Emotional Labor: An Examination of Faculty in Two Countries

Shanker Menon[1] & Lakshmi Narayanan[2]

[1] College of Commerce and Business Administration, Dhofar University, Oman

[2] College of Arts and Applied Sciences, Dhofar University, Oman

Correspondence: Shanker Menon, College of Commerce and Business Administration. P. O. Box 2509, Salalah, Oman. Tel: 96-82-323-7432. E-mail: s_menon@du.edu.om

Abstract

Although there have been several studies on expatriate adjustment, acculturation and cultural adaptation to a foreign culture in service-driven occupations, there is a dearth of research in many areas. There have been few studies that have looked at jobs that have high emotional labor in the academic field in a cross-cultural context. This study attempts to fill this gap by examining a high emotional labor occupation - the teaching profession, by looking at two different samples of teaching faculty, in two different countries. Two different groups of faculty from the US one teaching in the US, and one teaching as expatriate faculty in China were compared. Findings revealed significant differences in perceptions of emotional labor, stressors and strains. The implications of these findings are discussed.

Keywords: academic faculty, cross-culture, emotional labor, teaching profession

1. Introduction to the Educational Environment

With globalization and increased worker mobility, there are less barriers to international employment, and this has opened up opportunities for individuals from different parts of the world (Schoepp, 2011). One profession where there is very evident is in the educational field. In the education industry there has been a great demand for qualified teachers who have the knowledge and skills to meet the needs of many schools, colleges and universities in many countries.

Many countries in the world are seeing rapid growth and development, particularly in the developing world and this has increased their needs for human resources as the local population does not adequately have the skills and knowledge to meet their needs. Therefore, these countries have become very reliant and dependent on expatriate populations to meet their human resource needs (Belderbos & Heijltjes, 2005; Fang et al., 2010). In the educational field in particular there is a great demand for faculty in many countries. As Schoepp (2011) points out expatriate scholars are exemplars in today's new global employment reality. They have the capability to impart the knowledge and skills needed, and the advantage is they only need to be hired for a relatively short time period.

Additionally, the trends in education in many parts of the world have also changed due to economic, political and social factors and many educational organizations including schools, colleges and universities have become like a service-like industry (Hargreaves, 2000). Teachers are similar in many ways to service workers and have to respond to not only the needs of the students, but they are accountable to the parents and other stakeholders. Hebson et al. (2007) argue that these can create emotional labor in the teaching profession and affect job satisfaction, and be associated with many negative outcomes that affect the psychological and social well-being for these employees.

Many states and governmental institutions have cut funding to educational institutions for a variety of financial and economic reasons. In addition, even other educational institutions specifically private institutions have less support from donors and are primarily dependent on funding from the student body. Students are therefore perceived as customers or clients as financial resources are to a large extent dependent of student enrollment.

Furthermore, the 21st century environment we live in is in an age of an "affective or emotional revolution," (Ashkanasy & Humphrey, 2011). Our feelings and emotions and our communication styles are playing a greater role in the interactions with one another. Some researchers argue that there has been a paradigm shift in recent

years as the role of emotion or affect continues to gain significant importance in organizations today. Barsade, Brief, Spataro, and Greenberg (2003) state that this becomes more evident if we examine the literature in many fields of study, including sociology, psychology, education, and organizational behavior. Topics such as trait affect, state affect, the social sharing of affect, emotional intelligence, and emotional labor which is the focus of this study are getting increasing attention by researchers. We will examine one important construct in this affect or emotional field: emotional labor.

1.1 Emotional Labor

One of the most significant job stressor in service-driven occupations is emotional labor. There have been nearly four decades of research on this subject related to the service industry and many significant findings have emerged which point to the importance of this construct.

Hochschild (1983) in her seminal sociological work on the airline industry coined the term "emotional labour" which refers to the emotional display rules required by different service occupations. She explains how employees are expected to manage their emotions to meet the demands of job and how emotions have been commercialized in the service industry.

Many of these service-driven professions demand from employees certain behaviors and actions that need to conform to the feeling rules and expressions that are deemed appropriate for these jobs. Hoschild argues that sometimes employees have to become "social actors" to meet these emotional demands. Emotional labor according to Hochschild (1979) demands result in two types of emotional management strategies: surface acting (where you change your expression to change feelings) and deep acting (where you change your feeling to change your emotional expression).

