

**EMOTIONAL LABOR, EMPLOYEE WORKPLACE
BEHAVIORS, ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT,
AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE: AN
EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION ON FOREIGN
SERVICE WORKERS IN SABAH AND LABUAN**

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**THIS IS SUBMITTED IN FULFILLMENT FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER IN BUSINESS
(INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS)**

**LABUAN SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL
BUSINESS AND FINANCE
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH
2013**

BORANG PENGESAHAN STATUS TESIS

JUDUL: EMOTIONAL LABOR, EMPLOYEE WORKPLACE BEHAVIORS, ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT, AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE: AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION ON FOREIGN SERVICE WORKERS IN SABAH AND LABUAN

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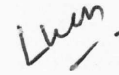
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I have been on this seemingly long and tiring, yet enriching and fulfilling journey for one and a half years. Finally, I have managed to reach my destination, which spells the completion of my master's thesis. There are so many wonderful people to whom this thesis is dedicated. This thesis would not be possible without their help. I would like to take this opportunity to thank them.

First, I would like to express my deepest gratitude and appreciation to my supervisor, Dr. Magdalene Ang Chooi Hwa, for her encouragement and guidance throughout my studies. I know Dr. Magdalene is a busy person, but she never fails to make time for me. She is also a good listener and advisor. Under her supervision, I have learned useful research skills: for instance, skills in gathering and synthesizing information, reading skills, writing skills, and also critical thinking skills. She taught me how to "fill the hole before the water fills the boat". She also taught me about "no sweet without sweat"; meaning, to press on until we achieve our goals. I truly appreciate Dr. Magdalene's help. Again, thank you Dr. Magdalene.

Next, I would like to say a special 'thank you' to Mr. Ricky Chia, the school's postgraduate coordinator. He is a teacher and also a friend. He helped us to settle administrative matters related to postgraduate studies and he is not stingy in sharing his experiences with us.

I am also grateful to my family and my boyfriend, for all their love and support. My parents, Tan Ngiap Kee and Tam Choi Jin, have always supported me, emotionally and financially. Without them, I would not be able to concentrate on my research. I would also like to thank my brothers, Yeong Hong and Yeong Meng, for always taking care of their "baby sister". Besides, a "special thank you" to my boyfriend, Kung Seng, for his love and understanding. Because of my Master's Degree, I have to be apart from him. But he never failed to call to encourage me when the going got tough.

I would like to extend my thanks to my lecturer and friends. I am lucky to have known Ms Nurhamiza Mumin @ Osman. She is kind to help me during the period I worked as a tutor. I would also like to extend my gratitude to Kwok Boon, Sze Sheng, Thian, Tzyy Wee, and Wai Loon. I have enjoyed all our fun time together. They have always been able to make me laugh. "Thank you" all for always been there for me.

Last but not least, I would like to dedicate a "special thank you" to MyBrain 15 for the sponsorship of my postgraduate study.

All in all, this has been a long and rewarding journey. Even though the research process was sometimes emotionally and physically challenging, I have gained countless of valuable experiences.

Now I have come to the end of my graduate life, and I will soon start another new journey. As they always say: all good things must come to an end. I deeply

treasure my life in Labuan with all of you. Thank you all for been an important part of it.

Tan Siew Luen
01st August 2012



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ABSTRACT

EMOTIONAL LABOR, EMPLOYEE WORKPLACE BEHAVIORS, ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT, AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE: AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION ON FOREIGN SERVICE WORKERS IN SABAH AND LABUAN

This study aimed to identify factors that determine entry-level job expectations of graduating students from Malaysia and Australia as entry-level job seekers. The factors were pay expectation, job security, company reputation, working condition, type of work, location of workplace, flextime, career advancement opportunity, and training opportunity. The present study also attempted to explore whether graduating student's entry-level job expectations are different across nationality (*i.e.*, Malaysian *vs.* Australian) and gender (*i.e.*, Male *vs.* Female). In addition, the current study examined how Malaysian and Australian graduating students rank these entry-level job expectations in terms of importance to them as entry-level job seekers. Using area sampling technique, questionnaires were distributed to 400 respondents in Malaysia and Australia. A total of 310 questionnaires were collected but only 268 questionnaires were found usable. The data were analyzed using several statistical analyses including factor analysis, reliability analysis, and test of differences. The results revealed that Malaysian and Australian graduating students were significantly different with regard to three job characteristics namely company reputation, working condition, and career advancement and training opportunity. Furthermore, the study found that male and female graduating students in Malaysia only or both countries were significantly different in terms of working condition. Interestingly, the study findings confirmed that pay expectation was perceived to be the most important factor by the graduating students, regardless of where they are from. Whereas type of work was cited as the least important job characteristic in selecting their entry-level jobs. The findings of this study can be beneficial for graduating students as they enter the job market, as well as for human resources managers in attracting and retaining potential employees from the pool of fresh graduates.

