

A Study of Emotional Labour Coping Strategies in Some Hotels in South East Nigeria

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Abstract

The main objective of this study was to examine emotional labour coping strategies adopted and practiced by customer-contact employees in hotel organizations. Given the crucial role emotional labour plays during service encounters, the study emphasized and was motivated by the importance of managing employee emotions in relation to quality service delivery. In order to achieve above main objective, four specific objectives were examined. Data were gathered by the use of structured questionnaires designed in Likert format, and interviews. The focus groups were customer-service employees of the selected hotels. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS 17.0 software. Formulated hypotheses were tested using analysis of variance (ANOVA), Z-test and t-test for tests of significance. Analysis revealed that most service employees use surface acting (SA) more often than deep acting (DA) as coping strategies. It was observed that in all the variables studied, 5-star hotels were rated better than the others. The likely implication of above findings is that at the end of the shift, employees go home emotionally drained-up. Our conclusions are that workers' emotion is poorly managed and emotional demand of customer service jobs is not very well appreciated. As above findings have serious human resource implications for the hotel industry in Nigeria, recommendations are made.

Keywords: Coping resources; Emotion regulation; Emotional support; Response-focused

Introduction

Emotion regulation refers to the process of modifying one's emotions and expressions. That is the processes by which individuals influence which emotions they have, when they have them and how they experience and express these emotions. Hotel employees perform emotional labour. Emotional labour was coined and popularized by Hochschild [1]. Hochschild defines the term to mean "the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display" intended to produce a particular state of mind in others; emotional labour is sold for a wage and therefore, has exchange value".

Individual strategies for coping with the stress of emotional labour may differ from person to person. Provis, et al. [2] suggest a conceptual framework for coping strategies and how managers might influence individual employee's ability to cope with emotional labour and the emotional stress it can cause. Coping resources refer to the resources from which an individual can draw so as to cope with the emotional stress caused by emotional labour dissonance. There are two main sources of coping resources; personal and external resources. Personal resources provide individuals with varying abilities to cope with emotional stress. Education and training, emotional stability, and social skills are likely to impact on the personal resources that an individual has at his/her disposal [2]. External coping resources such as social support from co-workers and supervisors are important resources in work context. Team-working can be particularly helpful in providing social support to cope with emotional stress.

Gross states that types of antecedent-focused emotion regulation include situation selection, situation modification, attention

deployment, and cognitive change. For service employees, there may be little opportunity to choose situation selection as a method for emotion regulation. To enact situation modification, an employee may choose to leave the work floor if a certain customer approaches [3], but this unavailability of the service worker leads to deterioration in service quality Grandey [4].

Emotion-focused coping strategies include avoidance, minimization, distancing, and wresting positive value from negative events. Some cognitive types of emotion-focused coping strategies result in a change in the way an encounter is construed, which is equivalent to reappraisal. Behavioral strategies which include physical exercise to take one's mind off the problem, having a drink, venting anger (through humour) [5] seeking emotional support (from peers, coworkers and trusted colleagues), are also emotion focused strategies [6].

Response-focused emotion regulation corresponds with the process of surface acting. An employee may paste a smile on her face though she is feeling "bad (adjusting intensity) or may put on an empathic "mask" in order to remain polite towards the customer who is annoying (fake the display).

Background of the Study

In the hospitality industry, successfully satisfying customers' needs and wants requires humanist aspect of high standard. Meeting such service delivery goal requires an appropriate organizational climate, and having employees who are trained in technical skill, interpersonal, emotive work and communication skills. Customer-contact employees must manage the points-of-encounter effectively and conscientiously as the representatives of their organizations.

Morris and Feldman define emotional labour as the act of expressing organizational desired emotions during service transactions. Morris and Feldman, in the same work present a framework that suggests that emotional labour can best be described in terms of frequency of emotional labour, duration of emotional labour, and emotional dissonance experienced as a result of having to express emotions one may not actually feel.

In the hotel industry, face-to-face transactions have the greatest power to make an impression on the guest. Here the customer/guest can undertake a full assessment of people, their manner, appearance and general behaviour. Therefore, the personal contact that takes place must be of superior quality. The skill with which emotional labour is performed impacts on perception of service quality [2,7]. The handling of difficult and unruly customer requires the active suppression and/or masking of one's own emotion while simultaneously expressing an alternate emotion. The service worker is expected to be upbeat and positive in the face of criticism and complaints [2]. He is expected to wear cheerful face, beaming "professional smile" no matter the situation.