Emotional labor and emotional demands are characteristic in service-driven occupations and there are many research studies that point to the negative effects of emotional labor on the psychological and social well-being of service workers. Studies that have been done on flight attendants, bill collectors, and public health workers (Bono et al., 2007; Diefendorff et al., 2008; Hochschild, 1983) point to the seriousness of this problem in these types of occupations. For example in the study by Hochschild (1983) she found that flight attendants as a condition of their job are required to keep smiling and show warmth toward consumers, and are trained extensively to do so.

From a cross-cultural perspective it is reasonable to expect that we will be less able to recognize emotions in other cultures as compared to our own. Cultures vary in their emotional display rules (Matsumoto, 1990), and Elfenbein and Ambady (2002) have found that we are worse at recognizing emotions of members from different cultural groups. In the cross-cultural contact, in service-driven occupations, the frequent intercultural encounters between service providers and customers will demand emotional regulation and control on the part of the employee even to a greater degree than in one's own culture.

Given that there are feeling rules and expression rules that are culture-specific in societies; these can put an additional burden for service-driven occupations for these expatriates in foreign cultures. Some studies that have examined expatriate adjustment and the role of emotion and these are discussed below.

1.2 Cross-Cultural Studies on Expatriate Adjustment

Several studies have been done by many researchers in the last few decades to examine how individuals adjust to a new environment in a new culture. Haslberger, Brewster, & Hippler, 2013, 2014) examined the multiple dimensions of expatriate adjustment and looked at expatriate adjustment as a person-environment relationship. They discuss three important dimensions in this context cognitions, feelings, and behaviors and how they related to expartriate adjustment. Boncori and Vine (2014) explored the pre-departure linguistic and cultural training for expatriates in China, and focused on the emotional aspects of movement. Grandey et al. (2005) argue that emotional labor also depends on the emotional culture. In their study they found that there were significant differences between US and French employees, in their perceptions of emotional labor. Koveshnikov, Wechtler, and Dejoux (2014) examined cross-cultural adjustment of expatriates and the role of emotional intelligence on international assignments and they found some significant relationships. The present authors (Menon & Narayanan, 2008, 2009, 2011; Menon, Narayanan, Plaisent, & Bernard, 2011) have also done several studies, related to expatriates.

1.3 Emotional Labor and the Teaching Profession

There have been some mixed findings regarding the role of emotional labor in the teaching profession. Some researchers contend that teachers need to control and manage their emotions as in other service driven professions as they face the same kinds of emotional labor that are faced in other service occupations (Hulsheger et al., 2011). These researchers found that emotional labor can potentially alienate us (Hülsheger & Schewe, 2011)

and this is consistent with the general findings of emotional labor in other service occupations.

However, other researchers argue that teaching is an intrinsically rewarding profession and they feel that the emotional labor they experience is part of their profession. These researchers state that teaching is a very emotionally intense profession, individuals are very passionate about their work and emotional labor sometimes has a positive affect (Hargreaves, 1998, 2000; Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2006). They argue that the nature of the work, though emotionally draining at times, is also intrinsically motivating and rewarding. For example, Hargreaves (1998), Mack (2008) and Smyth et al. (2000) point out that as teachers the emotional labor we experience may actually increase our job satisfaction, commitment and effectiveness of what we do.

Some researchers believe teaching is inextricably emotional. Hargreaves (2000) in an interesting study examined the "emotional geographies" how teacher feelings and emotions are embedded in the conditions and interactions of their work. He states that teaching and learning are "emotional practices" and irrevocably emotional.

In sum, based on the discussion from past research, there is a lack of systematic understanding of how our emotions are affected by our interactions in this teaching environment and affected by students, parents and administrators. While many studies have examined emotional labor on many service oriented occupations, including educational institutions, there have been few studies, to these researchers' knowledge, that have examined educational institutions in a global context specifically the impact of expatriate teachers in private institutions of higher education.

1.4 The Present Study

Given that educational institutions are the primary engines of national development and growth in any economy (Etkowitz, 2008), and given that many of these institutions in the developing world hire expatriate faculty to assist in this development, the goal of the present study is to examine this important and relevant topic. As pointed out earlier, there is a dearth of research on this subject and this study will enhance the research and knowledge in this area, particularly in the cross-cultural context.

There have been several studies that have examined stress among expatriates as they transition and move to a new country or culture and the challenges they face as they attempt to adopt and adapt to the new environment (Haslberger, Brewster, & Hippler, 2013; Boncori & Vine, 2014) However, these challenges become even greater when they have to adjust not only to a new environment, but to the additional demands of emotional labor on the job. In this study we will examine emotional labor in a culture-specific context among expatriate university faculty by comparing faculty working in their own country and faculty working in another country. We chose faculty from a western culture, the USA and examined the differences in emotional labor when they worked in a culture very different from their own, a Confucianistic culture–China, so we compared two samples, a US sample in the US, a US sample in China.