ABSTRAK

Sebilangan besar kajian telah dilakukan pada topik emosi pekerja dan kesannya di tempat kerja. Walau bagaimanapun, tidak banyak penyelidikan untuk meneroka pengaruh emosi pekerja asing terhadap tingkah laku kerja dalam konteks Malaysia. Justeru itu, tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk mengkaji pengaruh emosi pekerja ke atas tingkah laku tempat kerja, iaitu gelagat kewarganegaraan organisasi dan tingkahlaku devian di kalangan pekerja asing yang mewakili pelbagai organisasi perkhidmatan di Sabah dan Labuan. Kajian ini juga menentukan peranan sokongan organisasi dan kecerdasan emosi sebagai pembolehubah dalam hubungan ini. Dua set borang soal selidik telah disediakan untuk kajian ini, satu adalah disediakan untuk pekerja asing yang bekerja di pelbagai organisasi perkhidmatan, satu lagi disediakan untuk rakan sekerja. 205 borang soal selidik berjaya dikumpulkan dalam kajian ini. Data dikumpulkan dari Labuan dan beberapa bandar di Sabah, seperti Kota Kinabalu, Sandakan, Tawau, dan juga Lahad Datu. Data dianalisis menggunakan pelbagai analisis statistik, seperti analisis deskriptif, analisis factor, analisis kebolehpercayaan, ujian-ujian perbezaan, dan analisis regresi pelbagai. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan lakonan permukaan bertindak penting berkaitan dengan gelagat kewarganegaraan organisasi dan tingkahlaku devian. Di samping itu, kecerdasan emosi memainkan peranan sebagai pembolehubah dalam hubungan antara emosi pekerja berfokuskan kerja dan gelagat kewarganegaraan organisasi (individu).



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AET	Affective Events Theory
ANOVA	One-Way Analysis of Variance
DA	Deep Acting
DB	Deviant Behavior
EI	Emotional Intelligence
ELS	Emotional Labor Scale
FRE	Frequency
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HR	Human Resource
INT	Intensity
IRB	In-role Behavior
JF	Job-focused Emotional Labor
KMO	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin
LMX	Leader-member Exchange
M	Mean
MNC	Multinational Companies
MSA	Measure of Sampling Adequacy
OCB	Organizational Citizenship Behavior
OCBI	Organizational Citizenship Behavior (Individual)
OCBO	Organizational Citizenship Behavior (Organization)

OEA	Others' Emotional Appraisal
OS	Organizational Support
POS	Perceived Organizational Support
ROE	Regulation of Emotion
SA	Surface Acting
SD	Standard Deviation
SEA	Self-emotional Appraisal
SIM	Single Item Measure
SPOS	Survey of Perceived Organizational Support
UN	United Nations

UOE Use of Emotion

VAR Variety



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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

Emotion in the workplace has become an important topic in organizations in recent years (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1995; Fisher & Ashkanasy, 2000; Lord, Klimoski, & Kanfer, 2002). One area of emotion research that catches more attention is emotional labor (Hochschild, 1983; Morris & Feldman, 1996). Emotional labor is a critical aspect of many jobs that require employees to interact with customers, coworkers, and the public. On the other hand, workplace is a forum where a variety of different behaviors are expressed, each with a different consequence to the individuals within the organization as well as the entire organization (Appelbaum, Iaconi, & Matousek, 2007). Negative emotions can cause negative workplace behaviors such as turnover, emotional dissonance, and deviant behavior (DB) (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Ashforth & Tomiuk, 2000; Zapf, 2002), whereas positive emotions can cause positive workplace behaviors such as organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), job satisfaction, and job performance (Bagozzi, 2003; Locke, 1976).

The first study that documents the salience of emotional labor in everyday work roles was done by Hochschild (1983). Since then, a lot of studies were done by other researchers, such as Grandey (2000) and Brotheridge and Lee (2002), and they further found that there is theoretical and empirical support showing that emotional labor is a central part of everyday work life for many employees. With globalization, managing emotions in the workplace will continue to become increasingly important as argued by MacDonald and Sitiani (1996) and Pulglesi (1999).

In addition, researchers have begun to explore how emotions are managed by employees in order to improve work outcomes (Grandey, 2000). This is because interpersonal interactions in the workplace can affect organizational outcomes. Pugh (2001) reported that employees' displays of positive emotion were positively related to customers' evaluations of service quality. Emotional expression has also been related to customer mood (Luong, 2005), customer willingness to return and to

spread positive comments to others about the organization (Tsai, 2001; Tsai & Huang, 2002), and customer overall satisfaction with the organization (Mattila & Enz, 2002). Emotional labor is also important to organizations because it has been found to predict the reflection of employees' performance in a variety of jobs (Beal, Trougakos, Weiss, & Green, 2006; Diefendorff & Richard, 2003; Grandey, 2003; Pugh, 2001; Rupp & Spencer, 2006).

Rutter and Fielding (1988) shared the view that managing emotional expressions is important for successful performance. Correspondingly, Morris and Feldman (1996) argued that emotional displays have become "a marketplace commodity" and are an important part of the customer service jobs. Thus, many organizations stipulate how emotions should be presented to others through the use of emotional display rules (Diefendorff & Richard, 2003).

