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ARE YOU FAKE OR REAL? THE ROLE OF EMOTIONAL LABOR ON LEADER-MEMBER EXCHANGE

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Abstract

The main purpose of this study is to find out the relationship between emotional labor and leader-member exchange. With this finding, it was tried to answer the question whether the emotional labor exhibited by the employees had a significant effect on the quality of the relationship between the supervisors and the employees, and if so, in what direction. In order to realize this aim, a questionnaire was conducted on 174 health personnel working in Bayburt Province. After the required analysis, it was found that emotional labor had a significant and positive effect on the leader-member exchange and this effect was created by genuine acting as one of the dimensions of emotional labor. There was no significant cause-effect relationship between surface acting or deep acting and leader-member exchange.

Keywords: Emotions, Emotional Labor, Leadership, Leader-Member Exchange.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the last two decades, significant progress has been made in understanding the role and importance of managing emotional expressions in organizational behavior and outcomes (Hu & Shi, 2015, 1132). It is accepted that emotions form an integral part of leadership-related processes and outcomes (Fisk & Friesen, 2012, 1).

In today's rational, task-oriented business environment, there is a widespread belief that there is no room for emotions. Mann (1997) points out that emotions and emotional expressions are actually controlled and managed by organizations in some formal and informal ways. Organizations often expect their employees to follow the rules of emotional vision set by them, even if they do not actually have feelings. When this situation causes employees to suppress their true emotions or exhibit false emotions, emotional labor occurs (Hwa, 2012, 116).

The phenomenon of emotional labor, first conceptualized by Hochschild (1983), was defined by him as the management of a sense of image-making that is clearly observable in the face and body for a value.

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Most theories about emotional labor are dominated by the idea that organizations set standard display rules and force employees to follow them. Emotional labor can be defined as compliance of these display rules determined by the organization, leaving aside the real feelings of employees. (Diefendorff et al., 2005, 339-340). In order to comply with organisational requirements, emotional regulations made by employees form the basis of emotional labor (Lv et al., 2012,). These emotional regulations are critical to organizational success. Employees experience the phenomenon of emotional labor when organizing or displaying the emotions necessary in the workplace. According to researches on emotional labor, individuals control and manage their emotions in order to meet social norms and expectations (Edition et al., 2013, 1490).

Three acting strategies were identified to reveal the emotional expression desired by the organization. These are: surface acting, deep acting and genuine acting (Chu et al., 2012, 907). Surface acting involves hiding and suppressing emotions to show the necessary emotion; deep acting involves changing inner emotions in order to comply with visual rules (Gabriel et al., 2015, 863). Genuine acting, on the other hand, is the same as the felt emotions and these are the things that employees experience and show spontaneously and personally (Chu et al., 2012, 907).

Leaders are committed to their followers in achieving their organizational goals and objectives, which obliges them to evaluate each follower. The most critical aspect of these assessments is to reveal what leaders and followers really think about the relationship between them (Dulebohn et al., 2012, 1718). Each interaction between the leader and his followers may be different in quality. That is, the same leader can build weak relationships with some of his followers, while developing open and reassuring relationships with others. These relationships between the two sides can be in-group or out-group (Lunenburg, 2010, 1). This two-way process, in which leaders evaluate their followers and followers evaluate their leaders, is referred to as leader-member exchange (LMX) (Dulebohn et al., 2012, 1718).

The leader-member exchange theory introduced by Dansereau et al. in the 1970s was initially referred as the Vertical Dyad Linkage approach. The essence of the LMX theory is that the leader asserts that he/she influences the quality of the relationships with his/her followers through different forms of behavior (Martin et al., 2016, 68).

The leader-member exchange Theory has received considerable attention in the field of organizational sciences. The leader-member exchange is based on the emotional support and exchange of valuable resources between a supervisor and an employee under his/her direct control. Thus, LMX theory is the social exchange relationship between an employee and his/her first supervisor. According to social exchange theory, employees tend to develop high-quality relationships with people whom they interact with them and experience with them (Walumbwa et al., 2011, 205). In other words, the leader-member exchange (LMX) theory is based on the assumption that leaders develop differentiated relationships with employees. In this context, leaders establish low-level operational relationships with some employees, while others establish high-quality relationships involving socio-emotional exchange relationships (Prajya et al., 2010, 849).

