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The Moderating Effects of Theatrical Components on the Relationship between Emotional Labor and Emotional Exhaustion

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The employees deliver services to customers and interact with them using emotional labor. The causes of emotional exhaustion under several circumstances have been thoroughly investigated. One approach is to view the employee-customer interaction as an actor-audience relationship, known as dramaturgy theory. From the dramaturgical perspective, this study examined how emotional labor influences emotional exhaustion and was moderated by four theatrical components: front-back stage division, job autonomy, customers' positive feedback, and explicitness of service scripts. Testing responses from a sample containing 271 employees from various service firms, this study showed that front-back stage division and job autonomy have a weakly moderating effect. Meanwhile, customers' positive feedback and explicitness of service scripts at different levels also possessed a distinct effect on the relationship between emotional labor and emotional exhaustion.

Keywords: Emotional labor, emotional exhaustion, dramaturgy theory, theatrical components, service marketing

JEL: L84, M31, M54

Major industries in many Asian countries are gradually evolving from agriculture and manufacturing to service. For instance, according to a government survey, the service industry in Taiwan grew from 23.21 percent in 1986 to 35.23 percent in 2006 (Directorate General of Budget Accounting and Statistics, 2007). The service industry has played a dominant role in Taiwan's economic growth. Most service deliveries need personal interaction between customers and providers, known as service encounters (Bitner, Booms and Tetreault, 1990; Bitner, Brown and Meuter, 2000; Chandon, Leo and Philippe, 1997; Khan and Metri, 2011), while others may be remotely implemented, such as services by telephone, or virtually implemented, such as services on the Internet. Customers recognize and evaluate the services they get and providers build and manage the customers' perception of service quality during the interactions (Lin and Mattlia, 2010; Lin and Lin, 2011). Hence, any discrepancy in the perception of the service encounter between customers and service employees will influence the delivery of service quality (Chenet, Tynan and Money, 1999; Khan and Metri, 2011).

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Service organizations usually require frontline employees to maintain appropriate emotions during their interaction with customers to deliver high quality service. The contact period between customers and service employees constructs the customers' consumption experiences and perceptions of the service providers, and determines whether the service quality offered from service providers is good or bad. Customers may decide whether continue to use the service depending on the integrated responses from service employees, including body language, facial expressions and emotions. Hochschild (1983) named the effort required that need employees to maintain proper emotions publicly, according to the service firm's requirements, as emotional labor. As human emotion has become a kind of product, service providers have to consider how to apply and manage emotional labor effectively under the conditions of discrepancy between employees' true emotions and required emotions in order to maximize employees' working efficiency and raise organizational performance. Service providers have not only been offering products or labor but also including service employees' appropriate emotional expressions. While emotion is intangible and difficult to be defined precisely, researchers have tried to clarify the rules for emotional labor by applying dramaturgy theory (Goffman, 1959). This is so that service employees can deliver a "standardized product", emotional labor, to customers according to these rules (Blau *et al*., 2010; Cano, Sams and Schwartz, 2009; Tumbat, 2008; Whiting, Donthu and Baker, 2011). The interactions between customers and frontline employees during service encounters are similar to social relationships in a drama theatre from a behavioral perspective. Actors (service employees) perform with a certain expression (emotion) on the stage (service sites) to entertain audiences (customers) according to scripts (service organization's requirements) (Blau *et al*., 2010; Grove, Fisk and Bitner, 1992; Lovelock, 1996; Whiting *et al*., 2011). The dramaturgical approach separates a service site into front and back stage, as in a real drama performance, in order to examine the effects of the variant stages of the whole interactive process during service encounters (Cano *et al*., 2009; Tumbat, 2008).

Since most service employees provide emotional labor when in contact with customers in person, they may feel excessively weary emotionally (called emotional exhaustion) if a large incongruence exists between the service employee's true and required emotions (Cropanzano, Weiss and Elias, 2003; Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter, 2001; Pugh, Groth and Hennig-Thurau, 2010; Reyers and Matusitz, 2012). However, frequent customer contact and the emotional expressions required by service organizations do not necessarily correlate to higher emotional exhaustion (Brotheridge and Grandey, 2002). This study therefore investigates, from the dramaturgical perspective, (i) the management of frontline employees during service encounters and (ii) whether and how the relationship between emotional labor and exhaustion is moderated by theatrical components.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Emotional Labor

Hochschild (1983) categorized the work undertaken by firms' employees, and sold to customers, into three different types that create profits for firms and earn employees' a salary by coordination of labor; physical (the mind and body), mental (mind), and emotional (proper public emotional expression). Specifically, emotional labor is defined as "…the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display; emotional labor is sold for a wage and therefore has exchange value…" (Hochschild, 1983: 7). The meaning of emotional labor varies according to research in different fields. For instance, Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) argue that emotional labor is "the act of displaying the appropriate emotion" (p.90), while the act is "conforming to a display rule" (p.96). They emphasize the employees' actual behavior that is observable and that fits the emotional display regulations set out by service organizations. Grandey (2000) integrated previous works and emotion regulation theory, specifying emotional labor as "the process of regulating both feelings and expressions for organizational goals" p.97). In other words, the procedure of adjusting emotions becomes more dominant than personal feeling management or real behavior. Emotional labor is the impression management whereby service employees change their displayed emotions on purpose, according to the job needs, when they interact with customers. Other researchers are interested in the extent of the influence that frontline employees use in either of the forms of effortful emotion regulation strategies of emotional labor, surface or deep acting (Allen *et al.*, 2010; Wang, Seibert and Boles, 2011; Wharton, 2009).

In this study, emotional labor is referred to as the process in which service employees display appropriate emotions during interpersonal interaction in accordance with organizational emotion regulation to achieve profitable goals. According to our definition, emotional labor has four characteristics (i) emotional labor takes place as an interpersonal interaction involving a high level of voice-to-voice or face-to-face contact with customers; (ii) emotional laborers have to display proper facial expressions, gestures, and voices in compliance with organization regulations; (iii) emotional laborers must make certain efforts to adjust their private feelings in line with organizational emotion expectations; (iv) emotional labor is a modification of employees' internal feelings that obey organizational emotion expression rules so that they can be sold as a product and have an exchange value.

