

**DOES A SUPPORTIVE SUPERVISOR MODERATE
THE EFFECT OF EMOTIONAL LABOR ON BURNOUT
AMONGST EMPLOYEES OF SMALL AND MEDIUM-
SIZED ACCOMMODATION IN KOTA KINABALU?**

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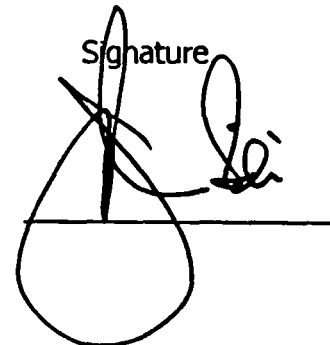
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ABSTRACT

DOES A SUPPORTIVE SUPERVISOR MODERATE THE EFFECT OF EMOTIONAL LABOR ON BURNOUT AMONGST EMPLOYEES OF SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED ACCOMMODATION IN KOTA KINABALU?

The main objective of this thesis was to determine whether supportive supervisor could be utilized as the moderator in the relationship between emotional labor and burnout. Data were collected via self-administered questionnaires from front-line employees working in different small and medium-sized accommodation businesses in Kota Kinabalu. The data were analysed using various statistical analysis including factor analyses, reliability analyses, descriptive statistics, correlation analyses, multiple regression analyses and hierachical regression analyses. Supportive supervisor was expected to moderate the relationship between emotional Labor and burnout so that individual who perform emotional labor would experience less burnout with the presence of supervisor support. Surprisingly, result from the analysis shown there is an absence of moderating effect of supportive supervisor which contradicts with the job-demand resource model. Therefore, finding suggests social support is applicable in all level of stress. If moderation does take place, then support is viewed as crucial only as a form of resource especially during the period when an individual faces circumstances or positions that are considers as relatively high stress. The implications for managers and practitioners is to ensure provision of instrument support such as handbook in handle difficult customer. Limitations of current study includes data was collected at a point of time. Suggestions for future research include considerations cultural factor are also discussed in this paper.



ABSTRAK

Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk mengaji hubungan antara "emotional labor" dan "burnout". Ia juga mencadangkan bahawa sokongan penyelia mungkin boleh menyederhanakan hubungan di antara "emotional labor" dan "burnout". Untuk menguji perhubungan yang dihipotesiskan, data dikutip melalui borang soal selidik dari pekerja-pekerja perkhidmatan di perniagaan penginapan kecil dan sederhana yang terletak di Kota Kinabalu. Data dianalisis menggunakan pelbagai analisis statistik termasuk analisis factor, analisis kebolehpercayaan, statistik deskriptif, analisis korelasi, analisis regresi berganda dan analisis regresi hierachical. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan ketiadaan sokongan penyelia dalam menyederhanakan hubungan diuji bercanggah dengan model sumber-permintaan perkerjaan. Oleh itu, dapatan kajian mencadangkan sokongan penyelia adalah berguna kepada semua tahap tekanan. Sekiranya sokongan penyedia berjaya menyederhanakan hubungan yang dikaji, maka ia bermaksud sokongan penyedia adalah amat penting keutamanya semasa individu menghadapi tekanan yang tinggi. Implikasi bagi pengurus dan pengamal termasuk penyediaan buku panduan sebagai contoh instrumen sokongan untuk membantu perkerja dalam mengendalikan pelanggan yang sukar. Batasan kajian termasuk data yang bergantung pada satu titik masa. Cadangan untuk mempertimbangan factor budaya pada kajian masa depan juga dibincangkan dalam kertas ini.



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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

Tourism industry is growing but at the same time facing the challenge of high turnover. Turnover rate or employee in this industry is considered the highest compare to others (Deloitte and New York University, 2010) supported by Kysilka and Csaba (n.d.) the hospitality industry is faced with the most serious turnover challenge.