The LMX theory, which asserts that leaders develop unique social change relations with their followers and that the quality of these relationships vary from low to high, specifies that low quality relations are based on economic exchanges within the scope of legal employment contract and that high quality relations based on mutual obligations and mutual respect by go beyond the legal contract. The type of LMX relationship is determined by the degree to which followers' desire to meet the expectations of their leaders and to live in accordance with these expectations (Breevaart et al., 2015, 755).

Two main reasons have emerged as an important and remarkable field of study of LMX theory. The first one, LMX theory deals with the reciprocal relations between the leader and his/her followers; the second one is that the leaders would not develop the same relationship with every follower. Specifically, the LMX theory emphasizes that leaders interact with their followers in different dimensions and determine their relationships with their followers in this interaction process. In the early days, researchers focused on the results of the relationship between the leader and the follower using LMX theory, but later they found that LMX theory was associated with many behaviors. (Dulebohn, 2012, 1716).

Grandey et al. (2007) stated that emotional labor can be exhibited against individuals outside the organization such as consumers, customers and patients, as well as individuals within the organization such as supervisor and colleagues (Gardner, 2009, 467). In this study, emotional labor of employees towards their supervisors is taken into consideration. In fact, the interactions between supervisors and subordinates based on emotional labor are very high in daily work. In other words, both supervisors and subordinates display emotional labor to develop high quality relationships (Murtini, 2016, 10). Nevertheless, there are not too



many studies in the literature which reveal the effect of emotional labor on leader-member exchange. Therefore, in this study, the effect of emotional labor on leader-member exchange was investigated.

2. RESEARCH THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

Emotions consist of psychological and physiological factors. The social environment can also be added to this phenomenon. Emotions are inevitable for understanding the dynamics of the working environment (Soran & Balkan, 2013, 154). Emotions are at the center of both our work environment and our self-experience, and we use them as signals of what we consider meaningful to us. In short, emotions are a measuring instrument for the identity of the individual (Humphrey et al., 2015, 754).

According to Hochschild (1983), if emotions are brought together to achieve the commercial objectives of the organization, this may undermine the emotional identities of employees as in the emotional labor process. However, in this process, as Van Maanen and Kunda (1989) put it, it may become inevitable for individuals to use emotional labor as an investment for themselves (Humphrey et al., 2015, 754). Emotional labor emerges as a process that can involve managing emotions in the working environment, mimicking emotions, increasing emotion levels or suppressing emotions (Sliter et al., 2013, 467). Rafaeli and Sutton (1987) suggest that emotions related to emotional labor can be used as a form of strategic manipulation and control by an individual to shape and influence the behavior of a target (Hwa, 2012, 116). In this study, emotional labor is considered as a manipulation tool used by subordinates to influence their relationship with the leader. Based on these explanations, the basic hypothesis of the research was developed as follows:

H1= Emotional labor positively affected leader-member exchange.

As mentioned earlier, an individual can display three types of emotional labor: surface acting, deep acting and genuine acting. In past researches, surface acting is defined as doing an act with bad intentions,, on the contrary, deep acting is defined as doing an act with good intentions. Whether surface acting or deep acting, previous researches have shown that both emotional labor strategies have different outcomes. In this context, while surface acting is mostly associated with negative results for both individuals and organizations, deep acting is associated with positive results rather than negative results. However, in previous studies, it was emphasized that organizations encouraged their employees to benefit from deep acting rather than surface acting (Dahling & Perez, 2010, 575). In some cases, it is stated that employees can display emotions that are compatible with the emotions expected from them without the need for additional incentives and this is called genuine acting (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Diefendorff et al., 2005). Genuine acting, which has similarities with deep acting in terms of containing the real feelings of the individual, differs from deep acting because it does not have a deliberate role-playing behavior (Lee & Chelladurai, 2016, 171).