Emotional Exhaustion

Emotional exhaustion is a worker's state of energy depletion and lack of emotional resources (Cordes and Dougherty, 1993; Maslach and Jackson, 1981) caused by interaction with others. It is characterized by tension, fatigue, extremely low working emotions and a lack of mental contribution (Golembiewski, Munzenrider and Stevenson, 1988; Grandey, 2003). Employees experience excessive weariness psychologically or

perceive that the draining of energy will prohibit effective production if they continue. This overloading of emotional demands on employees results in fatigue and the lack of energy mentally, emotionally, or sometimes physically (Cordes and Dougherty, 1993; Maslach and Jackson, 1981; Pugh *et al.*, 2010).

Morris and Feldman (1996) mentioned that those employees who have very involved jobs in which they interact unavoidably and frequently with customers and handle extreme emotional demands, usually suffer a high level of emotional exhaustion. Grandey (2003) summarized that controlling external (facial, vocal or gestured) expressions (known as surface acting), and adjusting internal feelings, (known as deep acting) to fulfill organizational rules are two emotional regulation strategies for delivering service from the dramaturgical perspective (Hochschild, 1983). Employees choosing surface acting will perceive inconsistencies between their exterior display of emotion and the true feelings that are associated with emotional exhaustion (Grandey, 2003; Lin and Lin, 2011; Van Dijk and Brown, 2006). Emotional exhaustion is treated in this study as a psychological response to the emotional incongruence caused by undue emotional demands on emotional labor providers during service encounters.

Emotional Labor and Emotional Exhaustion

When employees make continuous efforts to display suitable emotions, to comply with job requirements, replace inner emotional resources with working performance, they will use up energy gradually and feel psychological fatigue, i.e. emotional exhaustion (Grandey, 2000; Wharton, 2009; Whiting *et al.*, 2011). Several prior researches have defined the discrepancy between actual and displayed emotions expected from organizations as emotional dissonance (Morris and Feldman, 1996; Van Dijk and Brown, 2006). Many studies concluded that high level emotional labor generates higher emotional dissonance which, in turn, induces worse task performance, lower job satisfaction, and poorer mental health than low level emotional labor, and that these are negative consequences for employees (Adelmann, 1989; Brotheridge and Grandey, 2002; Morris and Feldman, 1997; Pugh *et al.*, 2010).

Workers with high job autonomy and better emotional regulation have lower emotional exhaustion for both high and low level of emotional labor (Grandey, 2000; Wharton, 1993). Morris and Feldman (1997) and, Phillips, Tan and Julian (2006) showed that emotional dissonance related to routine tasks, power of the service receiver, and job autonomy induce higher emotional exhaustion and lower job satisfaction. Brotheridge and Lee (2002) interpreted the emotional exhaustion produced by the burden of emotional labor from the conservation of resources perspective. Frequent emotional labor disbursing " consumes" personal emotions and is regarded as a personal resource loss. This implies that exhaustion could be cured by refilling the resources, e.g. social support or self-regulatory breaks (Grandey *et al.*, 2012). This study proposes the following hypothesis by referring to previous literature:

H_1: The extent of the emotional labor burden is positively related to emotional exhaustion.

Dramaturgy Theory

The pioneer of research on dramaturgy theory, the symbolic interactionist Goffman (1959), treated the process of social interaction as a drama to explain the structure of social interaction. People do their best to maintain a certain appearance under specific conditions so as to gain positive appraisal from others during interpersonal interactions. This is similar to actors who make efforts to perform on stage according to the script so as to get cheers from the audience. A person, who exhibits an emotional expression to others, is like an actor who presents himself to spectators by complying with a definite prescribed scenario called a part or routine. Ekman (1973) illustrated the expression of one's appropriate emotion using display rules which resemble Goffman's routine, i.e. a set of regulations to delimit an explicit "should" or "should not" emotion in a certain atmosphere. For example, a smiling face is appropriate for a salesperson but not for an undertaker in a funeral home. Grove and Fisk (1983) applied a drama metaphor to services marketing research, treating the communication in high contact service exchanges between customers and employees as the interaction between an audience and the actors in a theater.

Components of Dramaturgy Theory

Grove *et al*. (1992) suggested a conceptual framework based on their previous work (Grove and Fisk, 1983) whereby they separated service regions into front and back stage, regarding the front stage as a service drama containing four theatrical components: actors, audience, setting, and performance. The service encounters were analogized to performances in a theater, in which the interactive relationships during service consumption were characterized by involved persons, rather than the service process depicted by a drama metaphor. Dramaturgy theory utilizes an integral concept to embody the process of service encounters and practically exhibit the interaction between the four theatrical components. This is so that the dramaturgical perspective is suitable for inspecting the service quality of providers who deeply rely on interactive relations, especially during face-to-face interactions between customers and service employees in entity environments controlled by service organizations (Goodwin, 1996; Grove, Fisk and Dorsch, 1998).

Customers' perceptions of service performances create the service experiences, i.e. the interactions between service organizations, related systems or processes, service employees, and customers (Bitner *et al.*, 1997). Since emotional exhaustion was recognized as a personal resource loss that declined service performance, Grandey *et al*. (2012) argued that supplying personal resources continuously during service encounters is an effective way to reduce the exhaustion, whereas extensive training is one way to provide resources for professional employees who can manage emotion and handle interaction techniques more efficiently by way of training (Wharton, 2009). In the current study, the

positive result of interactions between a setting and customers is regarded as an intangible resource while explicit service scripts and well-trained employees' performances are ways to gain the resource, leading us to a moderating hypothesis:

H_2: The extent of the theatrical components moderates the emotional exhaustion during a process for service employees who are contributing emotional labor.