Display rules are defined as standards of behavior that govern which emotions are appropriate to be displayed when interacting with customers (Ekman, 1973). The basic idea of display rule is that organizations expect employees to display required emotions as part of their work role. The adherence to display rules is considered as a part of product in nearly all service jobs (Hochschild, 1983). Service jobs are generally characterized by an organizational setting that requires the "display of good cheer" (Rafaeli & Sutton, 1987). Emotional expressions are often enforced through supervisory monitoring and customer evaluations (Fuller & Smith, 1996; Rafaeli & Sutton, 1989). Hence, employees must regulate their expressions and felt emotions to conform to the display requirements regardless of their true feelings and emotions. On the contrary, there are some jobs that may require the display of negative emotions such as bill collector, or neutral emotion, like judge (Chau, 2007). This study, however, focused on expression of emotions in conformity to organization display rules when reacting to customers. This performance of such emotions is accordingly termed as emotional labor (Hochschild, 1983). As noted earlier, positive emotions can cause positive workplace behaviors such as OCB, job satisfaction, and job performance (Bagozzi, 2003; Locke, 1976).

Two key techniques of performing emotional labor commonly reported in the literature are surface acting and deep acting. In the service sector, engaging in surface acting and deep acting may affect service workers' performance in organization. Specifically, deep acting in the workplace can possibly lead employees to exhibit favorable behaviors such as OCB. In contrast, surface acting may increase the performance of negative behaviors such as DB. Deviant behavior occurs when normal work behavior goes outside the norms of the organization. The consequences of such behavior are far-reaching and affect all levels of the organization including its decision-making process, productivity, and financial costs (Coccia, 1998). As such, the management of DB is one of the growing concerns in organizations globally because DB can be detrimental to organizational financial well-being (Appelbaum, Iaconi & Matousek, 2007).

Against this backdrop, this research was undertaken to examine the performance and consequences (that include workplace behaviors like OCB and DB) of emotional labor among foreign workers in Sabah and the Federal Territory of Labuan (Labuan), Malaysia. The research was also aimed at exploring the role of organizational support and emotional intelligence in the management of emotions in the workplace. It is possible that these two variables can act as a buffer mechanism in decreasing DB, and possibly in enhancing the performance of OCB among foreign workers.

An explanation for targeting self-initiated foreign workers in this study is in order. Crowley-Henry (2007) defined self-initiated foreign workers as individuals who relocate voluntarily to a foreign country on their own initiatives. Recent years have seen a notable growth in the Malaysian economy, particularly in the manufacturing and service sectors (Barr, 2011). As such, job opportunities abound particularly for the low-skilled jobs which attract foreign workers to come to our shores. This has directly contributed to the population growth of foreign workers in this country (Kassim, 2002).

Foreign workers, just like other expatriates, are very likely to experience workplace stress. Families and spouses play an important role in expatriate adjustment process (Caliguiri, Hyland, Joshi, & Bross, 1998). It has been widely

documented that the adaption of foreign workers' families and spouses to a foreign country is a critical factor that can affect foreign workers' stress response (De Leon & McPartlin, 1995). In other words, foreign workers can adjust well in a stressful new environment with the support from the family, and especially from the spouse (Kraimer, Wayne, & Jaworski, 2001). Moreover, previous experiences abroad and language competencies also have important effects for foreign workers in reducing ambiguity, stress, and uncertainty in the new environment (Bhaskar-Shrinivas, Harrison, Shaffer, & Luk, 2005; Kim, 2008). In other words, if foreign workers have greater proficiency of a host country's language, it is easier to obtain information about everyday work and non-work activities (Nicholson & Imaizumi, 1993). Furthermore, organizational support is another influential factor of expatriate adjustment. Support from supervisors and co-workers can facilitate expatriate work adjustment (Eschback, Parker, & Stoelberl, 2001; Shaffer, Harrison, & Gilley, 1999), resulting in reduced ambiguity and stress.

In view of the above discussion, it can be surmised that foreign workers are more likely to experience work stress and other negative work outcomes than do local workers because they need to struggle with work-family balance, while facing the added challenge of working and living abroad. The scenario may be worse for foreign workers working in the service industry in which their jobs require them to interact with customers and perform emotional labor on a daily basis. Given that, studying foreign workers' performance and consequences of emotional labor is clearly merited.

1.2 Research Problem

Since the seminal work by Hochschild in 1983, a substantial number of studies have been done on the topic of emotional labor and its effects in the workplace (e.g., Brief & Weiss, 2002; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Pugh (2001) found that employees' displays of positive emotions were directly related to customers' evaluations of service quality and other positive individual as well as organizational outcomes. But when employees experience injustice and anger often in the workplace, the outcome may tend to be negative such as work stress (Greenberg, 2006; Francis & Barling, 2005). Indeed, negative emotional reactions have been found to predict a wide array of undesirable outcomes such as tension, turnover, decreased productivity, and even workplace violence (Bagozzi, 2003). The preceding discussion hence underlines how