1.1.1 Stress Causes Burnout

According to American Psychological Association and American Institute of Stress (2013) the seven top causes of stress in US comes from job pressure such as co-worker relationship and high work demand, financial needs, health condition, social needs, poor nutrition, information overload and inability to sleep. While work and money taking the proportion of 76% as the leading source of stress. The U.S stress statistics indicated on a regular basic 77% percent of people undergone sign of stress such as tiredness 51%, headache 44%,upset stomach 34% experienced in their physical body while 73% undergone psychological symptoms such as anger and frustration 50%, deceleration of strength 45% and feeling of worrisome 45% as well in their state of mind were all caused by stress. In U.S , estimation of 33% felt extreme stress in their daily living while the other 48% that experienced the same showed that the stress level was progressively increasing over the last 5 years and those people faced challenges to sleep as a result of stress. The stress impacted statistics indicated that in the U.S, 48% agreed stress had a damaging effect on their private and professional living with 31% working adults admitted they face challenges in balacing their work and family duties. Adding on, as a result of stress, 26% respondent said that their close relationship was detached supported by



Neuropsychologist expert (myStarjob, 2013). Another interesting study about vacation deprivation survey conducted by Expedia in the year of 2012, 90% Malaysia workers found hard to let go of their work even during a holiday , ranking number four in the comparison of which country has the most dedicated workforce after India, Brazil and Italy (myStarJob, 2013). In the same study, it was learnt that despite an average Malaysian worker who worked up to 40 hours a week in which they only used up 7% of their 14 days of annual leave allowance. In some countries, for example the government of Germany understood the damaging effects of burnout, therefore the ministry of employment had launched new law against manager on calling or emailing workers outside their working hours (myStarJob, 2013). All these statistics of stress on some degree had something to do with burnout, by referring to Babatunde (2013) stress led to burnout and supported by Shirom (2003) cited by Swider and Zimmerman (2010) that burnout was a response to stress; Outcome of stress was burnout (Grandey, 2000). Stress happened when circumstances were out of the control of a person's mental or physical abilities (Babatunde , 2013; Lim, 2013).

1.1.2 Burnout Causes Turnover

Reported by Deloitte and New York University (2010) in the U.S itself about 25% management positions and 50% non-manegerial positions left their works supported by (Tracey and Hinkin, 2008) whereas 120% turnover rate was found in fast food business. Partly was due to stress and burnout (Rahman, Mohd Azuan, Hamizam, Noraida, Siti Noraishah, Hamdin and Mohd Fazli, 2010; Swider and Zimmerman, 2010). While, the rest of the turnover was triggered by closely related to the aspect of working experiences inclusive of surbordinate relationship and conhesiveness of work group , job scope, role stress, opportunities for career development as well as pay (Griffeth, Hom and Gaertner, 2000). Refering to O'Neill and Xiao (2010) burnout was mental tiredness and it was a critical issue in hospitality industry because of the job nature with demanding human contacts which was more inclined toward the tendency of causing burnout. Adding on ,there was an increased rate of workers losing the purpose of work and energy in occupation related to service industry because of burnout (Schaufeli, Leiter and Maslach , 2009; Maslach and Jackson, 1981). As a result of burnout, talents in hospitality industry were leaving and it had



became a loss to the industry. Tracey and Hinkin (2008) said especially for tourism and hospitality industry employee turnover was not good for their operation because it compromised the service quality and had an impact toward their financial performance supported by Csaba and Kysilka (n.d) who also suggested that cost incur when turnover happened. Adding on, the new worker would need to take time to learn and employees who still in the organization will need to cover the job of those who had left their job. Hence, it increased the stress on remaining workers as they now need to cover more job scope and thus increased the possibility of burnout occurring in them.