Emotional labour must be managed on a day-to-day basis and at any point of encounter (moment-of-truth) between service employee and the customer in order to create a positive emotional experience in the customer. Every hotel organization experiences "moment-of-truth" in thousands every day and this is one of the reasons that necessitated this study.

Hochschild [1] sees emotional labour as increasingly relevant in the service industry given the particular demands of service job. Service jobs depend heavily on workers' ability to manage their emotions, service employees have sought to control this process, thereby transforming emotion management into labour as formal job requirement. The creation of consistently positive emotional experience is the key to customer satisfaction and loyalty. In the hotel industry, managing emotions (showing happiness and empathy, not fear, or anger) is an important facet in customer retention strategies. Managing emotions results in good customer performance [8-11].

Statement of the problem

For the service-oriented industry, its survival will depend on how service encounters are managed. In such situations, high quality service becomes a competitive edge. To achieve this edge, every 'moment-of-truth' (point-of-encounter) must be effectively managed by managing attitudes and behaviours of the service employees. Service employees perform emotional labour in order to deliver high quality service. Performance of emotional labour is associated with both positive and negative consequences on both the employee and hotel organization depending on the coping strategies employed. Negative consequences include employee experiencing emotional exhaustion and deterioration in service quality.

Conflict situations which occur during the working hours between service delivery employees and guests may result in a future loss of business for the hotel due to emotional failure on the part of the service delivery employees. Camillo and Connolly reported that among the key findings of their study was that internal factors such as over-confidence and emotional unfitness lead to the failure of independent restaurants.

Emotional dissonance associated with surface acting (emotional labour strategy) significantly affects employee job satisfaction and morale [5,12] and quality of service. Burnout is related to serious

consequences such as fatigue, low morale, poor quality service, absenteeism, job turnover and low commitment to organizational goals [9,13]. The implication of the above to organizations is that employees should adopt and practice appropriate coping strategies that would help them in conserving personal coping resources.

So far there is no direct evidence that a study of this nature has been conducted in Nigeria's hotel organizations that focused on emotional labour, and its coping strategies adopted by hotel organizations. It is against this backdrop that the researcher decided to embark on this study.

Objectives of the study

The main objective of this study was to examine emotional labor coping strategies adopted and practiced in hotel organizations. The study emphasized the importance of managing employee emotions in relation to quality service delivery. In order to achieve above main objective, the following specific objectives were examined:

- The extent to which customer service employees have adopted and practiced surface acting, as emotional labor coping strategy.
- The extent to which customer service employees have adopted and practiced deep acting, as emotional labor coping strategy.
- The extent to which hotel organizations have adopted co-worker support as emotional labor coping strategy.
- 4 Whether there are significant differences between and among various grades of hotels (1-star, 2-star, 3-star, 4-star and 5-star) in relation to above variables.

Statement of the hypotheses

Based on the objectives of the study, the following hypotheses stated in null (Ho) were formulated to guide this research:

- The extent to which customer service employees have adopted and practised surface acting as emotional labour coping strategy is high and not satisfactory.
- The extent to which customer service employees have adopted and practised deep acting, as emotional labour coping strategy is very low and not satisfactory.
- The extent to which customer service employees have adopted co-worker support as emotional labour coping strategy is very low and not satisfactory.
- There are no significant differences between and among various grades of hotels (1-star, 2-star, 3-star, 4-star and 5-star) in the use of above coping strategies.

Significance of the study

Emotional labour as a construct has been long over looked in Nigeria despite its being essential during service encounter between service employees and customers. It is a factor that has significant effect on the perception of customer service quality and the organization. It is essential that organizations are also aware of the emotional labour demands of their service employees so that they can find ways to provide support to their workers and help them deal with the impacts of emotional labour. The recommendations made at the end of the study would guide operators and academics, and act as a spring board for future researches.

Scope of the study

The study was limited to hotel establishments in the south eastern states of Nigeria. The study looked for the presence and/or absence of organizational policies, rules, procedures and practices which support workers in their customer service work. We also examined the following variables: coping strategies and skills with which emotional labour is performed, and co-workers' support. Employees' responses to questions raised through the questionnaire were analyzed to arrive at conclusions.

