
EMOTION MANAGEMENT IN THE WORKPLACE

Milen Dinkov, Head Assist. Prof., PhD¹

*D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics – Svishtov
The Department of Management*

Abstract: Emotions are at the heart of our social life. They function as filters of perceptions that affect our conscious actions and even decision-making. The range of acceptable emotions varies with culture, gender, and age. In many areas of life, inappropriate emotions cause trouble. Organizations therefore require and expect their employees to manage their emotions and refrain from negative emotional outbursts. This creates the need to investigate the opportunities how to regulate emotional behaviour as a means of controlling the negative effects of emotions in the workplace.

Keywords: emotions, emotional labour, emotional dissonance, emotional exhaustion.

JEL: J50, J80.

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Introduction

Emotions express the condition of people. They are indicative of the mental condition or biological response, depending on the mood and the level of motivation of a person. They manifest themselves in the process of human relationships and are influenced by social, cultural, interpersonal and situational conditions.

In a number of situations in our daily lives, we suppress our feelings and display behaviour that is close to conventional or is considered appropriate. Too often, we have to show excitement and emotion when assisting a colleague or to suppress feelings of anger or annoyance while working with customers.

Performing work in emotional milieu, is largely related to the manipulation of one's inner feelings or conscious behaviour to express an appropriate

¹ E-mail: m.dinkov@uni-svishtov.bg

attitude that fits the established rules or professional norms. This brings about positive or negative consequences for both the employees and the employer.

The object of research in this paper is labour perceived as conscious human activity aimed at the creation of products that meet various human needs. The subject of research is the emotions that accompany work activity, as a basis for outlining the substantive characteristics of emotional labour and the specifics of emotional dissonance. The main research objective is to outline the possibilities to regulate emotional behaviour as a means of coping with the negative effects of emotions in the workplace, in relation to which the substantive characteristics of emotional labour, the specifics of emotional dissonance and the popular techniques for regulating emotions at the work place will be considered.

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The use of emotions in the workplace has been attracting close attention in the field of organizational behaviour nowadays. Emotions have become a basic and intrinsic necessity in most professions. Wherever the performance of the work involves interpersonal relationships and interaction with colleagues and / or customers, we have emotions. Under certain conditions, this results in a number of positive effects for the organization, for example, increased productivity and customer satisfaction. However, work-related emotions in the workplace can also have a negative effect, which requires to be paid special attention.

The concept of emotional labour and emotions in the workplace was first launched in 1983 by Arlie Russell Hochschild in the book *"The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling"*. Based on empirical research on the work of flight assistants and bill collectors, Arlie Russell Hochschild analyzed the ways in which these employees manage their emotions in the context of their direct work responsibilities. According to the author, controlling personal emotions to conform to social norms can be called *"emotional labour"*. When working conditions require us to show some and to suppress other emotions, we manage our emotional behaviour for a simple reason - to receive a reward (Hochschild, 1990).

Taking emotional labour as a means of managing emotions, Arlie Russell Hochschild draws attention to both its manifestation and the exchange value it holds (Hochschild, 1983). She concludes that emotional labour is primarily for the benefit of employers and the organization itself, at least because the uniform behaviour of all employees is linked to expectations for better performance of duties, provision of high quality services and the attraction of loyal customers. Emotional labour is thought to improve work

efficiency, reduce the need for direct control, and minimize interpersonal problems (Ashforth & Lee, 1990).

Other researchers associate emotional labour with personal qualities and behavioral manifestations of genuine, artificially evoked, or fake emotions that help achieve the goals of an organization, enterprise, or institution (Сотирова, 2015).

In the extant literature, there are also opinions that portray emotional labour as an *"act of expressing desired emotions"* (Ashfirth & Humphrey, 1993). In this case, unlike the view of Arlie Russell Hochschild, the focus is on actual behaviour, not on supposed emotions. Both the airline employees, described in the Arlie Russell Hochschild's survey who have to comply with the organization's requirements for expression of emotion, and the employees of other service organizations must play roles, fake a smile or cheerful mood, and try to maintain a *"happy"* appearance вид (Karabanow, 1999)

According to some authors, for Arlie Russell Hochschild, emotional labour is based on employee *"acting"*, i.e. the service is a *"performance"* in which employees are *"actors"*, the customer is *"the audience"* and the workplace rules are the *"stage"* (Grandey, 1999). In the workplace, there are rules that allow *"actors"*, in this case, staff, to present themselves to the public. The interaction between actors and audience is based on the clarity of rules that can be interpreted as professional or organizational norms and standards of behaviour.

