

A New Perspective for the Concept of the Emotional Labor; Offering a Concept of 'Liquid Emotion'

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Abstract—This study offers a new concept for the emotional labor based on traditional studies on emotional labor. Precedent researches on emotional labors commonly and basically dealt with the relationship between the active group who performs actions and the passive group who is done with the action. It has been found that the active group is on the relatively higher interactive positions. This study focuses on the passive group and tries to offer a new perspective of 'liquid emotion' as a defense mechanism for the passive group from the external environment. This study makes its way as following procedures: first, this manifests logical bases of the literature on the active and passive behavioral types. Second, this investigates the concepts about the emotional labor and its relativity with active and passive behaviors. Third, this introduces the concept of liquid emotions as a new perspective, in particular determining terms and their concept. Forth, this looks over the importance of this study and suggests possible directions of following studies. Especially, this addresses a concrete discussion on directions of following studies on the liquid labor as a newly suggested perspective.

Keywords—Deep Acting; Emotion Labor; Liquid Emotion; Offensive Language; Surface Acting.

Abbreviations—Information Technology (IT).

I. INTRODUCTION

RADICAL changes in the industrial environment and spectacular developments of IT have changed the current of managements from people-centered to technology- or IT-centered. Interpersonal relationships have long become insipid and interactive services have also come as mechanical reactions. The Statistics Korea reported in 2016 that the number of employees working in the service industry in Korea is 10,025,000 as of 2014. In that economically active population in Korea is 27,524,000, it refers that as many as 1 of 2.35 is working in the service industry. Experts say the number is to keep increasing in the current of industrial structure. Not only the service industry but all kinds of industries are being reorganized into customer-centric, based on "Customer Orientation" or "customer First." Organized work instructions clearly specify the rules of normalized expressions for the employees under the name of customer-friendly, which has become a crucial factor to formalize a hierarchy in the relationship with customers. This kind of hierarchy, so called customer sovereignty paradigm, is causative of undeserved actions given to employees, who can't help exposing themselves to

customers' exorbitancy. Companies, which are in charge of protecting their employees from indiscreet customers, instead, force their workers for a sacrifice by reason of VIP or core customers. Employees are naked to various circumstances. Customers get irritated and discontented, sometimes starting to use offensive language and even leading to an act of violence, which can cause a mental damage. Hot temper once aroused is difficult to be controlled by oneself without compulsory measures. Hereafter this study investigates traditional definitions of emotional labor and focuses on offensive language which is used with the highest frequency among the circumstances. Then this suggests a new concept of liquid emotions as a defensive mechanism for employees faced with negative environment. In the last part this discusses the importance of this study and future directions of further researches.

II. BACKGROUND

2.1. Emotion Labor

Hochschild's [9, 10] emotional labor provided a historic turning point to the study of labor which had dealt with physical and mental labors. He describes that emotions of

individuals control their own behaviors to be fit to the norms of their job or organization. He defines the emotional labor is “to manage one's emotion to act her facial or body expressions” in his famous book, *The Managed Heart*. During his observation of the training sessions that flight attendants of Delta Airline participated, He actually found both internal and surface acting and He caught the effort of employees that they tried not to let their passengers notice their negative feelings.

The core premise of emotional labor is that employees must adhere to display rules that specify which emotions should be expressed on the job [Ashforth & Humphrey, 1; Morris & Feldman, 11; Rafaeli & Sutton, 13; 14; Sutton, 17; Sutton & Rafaeli, 18]. It can be read like this: the practice of emotional labor can be divided into two; one is the deep acting, with which employees themselves made their feelings harmonized to the expression rules of their organization, and the other is surface acting, which is not suitable with the expression rules of the organization but they made themselves look polite to customers with.

2.1.1. Deep Acting

Deep acting is an effort for an employee to actually express the desirable emotion and is concomitant with active attempts like changing her thought or physical figure for the expression [Hochschild, 10]. Deep acting is mostly derived from voluntary efforts, resulting in positive behaviors which lead to individual achievement as well as that of the organization. Ashforth & Humphrey [1] suggests that when members of an organization practice deep actings, they can come up with the most positive and creative ideas and their emotions influence on cognitive factors of individuals to get the positive achievement. In other words, employees who can practice deep actings produce positive results with their job performance competence and their organization's satisfaction. Grandey [4] doesn't concentrate on the emotional discordance due to the observable expressions and circumstances. He rather say emotional labors from a point of view of internal emotion control is a process of expressions and manipulations of emotion in order to accomplish the object of the organization. Indeed, deep acting is the action of internalizing the standardized rules of emotional expressions with a spontaneous will.