Surface acting refers to an act of emotion representation that can include both suppressing felt emotions and unfelt emotions. At the same time, surface acting involves fake emotions that employees show on their outward appearance such as expressions, gestures, sounds or intonations, in compliance with the emotions that should be displayed in the workplace (Chu et al., 2012, 907). In this context, employees may use surface acting to develop fake relations with their leaders and thus seek to gain more individual interests from their organizational interests. It is predicted that this false emotional relationship between the leader and subordinates will not be sustainable and will result in a low quality LMX relationship. Based on this explanation, the following hypothesis has been developed:

H1a= Surface acting negatively affected leader-member exchange.

Deep acting is a process in which an individual really tries to experience the rules of organizational display rules. As a result, deep acting provides a higher level of emotional display accuracy than surface acting. It has been shown that high impression accuracy levels, which are associated with deep acting, have positive linear relationships with global attitudinal structures (Fisk & Friesen, 2012, 3). In this context, more efforts are made by employees to show their expected feelings in the process of achieving organizational goals through deep acting, which can strengthen their relationship with their leaders. This may result in a high quality LMX relationship. Based on this explanation, the following hypothesis has been developed:

H1b= Deep acting positively affected leader-member exchange.



While surface acting and deep acting express two opposite concepts, genuine acting, another emotional labor type, expresses the natural emotions in which the employee can automatically feel the necessary emotions (Austin et al. al, 2008, 5). Steiner (1997) reveals that first likings of leaders toward their subordinates reflect to high-quality LMX relationship (Newcombe & Ashkanasy, 2002, 603). Accordingly, it is thought that employees who show the emotional expressions that should be displayed for organizational purposes will be loved by their leaders and this will lead to the emergence of high quality LMX relationships among them. Based on these explanations, the following hypothesis has been developed:

H1c= Genuine acting positively affected leader-member exchange.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Sample and Procedure

The sample of the study consists of 174 health care workers in Bayburt Province. The reason for the selection of health workers for such research is that emotional labor is very common because of the face-to-face service provided by employees in this field. As evidence for this, there are many emotional labor studies in the literature, including health care workers (Karimi, 2014; Bailey et al., 2015; Park & Chung, 2016; Kim, 2017; Sohn et al., 2018; Pandey et al., 2018). When the demographic characteristics of the research sample are analyzed, 59.2% of the participants are women and 40.8% are men. 63.2% of the participants are younger than 30 years, 24.7% are between 30-40 years old and 12.1% are older than 40 years 44.3% of the participants are married and 55.7% are single. 13.2% of the participants are doctors, 4.6% are dentists, 31% are nurses, 16.7% are health care officers and 34.5% are other health care personnel. 58% of the participants have an organizational tenure less than 5 years, 24.7%, 5-10 years and 17.2% more than 10 years. Finally, 20.1% of the participants have high school graduation. 32.8% have associate degree graduation, 37.4% have undergraduate graduation and 9.8% have master and doctorate graduation.

3.2. Measures

Emotional Labor Scale: Emotional Labor Scale, developed by Grandey (1999), consists of a total of 26 items revealing the emotional labor behavior of employees. The items in this scale which deal with the emotional labor behaviors in "surface acting", "deep acting" and "genuine acting" dimensions are answered with a 5-point Likert type scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

According to the results of exploratory factor analysis, the emotional labor scale shows a three-factor structure with a total variance of 55.14% (surface acting = 24.21%; deep acting = 15.72%; genuine acting = 15.21%). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the emotional labor scale is 91% (surface acting = 89%; deep acting = 79%; genuine acting = 81%).

Leader-Member Exchange Scale: The LMX-7 scale, developed by Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995), consists of seven items that measure the quality of the relationship between supervisors and employees. The items in this scale which deal with the overall effectiveness of the relationship between supervisor and subordinate are answered with a 5-point Likert type scale ranging from 1 (extremely ineffective) to 5 (extremely effective).