In sum, part of the substantive characteristics of emotional labour, derived from the above statements (without claiming comprehensiveness), can be summarized as follows:

- emotional labour is considered in relation to the experience of emotions, many of which are in the workplace;
- emotional labour is considered in relation to controlling emotions - demonstrating some and / or suppressing other feelings and experiences;
- the specific characteristics of emotional labour serve the interests and help achieve the goals of the organization.

On this basis, for the purposes of this study, emotional labour will be understood as the *labour requiring the demonstration of certain emotions with a direct contribution to the achievement of the desired personal and organisational results of the activity performed, established as a standard of work behaviour regardless of personal experiences and relationships in the workplace*. Thus perceived, emotional labour can be characterized by its intensity, amount, and emotional dissonance.

The term *"intensity of emotional displays"* refers to the intensity of emotions felt and those that are expressed. Since it is extremely difficult to *"fake"* strong experiences and feelings, it is the intensity of emotions that will

either convince or discourage a customer from taking the desired action. Ashforth and Humphrey (1995) indicate that each employee is able, using various techniques, to manage the difference between the intensity of the expected and of the displayed emotions, by revealing or concealing certain feelings and experiences (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1995).

The term "*amount of emotional labour*" refers to the diversity of emotions that an employee is required to display. The more diverse emotional displays an employee is supposed to produce, the more emotional work s/he will have to perform (Lazányi, 2009).

One of the key characteristics of emotional labour is *emotional dissonance*. Like cognitive dissonance, emotional dissonance reflects the discrepancy between the real and expected emotions. The discrepancy between the displayed (*cheerful and enthusiastic behaviour, for example*) and the real (*sadness and unhappiness*) emotions is precisely *emotional dissonance*. Hence, the level of emotional dissonance is closely related to the intensity and frequency of the control of emotions. Emotional dissonance has an accumulating effect over time, resulting in an increase in frequency that will increase the risk of emotional exhaustion and burnout (Fish & Jamerson, 1995).

According to Hochschild (1993), emotional dissonance has extremely negative effects on employees' psychological well-being when it comes to their own interests and has a less negative effect when it comes to their role in the workplace. When emotional dissonance is directly related to personality, employees blame themselves for demonstrating feigned emotions and feelings. This disassociation by itself has negative consequences such as depression and low personal performance. Conversely, when emotional dissonance is related to the role and the behaviour of the individual in the workplace, employees assign the displayed fake emotion to the requirements of the workplace rather than to their own desire, i.e. disassociation from work may prevent them from possible negative impact (Paules, 1991).

It should be pointed out that the most emotional stress is placed on the employees in the services sector and those of them occupying positions with direct contact with the customers - mainly in the field of transport, tourism, restaurants and others. Often their professional responsibilities force them to suppress their true emotions. In the services sector (and generally in the tourism industry), it is common to impose standards to regulate employee behaviour. A number of companies use company policy, artefacts, symbols, myths, stories, and rituals to ensure that standards of behaviour are met. The obedience of employees to these rules is also associated with the expectation that they will act amicably, conceal their annoyance and negative emotions towards "special" customers (Paules, 1991). All of this is intended to ensure

that employees will present the company to the public in a way that will generate the desired customer satisfaction and loyalty.

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The increasing social importance of emotional labour is predetermined by the specific features of socio-economic development and employment transformations. According to Eurostat data, representative for employment by economic activities for 2016, commerce, transport, tourism and restaurant industry together provide for the employment of about one quarter (25.6 per cent) of the employed in Bulgaria (Стойчева, 2017). In general, commerce, tourism, transport and restaurant industry are crucial in shaping the employment profile of the European Union, too. The data disclosed by Eurostat shows that in 2016, about one fourth of the EU citizens were employed in these spheres (България е сред лидерите в ЕС по дял на индустрията в икономиката, 2017).

Although with the development of the economy the number of opportunities for process mechanization and automation grows, the sectors in which there is direct contact with the customer are, in general, considered to be economic activities with a large share of human participation. This also implies high requirements for professional qualification and communication skills, which outlines the specific dimensions of the emotional charge of employment.