2.1.2. Surface Acting

Surface acting is that employees make their facial expressions, gestures, and voices to follow the rules of emotional expressions their organization demands with no regard to their real feelings. They ignore their own emotions but conform to the manual the company grants [Hochschild, 10]. For example, a customer claims an unreasonable demand or raises his voice during the service, employees would like to cope with the circumstance promptly and make sure the other customers don't get inconvenienced. They may conceal their uneasy feelings and keep treating the compliant with a kind act. They show a series of emotional actions without regard to their own emotions so that they courage the

customer to give a positive reaction or at least to prevent negative one. However, continuous surface acting could arise disagreement between internal and external emotional actions. This inharmony eventually isolate oneself or may be linked to dissatisfaction with the job, possibly resulting in job burnout [Ashforth & Humphrey, 1]. Therefore, the biggest difference between surface acting and deep acting is spontaneity and authenticity. Emotional expressions in the surface acting are an effort for employee himself to be fit in the standardized rules of emotional expressions and reactions without authenticity [Grandey, 5]. On the other hand, deep actings are authentic reactions that employee himself spontaneously makes his emotions harmonious with the standardized rules of emotional expressions.

2.2. External Environment of an Employee

External environment of an employee has chance of irritation and complaints from a customer, followed by offensive language and abuses, physical violence and even mental violence (See Figure 1). Although organizational stable solutions are keenly needed, companies are busy covering up the realities. Even some companies pass the buck to individual employees.

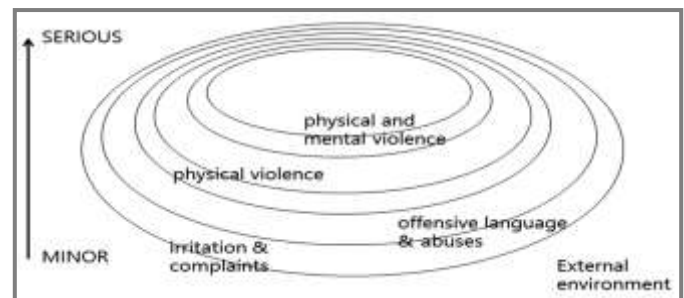


Figure 1: External Environment of an Employee

The most frequent type of actions in the external environment of employees is “offensive language [Grandey et al., 7]”. Offensive language is the most commonly and intensely given type of negative actions and employees in various industries as well as in service industry are easily exposed to it. Generally, offensive language puts the customer himself at minimal risk but brings out the maximum effect, so it occurs most easily and variously among negative actions [Glomb, 8; Neuman & Baron, 12; Sujeong Choi & Kiju Cheong, 16]. This study focuses on the offensive language among the external environment of employees. The reasons offensive language is on the focus are following: first, offensive language is a criterion of negative actions. Negative actions of customers can be divided into 4 stages, which are irritation and complaints, offensive language and abuses, physical violence, and physical and mental violence. (See Figure 1) The next stage of offensive language is physical violence that can cause a serious legal problem. On the contrary, irritation and complaints are trifling matters far from contravention of the law. Offensive language is between the two stages as a certain standard of the legal issue. Second, offensive language is more frequent and stronger than the other types. A customer with passive personality could use

offensive language as an active action, while a customer with active personality could think of offensive language as a passive action compatible with the law. Therefore, offensive language is an important criterion in the negative environment of employees. That's why this study brings the offensive language to a focus. Bourdieu discusses in his book 'Langage et Pouvoirs symbolique' that power of language is made in a certain social context and the social factors give such values to linguistic produce that they have superior value. Under the given situation of service market, customers who purchase products have superior value and it forms 'symbolic power.' This is one of the powers working in daily life. Symbolic power is formed with the social status of speaker, or the way of speaking, which work unconsciously to others so that the customers regard themselves superior. We can easily observe this kind of phenomena. At a point of contact in service like a department store, customers innately have priority to employees, who are located on the different social position. Customers take this positional superiority to show their dissatisfaction with the service of the store or its employees using violence. Slight are irritation and complaints, and severe are physical actions. Most common is offensive language, which could force others to acknowledge the position of the customer. In the situation, the customer is not aware of his socially constituted perception and schema, but receptive the sense of social normality without judgment [Sang-Gil Lee, 15].