Setting – physical site for service delivery

Although the service per se is usually intangible, a physical site is needed for the delivery of the service and this will influence the interactions between customers and service employees. The "setting" is a physical environment in which the service occurs from the viewpoint of dramaturgy theory (Grove *et al*., 1998; Reyers and Matusitz, 2012). Service employees perform high quality emotional labor in service regions similar to actors who enact assigned roles proficiently on stage. Similar to actors, service employees comply with prescribed scripts but take a rest during their break in a specific area, similar to actors who take off their costumes and relax back stage. It is usually assumed that there is a mechanism separating front and back stage to keep customers away and hidden from the specific area. This is the portion not belonging to the performance (Goffman, 1959; Reyers and Matusitz, 2012; Tumbat, 2008), so that employees do not need to retain their service emotions when facing customers but can rest and regulate their private feelings in this rest area.

In addition to the segregation of front and back stage, service providers pay more attention to and plan for atmospherics, décor, props, and spatial layout front of stage to achieve organizational and marketing goals. Furthermore, emotion workers should take a break from self-regulatory emotion demanded by organizations in order to reduce emotional dissonance and burden, retrieve psychological resources by certain mechanisms, improve their performance, and raise job satisfaction (Grandey *et al*., 2012; Trougakos *et al*., 2008). Appropriate front stage layout or division between front and back stage helps service employees to temporarily escape from emotional stress in order to recover from emotional exhaustion. Therefore, this study proposes,

H_{2a}: A better division between front and back stage diminishes the positive relationship between emotional labor and exhaustion.

Actors – employees delivering a service

Service employees are those persons who are in contact with customers at the beginning of delivering a service (Mattsson, 1994; Wang, 2009). The interpersonal interaction between customers and service employees is at the core of a service experience (Guiry, 1992; Yi, Nataraajan and Gong, 2011). Consequently, customers perceive the success or failure of a service by partially relying on the behavior of service employees, and they assess their service satisfaction depending upon the roles employees play during the service encounter (Baron, Harris and Davies, 1996; Patterson and Baron, 2010). The positive "unprompted and unsolicited employee actions" (Bitner *et al*., 1990) that pleased customers is an effective way for service employees to convey empathy with customers, by

which customers not only perceive employees' attentiveness and circumspection but also experience impressive and satisfactory service quality from the organization they represent. Since, service providers' expertise, attitudes, and behaviors influence customer perceptions of service quality (Brady and Cronin Jr., 2001), which is positively related to customer satisfaction (Ekinci and Dawes, 2009), service employees play a critical role in service encounters and the creation of service quality. Customers generally applaud reliable service quality given by employees, who are well-trained, have expertise and efficient service behavior that depends on their job autonomy. Service employees who have virtual freedom, independence, and dominion to determine the methods being applied and the progress they make in their job tasks, known as job autonomy (Hackman and Lawler, 1971). They will have attained greater achievements as they have sufficient authority in job and can decide eventual working performance because of their own decisions, efforts and innovations (Hackman and Oldham, 1975).

Moreover, service employees could avoid the possibility of misleading customers with inconsistent service perceptions and reduce further retaliatory complaints if they amend the service content to become more flexible and attentive, or resolve difficulties proactively using their job autonomy during service encounters to satisfy customers' extra needs (Bitner, Booms and Mohr, 1994). The job autonomy includes the right to choose suitable displays of emotion to fit workers' interpersonal relationships.

Consequently, employees with higher job autonomy have more degrees of freedom to carry out work tasks, which lessen depression and resentful feelings, and create lower emotional dissonance that is correlated to emotional exhaustion (Morris and Feldman, 1997). Therefore, this study appeals to the job characteristics model (Hackman and Oldham, 1975) and transforms service employees into "employees' amount of autonomy" (Pierce, O'Driscoll and Coghlan, 2004), that is the extent of autonomy whether service employees could freely and independently decide the service content, process, and progress to manage various predictable or unpredictable situations during service encounters. So we hypothesize as below:

H_{2b}: Service employees with a high level of job autonomy diminish the positive relationship between emotional labor and exhaustion.

Audiences – how customers perceive service

It seems that customers play a passive and idle role as service receivers when they have no way to escape from the process. They can influence the eventual service result depending on their response and behavior because customers are involved in a service creation "factory" to produce and consume service products simultaneously (Booms and Bitner, 1982; Lovelock, 1981; Parasuraman, Ziethaml and Berry, 1985). Grove *et al*. (1992) even argued that no matter whether customers have enough expertise or intention, a service encounter will be harmed without customer participation. Since, service providers can obtain perceived service

quality feedback from customer participation, which can affect the success or failure of the service encounter substantially, customers respond positively if they are satisfied with the service quality; conversely, they can also make punitive complaints.

Job feedback is the " degree to which carrying out the work activities required by the job results in the individual obtaining direct and clear information about the effectiveness of his or her performance" (Hackman and Oldham, 1976: 258). As a consequence, employees can modify their working progress or change processing resolutions according to the feedback message in order to achieve work requests and organizational goals. Employees recognize their working performance through job feedback, while the feedback message is from co-workers, organizations, or even customers. The negative impact from emotional labor could be reduced through internal job design or external feedback. For emotional jobs, employees must induce emotional reactions during interactions with customers (Grandey and Diamond, 2010). Therefore, appropriate and positive feedback from customers creates massive inspiration and support can diminish employees' negative emotions (Grandey and Diamond, 2010; Yagil and Ben-Zur, 2009). The lack of accomplishment perception or explicit feedback expectation will lower employees' job performance. Therefore, it is presumed that, as service employees recognize customer response, the inspiring effect that is especially induced from positive feedback can increase employees' job satisfaction and decrease emotional exhaustion caused by the burden of emotional labor (Cordes and Dougherty, 1993; Yagil and Ben-Zur, 2009). By referring to the job characteristics model (Hackman and Oldham, 1975), customers are converted to providing " customer feedback" in this study, representing customers' opinions related to perceived service quality in response to service employees. Customer feedback will be positive when customers are satisfied with the service quality. Consequently, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H_{2c}: Customers responding with positive feedback can diminish the positive relationship between emotional labor and exhaustion.