1.1.3 Human Resource Challenges

It was important to study this industry because the industry was experiencing significant growth yet facing human resource challenges (Bharwani and Butt,2012; Alejandro, Powell, Brandy and Wohi, 2010) and human factor was one of the crucial resources in Tourism and Hospitality Industry (Bharwani & Butt, 2012; Deloitte and New York University, 2010). On the other side, reported by myStarjob (2013) an online news portal in Malaysia said jobseekers especially graduates from University is finding hard to secure a job. Besides, in order to remain competitive in the industry, the ability of hospitality workers in carrying out authentic experiences that amplify customers on an individual and emotion became aggressively crucial (Bharwani and Butt, 2012) supported by (Montgomery, Panagopolou, Wildt and Meenks , 2006) said there was increasing demand on emotion as part of the work culture. Therefore, workers had an important role in the organization because they were the representatives of company and as part of the customers' experiences. Another scholar, Ahmad Rasmi and Ahmad Puad (2013) said there was a need for the industry of tourism and hospitality in Malaysia to put in more efforts on developing the human resource. As some of the latest issues related to human resource in hospitality industry were the challenges to pull and retain worker, the challenges to meet the expectation of changing patterns of consumer demand which experiences were much more emphasized, technologies, challenges of strategize training and development programs, building branding, increasing the level of commitment and involvement of workers, but the most urgent issue was to pull and retain workers (Bharwani and



Butt, 2012). Besides, social media had repeatedly pronounce the issue of unsatisfactory customer service in Malaysia (myStarjob, 2013). Cited from myStarjob (2013) customers got upset with the cashier in a supermarket because the worker failed to greet them when during the transaction time and another customer said they felt the worker was being rude to them as the customer owe them money.

1.2 Research Problem

This research started with the issue of burnout. Literature indicated stress causes the problem of burnout. There was about 76% of stress come from money and work related matter and it had damaging effects (American Psychological Association and American Institute of Stress, 2013). The statistics of stress mentioned above had some degree to do with burnout because previous literature indicated stress led to burnout (Babatunde, 2013); and outcome of stress was burnout (Grandey, 2000). Stress happened when circumstances were out of the control of a person's mental or physical abilities (Babatunde, 2013; Lim, 2013). One of the consequences of burnout was turnover (Rahman *et al.*, 2010).

The tourism and hospitality industry was expericing significant growth yet facing human resource challenges while human factor was crucial resource in this industry. It had the highest turnover compared to other industry (Swider and Zimmerman, 2010; Deloitte and New York University, 2010; Csaba & Kysilka, n.d). Tracey and Hinkin (2008) said especially for the tourism and hospitality industry, turnover was not good because it compromised the service quality and had impact toward the financial performance of the organization. O'Neill and Xiao (2010) reported burnout was a mental tireness and critical issue in hospitality industry because of the nature of the job with frequent human contact which was more incline toward the tendency of getting burnout as a result. Furthermore, there was increased rate of worker losing the purpose of work and energy in occupation relate to service industry because of burnout supported by (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2009; Maslach and Jackson, 1981).



Therefore, this study aimed to study more about emotional labor and to find out its impact in tourism and hospitality industry population especially in the small and medium-sized accommodation businesses employees in Kota Kinabalu as the target sample because they are most in number in Sabah and continue growing (Sabah Tourism Board, 2008) and faced with human resource challenges. According to Chan and Quah (2008) knowledge constraints in technology, general knowledge, low personnel morale, surplus of employees, poor-trained workers, lack of empowerment, motivation and shortage of skilled supervisors and managers were part of the human resource issues other than employee turnover. Furthermore, this issue could be studied in Kota Kinabalu because it is happening everywhere supported by (Schaufeli, Leiter and Maslach, 2009) that burnout was studied around the world and corresponding to Shani, Uriely, Reichel and Ginsburg (2014) proposed further study of the issue is still required at different part of the globe to address the effect of emotional labor. Adding on, according to Brotheridge and Grandey (2002) there was a lack of studies between burnout and demand of emotion in workplace supported by (Morris and Feldman, 1996). Furthermore, Ang (2012) said workplace emotion was part of the role of service labours and they had to learn to cope with challenges or frustration during work especially facing provoking customer without being rude and unfriendly. As reported by Grandey (2000) and Brotheridge and Grandey (2002) burnout was related to both types of emotional acting in emotional labor. Previous studies (Bayram and Dursun, 2012; Lam and Chen, 2012; Lee and Ok, 2012) had also shown there was a relationship between emotional labor and burnout. Therefore, this study aimed to find out more about the topic through this study in the Sabah context and introducing supportive supervisor as the moderator.

