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**EDUCATION OF DISCUSSING THE SERVICE EMPLOYEE'S  
EMOTIONAL LABOR STRATEGY AND SERVICE SWEET-HEARTING  
BEHAVIOR DURING SERVICE INTERACTION**

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**Abstract**

Compare with other sectors, the service sector has been developing the new engine for initiating economic growth and major consumption activities with people, especially front-line employees of service sectors are usually required for offering the appropriate emotion to directly interact with their customers (i.e. Face-to-Face or Voice-to-Voice), any kind of services is the fundamental social interaction as basically two people, this study has put forward four research propositions which are involved service employee's surface acting, deep acting, and service sweet-hearing during the service interaction with their customers in to support the past and related literatures and proposed management implications, research limitations and future research suggestions based on the research results.

**Keywords:** Service industry, Emotional labor, Theatrical components, Service Interaction, Service Sweet-hearing.

**1. Education of discussing the recent development of emotional labor**

Compare with other sectors, the service sector has been developing the new engine for initiating economic growth and major consumption activities with people Park and Shin (2012). Major countries from the early agriculture and manufacturing industries have gradually developed and evolved in the service industry (Yang, Ma, & Lee, 2014). In addition, service sector contributes and sustains the faster productivity growth of Asia economies all the time (Park & Shin, 2012). These economic phenomena showed that service industry has already become the dominant role in Asia's economic growth (Yang et al., 2014). In addition, the front-line employees of service sectors are usually required for offering the appropriate emotion to directly interact with their customers (i.e. Face-to-Face or Voice-to-Voice) than other ones. There was the emotional labor study, which was applied four theatrical components to describe service interaction between service employees and their customers (Yang et al., 2014) and the relationships between these four theatrical components and service interaction's process are included that drama actors as service employees, drama audiences as customers, drama stage as service setting, and drama actor's performance as service employee's service performance); For any kind of service and it's fundamental service interaction are basically included two people are included both service provider/sender such as service employee and service receiver such as customer (Henkel, Boegershausen, Rafaeli, & Lemmink, 2017). During service interaction's process that service employee's emotion can be considered as the service's product, they have to consider how to

efficiently manage and apply their emotional labor under the discrepant condition between their true and required emotions (Yang et al., 2014). Hence, service employees they usually can use either surface acting or deep acting of emotional labor strategy during the service interaction between them and customers in public that according to their organizational work expectation (Zhan, Wang, & Shi, 2015). The service interaction between customers their responds to service employee in both different ways (Gutek, Cherry, Bhappu, Schneider, & Woolf, 2000) are service encounters (i.e., the short-term service interaction that customers they contacted once with the different service provider or employee in each time) and service relationships (i.e., the long-term service interaction that customers they have repeated contact with the same service provider or employee); therefore, there are basically two different service types (i.e., service relationships and service encounters) by the distinguishing of the service interactions between service employees and customers (Gutek et al., 2000); however, the most first definition of emotional labor by Hochschild was “emotional labor is sold for a wage and therefore has exchange value” (Hochschild, 1983, p. 7) that already indicated service employees and customers they both are under the service interaction situation, also the service sector is either service relationships or service encounters, its service employees they all have to present the appropriate emotional display towards their customers by using the emotional labor strategy such as surface acting or deep acting (Grandey, 2000; Hochschild, 1983), and any service sector its service goal is to establish the long-term service interactions with their customers by service marketing’s perspective. While service employees they are engaged in “give unauthorized free or discounted goods or services to a friend or acquaintance” (Brady, Voorhees, & Brusco, 2012, p. 81) this deviant behavior which is termed “service sweet-hearting” (Brady et al., 2012), usually this special kind of service interaction between service providers and service receivers was common happened in hospitality industry’s service employees such as sales and cashiers; although these service employees they are already known their service interactions are illegitimate, dysfunctional and unethical with the organizational rules and this behavior also will due to costs increased and profit lost (Brady et al., 2012), they are still intended to interact with their customers with these deviant service behaviors for to establish the long-term service interaction between them with their customers. There are two problem statements that are included in this study; for the first one is to discuss the influencing relationship between both service employees their emotional labor strategies (i.e., surface and deep acting) and the service interaction with customers; and the second problem statement is to discuss the influencing relationship between service employee’s service sweet-hearting behavior, their two emotional labor strategies, and the service interaction with their customers. Therefore, there are four research objects which are according to these two problem statements and they are including: service employee’s surface acting strategy is negatively related to enhance service interactions with customers or not, service employee’s deep acting strategy is positively related to enhance service interactions with customers or not, service employee’s service sweet-hearting will enhance surface acting strategy’s negative effect towards with service interactions with customers or not, and the service employee’s service sweet-hearting will enhance deep acting strategy’s positive effect towards with service interactions’ with customers or not. The important one goal of any service sector is to train and gain the efficiently service employees by their suitably emotional regulation to service interaction with their customers; besides, service interaction is perfectly similar to the