Performance – delivery of service

The interpersonal interaction between customers and employees during the service process is a " performance" from a dramaturgical perspective (Cropanzano *et al.*, 2003; Grove *et al.*, 1998) and the delivery of the service is the core aspect of a service encounter (Khan and Metri, 2011; Mattsson, 1994; Whiting *et al.*, 2011). Personal contact embedded in a service encounter is characterized by purpose, and mission-orientated processing is a kind of role play through which it is easy to establish a short-term common consensus and evolve the norms of behavior to dominate the entire service encounter. These norms of behavior judge the proper exhibition of customers and service employees under certain circumstances and are treated as scripts in dramaturgy theory (Baron *et al.*, 1996; Bitner *et al.*, 1994; Whiting *et al.*, 2011). Grove and Fisk (1983) illustrated that a service exchange is similar to a theatrical

performance during which service demanders and suppliers both take part properly according to devised scripts. Service employees with good-fitting costumes assist customers in clean, light, and cozy environments on the basis of the scripts set up by their service organization. These scripts do not use unscripted behavior, so the whole service procedure subject to the implementation of various scripts. Bitner *et al*. (1994) pointed out that customers and service employees could share common perspectives during personal interaction in order to form service experiences. Since correct service scripts and performances lead to deep and positive impressions for audiences (customers), service organizations need to be more conscientious and to apply complicated rules or notes in order to manage obstacles and errors as perception conflict between demanders and providers increases significantly owing to ambiguous role definitions (Khan and Metri, 2011).

Customers and service staff accommodate and conform to a series of ordered behavior traits through learning experience, communication, or training throughout the service delivery, which contribute to the scripts. For service employees, scripts are a "programmed list of suitable behaviors" (Baron et al., 1996) which they have require employees to comply with certain rules and procedures, including their exterior appearance, such as standard uniforms and gestures, and interior emotions such as enthusiastic dialogue and a smiling face. This interaction with customers maintains a high level of service quality (Guiry, 1992; Wharton, 2009; Whiting *et al.*, 2011). It is also noted that employees suffer frustration and, in turn, this cause emotional exhaustion while service scripts are so ambiguous that they are indecisive and fail to process customers' requests properly (Baron *et al.*, 1996; Grandey and Diamond, 2010; Mattsson, 1994). Study thus summarizes above discussion as the hypothesis below:

H_{2d}: If organizations set more explicit service scripts, it diminishes the positive relationship between emotional labor and exhaustion.

Theoretical Framework

The literature review concluded that service employees ought to offer different levels of emotional labor for various customers. Yet continual and frequent interaction with customers induces the draining of internal emotional resources and, consequently, invokes emotional

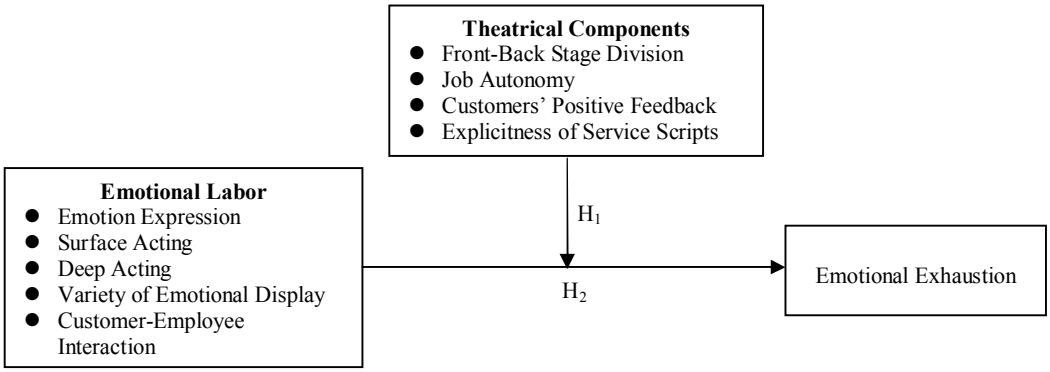

Figure 1. Conception of relationship between emotional labor and emotional exhaustion and moderating effect from theatrical components

exhaustion. Supplying appropriate external assistance can inhibit this emotional exhaustion. In addition, a nice resting space and job autonomy for service employees, positive job autonomy for service employees, positive feedback from customers, and explicit service scripts from organizations could moderate the relationship between emotional labor and exhaustion (see Figure 1).

METHODOLOGY

Sample and Data Collection

This research focused on occupations that need to dedicate a high level of emotional labor for customers. Questionnaires were distributed to frontline service employees of various organizations including departmental stores, banks, airlines, hospitals, restaurants, and hair salons. Of the 300 questionnaires distributed, 271 were returned with 35 ineffective responses, resulting in an effective response rate of 78.67 percent. The questionnaire contained three sections comprising of items employing a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) in order to measure emotional labor, theatrical components, and emotional exhaustion.

Instruments

- Emotional Labor

In order to examine both characteristics and levels, and measure them more practically and completely, the Discrete Emotions Emotional Labor Scale, DEELS (Glomba and Tews, 2004), and the Emotional Labor Scale, ELS (Brotheridge and Lee, 2003), were applied to assess the five dimensions of emotional labor (see Figure 1). The first dimension of emotional labor, emotion expression, was measured with the DEELS to get a more precise estimation of the sample employees' emotions. A higher score of emotion expression represented a higher level of emotional labor. The Cronbach's *alpha* for this dimension was .83. The remaining four dimensions were measured using the ELS's fifteen items, in which frequency, intensity of emotional display, and duration of interaction were united as customer-employee interaction.

Surface acting was a lower level and exterior display control that usually belongs to ordinary routines and with which service workers do not have excessive conflict between true feelings and required expressions. A high score in surface acting signified a high level of emotional labor. The Cronbach's *alpha* for surface acting was .74. In contrast, deep acting was associated with emotional dissonance and the tasks stood on a higher level than surface acting as workers need to expend much more effort to restrain internal emotional states in order to create the emotional displays demanded by service organizations, sometimes even having to contradict their true feelings. Organizations requiring work with a large amount of deep acting added the heavy burden of emotional labor onto their employees. The Cronbach's *alpha* for deep acting was .78. The variety of emotional display measured the complexity of variation for service workers' emotional states under different environments, situations, and types of customer. More complicated requirements of emotional states produced more emotional labor for workers. The Cronbach's *alpha* for a variety of emotional

displays was .78. Although frequency, intensity of emotional display, duration of interaction, and variety of emotional display had certain relationships with each other, most service employees perceived their emotional roles as a single construct (Brotheridge and Lee, 2003; Morris and Feldman, 1996). Hence, the frequency, intensity of emotional display, and duration of interaction were treated as customer-employee interaction in this research. A more extensive customer-employee interaction revealed a higher level of emotional labor. The Cronbach's *alpha* for the last dimension was .86.

