

Effects of Policy Strength and Social Sharing of Emotions on Emotional Labor and Customer-directed Sabotage Behavior in Chinese Service Industry

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KEYWORDS Deep Acting. Deviant behavior. Emotional Labor. Surface Acting

ABSTRACT The purpose of this paper was to inquire how policy-strength and social sharing of emotion moderate the relationship between emotional labor strategies and customer-directed sabotage behaviors. Survey was administered twice. Data was collected from 788 employees who work in service industry. Hierarchical regression analyses showed that surface acting is a more significant predictor of customer-directed sabotage behaviors than deep acting. Moreover, policy strength has a significant moderating effect between surface acting and customer-directed sabotage, and social sharing of emotion has an important mediated effect between deep acting and customer-directed sabotage. Results suggested that surface acting and deep acting strategy take effects in different ways, and each effect varies depending on emotion-based moderator and resource-based moderator respectively.

INTRODUCTION

Emotional labor is a necessary part in service industry. It proved to be effective on many organizational outcomes, such as well-being and strain, emotional exhaustion (Grandey 2003; Alicia et al. 2015), and withdrawal behaviors. The effective management of emotional labor was proved to be vital to the survival of organizations (Estelami 2000; Tsung and Hu 2013; Golfenshtein and Drach 2015). So the attention should be paid to emotional labor from both research and practice.

Deviant behavior has caused researchers' interest recently. It is one kind of organizational outcome, including workplace aggression and violation, sabotage, and many other forms. Emotional labor is a negative consequence of deviant behaviors, but few have taken employees' deviant behavior as a consequence of emotional labor into research. In fact, emotion plays a central role in employees' deviant behavior. It (Bechtoldt et al. 2007) indicated that surface acting may predict employees' deviant behaviors, since the gained gratification from such behaviors would compensate for the negative emotions got from customers, and such behaviors could also provide them opportunity to escape from the emotional dissonance caused by surface acting.

However, employees can develop a more direct relationship with customers, because their main job is interacting with customers, and this direct relationship can also provide employees the opportunity to gain and lose resources. So that employees will be more possible to direct their retaliation efforts toward the customers when experiencing negative emotions and emotional dissonance which is caused by surface acting. Therefore the research proposes that customer-directed sabotage behavior will be a more proximal consequence caused by surface acting, compared with the long-run organizational deviant behavior. As to deep acting, it is less possible to lead to deviant behaviors without such emotional dissonance.

Objectives

Policy strength and social sharing of emotion have received limited attention. The research attempts to add them into the relationship between emotional labor strategies and customer-directed sabotage. This can extend the emotional labor field. Policy strength refers to the extent of effectiveness that rules can inspire employees' to deliver proper emotions (Bacharach et al. 2002), which can increase their identification of rules, and reduce the possibility for surface acting to induce emotional dissonance. Social sharing of emotion can be regarded as a way to gain social resource, which can make up for the resource loss from deep acting. The research pro-

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poses that policy strength will regulate the relationship between surface acting and sabotage, and social sharing of emotion will moderate the relationship between deep acting and sabotage.

METHODOLOGY

Participants and Procedures

Data was collected from 12 big hospitals in Eastern China via two-wave surveys the sample consisted of nurses, doctors and other medical personnel. One thousand and fourteen employees responded to the 1st survey, eight hundred and ninety-nine responded to the 2nd and 788 of them completed both steps of the data collection. The participants were disproportionally female (with a valid percent of 78.8), were 25.49 years old on average ($SD=2.34$), and education average ($SD=1.54$) was 15.12 years.

The data collection included two waves. Demographic variables (age, sex and education), other control variables (negative affect and neuroticism), the two kinds of emotional labor, surface acting and deep acting, and policy strength were measured in the 1st wave, while customer-directed sabotage behavior was measured in the 2nd wave.