1.3 Research Questions

The research questions of this study were to examine :

- a) Does Emotional Labor contribute to burnout in employee in small and medium-sized accomodation businesses in Kota Kinabalu?
- b) Does a Supportive Supervisor have a positive effect on burnout?

- c) Does a Supportive Supervisor moderate the effect of burnout in employee who performs emotional labor in small and medium-sized accomodation businesses in Kota Kinabalu?

1.4 Research Objectives

The research objectives of this study were as follows:

- a) To examine and investigate if there is a direct relationship between emotional labor and burnout in small and medium-sized accomodation businesses in Kota Kinabalu.
- b) To examine and investigate if supportive supervisor has positive effect on burnout.
- c) To examine and investigate if supportive supervisor can moderate the effect of burnout cause by emotional labor in small and medium-sized accomodation businesses in Kota Kinabalu.

1.5 Scope of the Study

The scope of this study focuses on the employees in small and medium-sized accomodation (SMSA). It is a type of accomodation which includes bed and breakfasts, backpackers's lodges and budget hotel. The Ministry of Tourism Malaysia categorizes them under orchid rating because they are not qualified for star rating but was equipped for fundamental needs such as hygiene, free from danger and welcoming spirit at the place. Besides that, if it has 50 rooms and below is considered small sized and whereas for medium sized if it has from 51 to 100 rooms at their accomodation. The reason of choosing this segment was because they were facing human resource issues in Sabah itself as reported by (Chan and Quah, 2008). These human resources issues were the challenges of employees 's knowledge constraints in technology and general knowledge, low personnel morale, surplus of employees,

poor-trained workers, lack of empowerment, motivation and shortage of skilled supervisors and managers other than employee turnover.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study could be categorized as follows:

1.6.1 Knowledge Implications

The finding of this study would be useful for future reference as it added more useful information in existing literature on this area especially on the moderator supportive supervisor as this study examined its role in the issue of surrounding emotional labor and burnout in tourism and hospitality industry in Sabah. Furthermore, this study also could serve as a starting point for individuals to further explore own their own initiative about the usage of emotional labor in their work place or share with others what they had learned through the process of answering the questionnaire survey. Shani, Uriely, Reichel and Ginsburg (2014) said the study of emotional labor in hospitality was highly rewarded as the prospects of emotional labor was applied as the service quality measurement in SERVQUAL as service quality recognition.

1.6.2 Managerial Implications

The result and findings would serve as useful information and could be further applied in the tourism and hospitality industry in Sabah especially by managers in the industry. Managers would then be more aware to the effect of emotional labor to their subordinates and strategize training and development program for their employees. Thus, this might lead to reduced burnout rate among their employees, retained talents in the industry and achieve effectiveness and efficiency in their operation. Referring to Cordes and Dougherty (1993), it was important for manager to truly understand this burnout concept so that he or she could deal with the individuals in organization in a right way.

1.6.3 Government Policy

The result and information of this study would be useful for policy makers as they developed plans or strategies for talent development for this nation. According to myStarjob (2013) the Government of Malaysia had set aside RM 54.6 billion equal to the proportion of 21% of overall budget 2014 for human capital development in this nation. In a state level, the state of Sabah had been allocated with RM257.84 million for talent development. In respect to this, service sector played an important role in contributing to Malaysia economy growth (Alejandro, Powell, Brandy and Wohi, 2010).

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

Definitions of important variables used in this study were as follows:

1.7.1 Emotional Labor

Emotional labor was defined as management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display and had an exchange value (Hochschild, 1983:7).

1.7.2 Surface Acting

Surface acting was defined as the display of emotion not actually experienced by the employees (Grandey, 2000).

1.7.3 Deep Acting

Deep acting was defined as modification of feeling by first internalizing the emotion before acting it out (Grandey, 2000).

1.7.4 Genuine Acting

Genuine acting was defined as the state in which employees are at their nature feel emotions without any elements of acting (Ashforth and Humphrey, 1993).