What makes this frequent use of offensive language of customers? Precedent studies states as follows: first, offensive language is less dangerous and has less binding force and chance of proceeding to complicated problems than physical threat [Grandey et al., 6]. Second, customers can derive offensive language from dissatisfaction with the service or product itself [Bitner et al., 3]. Third, unstable psychological condition of the customer can facilitate the situation. This study investigates More fundamental drives of offensive language: first, it comes from dissatisfaction with the situation of service. Let's take an example. The most typical non-face-to-face service belongs to call center agents. Their duty usually starts with customers who are experiencing or have already experienced certain negative situation. In other words, customers meet with a call center agent on the phone when they find a defect on their purchase or delivery. If the problem-solving doesn't go well or they find any discontent from the conduct of the agent, language is susceptible to get aggressive. Second, the offensive language comes from the contents of service. Customers have an expectation on the service in the process of purchase and utilization. If the contents of service is trifling or less satisfactory than expected, customers may take negative actions as far as they can. Third, dissatisfaction with the quality of service leads to using offensive language. This has some resemblance to the second one but this is more about customer service after purchase. Warranted or free, customer service with poor quality can provoke negative actions of customers.

2.3. *Liquid Emotion*

This study intends to propose a new concept in studying human emotional labor. Consequently this study is interdisciplinary and this examine various phenomena from a different disciplinary point of view, which had been unseen in business administration. Especially distinguished sociologist Bauman's 'liquid' introduces a new perspective of human emotions, specifically the types of emotional labors of employees. In his book *Liquid Modernity*, Bauman [2] describes 'liquid' as "melting all solid things." That is, many things that used to be believed as truth and impossible are actually fluid phenomena that are ever so much changeable. We are living in a 'liquid' period that comes next to 'solid' period. Bauman [2] proposed the creative concept of 'liquid' to describe these days that are continuously changing without holding a space, binding time, or staying in a certain form. The most remarkable thing about 'liquid' is fluidity, or mobility. Liquid doesn't stay in a certain form and has high mobility. Running into an obstacle, it can take a roundabout way and melt, swallow or pass it by. For these reasons, liquid is related to 'lightness'. Even though liquid in certain kind of container can be heavier than solid [Baumann, 2], we have an intuitive thought that most liquid is more light and movable than solid. The idea of liquid and solid is hereof poles apart and have opposite traits. Is there a necessity of new conceptualism in researches on human emotional labor? Researches in this field started in 1980s. Since American sociologist Hochschild [10] started to study on emotional labor, researches on emotions have actively evolved. With the deep and surface acting of Hochschild at the head of the list, new concepts have been suggested, seemingly becoming a worldwide trend. However, besides deep acting and surface acting, and Morris & Feldman [11] frequency, levels, and diversity of emotional expressions and emotional discordance, there are few concepts which meet a general consensus. That is closely connected with the fundamental object of researches of emotional labor. Most of the traditional studies on emotional labor have taken the format of an empirical research where a researcher set up a hypothesis and verify it. Quantitative studies have made a remarkable growth. Meanwhile the growth of qualitative studies closely related to the conceptual aspect is stagnant. Because of lack of discussion on conceptual definitions, qualitative studies also made little progress. Thus there is a necessity of new concepts with a common agreement. This study classifies emotional labor into three types: liquid, aerial, solid emotions, which accord with the surroundings of employees (Figure 1). (See Figure 2) Liquid emotion and solid emotion are most opposite each other, and between the two types is aerial emotion.