Data Collection Tools

The researchers measured two control variables: neuroticism (Big Five) and negative affect (PANAS-NA) in the study. An 8-item subscale of the 40-item Big Five Personality Inventory was used to be measure neuroticism. In this scale, participants were asked to respond on a 9-point scale ('1' indicated 'strongly disagree' and '9' indicated 'strongly agree'). Negative affect was

measured by PANAS-NA, which included 10 items in the subscale. Participants were asked to respond on a 5-point scale ('1' indicated 'strongly disagree' and '5' indicated 'strongly agree').

An 8-item survey of emotional labor, which was originally advanced by Brotheridge and Lee (2002) and Grandey (2003), was used to measure surface acting (5 items) and deep acting (3 items). Participants were asked to answer the items on a 5-point scale ('1' = 'never' and '5' = 'always').

A 7-item scale is used to measure policy strength, which is the extent of policy enhancement inside the call center, according to the research (Bacharach et al. 2002). The instructions for this scale read "Please rate the extent to which you agree with each statement according to your true experience" (1 = "strongly disagree" to 5 = "strongly agree").

A 4-item scale adapted from the study (Gable et al. 2004) was used to measure social sharing of emotion. Participants were told to respond their frequency of sharing their experience of emotions and events to close others on a 5-point scale ('1' indicated 'never' and '5' indicated 'always').

A five-item behavior checklist developed by Skarlicki et al. (2008) was used to assess employees' customer-directed sabotage behavior. Participants were instructed to report the frequency of behaviors they had used in treating customers on a 5-point scale (1 = "Never" to 5 = "Frequently").

RESULTS

The data was analyzed by SPSS 18.0. The means, standard deviations, Pearson correlations among all study variables and coefficient alphas of each variable were presented in Table 1. Both control variables showed significant associations

Table 1: Means, standard deviations, reliabilities and correlations among study variables

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1.Age	25.49	2.34	-									
2.Education	15.12	1.54	.05	-								
3.Sex	-	-	.01	.02	-							
4.Neuroticism	3.88	1.13	-.06	.03	.07	(.76)						
5.Negative Affect	2.27	.66	-.10**	-.08*	-.02	.50**	(.86)					
6.Surface acting	3.26	.86	-.09*	-.01	-.02	.18**	.30**	(.84)				
7.Deep acting	4.04	.67	.04	.04	.03	-.17**	-.04	.20**	(.83)			
8.Policy strength	3.77	.60	.01	-.02	-.03	-.09*	.03	.12**	.31**	(.81)		
9.Social sharing	2.23	.63	-.20**	.05	.03	.12**	.14**	.12**	-.01	-.03	(.77)	
10.Customer-directed sabotage behaviors	1.11	.34	-.03	-.05	.01	.10**	.15**	.12**	-.05	-.07*	.17**	(.87)

Note: N = 788. *p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, values on the diagonal are coefficient alphas
Gender was coded 1 for men and 2 for women.

with customer-directed sabotage behaviors ($r = 0.10, p < 0.01$; $r = 0.15, p < 0.01$, respectively). Surface acting demonstrated significant positive associations with customer-directed sabotage behaviors; however, deep acting didn't show significant associations with customer-directed sabotage behaviors. Policy strength and social sharing also showed significant associations with customer-directed sabotage behaviors. Surface acting and deep acting were also remarkably associated with one another ($r = 0.20, p < 0.01$).

Hierarchical moderated regression analyses were used to examine the relationships between variables. Results from these analyses can be found in Table 2. Sex, age, education, neuroticism and negative affect were entered in step 1 as control variables. Independent variables (that is, surface acting and deep acting) and moderators (that is, policy strength and social sharing) were entered in step 2, and interactions of independent variables and moderators were entered in step 3. Customer-directed sabotage behavior was entered as the dependent variable. The research concentrates all main effect variables to compute interaction terms (Cohen et al. 2003).

