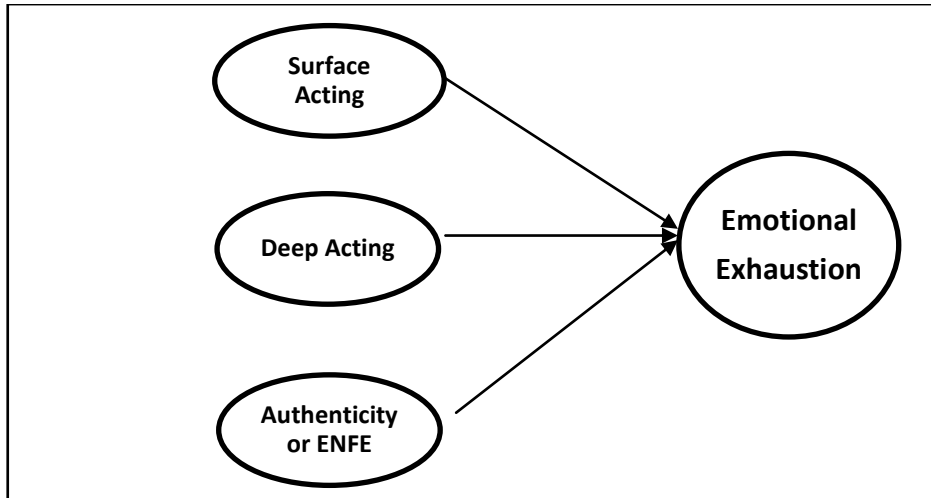
Figure 1: Theoretical model

3.3. Measures/ Instruments

3.1.1 Emotional Labor

 Grandey (2003) emotional labor scale was used to measure emotional labor strategies. This scale consists of 5-items for surface acting, 3-items for deep acting, while authenticity or ENFA is measured by a scale used by Diefendorff et al (2005). These measures adopted with slightly change according to EMS employee's context. The word "customer" changed with "victims" for EMS employee's context**.** All the items were rated on 05-point likert scale ranging from 1 (very slightly or not at all) to 5 (very much).

3.1.2 Emotional Exhaustion

Emotional exhaustion was measured by the scale used by Maslach & Jackson (1981). Participant were asked to rate "to what extent each of these item describes you at this moment". The 9-items scale was rated on 05-point likert scale ranging from 1 "very slightly or not at all" to 5 "very much".

4. Data Analysis

4.1 Cronbach Alpha

Table 1 exhibited the reliabilities for this study estimated α .747 for surface acting (five items, Mean=1.743, SD=.835), α .809 for deep acting (three items, Mean=3.769, SD=1.1222), α .724 for authenticity or expression of naturally-felt emotions (three items, Mean=3.677, SD=0.937), and α .914 for Emotional Exhaustion (Nine Items, Mean=1.764, SD=.864).

Table 1. Correlations, Means, Standard Deviations and Reliabilities of Emotional labor Strategies and Emotional Exhaustion

		1 SA	2 DA	3 ENFE	4 JS	A	Mean	SD
1	**Surface Acting**					0.747	1.743	0.835
2	**Deep Acting**	.022				0.809	3.769	1.122
3	**Authenticity or ENFE**	-.132	.487**			0.724	3.677	0.937
4	**Emotional Exhaustion**	.347**	-.201*	-.250**		0.914	1.764	0.864
**. Correlation is Significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed), N=110							
*. Correlation is Significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).							

5. Results

5.1. Emotional Labor and Emotional Exhaustion

Table 1 depicts the mean scores of the variables ranging from (1.74 to 3.769 on a five point likert scale). The means of deep acting and authenticity or ENFA are fairly high than surface acting. The summary of Pearson correlation in table 1 shows that all emotional labor strategies have significant correlation with emotional exhaustion. Surface acting is significantly and positively correlated with emotional exhaustion ($r = 0.347$, $p < 0.00$), while deep acting ($r = -0.201$, $p < 0.03$) and authenticity or

expression of naturally felt emotions (r = -0.250, p < 0.00) are negatively and significantly correlated with emotional exhaustion. As expected in the model, emotional labor strategies have a significant impact on emotional exhaustion.

Table 2 shows the results of linear regressions between emotional labor strategies and emotional exhaustion. In model 1, results demonstrate that surface acting is positively associated with the emotional exhaustion with the value of β coefficient (surface acting = 0.347) and its significance value (P<0.01) which means a unit change in surface acting will 34.7% positively effect on emotional exhaustion. H1 is thus supported. Adjusted R square shows that surface acting has 11.3% impact on emotional exhaustion.

In model 2, results reveal that deep acting is negatively associated with emotional exhaustion with the value of β coefficient (deep acting = -0.201) and its significance value (P<0.05) which means a unit change in deep acting will 20.1% negatively effect on emotional exhaustion. H2 is, therefore, supported. Adjusted R square exhibits that deep acting has 3.2% impact on emotional exhaustion.