- Theatrical Components

Based on theoretical and empirical research applying dramaturgy theory, begun by Goffman (1959), to interpret emotional exhaustion, this study reorganized the four conceptual theatrical components of dramaturgy theory as front-back stage division, job autonomy, customers' positive feedback, and explicitness of service scripts as these have not been tested by existing articles. The items in Table 2 (see Appendix-II) were proposed to measure these dimensions. Back stage is a resting space that is separated from the front stage and is an area in which service employees don't need to fake or suppress their emotions and can relax and regulate their mood in preparation for their work. The front-back stage division was measured with three items designed by referring to prior works (Goffman, 1959; Reyers and Matusitz, 2012; Tumbat, 2008) in order to examine the relationship with emotional exhaustion. Customers' reciprocal complaint behavior and their inconsistent perception of the service contents could be avoided if service employees possessed enough autonomy to satisfy customers' extra requests, could adjust standard procedures to provide better customized services, and had the ability to deal with even more complicated circumstances. The relationship between job autonomy and emotional exhaustion was measured with three items relying on the job characteristics model (Hackman and Oldham, 1975). The extent of customer involvement in a service procedure not only strongly influenced the eventual success or failure of the service but also revealed experienced quality to service employees. Customers typically feedback positively if they are satisfied with the service. The customers' positive feedback was measured with four items according to recent research (Grandey and Diamond, 2010; Yagil and Ben-Zur, 2009) in order to explore the relationship with emotional exhaustion. Employees have to comply with their organization's prescribed rules or standard procedures, symbolized as scripts using dramaturgy theory, to deliver services with a constant level of quality, including exterior displays (e.g. wearing uniforms) and interior emotion giving (e.g. smiling and enthusiastic conversation). Yet employees feel confused and fail to handle customers' requests if the rules are not explicit enough, and thus can cause frustration and emotional exhaustion. The explicitness of the service scripts was measured with three items raised from previous studies (Baron *et al.*, 1996; Bitner *et al.*, 1994; Mattsson,

1994) in order to investigate the influence on emotional exhaustion (see Appendix-II).

- Emotional Exhaustion

Emotional exhaustion was measured using the subscale from the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) developed by Maslach, Jackson and Leiter (1996). This included items such as " I feel tired when I get up in the morning and have to face another day on the job" (see Appendix-III). The MBI has been used by many relevant articles and has proved to be reliable and valid. The Cronbach's *alpha* for this scale was .81.

Reliability and Validity for the Theatrical Components Scale

Since there are no appropriate scales available to measure theatrical components, this research suggested items by referring to relevant articles that explore the relationship with emotional exhaustion and which require further investigation regarding reliability and validity. The internal reliability for the subscales of each theatrical component and their means, standard deviations, and correlations are shown in Table 1 (see Appendix-I). The subscales manifested sufficient levels of internal reliability (Cronbach's *alpha*) for Front-Back Stage Division (.71), Job Autonomy (.75), Customers' Positive Feedback (.87), and Explicitness of Service Scripts (.78).

A factor analysis using principal factors extracted by varimax rotation was performed on items of the theatrical components scale (Table 2, see Appendix-II) to examine the factor structure. Four factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 were extracted, as expected, which accounted for 70.36 percent cumulative variance. The consistent and distinct factor structure moderately supports construct validity.

RESULTS

Emotional Labor and Emotional Exhaustion

The regression result for emotional labor and emotional exhaustion is shown in Table 3. Five dimensions of emotional labor acted as predictors and exhibit a significant model with $p < .01$ for overall test. However, individual parameter tests for most dimensions of emotional labor, emotion expression, surface acting, deep acting, and customer-employee interaction, had p values greater than significance level showing no apparent influence on emotional exhaustion. The exception was the variety of emotional display which was a significant positive predictor and partially confirms hypothesis H_1. The more complex emotions required for employees to exhibit during service, the more psychological fatigue they will experience.

Emotional Labor	Emotional Exhaustion	
	B	***R^2***
Emotion Expression	-.16	
Surface Acting	.08	
Deep Acting	.14	
Variety of Emotional Display	.20**	
Customer-Employee Interaction	-.07	.06*

$n = 271$
*$p < .05$
**$p < .01$

Table 3. Regression relationship between emotional labor and emotional exhaustion

The Moderating Effect of Theatrical Components on the Relationship between Emotional Labor and Emotional Exhaustion

Hierarchical regressions including one component each time based on the framework suggested by Lindley and Walker (1993) was conducted for all four theatrical components to test hypothesized moderating effects. First, the front-back stage division effect was not significant itself (p = .64) as added into the emotional labor – emotional exhaustion model shown in Table 4. The interaction between emotional labor and front-back stage division, however, was weakly significant (p = .07 for Surface Acting x Front-Back Stage Division and p = .08 for Deep Acting x Front-Back Stage Division) though the variance contributed from the interaction was insignificant (p = .36 for $\triangle R^2$). We understood that p equals to .07 > .05 for Surface Acting x Front-Back Stage Division and p equals to .08 > .05 for Deep Acting x Front-Back Stage Division are not significant, however, these p values are less than .10 and much lower than p values for other theatrical components (Customers' Positive Feedback and Explicitness of Service Scripts). Therefore, we concluded "weakly significant". For each theatrical component, the sample employees' responses were classified as a "high" group if the scores were greater than the means listed in Table 1, or a "low" group if the scores were less than the means. The regression analysis for emotional labor and emotional exhaustion was then rerun, similar to the testing for hypothesis H_1, for both the high and low groups of each theatrical component to investigate the direction in which how theatrical component influences emotional exhaustion. The regression relationship between emotional labor and emotional exhaustion for high and low groups of theatrical components is shown in Table 5 (see Appendix-IV).