Review of Related Literature

Emotional labour is a gesture in a social exchange; it has a function there and is not to be understood merely as a factor of personality. Hochschild [1] differentiates between emotional labour and emotion work, treating labour as that action that is required by an employer and work as the nature of the action itself. In other words, to perform emotion work one must expend emotional labour. Hochschild [1] sees emotional labour as relevant in the service industry, given the particular demands of service jobs and it is incumbent upon the service employees to manage their emotions as a part of the job; service employers have sought to control this process thereby transforming emotion management into emotional labour as a formal job requirement. Performance of emotional labour requires that workers suppress their private feelings in order to show the organizationally desirable work emotions by displaying organizationally specified "display rules" as part of their service performance, such as to "serve customer with a smile" and/or to suppress negative emotions towards customers as part of the service performance [14].

Displaying organizationally sanctioned emotions to customers has been argued to be a form of "labour" since it requires effort, planning, anticipation, and adjustment to situational factors in order to publicly display emotions that employees may not necessarily and privately feel. Hochschild uses the term "feeling rules" to describe societal norms about the appropriate type and amount of feeling that should be experienced in a particular situation. Hochschild's contention is that (service) employees who perform emotional labour are liable to suffer negative consequences one of which she calls "emotive dissonance". Workers who are required to display emotions regardless of whether these are congruent with their feelings may over a time develop a sense of self-estrangement or distress, and other issues that impinge upon their psychological well-being.

Hochschild coined these terms "surface acting and deep acting" in relation to emotion regulation strategies [1]. Surface acting is a form of response-focused emotion regulation where the employee manipulates only the expressive aspect of the emotion [9,15,16]. Surface acting is used by service employee to hide negative emotions or fake felt emotions. Surface acting can be seen as acting in bad faith as the service agent is going through the "motions of emotions [17].

Surfaced acting

In surface acting, negative emotion is masked with a fake positive emotion expression [18,19] by using unnatural and artificial body language and verbal communication, for instance that he does not feel, or hide emotion that he feels [20].

Surface acting is an example of response-focused-emotion regulation [9]. Employees who continue to perform surface acting are

likely to feel inauthentic and, over time, experience emotional exhaustion and adopt depersonalization as a defensive mechanism [9,18]. Surface acting may be beneficial and desirable to organizations so that customers or clients always observe the expressions that are mandated, even when the employee may feel differently.

Deep acting

In deep acting the employee attempts to align privately felt emotions with normative expectations or to bring the outward expression of emotion in line with them as required by the organization [1,9,17,21]. Deep acting is an antecedent-focused emotion regulation strategy whereby the service agent reappraises the situation, modifies his feelings to match required display, in order to seem authentic to the customer ("faking in good faith") [9]. Mann, [22] puts it succinctly, thus; "feelings are actively induced as the actor psyches him/herself into the desired person." For example, flight attendants are trained to cognitively reappraise disorderly adult passengers as children so as not to become infuriated with their seemingly infantile behaviour [1]. Another deep acting strategy suggested by Kiely is trained imagination whereby the employee focuses on involving thoughts, images and memories to induce the desired emotion. Ashforth, et al. [8] view the service worker as an "actor performing on stage for an often discriminating audience".

Co-worker support

Emotion regulation literature suggests that organizational environmental factors are very important in understanding emotion management [8,9]. The situation in which employees work affects the level and type of emotional labour in which they engage. Work climate affects behaviour of people in organization and how they engage in the performance of emotional labour [16].

As suggested by Schneider, et al. and supported by emotion regulation literature, supervisor and co-worker support create a positive working environment, which by extension should minimize the need to engage in emotional labour when the display rules are positive. That is, if an employee is in a positive mood due to the environment, then less emotional effort is needed to display positive organizationally prescribed emotions. There is a strong body of evidence that a lack of social support is linked to numerous stress-related outcomes, including burnout [23]. Receiving such support from supervisor is especially important, perhaps even more so than from co-workers according to findings of Maslach, et al. and Guy et al. [5,6]. Ventilating feelings with co-workers was a recurring theme in Guy et al. interviews and an important source of social support. Co-workers are also sources of job stress [5].

Golembiewski et al. [23] recognize the relationship between burnout and the organizational environment. Support from supervisors and co-workers should create a positive working environment [24]. Employee's perception that he is working in a supportive environment has been found to relate to job satisfaction, lowered stress, and turnover intentions and even higher team performance [16,25]. Social support is thought to enable individuals to cope better with job stressors and to increase their sense of personal control [26]. Supervisor and co-worker support acting as moderators, prevent emotional dissonance from reducing job satisfaction [27].