theatrical interaction of these four theatrical components their interactive process (Yang et al., 2014; Zhan et al., 2015) and especially for theatrical script which are requiring actors to regulate their emotions to perform with their audiences, and similarly with service employees their service performances during the service interaction with their customers are also required by service sector's display rule's requirements. Therefore, the theatrical interactions between actors and audiences are wonderfully similar with the service sectors between service employees and customers, also either actors or service employees they all have to regulate their both inside feelings and outside expressions by the emotional labor strategy (i.e., surface or deep acting) which they are chosen to comply with organizational display requirement (i.e., theatrical script or display rule) for promoting organizational goals. The above conditions had showed that service interaction is the key factor which is greatly influenced on service sector's performance; for instances, customers they usually are expecting to their service employees can provide more or extra benefits to satisfy their needs or demands (Collier et al., 2018) when they both under the well service interaction, also when customers they have received the free or the discounted products or services form their service employees, they might be creating the reciprocity's thinking or behaviors in their service interaction (Brady et al., 2012). In the contrast, when service employees they are engaged in deep acting also providing the service sweet-hearting behaviors with their customers between their service interaction, service employees they are more willing to provide free or discounted goods or services these unauthorized behaviors to their customers (Brady et al., 2012), and especially for service employee and customer they both have already established the long-term service interaction. As such, this study's research significances are included discuss that whether service employee's emotional labor strategy such as surface or deep acting is effective with their service interaction with customers or not by the two research hypothesis, and for investigating how service employee's emotional labor strategies to influence on enhancing the service interaction with customers has become the most important and notable research issue between both academic fields and practical fields. By the way, this study is also to discuss that whether service employee's service sweet-hearting behavior will enhance emotional labor strategy effect (i.e., surface and deep acting) towards with service interaction with their customers or not that also are included other two research hypothesis; Although there is no emotional labor study has been clearly or completely evidenced that service employee's service sweet-hearting this behavior will enhance emotional labor strategy's effects on service interactions, there are some service management articles have already demonstrated that customers they have higher service expectations in today than in the past, and customers they highly expect their service employees can be able to satisfy their extra need (Beatty et al., 2016; Collier et al., 2018; Wilder, Collier, & Barnes, 2014), also there are also more and more customers believe they are important to this service company and expect to receive special treatment from their service employees (Boyd & Helms, 2005; Fisk & Neville, 2011) especially those customers they are involved in repeated employee-customer interactions (i.e., service relationships) (Grandey & Diamond, 2010). Therefore, service employees' service sweet-hearting behaviors such as providing their customers with unauthorized free or discounted goods or services are the effectiveness of employees' EL strategy on long-term customer outcomes (Boukis, 2016; Brady et al., 2012; Leo & Russell-Bennett, 2014).however, there is no emotional labor study has been clearly or completely evidenced that service employee's service sweet-

hearting this behavior will enhance emotional labor strategy's effects on service interactions or not, also this is the particular research issue related to service employee's emotional labor study.