As indicated in Table 2, when controlling for age, sex, education, neuroticism and NA, the coefficient of surface acting's main effect is statistically considerable in Step 2 (standardized $\beta = .10, p < .01$). Surface acting is positively related

with customer-directed sabotage behaviors. And Table 2 also showed the coefficient of the main effect of deep acting insignificant (standardized $\beta = -.04, p > .05$). So deep acting is not related to customer-directed sabotage behaviors.

Moderation effects were distinguished when the corresponding interaction term had a significant β coefficient, and interactions were outlined using the values of "1 and +1 sd of the observed distribution for each variable to represent the moderation effects. A test of simple slopes analysis demonstrated that, when policy strength is high, customer-directed sabotage behaviors is not significantly predicted by surface acting ($\beta = .014, p > .05$). However, this relationship is significant when policy strength is low ($\beta = .070, p < .01$). The relationship between surface acting and customer-directed sabotage behaviors would be moderated by policy strength, and the interaction between surface acting and policy strength was statistically significant ($\beta = -.08, p < .05$). This interaction is illustrated in Figure 1.

A test of simple slopes analysis demonstrated that, to those who share their emotions more frequently, customer-directed sabotage behaviors is negatively predicted by deep acting ($\beta = -.076, p < .01$). However, this relationship is insignificant when frequency of social sharing is low ($\beta = .035, p > .05$). The relationship between deep acting and customer-directed sabotage behavior

Table 2: Regression analysis results on customer-directed sabotage

Variables entered	Step 1			Step 2			Step 3		
	$\hat{a}$	s.e.	Beta	$\hat{a}$	s.e.	Beta	$\hat{a}$	s.e.	Beta
<i>Step 1: Control Variables</i>									
Age	-.00	.01	-.02	.00	.01	.02	.00	.01	.02
Sex	.01	.03	.01	.01	.03	.01	.02	.03	.02
Education	-.01	.01	-.04	-.01	.01	-.05	-.01	.01	-.05
Neuroticism	.01	.01	.03	-.00	.01	-.01	-.00	.01	-.01
Negative affect	.07**	.02	.13**	.05*	.02	.10*	.05*	.02	.09*
<i>Step 2: Main Effects</i>									
Surface acting				.04*	.02	.10*	.04**	.02	.10**
Deep acting				-.02	.02	-.04	-.02	.02	-.04
Policy strength				-.05*	.02	-.08*	-.05**	.02	-.09**
Social sharing				.09**	.02	.16**	.08**	.02	.15**
<i>Step 3: Interactions</i>									
S×policy strength							-.05*	.02	-.08*
S×social sharing							.06	.03	.07
D×policy strength							.02	.03	.03
D×social sharing							-.09**	.03	-.11**
R^2	.024**	.066**	.092**						
ΔR^2	.024**	.041**	.026**						

Note: N = 788. * $p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.01$. $\hat{a}$ represents the unstandardized regression coefficient, Beta represents the standardized regression coefficient. S: surface acting. D: deep acting.

iors would be moderated by social sharing of emotion, and the interaction between deep acting and social sharing was statistically significant ($\beta = -.11, p < .01$). This interaction is illustrated in Figure 2.

DISCUSSION

This research is one of the first to investigate the relation between emotional labor strategies and customer-directed sabotage, also the first to explore moderators in the relationships of them. Through integrating the emotion path and resource path of emotion labor, the research made a comparison between surface acting's and deep acting's influence on customer-directed sabotage. Specifically, when controlling for age, sex, education, neuroticism and negative affect, policy strength materially moderated the relation between surface acting and customer-directed sabotage as an emotion-based moderator, and the relationship between deep acting and customer-directed sabotage was significantly moderated by social sharing of emotion as a resource-based moderator. The research fills gaps in former studies by concentrating on a more specific sabotage (that is, customer-directed sabotage), discovering the limit conditions under which the relations between employees' emotional labor strategies and customer-directed sabotage is enhanced or weakened, and improving research methodology with a two-wave design.