1.5 Hypotheses

The following 4 hypotheses were tested:

1) There will significant differences in the emotional labor type of incidents faced in each country.

2) There will be significant differences between the US and China samples in the types of emotional reactions in each country

3) There will be significant differences between the US and China samples in the types of strains reported.

4) There will be more surface acting by the sample in China, compared to the sample in the US.

2. Method

2.1 Sample

We chose faculty from the US, one group of faculty worked in their own country, the second group of faculty were also from the US but worked in the culture very different from their own, in China. There were 143 faculties from the US working in the US, and 134 faculties from the US working in China.

2.2 Measures

Emotional labor was measured by using a qualitative method, the emotional incident record. Using close-ended measures that traditional likert-type measures use with general questions may not adequately address the unique and specific conditions that create emotional labor for the individual in a particular culture. A qualitative technique will better address culture-specific challenges and problems faced by the faculty and understand the unique conditions and context of situations where there are emotional demands in the cross-cultural context. The present authors have more recently discussed the importance of this kind of measurement especially in the

cross-cultural context (Menon & Narayanan, 2015).

A modified version of the SIR, stress incident record, was used and we focused the incident on emotional labor. This was used by Keenan and Newton (1985) and has also been used by present authors in earlier studies (Narayanan, Menon, & Spector, 1999a, 1999b). Participants were asked to describe an event their work environment where they experienced a deep emotion that put an emotional strain on them. They were specifically asked to describe situations where they had to display expression, or feelings to match the situation and pretend to feel or display certain emotions.

They were asked to briefly describe this incident, their emotions and feelings about this incident, and also to describe the action they took to cope with this situation and their specific behavior. They were also asked what strains they felt, and finally how often they faced these kinds of events. To minimize memory distortions, participants were asked to only describe events that had happened in the last six months. If there was no such event they were simply asked to report "none".

2.3 Content Analysis

We used a similar procedure that has been used in past research by the present authors where two independent raters develop exhaustive categories of responses to the specific open-ended questions based on the themes that emerge.

Categories that had the same theme were combined into higher-order categories. Categories that could not be combined were placed in the "other" category. Next, a third rater was given these responses and categories scrambled, and asked to put them back into the categories. The reliability of this measure was assessed with inter-rater agreement. This was the percent of times the third rater independently placed the responses in the original categories developed by the first two raters. Inter-rater agreement was relatively high and ranged from 91-93% in this study. The disagreements were resolved by consensus.

3. Results

Table 1 presents the frequencies of responses obtained from each category from the open-ended data for the sample for each country. This includes the Type of Emotional incident and the frequency of the incident in for each sample. A 2 (country) X 8 (type of emotional incident) Chi-square was done to test for significant differences on type of emotional incident by country. There were some significant differences found. $\chi^2 = (28.75$ df, 7), p < .000. The frequencies are detailed in Table 1. Hypothesis 1 was supported.

It was significant to find that the types of emotional incidents that were perceived as emotional labor differed significantly for the two samples in their frequency. The most frequently reported emotional incident for the China sample was the Interaction with parents/stakeholder, Lack of control over situation, customs/beliefs dissonance, and disagreement over grade and behavior of students and misunderstandings. The most frequently reported emotional incident for the US sample was interpersonal conflict, Conflict with Chair/Head of Department, and lack of control over situation.

Table 1. Frequencies of type of emotional labor incident for the two samples

Type of incident	China sample	USA sample
Conflict with Chair/Head of Department	16	24
Disagreement over grade	21	15
Behavior of students /Misunderstanding	21	16
Interaction with parents/stakeholder	23	09
Lack of control over situation	23	18
Customs/Beliefs dissonance	22	08
Interpersonal Conflict	11	32
Other	06	11

A 2 (country) X 10 (type of emotional reactions) Chi-square was done to test for significant differences on emotional reactions by country. There were some significant differences found. $\chi^2 = (19.21$, df, 9), p < .023. The most frequently reported emotional reaction for the China sample was Anger and frustration, sadness/depression,

apathy/withdrawal and anxiety and fear. For the US sample the most frequently reported emotional reaction was Empathy, positive feelings, anger/frustration, and anxiety and fear. The frequencies are detailed in Table 2. Hypothesis 2 was also supported.