## **2. The development of propositions and conceptual framework**

### **2.1 Service employee's emotional labor during service interaction**

The "emotional labor" this term was introduced firstly by A.R. Hochschild, who is the American sociologist, since "emotional labor" this concept was introduced in (Hochschild, 1983), the refined concept of emotional labor and its related researches have been continually made by many researchers; In order to make the widen understanding of emotional labor's concepts and developments this section which presents some notable and major researchers who have been mentioned frequently in emotional labor's related literatures (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Grandey, 2000; Hochschild, 1983; Morris & Feldman, 1996; Yang et al., 2014); Therefore, this study in this section specifically examines these emotional labor's researchers for treating the conceptualizations of emotional labor in priority, and intending to refine the new concepts of emotional labor based on this section. Emotional labor was firstly mentioned and introduced in the book "THE MANAGED HEART" "by Hochschild in 1983, the major contents of emotional labor in this book are that Hochschild she termed the regulation of someone's emotions for complying with his or her occupational or organizational rules (e.g., Display rules in public) as "emotional labor". The definition of emotional labor by Hochschild as "the feeling's management to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display; emotional labor is sold for a wage and therefore has exchange value" (Hochschild, 1983: 7). According to Hochschild's mentions in this book, there are three criteria of emotional labor and jobs (e.g., Service employee's emotional labor with their job requirements), they are: 1) they are required face-to-face or voice-to-voice for contacting with their customers in the public, 2) the job requirements that worker/employee to produce the appropriate emotional state with their clients or customers, and 3) allowing their worker/employee to through training, policy, and supervision for exercising the self-emotional control of their emotional activities during their job processes/interactions with customers. For the definition of emotional labor that explicitly delineates service providers (e.g., Service sector employees) they usually are required by their organization to manage or to regulate their "feeling emotions" and "emotional display" both or those emotions to comply with organizational goals, and these "display" emotions are existing the economic value which can be transformed to like the salaries, wages, or tips. In addition to the emotional management perspective (Hochschild, 1983), was influenced by dramaturgical views (Goffman, 1959) that categorized emotional labors by employees their "acting performance" during the service interactions (Kruml & Geddes, 2000); Caused by this, the perspective of emotional labor (Hochschild, 1983) was made popular by dramaturgical perspective (Goffman, 1959) and employees their respective organizational roles are seen as emotional performance on the different organizational stage (Choi, Kim, & Kim, 2014). Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) their contributions of emotional labor's research areas have been propelled into the study of emotion and behavior in forward, this study was following social identity theory, this theory suggests that individuals/employees who are in the strongly identify with their roles in the organization or relatedly with their occupations, they included the social identity roles and integrated this theory into individual emotional expression in their works, and "individuals develop a sense of who they are, what their values, goals, and beliefs are, and what they ought to do" (Ashforth &

Humphrey, 1993) (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993: 98), also they argued that emotional labor's some effects are influenced by the moderating functions which from individuals/employees their social identities and personal identities, and then their emotional labor stimulates the pressures and emotional expressions during their work process. Besides, their definitions of emotional labor that indicated emotional labor as "the act of displaying the appropriate emotion" (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993) (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993: 90), and the act in this while is "conforming to a display rule"(P. 96), their definitions of emotional labor were differed with Hochschild's (1983), they emphasized the actual behavior of employees and these behaviors are observable also fit with emotional display regulations by their service organizations (Yang et al., 2014), In addition, Ashforth & Humphrey (1993) they also mentioned that emotional labor is also closely related to the degree of customers' wellbeing, and its happiness of customers by their service providers. Morris and Feldman (1996) they have been taken the great contributions by refining emotional labor's conceptualization to the growing the literatures on emotional labor, and the concepts and references of emotional labor that have been frequently used and cited by most researches are the two emotional labor's literatures (Hochschild, 1983; Morris & Feldman, 1996); and their definitions of emotional labor as "the effort, planning, and control needed to express organizationally desired emotion during interpersonal transaction (Morris & Feldman, 1996) (Morris & Feldman, 1996: 987), and their emotional labor's definitions which come from an interaction approach which offered emotions are expressed in, and this interaction was happened in the social environment. For their perspective of emotional labor that was similar with the others (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Hochschild, 1983) that indicated individual emotions can be modified also can be controlled by their self. In additions, Morris and Feldman (1996) they also mentioned that employees who have very involved in their jobs, by this condition that will make these employees they have been interacted with their customers unavoidably and frequently, and they also have to handle the extreme emotional demands by their organizational goals such as the display rules, and they usually suffer the high level of emotional exhaustion this emotional condition. Grandy (2000)'s emotional labor's research article has also been another important of emotion research which major purposes are to review and to compare the previous perspectives (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Hochschild, 1983; Morris & Feldman, 1996) of emotional labor, due to he provided and delineated respectively the three conceptualizations of emotional labor from these previous literatures, this made the perspective of emotional labor has been greatly influences and contributions on emotional labor's definitions until to the present, in his article also provided another emotional labor's conceptualization that in an attempt to clear up the apparently contradictions from the previous literatures for to refine the construct of emotional labor, and his definitions of emotional labor as "the process of regulating both feelings and expressions for organizational goals" (Grandey, 2000) (Grandey, 2000: 97). For the relationship between emotion regulation and emotional labor by his article, he was applied "Emotion Regulation Theory (ERT)" to explain the expressions of emotional labor, she indicated that emotional labor as the modifying process of individual own emotions, and the expressions of emotional labor is to be consistent with the display rules of their organizations or occupations. And Grandey (2000) suggested the conceptual model by applying emotion regulation theory as a guiding theory to through characterizing emotional labor help us for understanding the mechanisms of emotional labor. In addition, he indicated that