As seen in Table 2 that surface acting is positively associated to customer-directed sabotage behavior, but the relation is insignificant between deep acting and customer-directed sabotage behavior. That is to say, when employees use surface acting when communicating with customers, the more emotion labor is used, the more sabotage behaviors will be produced towards customers. However, when deep acting is used, the extent of emotion labor used will not increase customer-directed sabotage behaviors. Furthermore, previous research only took a general view on deviant behaviors (Shanock et al. 2013), but the researchers' findings specified deviant behavior by taking only customer-directed sabotage into research. In this way the researchers' finding extends previous theoretical framework by adding a new behavioral outcome into research when comparing different emotional labor strategies. Results proved that deep acting can increase emotional accordance, because it is more difficult for individuals to distance them-

selves from the position in this case, and the positive effect can balance out its negative effect of resource consuming. This result supported the conservation of resource theory that surface acting is less positive than deep acting (Brotheridge and Lee 2002; Becker and Cropanzano 2015). This finding also had practical implications, that employees should be encouraged and trained to choose deep acting when interacting with customers, in order to prevent undesirable behaviors. In further, training programs that intend to increase employees' engagement in deep acting and decrease their surface acting should be adopted, on the base that validity of such programs has already been tested (Nair and Bhatnagar 2011).

The current study also found two distinct moderators which moderates the relation between emotion labor strategies and customer-directed sabotage behaviors. Policy strength is an emotion-based moderator which affects the relationship between surface acting and customer-directed sabotage behaviors, and social sharing of emotion is a resource-based moderator, which affects the relationship between deep acting and customer-directed sabotage behaviors. By examining variables that moderate the emotion path and the resource path respectively, we can gain a better awareness of the mechanisms how surface and deep acting strategies predict employees' sabotage behaviors distinctly.

Policy Strength Moderates Surface Acting–Sabotage Relationship

Figure 1 illustrates that surface acting can no longer increase customer-directed sabotage behaviors when policy strength is high. This result proved the policy enhancement perspective of managerial control theory that clear and effective rules can reduce the possibility that employees adopt sabotage behaviors to customers (Bacharach et al. 2002), which contributed to the theoretical framework on emotional labor by adding that supervisory support climate is an important factor for diminishing the negative effect caused by surface acting. However, this moderator only takes effect when employees use surface acting instead of deep acting. When deep acting, individuals is more difficult to distance themselves from their position (Yüksel 2014), they tend to obey the emotion display rules more initiatively, without any need of external encouragement or supervision. In this way sabotage behaviors can be hardly induced. However,

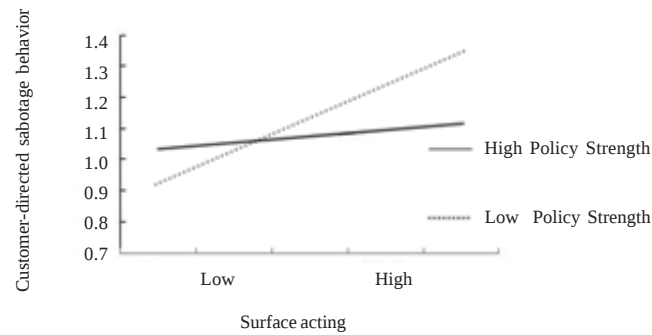


Fig.1. Policy strength moderates the relationship between surface acting and customer-directed sabotage behaviors

when surface acting employees are unwilling to behave friendly unless being supervised (Grandey 2003), in this situation policy strength will matter in determining whether surface acting can lead to customer-directed sabotage.

This finding can also inspire managers or supervisors practically. The result indicated that, a clear policy system regulating proper emotion expressions inside an organization can effectively buffer the negative effect caused by surface acting. Supervisors of service industry should be encouraged to pay more attention to the prescription of policies rewarding proper behaviors

and punishing problematic behaviors, in order to develop good relationships with customers.