Research Methodology

This section presents the methods used in the study. It deals with the following: research design, description of the study population, sample size determination, data collection instrument, and its administration, test of validity and reliability, and method of data analysis. This study is a descriptive research; hence, a survey method was adopted. Descriptive data are typically collected through a questionnaire, an interview, observation [28] and recorded events and documents.

Population of the study and sampling procedure

The population for the study comprised of both junior and senior staff of hotel establishments in the South-Eastern zone. Hotels of one (1) to five (5) star classification were used in this study. A total of thirty one (31) hotels were selected for the study. The total population for the service employees was 441.

A non-probability sampling method was adopted in choosing the establishments for the study. In this study stratified sampling was used to determine individual company's sample size with regards to customer service employees. By applying the stratified method, and using the Bouley's population allocation formula, we determined sample size for each hotel. In this study random sampling method was used to select the customer-contact employees. From each establishment, respondents consisted of male and female staff that has at least two years work experience in the industry. Due to the heterogeneous nature of the study population, the Taro Yamane's formula given by Alugbuo was used to determine the sample size from the hotels selected for the study. Applying this formula, sample sizes for customer-contact employees was 210. In each company, the Bouley's population allocation formula given by Okeke was used [29].

Data collection instrument and administration

The primary data in this study were collected through structured questionnaires and oral interview. In this study, the Likert-type scales were used. According to Gay [28] a Likert scale asks an individual to respond to a series of statements by indicating whether he or she strongly agrees (SA); agree (A); disagree (D), or strongly disagree (SD) with the statement. Other response options used were: never (0), rarely (1); sometimes (2); often (3), and always (4). Each response is associated with a point value and an individual's score is determined by summing the point values for each point value; 4, 3, 2, 1 and 0 were assigned to always, often, sometimes, rarely and never respectively where appropriate to positive responses to positive statements. For negative statements the point values were reversed, always was assigned one (0).

Designing the research instrument

In this study some already developed, pre-validated and reliable scales were adapted in addition to scales developed by conducting pilot studies and extensive literature search. Attitude statements for the study were generated through in-depth interviews and discussions with the operators of the industry (focus group) and lecturers in the field of hospitality. Validity and reliability tests were conducted for the modified scales. The questionnaires were designed following procedure described by Hall [30].

At the end of the attitude statement generation and questionnaire designing exercise, a questionnaire emerged for customer-service employees. The questionnaire is presented in the Appendix. The

Cronbach's alpha coefficient for internal consistency was used to determine reliability of the research instrument. Procedures described by Gliem, et al. and Onunkwo were adopted [31,32].

Emotional labour scale developed by Brotheridge, was used [33]. The scale is composed of sub-scales that measure dimensions of emotional labour - the duration and frequency of customer interaction, the surface acting (SA), deep acting (DA), and emotional dissonance. The Deep Acting sub-scale assesses how much an employee has managed his feelings to comply with organizational sanctioned emotions while the Surface Acting, sub-scale measures the extent to which the employee has to express emotions that are not felt. Brotheridge [18] report high coefficient alpha for DA and SA sub-scales as .89 and .80 respectively. Naring, et al. [34] report alpha coefficient of 0.79 and 0.81 for SA and DA respectively. Groth, et al. [35] report alpha coefficient of 0.90 and 0.92 for DA and SA respectively. The questionnaire for customer-service employees has three (3) sub-scales measuring: use of surface acting and deep acting, and co-workers' support. Reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) for co-workers' support sub-scales was 0.88.

Data Analysis and Results

Descriptive statistics for the study variables were determined. This involved calculating mean scores, mode, and standard deviation for each attitude statement and sub-scales. Analysis of variance, Z-test and t-test were used for testing the hypotheses. Questionnaire return rates of study respondents are presented in Table 1.

The profile of the study respondents indicated that for the customer service workers, 45.2% were males, while 54.80% were females. There ages range from 20 yrs to 40 yrs and above. 22.37% of the respondents specialized in catering and hotel management. The job tenure for hotel employees ranges from 2 years and above at customer contact positions.

Hotels	Customer Service Workers	
	Distributed	Returned
1-star	48	38(79%)
2-star	54	42(77.78%)
3-star	58	46(79.3%)
4-star	56	48(85.7%)
5-star	57	45(79%)
Total	273	219(80.2%)

Source: Survey data 2014

Table 1: Questionnaire return rate.