Workplaces that are directly related to intensive emotional labour have three main characteristics: *first*, they require employees to engage in sign or voice contact with the public; *second*, they require employees to show positive emotions and feelings to customers and consumers; *third*, they provide the employer with the opportunity to control the emotional activities of the employees (Hochschild, 1983). This also explains the increased research interest in exploring the ways to keeping emotions under control and model an appropriate rational emotional behaviour in the workplace.

Popular studies on the work of emotional workers indicate that the desired control of emotions in the workplace can be achieved through the use of three types of strategies (techniques): *surface acting*, *deep acting*, and *genuine acting* (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993).

The surface-acting strategy (technique) describes the behaviour of employees who display emotions that they do not actually experience. This is usually done by using external manifestations in the form of appropriate *facial expressions, gestures or tone*, when needed.

Using this strategy (technique) people alter the nature of their emotions in the workplace. The alteration of the facial expression or body posture can induce changes in internal emotion to the desired state. (Kemper,

1990). In their research Ashforth and Humphrey describe cases from the daily life of flight attendants in which this technique provokes the desired friendly behaviour. *"If I pretend to feel really great, sometimes I'm really cheerful and am friendly. Passengers respond to my attitude in the same way."* The display of desired behaviour, even when it does not reflect genuine emotions, is based on the desired difference between the emotion experienced and displayed (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993).

Deep acting is usually applied in cases where employees are aware that they are not prepared or do not have the necessary skills to deal with a particular situation. In this way, the expression of appropriate (desired) emotions is the result of accumulated experience and demonstration of behaviour 'learned' in similar situations in the past.

Unlike the surface-acting strategy (technique), deep acting is based primarily on the transformation of inner feelings. In the surface-acting technique, the feelings change from the outside inwards, while in the case of deep acting - from the inside outwards (Hochschild, 1983).

A deep acting strategy (technique) can be considered as: **first**, a called feeling whereby an employee actively tries to evoke or suppress an emotion, and, **second**, a trained or learned imagination in which an employee actively "calls" thoughts, images and memories to evoke associated emotion. In this way, employees use what they have learned or their past experiences to recreate the appropriate emotions and reactions in a particular situation.

The behaviour displayed as a result of using a deep-acting strategy (technique) is based on actively evoked, suppressed or narrowly profiled emotions (Kruml & Geddes, 2000). The difference between it and the surface-acting strategy (technique) is in fact reduced to the difference in the degree of satisfaction with the work performed. When the emotions of employees are close to the requirements of the job (*deep acting*), this usually leads to a lower level of stress and a high degree of work satisfaction. On the other hand, when emotions have to be "faked" (*surface acting*), it often leads to emotional exhaustion and overload, and sometimes to depression, causing one or another degree of dissatisfaction with the work performed.

Part of Arlie Russell Hochschild's research on the issues related to emotional labour is based on her observations on the use of the deep-acting strategy (technique) in an airline. In her view, this allows flight attendants to create appropriate or suppress inappropriate emotions when interacting with passengers. During their training, they master the ability to imagine the cabin of the aircraft as their own living room where passengers are their guests and troubled travellers - children that require special attention. In this way, the use of deep-acting techniques enables the desired changes of the feelings to be

achieved by consciously perceiving a significant part of reality in a different way. (Hochschild, 1983).

However, the expected and desired emotion may be a natural reaction as a result of spontaneous or sincere experiences, without any effort. In such situations, the true emotional behaviour is associated with *the genuine acting strategy (technique)* (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993).

In their attempts to guarantee the quality of services, employers often introduce and follow strict rules of conduct that require a smile, appropriate eye contact, body posture, tone of voice, etc. These rules are often also taken as a precautionary measure against possible unwanted spontaneous reactions of employees in critical situations. They practically require the personal feelings to be suppressed and replaced by a scenario prepared by the employers.

The severe competition in the tourism industry has provoked a number of companies to call on their employees to strive for 'world-class' services. This pursuit of excellence requires workers to avoid the surface acting strategy (technique) and to use deep acting or genuine acting. In this way, management teams hope to improve the quality and authenticity of service and reduce the possibility that employees violate generally accepted norms by expressing emotions other than the expected (Paules, 1991).

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The increasing importance of emotional labour, however, also determines the increasing importance of the positive and negative consequences associated with it, both in personal and institutional terms.