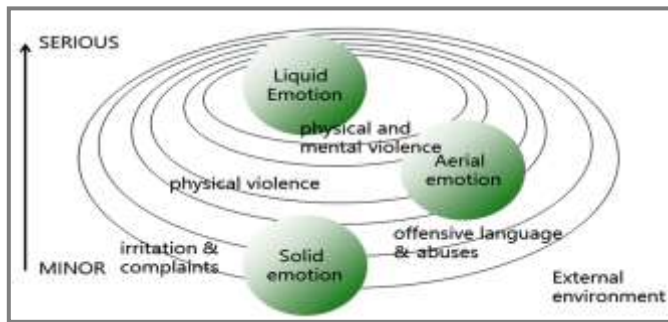


Figure 2: Framework

In the surroundings of employees, from the lowest stage of irritation and complaints to the highest stage of mental violence, liquid emotion is an active emotional condition which can confront all exterior environment and protect the employee. On the contrary, solid emotion is a fragile emotional condition which can be easily damaged even by low environment. Then how are the new concepts of liquid and solid emotions different from existing representative concepts: deep acting and surface acting? Strictly speaking, liquid emotion also include deep and surface acting on the ground. Table 1 shows the directly opposed features of liquid and solid emotions.

	Solid Emotion	Liquid Emotion
Fluidity	Small	Big
Spontaneity	Small	Big
Authenticity	Small	Big

Classification is based on fluidity, spontaneity, and authenticity. Liquid emotion is highly active and has higher levels of all three parts of fluidity, spontaneity, and authenticity than those of solid emotion. It can be expounded as a type of a high level of deep acting. That is, liquid emotion is similar to the type of a high level of deep acting, which is desirable to emotional labor workers. On the contrary, solid emotion can be considered the type of a high level of surface acting. The relationship between liquid emotion and deep and surface acting verifies it.

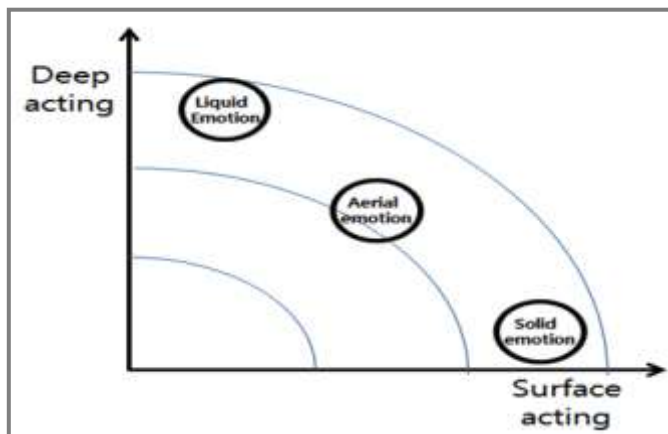


Figure 3: Relationship between Liquid Emotion and Deep and Surface Acting

Figure 3 displays the positioning of liquid, aerial, and solid emotion based on deep and surface acting in graph form. Liquid emotion represents high deep acting and low

surface acting, while solid emotion stands for low deep acting and high surface acting. Liquid emotion eventually shows an active emotional labor worker, who has high deep acting and low surface acting.

III. CONCLUSION

This study suggests a new concept of 'liquid emotion' in Bauman [2] phrase 'liquid' from Liquid Modernity to investigate human emotional labor based on interdisciplinary features. Precedent studies made much development in practical and methodological aspects but little in conceptual one. Hochschild [10] deep acting and surface acting, and Bauman's frequency, levels, and diversity and discordance, there is no general consensus. Researchers have continued suggesting creative concepts but they have failed to make an integrated agreement. 'Liquid emotion' could follow an old tradition of precedent studies, but interdisciplinary study has done a new attempt as borrowing Bauman's concept of 'liquid' to overcome several limited points of view in business administration.

Further studies could follow those two directions: first, to settle the matter of ambiguous concepts. The new concept is not yet made completely. Particularly, this study focuses on liquid and solid emotions only so aerial emotion is dimly abandoned. Aerial emotion is just stated it is in the midway between liquid and solid emotions but there is no specific features. Future studies should make progress in the concept of aerial emotion. Second, the most important process of this sort of study that suggests a new concept is to make an improvement on the weak points of existing researches. This study takes notice of the lack of conceptual agreement on emotional labor and suggests a new concept based on an interdisciplinary study. However, this attempt is not a rare trial. Suggestions of new concepts rather have thrived. Whether the concept of 'liquid emotion' could gather a general supports is up to future progress on the study of emotional labor.

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