Service employees' responses

The mean score and mode for 1-star were 3.45 and 3 respectively, meaning that the employee's use surface acting often times during service interaction. As observed from the Table 2 service workers in the 1-star hotels use surface acting much more frequently than others. While those in the 5-star use it less frequently than others. The overall mean, standard deviation and mode were 2.82, 0.70 and 3 respectively.

This result indicates that often times the employees use surface acting as emotional labour coping strategy.

	Sample Size (n)	Surface acting		
		Mean	SD	Mode
Overall	219	2.82	0.7	3
1-star hotel	38	3.45	0.52	3
2-star hotel	42	3.29	0.5	3
3-star	46	2.9	0.57	3
4-star	48	2.5	0.5	3
5-star	45	2.11	0.53	2

Source: Survey data 2014

Table 2: Descriptive statistics for use of surface acting as strategy.

	Sample Size (n)	Deep Acting		
		Mean	SD	Mode
Overall	219	2.14	0.6	2
1-star Hotel	38	1.68	0.5	2
2-star hotel	42	1.87	0.5	2
3-star hotel	46	2.09	0.56	2
4-star hotel	48	2.44	0.54	2
5-star hotel	45	2.53	0.47	3

Table 3: Descriptive statistics for use of deep acting as strategy.

Table 3 presents descriptive statistics for use of deep acting by service employees as emotional labour coping strategy.

	Sample Size (n)	Supervisor Support		
		Mean	SD	Mode
Overall	219	1.56	0.1	
1-star Hotel	38	1.12	0.62	1
2-star Hotel	42	1.18	0.67	1
3-star hotel	46	1.5	0.82	1
4-star hotel	48	1.55	1.2	2
5-star hotel	45	2.45	1.22	2

Source: survey data 2014

Table 4: Customer-service employees' responses: on co-worker support.

For the 1, 2 and 3-star hotels, (mean=1.68, 1.87 and 2.09 respectively, and mode=2) the implication is that their employees sometimes use deep acting as strategy for managing emotional labour during service encounters. For the 4-star (mean=2.44) and 5-star

hotels (mean=2.53), indicate that their service employees often times use deep acting during service encounters (Table 4).

The mean scores for 1 and 2 star hotels are 1.12 and 1.18 respectively meaning that majority of their service employees rarely receive emotional support from their co-workers. The overall mean for this variable was 1.56, (mode of 2) which implies that most times majority of the service employees do not receive emotional support from their co-workers. The mean and mode for the 5-star class were 2.45 and 2 respectively indicating that majority of their workers sometimes use co-worker support as coping strategy.

Test of hypotheses

Hypotheses stated earlier were tested using Z-test for hypotheses 1, 2, and 3 while hypothesis 4 was tested using analysis of variance (ANOVA) (Table 5).

Hypotheses as Stated	Decisions
The extent to which customer service employees have adopted and practised surface acting as emotional labour coping strategy is high and not satisfactory..	Accept hypothesis.
The extent to which customer service employees have adopted and practised deep acting, as emotional labour coping strategy is very low and not satisfactory.	Accept hypothesis
The extent to which customer service employees have adopted the practice of giving emotional support to themselves as strategy is low and not satisfactory.	Accept hypothesis
There are no significant differences between and among various grades of hotel (1-star, 2-star, 3-star, 4-star and 5-star) with regards to the following variables: use of surface acting, deep acting, and co-workers support,	Reject hypothesis

Table 5: Summary of hypotheses testing and decisions.

Tests of significance were conducted. In this section, the outcome of hypotheses testing and decisions are presented. Table 5 presents summary of the outcome of hypotheses testing and decisions taken. All hypotheses were accepted except the 4th hypothesis. Differences were observed from one grade of hotel to another. The 4 and 5-star hotels were rated better than 1, 2 and 3-star hotels in all the variables studied in this research.

Discussion and implications of the findings

The main objective of this study was to investigate emotional labour coping strategies, surface acting, deep acting and co-worker support, adopted by customer service employees. Each of the two emotional labour dimensions investigated in this study has consequences on employee's well-being and job outcomes. The following section presents the discussions on the findings of this study.