Social Sharing Moderates Deep Acting–Sabotage Relationship

Figure 2 illustrates that only when employees share their emotions with others can deep acting help decrease customer-directed sabotage behaviors. This study has revealed a negative relationship between one kind of emotional labor and customer-directed sabotage behavior under certain circumstance. Gable et al. (2004)

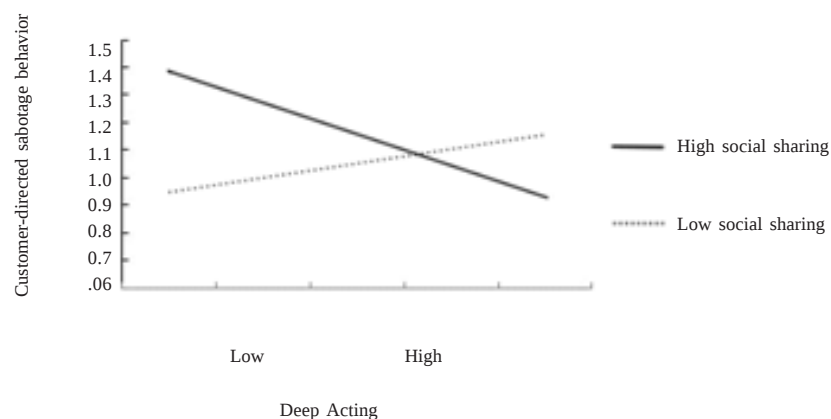


Fig. 2. Social sharing moderates the relationship between deep acting and customer-directed sabotage behaviors

indicated that social sharing can help individuals improve positive emotions beyond the positive event itself. Similarly, our finding indicated that social sharing of emotion can help enhance deep acting's positive influence in resolving emotional dissonance, and this positive effect transcended the negative aspect of resource loss. This finding opens implications for future study to explore more positive aspects of emotional labor in answering for Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi's (2000) call for more attention on positive aspects in psychology researches, since most researches concentrate only on the negative aspect emotional labor.

The current finding also offers a way to help service workers better decrease their problematic behaviors towards customers when having to involve in emotional labor, that is, to share their experience and emotions more with others. Social sharing can provide employees with more social resource, and make up for the resource loss caused by deep acting. However, this compensation is only effective to deep acting, but inadequate to make up for the resource loss caused by surface acting, which in further proved the conservation of resource theory that surface acting is more resource consuming than deep acting (Brotheridge and Lee 2002; Sapepa et al. 2015).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, in view of the importance to take a deeper look at the emotional labor phenomenon in organizations, the research aims to contribute to customer service research framework in the following ways. First, formers studies only view deviant behaviors in general to discuss the effect of emotional labor, but this research chooses a more direct effect variable, customer-directed sabotage, to differentiate the mechanisms of surface acting and deep acting affecting employees' sabotage behaviors. Second, the research in further seek for potential moderators in the relationship above to promote the understanding of how emotional labor strategies affect customer-directed sabotage under different conditions. Third, by using a two-wave design and taking emotion path and resource path together in discussing the difference between surface acting and deep acting, both methodology and theoretical basis have been strengthened in the current study. The current

study can also benefit managerial practices in preventing employees' problematic behaviors.

The research also plays a part on the emotional labor literature via an improvement in research methodology. Until now, most researches that have concentrate on the impact of emotional labor used cross-sectional surveys, which failed to test the direction of causality and the only way to exclude the existence of reversed direction was theoretical deduction. However, in the current study we used a two-wave design, that causal variables (surface acting and deep acting) was measured in the 1st wave and the effect variable (that is, customer-directed sabotage) was measured in the 2nd wave, which satisfied the antecedent condition to establish causal relationships.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In summary, since both of the emotion labor strategies (surface acting and deep acting), have different mechanisms in effecting customer-directed sabotage, methods to promote better outcomes should be taken differently according to the strategy used. In general, deep acting should be encouraged among customers since it brings more positive effects, and this positive effect will more significant when employees have access to sharing their emotions with others. But when employees cannot regulate their strategy of emotion labor, and have to use surface acting, negative effects can be prevented if the organization can provide effective policies regulating proper behaviors.

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