It has been proven that there is a close relationship between individual's emotional and physical state. A number of studies indicate that efforts to display positive or suppress negative emotions can lead to negative psychological reactions or somatic diseases (Schaubroeck & Jones, 2000). Too often, emotional labour is associated with *professional burnout* and *dissatisfaction with the job* (Morris & Feldman, 1996). This is also supported by the findings of a research on the work of prison staff, which found out that suppression of emotions in the workplace largely results in stress and dissatisfaction with the job (Rutter & Fielding, 1988).

The excessive burden of workplace emotional requirements is often associated with the negative consequences of identifying the individual with the job or the role played in the work process (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). If an individual fails to formulate behaviour adequate to the requirements of the workplace, then this inevitably leads to a feeling of worthlessness (Burke, 1991). Some studies link emotional labour with *lack of self-esteem*, *depression*, *cynicism in communication*, *alienation* (Tolich, 1993), as well as

with *permanent unnatural states of the mind*, as a result of which one can lose not only his identity but also the ability to perform any kind of work at all (Payne, Jick, & Burke, 1982).

Most of the negative effects of emotional labour are related and explained primarily by alienation. It, provoked by the conflict between one's self and the role performed in the workplace, takes the form of *emotional dissonance* or *fake emotions* and can be considered an effect of applying the technique of surface acting. It should be noted that the alienation observed in line workers forced to perform certain physical activities that are not typical of their daily routine is also observed in employees in face-to-face contact with customers who gradually get used to the standard for their workplace model of behaviour thus stopping to show their true feelings.

The alienation that underlies emotional dissonance is often associated with negative psychological effects. Such effects are first mentioned in Arlie Russell Hochschild's research, who considers the excessive "*involvement*" of some employees in their roles in the workplace does not allow them to leave this state in the informal environment of their daily routine, while the concealment of the real emotions leads to insecurity and emotional discomfort (Hochschild, 1983).

Jobs that require people to be constantly polite and friendly are said to be harmful to health. This is also supported by the research done by psychologists at the University of Frankfurt am Main, published in the German journal *Guter Rat*. Specialists warn that flight attendants, salespeople and call centre employees are at particular risk. Psychologists are positive that, in addition to health problems, people who are compelled to conceal their true feelings and always to be kind, suffer from "emotional dissonance" that can lead to psychological exhaustion and deep depression (Атанасов, 2006).

However, the above suggests that it is not so much emotional labour but *emotional dissonance* (already presented as a discrepancy between what is expected /displayed and the true emotional state) and, in particular, the consequences of it can be harmful. If the true emotions of a person are identical to the emotions required at work, then there are neither emotional dissonance nor consequent negative side effects (Rafaeli & Sutton, 1987).

In addition to negative effects, emotional labour is also associated with a number of positive effects for both organizations and employees. For an organization, the rational management of employees' emotional behaviour can guarantee the efficient execution of the assigned tasks and the quality of customer service, as well as can contribute to the increase in sales and repeatability of purchases (Rafaeli & Sutton, 1987). For the individual, the positive aspects of emotional labour in the tangible aspect are related to the

financial incentives received in the form of extra remuneration, and in the intangible aspect - to increased satisfaction, sense of security, self-confidence and increased personal efficiency, psychological well-being and low level of stress.

Direct contact and communication with customers are traditionally regarded as one of the main sources of stress for employees, but they can also be a cause for enjoyable and satisfying moments in the work day. One of the prerequisites for this is that the communication with customers livens up and adds worth to professions that would otherwise be considered monotonous and boring. Most of the jobs that form the lowest level of the hierarchical structure of employment in the service sector require routine actions and performing standardized operations. However, the diversity of clients and their presence, although annoying at times, in some situations may break the monotony and can be stimulating. This is supported by the results of studies that link emotional labour and direct interaction with clients with the relief of stress and add to the mental well-being of employees (Shuler & Sypher, 2000).

One of the studies that link work characteristics to the emotional state of employees in the restaurant industry, found that *they overwhelmingly feel satisfied that they are contributing to their customers' enjoyment. As a whole, waiters say they like the noise, the lively atmosphere of the restaurant, the attention that customers pay to the smallest details and the feeling of being at the centre of events* (Rose, 2001). This proves once again that the emotional experiences of the direct contact with clients cannot be evaluated unequivocally - they are not always psychologically harmful, but the interaction with the public, the feeling of being in the spotlight and the feeling of joy from delivered satisfaction to the others is the reward and the result of emotional labour. This is also one of the reasons why some employees are satisfied with the performance of emotional labour and are attracted to jobs that present emotional challenges (Shuler & Sypher, 2000).