1.7.5 Burnout

Burnout was like an activity to put off the burning fire. It was a psychological syndrome resulting from constant emotional and interpersonal stress (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2009).

1.7.6 Emotional Exhaustion

Emotional exhaustion was the basic dimension and most frequent term used by society to explain burnout. The perception of one being drained and depreciation of personal emotional as well as in physical means. Feeling tired at the very idea of work, long-term fatigue, challenge in sleeping, and suffered physical issues as a result of draining their emotional and physical resources (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2009).

1.7.7 Depersonalization

Cynicism and depersonalization was the second dimension in burnout involving interpersonal relationship. Individual that performed emotional labor would become skeptical, insensitive, uninterested, unreasonably segregation by avoiding social contacts, and showing unfavorable behaviors such as negative attitudes toward their jobs (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2009).

1.7.8 Diminished personal achievement

Diminished personal achievement or accomplishment was the third dimension in burnout that indicates reduced efficacy or accomplishment. The feeling of inadequate and shortness in productivity. The individual assessed herself or himself negatively,

feeling he or she was unable to move the situation forward. Individual began to doubt her or his genuine abilities to accomplish things (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2009).

1.7.9 Supportive Supervisor

Supportive Supervisor was defined as a form of affective commitment who had a crucial role in influencing the emotional behavior of the subordinates (Lapointe, Morin, Courcy, Boilard and Payette, 2012; Grandey, 2000).

1.8 Organisation of Chapters

This study was generally a research on emotional labor; specifically the main purpose was to investigate if supportive supervisor could reduce the burnout impact caused by emotional labor in hospitality industry of Sabah. Chapter one discussed and provided the introduction of this study. Subtopics included research problem, research questions, research objectives, scope of study, and significance of this study. Key terms that would be used in this study were included in chapter one. There were emotional labor, burnout, and supportive supervisor.

Chapter two reviewed the history of research , literatures and explanations of key conceptual variables which were emotional labor attributes such as surface acting, deep acting and genuine acting, burnout attributes such as emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and diminished personal accomplishment and supportive supervisor followed by evaluation of key literatures on the relationship between the variables. The theoretical framework was also discussed in this chapter.

Chapter three outlines the research methodology. This chapter included the research framework and design, research hypothesis, sampling size and method, data collection, research instrument and data analysis.

Chapter four would then report on the result of the study using Social Package for Social Science (SPSS). This chapter would outline the profile of respondents, factor analysis, hypotheses testing and summary of findings.

Chapter five would provide a recapitulation of the relevant findings from chapter 4 followed by discussion and also highlighted the implications of the study, limitations of research and suggestions for additional research for future study.



CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Today, the growth of Malaysia economy is part of the result from blooming service industry (Alejandro *et al.*, 2010; Euromonitor International, 2013). However, while celebrating the growth of Malaysia, an uninvited guest seems to follow. According to Schaufeli *et al.* (2009) the issue of burnout was a modern day social problem and it seemed to follow as the economic development of countries and the consequences were critical especially in human service industry (Mukundan and Khandehroo, 2010; Schaufeli *et al.*, 2009; Brotheridge and Grandey, 2002; Maslach and Jackson, 1981). Lack of resources upon the demands at work was one of the reasons for burnout (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2009; Muhammad Jamal, 2008). Schaufeli *et al.* (2009) said emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, diminished personal accomplishment were the three dimension well employed in the study related with the topic of burnout.

The concept of emotional labor was studied in this paper. Emotional labor was about managing personal emotions and physical display to meet organization or customer expectation defined by Hochschild who was the original author of this concept. According to Ang (2012) the topic on emotional labor was still an under-researched area in Malaysia and Sabah was losing its talents in hospitality industry supported by (Brotheridge and Grandey, 2002) saying there was a lack in study of burnout and demand of emotion in workplace. Furthermore, Shani *et al.* (2014) said the study of emotional labor in hospitality was highly rewarded as the prospects of emotional labor was being applied as the service quality measurement in SERVQUAL as service quality recognition.



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