A 2 (country) X 8 (type of outcome) Chi-square was done to test for significant differences on type of outcome by country. There were some significant differences found. $\chi^2 = (22.64, df, 7)$, $p < .002$. The most frequently reported outcome for the China sample was intention to quit, seeing the funny side, avoidance, and substance abuse. For the US sample it was seeing this as a positive challenge/intrinsic motivation, substance abuse and physical symptoms. The frequencies are detailed in Table 3. Hypothesis 3 was supported.

A 2 (country) X 3 (type of strategy) Chi-square was done to test for significant differences on type of strategy by country. There were some significant differences found. $\chi^2 = (12.67 \ df, 2)$, $p < .002$. There were significantly more surface acting in the sample in China and significantly more deep acting in the US. This is detailed in Table 4. Hypothes 4 was supported.

Table 2. Frequencies of type of emotional reactions to the incident for the two samples

Type of emotional reactions	China sample	USA sample
Resentment	16	12
Anger/Frustration	20	17
Resignation/Acceptance	14	05
Apathy/Withdrawal	15	07
Empathy	10	25
Sadness/Depression	18	16
Positive Feelings	12	19
Anxiety/Fear	15	17
Disgust/Scorn	14	06
Other	09	10

Table 3. Frequencies of type of outcomes in relation to the incident reported by the two samples

Type of outcome (psychological, physical, behavioral)	China sample	USA sample
Intention to quit	24	12
Lack of sleep	17	13
Headache, body ache/Other physical symptoms	15	21
Saw this as a positive challenge/Intrinsic motivation	20	32
Substance Abuse (drinking, smoking, etc)	16	29
Seeing the funny side	23	10
Avoidance	22	09
Other	06	08

Table 4. Frequencies of types of strategy used to deal with emotional labor incident for the two samples

Type of strategy to deal with incident	China sample	USA sample
Surface acting (Suppressed and Faked emotion)	81	49
Deep acting	52	77
Other	10	08

4. Discussion

The results of the study supported all 4 hypotheses. It was interesting to note that no participant answered "none" and it is evident that emotional labor is very prevalent among college faculty in both countries. Four important findings emerged, first, there are many types of situations where faculty experience emotional labor, both in their own country and in another culture and there is a culture-specific difference. Second, there are some significant differences in the types of situations where they perceive emotional labor, as well as significant differences in the types of emotional reactions and outcomes faced in both countries. It also appears that most individuals engaged in surface acting more in another culture compared to working in their own culture, there was more deep acting within their own culture. Finally, some individuals found that emotional labor was positive for them, and stated that this was related to some positive outcomes such as motivation, inspiration, and positive emotions such as empathy. This study is consistent with previous research as emotional labor appears to have both positive (Hargreaves, 1998, 2000; Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2006) and negative consequences (Hulsheger & Schewe, 2011). Although the relationship of surface acting and deep acting was not examined quantitatively, it is conceivable that deep acting was related to positive outcomes, and surface acting to negative outcomes. Johnson and Spector (2007) found some positive effects for deep acting and negative effects for surface acting in their study.

The results of this study add further support to the importance of cross-cultural differences that have been supported by several researchers in several studies (Hofstede, 2003; Holrgraves, 1997).

Beyond just the theoretical implications from the findings of this study, this study also has some very important practical implications. Colleges, schools, universities and other organizations can be prepare and orient employees to the special specific challenges, demands and specific stressors. This can increase the awareness of both employers and employees, particularly in a cross-cultural context.

For example, previous research has supported the use of Realistic Job Preview (RJP). The Realistic Job Preview (RJP) is a recruitment technique used by human resource management where organizations provide both positive and negative aspects of the job. This technique has had several positive outcomes in the hiring process (Horn, Griffeth, Palich, & Bracer, 1999; Premack & Wanous, 1985; Wanous, 1992). In recent years several researchers have pointed to the benefit s of this approach in the cross-cultural context (Templer, Klaus, Tay, & Chandrasekar, 2006). We propose that the conditions of emotional labor in these service-oriented jobs be incorporated in the RJP process, specifically for expatriate selection and recruitment, in addition to the training and orientation process.

This study had limitations in that we looked at only 2 groups, and their interactions in one culture, and only one occupation was examined. Also, there was a focus on measuring stressors and strains related to emotional labor conditions, it is possible that other stressors such as workload, salary, co-workers also played a role in these responses.

This study looked at the group of faculty from the US and also examined this cross-culturally in one culture. This underscores the importance of research need in a cross-cultural context as the present authors have pointed out (Menon & Narayanan, 2008, 2009, 2011). This type of research can open up new areas of enquiry, more cultures can be examined by future researchers substantiating such findings and increasing our knowledge-base in both theory and practice in the area of education.

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