Table 2. Linear Regression summary of Surface Acting, Deep Acting and Authenticity or ENFE with Emotional Exhaustion

	B	S.E	β	t-value	(P) sig.	R square	adj. R^2
Model ¹							
Constant	1.138	.180		6.313	.000		
Surface Acting	.359	.093	.347	3.850	.000	.121	.113
Model ²							
Constant	2.348	.285		8.229	.000		
Deep Acting	-.155	.073	-.201	-2.134	.035	.040	.032
Model ³							
Constant	2.612	.326		8.017	.000		
Authenticity or Expression	-.230	.086	-.250	-2.683	.008	.063	.054

| of NFE | | | | | | | |

Dependent Variable: Emotional Exhaustion

In model 3, results show that authenticity or ENFE is also significantly and negatively associated with the emotional exhaustion with the value of β coefficient (authenticity or ENFE = -0.250) and its significance value (P<0.01) which means one unit change in authenticity or ENFE will 25% negatively effect on emotional exhaustion. Adjusted R square depicts that authenticity or ENFE has 5.4% impact on emotional exhaustion. Thus H3 is supported.

6. Discussion

The results of this study provide a deep insight to investigate the impact of emotional labor i.e. surface acting, deep acting and authenticity or expression of naturally felt emotions on emotional exhaustion of the EMS employees in Rescue 1122, Pakistan. The results exhibited that EMS employees are mainly engaged in deep acting, authenticity or expression of naturally felt emotions than surface acting in their emotional display which reduces the stress level or emotional exhaustion. It is supported by various researchers (Zhang & Zhu, 2008; Ashforth & Tomiuk, 2000; Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993). It is also because in health care profession, the expression of inner felt and genuine emotions for miserable people may lead to higher satisfaction. While in surface acting employees just pretend to show emotions which may not felt which leads to mental distress or emotional exhaustion instead of satisfaction. Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) stated that during the interpersonal interactions, surface actors use a mask on their faces by faking and hiding the actual emotions, and expressing and stimulating the unfelt or experienced emotion to customer, this state of difference cause emotional exhaustion, psychological ill-health (Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001) and job dissatisfaction (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Cheung & Tang, 2009, 2010).

Current research also reveals that deep acting followed by authenticity or expression of naturally felt emotions have negative and significant impact on emotional exhaustion.

7. Conclusion and Recommendations

The basic aim of this study was to analyze the impact of emotional labor on emotional exhaustion of EMS employees in Rescue 1122, Pakistan. It reveals that which emotional labor strategy should be practiced and which are the practices that should be avoided to reduce the emotional exhaustion of the EMS employees. The results exhibit that surface acting has positive relationship with emotional exhaustion, so EMS employees should avoid displaying fake or superficial emotions during interpersonal transactions to reduce emotional exhaustion level. When dealing with victims EMS employees should treat them in a good way with actual feelings in spite of just pretending a good temper. EMS employees should avoid using a "mask" of good professional but they should actually perform the emotions with inner feelings to overcome the impact of emotional exhaustion. It is also recommended that EMS employees should try to feel the pain of victims in actual and then respond them with sympathy and actual emotions. The results regarding the authenticity (ENFE) suggest that focus on displaying spontaneous and actual emotions towards the victims to overcome emotional exhaustion.

It is also suggested that a formal training program on emotional labor management should be devised to create awareness as how to display and manage genuine and natural emotions which are needed to display, and which expressions should be avoided during interpersonal interactions.

8. Research Implications

This study has numerous theoretical and practical implications as well. Literature argues that across cultures, emotions perceived differently (Krone & Morgan, 2000). Though a lot of scholarly work has been done on emotional labor paradigm however this study contributes in the field of Emergency Medical Services of Pakistan in which no prior research work has been initiated. This study extends and supports the work of Ashforth and Humphrey (1993). The impact of emotional labor in Pakistan's cultural context is supported by social identity theories (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993) which implies that in different cultures emotional impact differs, while dramaturgical perspective of Hochschild (1983) not much supported as the results indicates that EMS employees display emotions as routine work which do not employ much conscious efforts. Mean score of variables also exhibits that EMS employees did not reported emotional exhaustion, and surface acting highly. It means that EMS employees show emotional display as routine which may not cause stress or exhaustion (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993). Thus, this study also reveals that EMS employees should understand the emotional management to employ organizational required and inner felt emotions during interpersonal transactions.

9. Limitations/ Future Study

Though this is a new research with this topic on EMS employees in Pakistan, however there are few limitations which can be considered for future study. A research design limitation is that, this study does not measure the impact of potential mediating variables like emotional intelligence and occupational identity or moderating variables like Psychological capital (F. Cheung et al., 2011). Another limitation is that, study measures the emotional exhaustion only with emotional labor but there may be other factors like job demands and job resources, which should be considered for future research. (Zhang & Zhu, 2008)

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