Predictors	Emotional Exhaustion		
	B	R^2	$\triangle R^2$
Emotion Expression	-.20		
Surface Acting	.05		
Deep Acting	.19		
Variety of Emotional Display	.20**		
Customer-Employee Interaction	-.08	.06	.06**
Front-Back Stage Division	.02	.06	.001 (.64)
Emotion Expression x Front-Back Stage Division	.13		
Surface Acting x Front-Back Stage Division	-.27† (.07)		
Deep Acting x Front-Back Stage Division	.24† (.08)		
Variety of Emotional Display x Front-Back Stage Division	.05		
Customer-Employee Interaction x Front-Back Stage Division	-.03	.09	.02 (.36)

n = 271; *Significance appearing in parentheses*
†$p < .10$
*$p < .05$
**$p < .01$

Table 4. Effect of emotional labor on emotional exhaustion moderated by front-back stage division

Second, the job autonomy effect was weakly significant itself (p = .06) as added into the emotional labor-emotional exhaustion model shown in Table 6. We knew that p = .06 > .05 for job autonomy is not significant, however, this p value is less than .10 and much lower than p values for other theatrical components added into the emotional labor-emotional exhaustion model (Front-Back Stage, Customers' Positive

Feedback, and Explicitness of Service Scripts). Therefore, we concluded " weakly significant". Similar as the front-back stage division but with stronger influence, the interactive effect between emotional labor and job autonomy was significant (p = .01 for Surface Acting x job autonomy), nevertheless, the variance contributed from the interaction was insignificant (p = .18 for $\triangle R^2$). Unfortunately, both customers' positive feedback and explicitness of service scripts were insignificant not only themselves included in the emotional labor-emotional exhaustion model but also interacted with emotional labor.

Predictors	Emotional Exhaustion		
	B	R^2	$\triangle R^2$
Emotion Expression	-.01		
Surface Acting	-.01		
Deep Acting	.07		
Variety of Emotional Display	.21**		
Customer-Employee Interaction	-.10	.05	.05* (.04)
Job autonomy	-.09	.07	.01† (.06)
Emotion Expression x Job autonomy	.17		
Surface Acting x Job autonomy	-.35* (.01)		
Deep Acting x Job autonomy	.05		
Variety of Emotional Display x Job autonomy	.01		
Customer-Employee Interaction x Job autonomy	.06	.106	.03 (.18)

n = 271; Significance appearing in parentheses
†p < .10
*p < .05
**p < .01

Table 6. Effect of emotional labor on emotional exhaustion moderated by job autonomy

DISCUSSION

Although only one dimension of emotional labor, the variety of emotional display, can cause significant emotional exhaustion, the test result is consistent with prior research (Brotheridge and Grandey, 2002; Pugh *et al*., 2010). The explanation capability of the test is weak though because it is essentially a difficult trial to detect emotional exhaustion with cross-sectional study design. Employees' perception of exhaustion could be activated only if all five dimensions create a significant effect simultaneously. Service employees are required to exhibit various emotions for different groups of customers, atmospheres, and environments and the need to switch back and forth between numerous kinds of exterior emotional displays could be easily prompt emotional conflicts and exhaustion than other factors. The feelings of being drained of energy and mental fatigue may be milder if there are fewer requirements for a variety of emotional displays. Recent studies also support this argument, e.g. Gursoy *et al*. (2011).

For the theatrical components, front-back stage division did not directly influence emotional exhaustion while the interaction with emotional labor did. The surface and deep acting did not influence emotional exhaustion initially moderated by front-back stage division decreased (β = .27, p = .07) and increased (β = .24, p = .08) the effect on emotional exhaustion respectively. Certain service employees such as aircraft crew requiring high level of surface acting usually intensify emotional exhaustion (Johnson and Spector, 2007) could be alleviated by an environment with good front-back stage division. This result supported hypothesis H_{2a} partially and weakly. On the other hand, unlike the surface acting, the deep acting that is a minor factor

causing emotional exhaustion (Grandey, 2003) could easily arouse employees' fatigue feeling as they take a break in the space with good front-back stage division. Perhaps the perfect isolation from working space release employees' true internal emotional states and prompt an effect opposite to hypothesis H_{2a}.

The job autonomy had a negative main effect and an interactive effect with emotional labor on emotional exhaustion. The surface acting did not exist significant effect on emotional exhaustion moderated by job autonomy decreased (β = −.35, p = .01) the influence on emotional exhaustion. Similar as front-back stage division, service employees need to engage in high level of surface acting and result in emotional exhaustion could retard the negative effect if they own more job autonomy. Employees who possess higher degrees of freedom to arrange and implement their tasks will relax the positive emotional labor-emotional exhaustion relationship. This result supports hypothesis H_{2b} partially.

Although customers' positive feedback and explicitness of service scripts did not moderate emotional labor-emotional exhaustion relationship significantly and H_{2c} and H_{2d} were not justified, the regression analysis results in Table 5 still demonstrate evident difference of the impacts from theatrical components at different levels on the relationship between emotional labor and emotional exhaustion. Service employees recognized the obvious drain on their energy if customers revealed less positive feedback (p = .003) but the psychological effect was not apparent if customers showed more positive feedback (p = .52). Both deep acting and variety of emotional display inspired distinct and positive impacts (β = .23 and .24, respectively) on emotional exhaustion under the situation of low customers' positive feedback. Employees needed to manage emotions deeply and exhibit many kinds of exterior emotion could perceive emotional exhaustion without sufficient positive feedback from customers. Moreover, the emotional labor affected emotional exhaustion significantly for employees in organizations without explicit enough service scripts (p = .03), whereas the preceding relationship was not valid statistically for organizations that had explicit service scripts (p = .25). The variety of emotional display produced an evident and positive effect (β = .22) on emotional exhaustion. Employees suffered excessive psychological weariness when they were required to show a variety of emotions during service delivery if the organizations had no clear task scripts.