employees' emotional labor may involving enhancing, faking, or suppressing these three emotions to modify their emotional expressions. In summary, employees they must manage and control their own emotions for complying with the display rules by their organization or occupation. The emotional labor's research (Yang et al., 2014) is should be the current and greatly contributed article in emotional labor's related literatures, their perspectives were also integrated other previous literatures as Grandey's method that including Hochschild (1983), Ashforth and Humphrey (1993), and Grandey (2000). In their article's contents they specially indicated these three different perspectives of emotional labor, Hochschild (1983) categorized firm's employee their work undertaken with their customers that respectively to the three different types for creating firm's profits also to earn their salaries by emotional labor's coordination, first one is physical (as the mind and body), second is mental (as mind), and the third is emotional (as the proper emotional expression publicly); Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) they argued employees' emotional labor is the appropriately display emotion and this emotional act is conforming by their organizational or occupational display rules; Grandey (2000) he integrated previous emotional researches and "Emotion Regulation Theory (ERT)", and he specified that employees' emotional labor as the regulating process between their both feelings and expressions for to complete organizational display rules or goals. Besides, they suggested four characteristics of emotional labor, they are (1) emotional labor occurs in an interpersonal interaction between employee and customer by voice-to-voice or face-to-face contact, (2) emotional labor must to display appropriate facial expressions, behavior (e.g., gestures and voices) for complying with their organizational regulations, (3) emotional labor is by managed and controlled their private/true feelings for to line with the emotional expectations by the organization, (4) emotional labor is existing a modifying function of internal feelings for employee to comply with their organizational emotion expression/display rules hence emotion as the product can be sold to exchange the value as salaries or wages . "Service organizations usually require frontline employees to maintain appropriate emotions during their interaction with customers to deliver high quality service"(Yang et al., 2014, p. 37).

## **2.2 Focus group methodology**

This study is chosen focus-group interviews this qualitative research method to collect qualitative data, due to focus group is a form of group interview that capitalizes the research participants in order to generate data besides focus group interviews it is also the quick and convenient way to collect qualitative data (Kitzinger, 1995); this study is chosen the service employees for the research participants and consider about their service homogeneity, these service employees their service background such as the same service sector type and the same service interaction context, also these service employees their gender, age, marital status, and even their service experience time and the main service context are also required the similar, besides these chosen service sectors are including convince store, fast food restaurants, and gas stations these common and daily service sectors which consumers they are almost encountering and service interaction in every day.

## **2.3 Theatrical interaction as service interaction**

The service interactions between customers and frontline employees during service encounters are similarly to social relationships in a drama theatre from a behavioral perspective. Actors

(service employees) perform with a certain expression (emotion) on the stage (service sites) to entertain audiences (customers) according to scripts (service organization's requirements). Grove and Fisk (1983) applied a drama metaphor to services marketing research, treating the communication in high contact service exchanges between customers and employees as the interaction between an audience and the actors in a theater. "the dramaturgical perspective is suitable for inspecting the service quality of providers who deeply rely on interactive relations, especially during face-to-face interactions between customers and service employees in entity environments controlled by service organizations" (Yang et al., 2014, p. 40). Most service deliveries need personal interaction between customers and providers, known as service encounters (Yang et al., 2014). Customers recognize and evaluate the services they get and providers build and manage the customers' perception of service quality during the interactions (Yang et al., 2014). "The interactions that occur between service providers and customers can be structured such that the provider and recipient may be well known or strangers to each other" (Gutek et al., 2000, p. 320). Service employee's emotional labor is described as the interaction between the employee and the customer, and it is proposed that leader emotional labor will directly influence the customer's attitude and behavior. (Tang, Gu, & Cui, 2017). Thus, this study proposes two propositions:

**Proposition 1a: Service employee's surface acting strategy is negatively related to enhance service interactions with customers.**

**Proposition 1b: Service employee's deep acting strategy is positively related to enhance service interactions with customers.**