Work outcomes of surface acting

Surface acting is used by service employee to hide negative emotions or fake felt emotions, expressing emotions that one does not feel [1,20]. A long term use of surface acting is associated with emotional dissonance and exhaustion [9,18]. In this study, it was found that service employees of 1 and 2 hotels always use surface acting (means 3.45, 3.29 respectively), 3-star (mean=2.90) hotels use it often times while 4 and 5-star employees sometimes use surface acting.

The general picture is that service workers at all levels use surface acting more often than deep acting during service interaction with customers. Emotional exhaustion leads to poor quality of service and low morale. Employees who continue to perform surface acting are likely to feel inauthentic over time and adopt depersonalization (an anti-service syndrome) as defensive mechanism. The implication of this finding is that the use of surface acting is significantly affecting the well-being of service workers and the quality of services rendered in hotels. These findings are of significance to hotel organizations as emotional exhaustion can lead to deterioration of service quality because of the amount of effort it takes to maintain a smiling face by service providers while coping with difficult customers who believe that they are always right, and take the place of a second boss to the service provider. During one of the interview sessions, a restaurant waitress said thus; "sometimes it is impossible to force out smile from me because of the way the customers treat us; treating us like their house maids..." In another interview session a bar waiter said thus; "... an old man like me, do you expect me to laugh when small boys come here and use derogatory words on me, I don't laugh when such happens... And sometimes I leave the service floor to cool off". Such scenario as observed from the field work, a situation where service employees find it difficult to smile and/or leave the service floor can lead to deterioration of service quality. Emotional contagion theory confirms that if a service provider serves with smile, the customer will equally smile, while on the other hand if the service provider is grumpy and heavy handed, the customer will be unhappy. Emotional contagion suggests that exposure to an individual expressing positive or negative emotions can produce a corresponding change in the emotional state of the observer [36,37].

Work outcomes of deep acting

In terms of deep acting which is associated with emotive effort, in the present study it was found out that service employees of the 4 and 5-star hotels sometimes use deep acting, while 1 to 3-star service employees rarely use deep acting during service encounters. Given the findings in this study, service employees of 1-3 star hotels and their organizations are likely not to benefit from the positive effects of deep acting. The overall picture of the finding in this study is that the extent to which deep acting is used is low.

Co-workers support

Research evidence confirms that employee who receives support from their co-workers, experience job satisfaction and less stress [16,25]. Co-workers' support prevents emotional dissonance from reducing job satisfaction [27]. In this study, the mean scores for 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5-star hotels were found to be 0.98, 1.13, 1.47, 1.34 and 2.10 respectively, signifying that their service employees most times work in an un-supportive environment. Unsupportive environment decreases job satisfaction and performance [38-41].

Employee's perception that he is working in an unsupportive environment coupled with emotional exhaustion arising from use of surface acting, [42-45] can quickly lead to depletion of emotional resources thereby rendering the individual ineffective. This is the situation in which majority of service employees find themselves in most (1 to 3-star) hotels in Nigeria [46,47].

In one of the interview sessions, a waiter recounted her experience with a guest who called her a "thief" and used derogatory words on her and she cried. The waiter said...." my co-workers saw me crying and

they never asked me why I was crying neither did they make any attempt to console me..." In another interview a clerical staff said "We are in competition with each other, helping each other is not common..."

Summary and Conclusions

Findings in this study have led us to conclude that emotional labour is not properly managed in the hotels under study. Service employees use surface acting (associated with emotional dissonance) most of the times rather than deep acting. It is very well known that long term performance of emotional labour can have negative consequences on well-being of workers who perform such jobs. Service workers in the hotels particularly those in 1 to 3-star hotels are likely to experience emotional exhaustion, a condition that can render a worker ineffective.

One other notable finding in this study was that employees of the 1 and 2-star hotels were less professional than those of them in the 3 to 5-star hotels. Employees at the 1 and 2-star hotels perform less emotional labour than those in the 3 to 5-star hotels, and are likely to experience more emotional dissonance and emotional exhaustion; because they use surface acting more often than deep acting.

Co-worker support is practiced at a very low extent particularly in 1 and 2 star hotels. In 3 and 4 star hotels, the level is moderate. Employees claim that team work prevails, but the situation observed is not encouraging.

Recommendations

Within the context of the Nigeria's hotel industry, this study investigated emotional labour coping strategies. Based on the objectives and findings in this study we recommend that service employees should be trained and encouraged to use deep acting most of the times and support each other. The employees should know that they are not in competition with each other. Service employees should be made to understand the crucial role emotional labour during service encounters.

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