CONCLUSION

The demand of high level of emotional labor from service employees does induce emotional exhaustion but only one dimension, the variety of emotional display, rather than all five dimensions of emotional labor causes the emotional depletion feeling. Service employees needed to vary among many kinds of faking exterior expressions possess higher potential to trigger emotional conflicts and increase the extent of emotional exhaustion. The positive emotional labor-emotional exhaustion relationship is not obvious as other researches (Grandey, 2000; Wharton, 2009; Whiting *et al.*, 2011). It is not easy to actuate significant emotional exhaustion

unless all five dimensions of emotional labor suffer a certain extreme condition simultaneously.

Two of four theatrical components, front-back stage division and job autonomy, moderate the positive emotional labor-emotional exhaustion relationship weakly. Service employees applying surface acting strategy frequently to interact with customers may feel less exhausted if there is an ideal separation between working and resting area and more job autonomy for employees. A good front-back stage division, on the contrary, may intensify the employees' exhausted perception if they have to use deep acting strategy to manage emotions as delivering services.

The remaining two theatrical components, customers' positive feedback and explicitness of service scripts do not have moderating effect on the positive emotional labor-emotional exhaustion relationship. However, the relationship has a distinct difference at different levels of customers' positive feedback and explicitness of service scripts. With fewer cheer from customers and unclear rules of expressions from organizations, it is easier to detect employees' emotional exhaustion at high rather than low demand of emotional labor.

IMPLICATIONS

Emotional labor causes emotional exhaustion but the effect will be reduced by high rather than low levels of front-back stage division and job autonomy. For many service industries, the break periods may be too short to enable employees to recover from exhaustion without appropriate mechanisms to separate the service areas (front stage) and resting areas (back stage). Most employees have been used to exhibiting the proper emotions during service encounters so some of the components of emotional labor, such as frequency demands, intensity of emotional display and duration of interaction, are no longer effective predictors of emotional exhaustion on workplaces (Cordes, Dougherty and Blum, 1997), even those with poor front-back stage division. Firms with good isolated resting areas can give employees a chance to not only take a break but also " remind" them that they are exhausted. This may justify the reverse moderating effect of front-back stage division for deep acting. With regards to the job autonomy, this study shows the moderating effect similar as several researches revealed that high job autonomy can help reduce emotional dissonance and emotional exhaustion (Morris and Feldman, 1997), though other research argues that there is not yet enough evidence to propose that the job autonomy effect may be strong enough to decrease emotional exhaustion caused by high levels of emotional labor demand (Gursoy *et al*., 2011).

The customers' positive feedback and explicitness of service scripts possess distinct effect on the positive relationship between emotional labor and emotional exhaustion as expected, and is associated to relevant research (Grandey and Diamond, 2010; Yagil and Ben-Zur, 2009). A high level of customers' positive feedback and explicitness of service scripts does not further magnify the positive influence of emotional labor on emotional exhaustion, but low levels do. Employees will be inspired to deliver

better services and overcome the dissonance between their interior and exterior emotions activated by the excessive demand of emotional labor so as to avoid using all their energy when they are encouraged by more positive feedback from customers. Additionally, service firms owning detailed and explicit operational procedures, rules, or instructions, often train employees in what to do and how to do help relax their emotional exhaustion. The more explicit service scripts suggest smaller degrees of freedom for employees to judge the appropriate behavior on their jobs, i.e. lower job autonomy, and perhaps this implication soothes employees so that they can rely on these rules under any circumstances and in turn avoid most of the impacts of emotional exhaustion.

No matter what the predicting effects of emotional labor or the moderating effects of theatrical components, this research reflects a variety of emotional displays as a positive key factor that brings on emotional exhaustion. Therefore, organizations can improve service quality as employees reveal noticeable emotional exhaustion from the variety of emotional display perspective. This can be resolved by sympathetically designed training programs. Learning the technique for swapping smoothly between the numerous required emotions and rebuilding the value of service jobs may help employees handle the unavoidable variety of emotional displays, reduce the conflict between true feelings and faked emotions, and decelerate the consumption of internal emotion resources.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The inference of this research had several limitations. First, sample service employees came from department stores, banks, airlines, hospitals, restaurants and hair salons. Therefore, all conclusions were applicable only to those organizations instead of all service industries. Secondly, respondents were drawn by purposive sampling from six industries so that sample sizes were not large enough after eliminating ineffective questionnaires for some sectors and hence influenced the precision of statistical analysis.

The accurate measurement for emotional labor, emotional exhaustion, and theatrical components are keys for the correct research results. There exist well accepted and confirmed scales to assess emotional labor and emotional exhaustion while no common items exist to measure theatrical components. The more rigid investigation than this study to build a solid scale measuring theatrical components is one future research target. In addition, larger sample size applied to service sectors more than six types of organizations to extend value of the idea for this research is a future work as well.

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Appendix-I

	M	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Front-Back Stage Division	3.72	.79	(.71)									
2. Job Autonomy	3.56	.75	.34**	(.75)								
3. Customers' Positive Feedback	4.15	.62	.25**	.53**	(.87)							
4. Explicitness of Service Scripts	4.21	.57	.10	.25**	.53**	(.78)						
5. Emotion Expression	4.40	.45	.14*	.25**	.41**	.38**	(.83)					
6. Surface Acting	4.24	.55	.15*	.14*	.38**	.31**	.71**	(.74)				
7. Deep Acting	3.96	.48	.13*	.16*	.31**	.30**	.57**	.58**	(.78)			
8. Variety of Emotional Display	3.37	.74	.23**	.21**	.10	.09	.23**	.28**	.34**	(.78)		
9. Customer-Employee Interaction	4.18	.73	.10	.13*	.32**	.38**	.37**	.31**	.37**	.16*	(.86)	
10. Emotional Exhaustion	2.65	.70	.09	-.08	-.08	-.06	.01	.09	.13*	.23**	.01	(.81)

$n = 271$
*$p < .05$
**$p < .01$

Table 1. Descriptive statistics, Correlations, and Reliability for Theatrical Components, Emotional Labor, and Emotional Exhaustion