#### **2.4 Service Sweet-hearting behaviors as a boundary condition in service interaction**

Service management researchers have found that customers today have higher service expectations than in the past and expect service employees to meet their extra needs (Beatty et al., 2016; Collier et al., 2018; Wilder, Collier, & Barnes, 2014). For example, many customers believe that they are important to the company and expect to receive special treatment from service employees (Boyd & Helms, 2005; Fisk & Neville, 2011). Moreover, in the context of service relationships, customers trust the service employees and believe they can satisfy their potential needs (Gutek et al., 2000). Therefore, customers not only place importance on employees' sincere emotional displays (Groth et al., 2009), but also expect additional benefits and customized services from service employees when they are involved in repeated employee-customer interactions (i.e., service relationships) (Grandey & Diamond, 2010). As such, we propose that the effectiveness of employees' EL on long-term customer outcomes might depend on the presence or absence of sweet-hearting behaviors (e.g., providing customers with unauthorized free or discounted goods/services) (Boukis, 2016; Brady et al., 2012; Leo & Russell-Bennett, 2014). Specifically, we expect that employees' service sweet-hearting can amplify the positive indirect effect of deep acting on customer satisfaction and long-term outcomes. When customers receive free or discounted products from employees, they might feel that they owe the employees a debt of gratitude (Greenberg, 1980), creating a sense of reciprocity (Brady et al., 2012). Further, when service employees engage in both service sweet-hearting and deep acting within repeated interactions, customers not only form a future

obligation to reciprocate, but also view employees' deep acting as more genuine, since they take risks to provide unauthorized resources to the customers (Brady et al., 2012), which combined are more likely to increase customers' satisfaction with employees. These might in turn enhance customers' willingness to recommend and maintain a long-term relationship. Similarly, according to the social exchange perspective (Brady et al., 2012), if customers receive additional benefits from the "sweetheart" employees, who are solely at risk for any possible punishment associated with the provision of special treatment, these behaviors can increase customers' perceived obligations to reciprocate (Brady et al., 2012). In this line of reasoning, although surface acting harms customer satisfaction and decreases customer long-term outcomes due to inauthenticity (Chi et al., 2011; Grandey, Fisk, Mattila, Jansen, & Sideman, 2005; Groth et al., 2009), sweet-hearting behaviors can mitigate the negative reactions to surface acting, since such behaviors may activate a debt of gratitude and lead customers to recognize employees' good intentions (Greenberg, 1980; McCullough et al., 2001). In turn, customers may overlook or dismiss service employees' inauthentic expressions, attenuating the negative indirect effects of surface acting on customers' willingness to recommend and maintain the relationship. Thus, we propose the following two propositions:

**Proposition 2a: Service employee's service sweet-hearting will enhance the negatively indirect effect of surface acting towards service interactions with their customers.**

**Proposition 2b: Service employee's service sweet-hearting will enhance the positively indirect effect of deep acting towards service interactions with their customers.**

### **3. Conclusions**

#### **3.1 Managerial Implications**

This study's propositions that provide several insights can help service organizations and managers to manage their service employees. And for service occupations that involve repeated service interactions such as insurance agents, financial agents, and travel agents, their employees' deep acting should be encouraged, whereas surface acting should be avoided. In addition, service organizations can select the service employees who are tending to display truly positive emotions such as high accordance, or less likely to fake emotions by their personality. Therefore, service employee's deep acting is the positive effects that as well as the surface acting on customer satisfaction and long-term outcomes by their both strong relationships. In the last, for the service employees who continually must be interacting with the same customers in the future (e.g., insurance sale agents, financial service agents, and travel agents etc.), these service organizations can provide they employees with fixed salaries of the discounted services or free gifts, make their service employee's they can provide these resources to their important customers.

#### **3.2 Limitations and future research**

Although the previous studies, they have already confirmed the causal relationship between service employees' emotional labor strategies and their customer satisfaction, this study is hoping to use empirical research method and designs that such as the researchers grandeur et al., 2005 and Hennig-Thurau et al., 2006, we also encourage the future researchers they can to tackle this issue by collecting data from multiple service interactions and employ cross-lagged panel analysis by the grant questionnaire such as Grandey's (2003) five-item scale for surface acting,

Brotheridge and Lee's (2002) three-item scale for deep acting, Liao and Chuang's (2007) four-item scale to measure customers' willingness to maintain a service interaction with the service employee, and Brady et al.'s (2012) five-item scale to measure service employees' service sweet-hearting behaviors for to carry out the actual survey carry out statistical analysis and results, and to determine the direction of causality between EL and customer satisfaction in the future.

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