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By presumption, employers are convinced that the emotions and emotional displays of their employees are a tool for achieving high quality in the process of fulfilling their work responsibilities. First-line employees usually share these principles, but they are not always able to manage their emotions in real life. Difficulties in seeking and striking a balance between personal emotional experiences and the emotions required in the workplace are usually identified as a major problem. In such situations, the interests of employees can be sacrificed, and the prolonged exercise of emotional labour often leads to an alienating from the required role dissonance between one's

own feelings and emotions and the fake behaviour imposed by the requirements of generally accepted company rules and norms (Wharton & Erickson, 1993).

It is legitimate to argue that in organizations where required behaviour approximates the limits of the displayed, emotional labour becomes a major cause of problems of a different nature. The excessive mixing of one's emotions with the demands of the work process gradually limits the ability of workers to break away from the role they play in the workplace. Employees whose work involves continuous contact with clients often lose the ability to maintain a sufficient psychological distance between the emotional demands imposed by their work and their own feelings. Many workers use the technique of deep acting to express the desired positive emotions and to suppress experiencing negative emotions. Over time, however, more and more of them are experiencing increasing difficulty in striving to regain their true feelings. This can be explained by the continuous shift between the experienced and the desired emotions, which leads to the loss of an objective perception of reality and a gradual confusing mix between role behaviour and reality.

The rational management and modelling of emotions in the workplace enables limiting the display of negative emotions and deriving positive effects of emotional labour. To this end, attention and efforts need to be focused on:

- Determining the true value of the work performed. Each work activity is carried out for a specific purpose and has its own specific contribution and importance for the development of society. Recognition of the material and intangible value of the work performed determines the sense of pride and satisfaction with it.
- Improving the interpersonal relationships in the workplace, which also determines the emotional satisfaction with the work performed.

It is logical to expect that maintaining good interpersonal relationships reduces emotional dissonance, and the occurrence of positive effects of emotional work is directly functionally dependent on the specifics of the established formal and informal relationships with managers, colleagues and clients. It is unrealistic to expect that a person, in the performance of his / her work duties, will have a constant and completely positive attitude towards the elements of the working environment and the state of interpersonal relationships. This requires seeking and finding an appropriate way to relieve tension and express the accumulated negative emotions - using a joke or smile, face-to-face conversations, limiting the spread of rumours, creating conditions for relaxation and maintaining the good mood in the workplace and other. The accumulation of negative emotions generated by the work activity performed indicates that the work conflicts with the internal beliefs and principles of the individual and is carried out without enthusiasm and desire,

or indicates a deterioration of the social climate and accompanying high levels of stress.

Conclusion

Although research on emotional labour is at an advanced stage, there is still no definitive opinion regarding the positive and negative effects of this type of activity. All claims that the suppression of emotions leads to various health problems are in the form of hypotheses, since no study explains exactly how this process unfolds. On the other hand, much of the research is often contradictory - both in terms of the findings and of the future projections.

Emotional labour is becoming a phenomenon of modern working relationships with significant capacity to influence the loyalty and satisfaction of the client and the development of the organization as a whole. The focus on those aspects of work that are traditionally perceived as enjoyable and thus express positive emotions significantly contributes to the transformation of one's personality from "surface acting", i.e. displaying imposed emotional experiences into "deep acting". This makes emotions at work easier to accept and experience and frees the employee from being forced to hide behind the fake mask of imposed behaviour. Experiences accompanying and provoked by work nowadays are becoming a challenge that everyone has to deal with, and rational management of emotions in the workplace is an essential prerequisite for achieving job satisfaction, increasing productivity and personal well-being.

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YEAR LXXII, BOOK 4 – 2019

CONTENTS

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Enhancing the Adjustments of Market Multiples
for Better Operating Efficiency /3

Shteryo S. Nozharov

Hybrid Threats as an Exogenous Economic Shock /21

Milen Dinkov

Emotion Management in the Workplace /30

Elka N. Syarova

Changes and Trends in the Employment Status
of University Graduates in Bulgaria and the EU /43

Yassine-Mehros, Abdelaziz Elabjani

SMES Performance: Analysis of the Innovation Role /61