Appendix-II

Items	Factor loadings				Commu-nalities	Percent of variance	Cumulative percent of variance
	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4			
Customers' Positive Feedback							
12. Customers tell me in person or in other ways they are satisfied with my good service.	.803				.716		
11. Customers are happy as they perceive my extra service.	.785				.706	21.838	21.838
10. I can feel customers' pleasure immediately as their demands are met.	.779				.779		
9. I can comprehend my good job performance by way of customers' delighted responses.	.693				.692		
Explicitness of Service Scripts							
13. Our company offers pre-job training so that I have better service performance.		.890			.885		
17. Our company sets up relations about clothes and dress for service employees.		.757			.587	17.947	39.785
14. I have to follow our company's criteria and operational procedures during service.		.754			.679		
Job Autonomy							
7. I have a high degree of freedom to determine my job progress.			.854		.781		
8. I can modify service procedures in accordance with customer needs.			.765		.694	15.818	55.603
6. My professional skills match my current job perfectly.			.679		.595		
Front-Back Stage Division							
1. The place I work possesses separators or resting areas to separate the customers.				.847	.769		
2. I can take a break in the rest areas when I feel uncomfortable.				.814	.733	14.766	70.369
3. I have no chance to escape from customers temporarily because of the long period and high frequency of contacting customers.				.672	.532		
Eigenvalue	2.839	2.333	2.056	1.920			

Table 2. Items to Measure Theatrical Components

Appendix-III

Items to measure emotional labor. Each dimension of emotional labor is measured as item 1-5 for emotion expression, item 6-8 for surface acting, item 9-11 for deep acting, item 12-14 for variety of emotional display, and item 15-20 for customer-employee interaction. Used scale is 5-point Likert type i.e. 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (neutral), 4 (agree), or 5 (strongly agree).

	1	2	3	4	5
1. I genuinely concern customers' needs so that they feel respectable.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. I genuinely show contentment expression so that customers feel we are reliable.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. I genuinely show happiness expression so that customers feel they are welcomed.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. I genuinely feel liking to interact with customers.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. I genuinely feel enthusiasm for my works and customers.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. My company requires me to resist expressing my true feelings to avoid spoiling proper attitude to customers.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. My company hopes I pretend to have cheerful emotions to keep happy atmosphere even I don't really have.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. My company requires me hide my true feelings and keep certain expressions to accord with corporate image.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. I have to make an effort to actually feel the emotions that I need to display to customers.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10. I try to actually experience the emotions that I must show even I have been fatigued.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11. I really try to feel the emotions I have to show as part of my job.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12. My company requires me to display many different kinds of emotions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13. My company requires me to express many different emotions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14. My company requires me to display many different emotions when interacting with different types of customers.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15. My job requires me to display specific emotions to customers for a long time every day.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
16. My job requires me to adopt certain emotions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17. My job needs me to express particular emotions to customers very often every day.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
18. My job needs me to express intense emotions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
19. My job needs me to show some strong emotions to customers.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
20. I feel that a typical interaction with a customer is too long.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Items to measure emotional exhaustion. Used scale is 5-point Likert type i.e. 1 (never), 2 (rarely), 3 (sometimes), 4 (often), or 5 (always).

	1	2	3	4	5
1. My job let me feel emotional exhausted.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. I feel fatigued after work every day.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. I feel tired when I get up in the morning and have to face another day on the job.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. I am weary of my job.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Appendix–IV

	B		*t*		*p*	
Front-Back Stage Division	low	high	low	high	low	high
Emotion Expression	-.310	.039	-2.135*	.293	.035	.770
Surface Acting	.368	-.231	2.538*	-1.696	.013	.093
Deep Acting	-.001	.276	-.007	2.135*	.995	.035
Variety of Emotional Display	.130	.305	1.326	3.054**	.188	.003
Customer-Employee Interaction	-.119	-.095	-1.161	-.901	.248	.370
low: R =.303, R^2 = .092, Adjusted R^2 = .048, F = 2.102, p = .071						
high: R =.376, R^2 = .141, Adjusted R^2 = .100, F = 3.417**, p = .007						
Job Autonomy	low	high	low	high	low	high
Emotion Expression	-.084	-.025	-.518	-.188	.606	.852
Surface Acting	.213	-.134	1.313	-.986	.193	.326
Deep Acting	.071	.069	.504	.582	.616	.562
Variety of Emotional Display	.112	.280	.979	3.012**	.330	.003
Customer-Employee Interaction	-.029	-.181	-.251	-1.757	.802	.082
low: R =.257, R^2 = .066, Adjusted R^2 = .010, F = 1.186, p = .323						
high: R =.331, R^2 = .110, Adjusted R^2 = .070, F = 2.735*, p = .023						
Customers' Positive Feedback	low	high	low	high	low	high
Emotion Expression	-.132	-.046	-1.028	-.355	.306	.724
Surface Acting	.073	.023	.568	.178	.571	.859
Deep Acting	.238	-.043	1.991*	-.348	.049	.729
Variety of Emotional Display	.240	.213	2.507*	1.988	.014	.050
Customer-Employee Interaction	-.106	-.019	-1.126	-.175	.263	.862
low: R =.373, R^2 = .139, Adjusted R^2 = .103, F = 3.816**, p = .003						
high: R =.214, R^2 = .046, Adjusted R^2 = -.009, F = .814, p = .524						
Explicitness of Service Scripts	low	high	low	high	low	high
Emotion Expression	-.164	.030	-1.197	.219	.234	.827
Surface Acting	-.049	.100	-.332	.768	.740	.445
Deep Acting	.231	.008	1.777	.065	.078	.948
Variety of Emotional Display	.226	.191	2.191*	1.855	.031	.067
Customer-Employee Interaction	-.038	-.068	-.378	-.646	.706	.520
low: R =.328, R^2 = .108, Adjusted R^2 = .066, F = 2.586*, p = .030						
high: R =.255, R^2 = .065, Adjusted R^2 = .016, F = 1.331, p = .258						

*p < .05
**p < .01

Table 5. Regression relationship between emotional labor and emotional exhaustion for each theatrical component at high and low level