As a result of the exploratory factor analysis for LMX-7 scale, it is observed that a single factor structure with a total variance of 67.62%. In addition, it should be noted that item 1 was excluded from the exploratory factor analysis since it constitutes a separate factor alone. According to the reliability analysis of the LMX-7 scale, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the scale is 90%.

4. FINDINGS

4.1. Correlations

Table 1 presents the data related to the spearman correlation analysis among the research variables. Positive relationships were found between emotional labor and its subdimensions, surface acting ($r = , 896$), deep acting ($r = , 754$) and genuine acting ($r = , 788$). Based on this finding, it can be said that all three subdimensions can represent the concept of emotional labor. However, as the two main variables of the study, a positive relationship was found between emotional labor and leader-member exchange ($r = , 293$). In terms of sub-dimensions, it was seen that there was a positive relationship between leader-member exchange and



surface acting ($r = ,197$), deep acting ($r = ,213$) and genuine acting ($r = ,336$). However, as these relationships may be random, multiple regression analysis was performed in the next step.

Table 1: Spearman Correlation Coefficients Among Variables

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	1	2	3	4	5
1. Emotional Labor	3,27	,72	1,000				
2. Surface Acting	2,92	,94	,896**	1,000			
3. Deep Acting	3,75	,75	,754**	,496**	1,000		
4. Genuine Acting	3,32	,90	,788**	,557**	,526**	1,000	
5. Leader - Member Exchange	3,61	,94	,293**	,197**	,213**	,336**	1,000

4.2. Testing Hypotheses

Table 2 and Table 3 show the data for two multiple regression models established to demonstrate the cause-effect relationship between the variables of the study. In this study, a total of four hypotheses including one basic and three sub-hypotheses have been proposed. Multiple regression analysis was performed to test these hypotheses. At this point, it should be noted that gender, age, marital status, title, organizational tenure and educational level variables were included in the multiple regression analysis as control variables in order to reveal the effects of emotional labor dimensions on leader-member interaction clearly.

Table 2: Regression Coefficients for Main Hypothesis

MODEL 1	LMX
1. Gender	-,114
2. Age	,096
3. Marital Status	,122
4. Title	,017
5. Organizational Tenure	,042
6. Educational Level	-,011
7. Emotional Labor	,223**
R	,317
R ²	,101
F	2,654
p	,013

Table 2 shows that model 1 is significant ($R^2 = ,317$; $F = 2,654$). When the regression coefficients between the variables were examined, it was seen that there was no significant effects of the control variables on LMX. However, it was found out that emotional labor positively affected LMX (Beta = ,223; $p < ,01$). Based on this finding, the H1 hypothesis was accepted.

Table 3: Regression Coefficients for Sub-Hypotheses

MODEL	LMX
1. Gender	-,106
2. Age	,083
3. Marital Status	,117
4. Position	,007
5. Organizational Tenure	,057
6. Educational Level	-,026
7. Surface Acting	,026
8. Deep Acting	,029
9. Genuine Acting	,227*
R	,342
R ²	,117
F	2,407
p	,014

Table 3 shows that model 2 is also significant ($R^2 = ,117$; $F = 2,407$). Regarding the regression coefficients between the variables, no significant effects of the control variables on LMX were observed.



However, the effects of surface acting (Beta =, 026; $p > .05$) and deep acting (Beta =, 029; $p > .05$) on LMX were not significant, whereas genuine acting was positively affected LMX. (Beta =, 227; $p < .05$). Based on this finding, H2 and H3 hypotheses were rejected and H4 hypothesis was accepted.

5. CONCLUSION

This research has four objectives including main and sub-objectives. The main purpose of the study is to reveal the effect of emotional labor on leader-member exchange. The sub-objectives of the study are to show the effects of surface acting, deep acting and genuine acting, which represent emotional labor, on the leader-member exchange. Four hypotheses have been developed to achieve these goals. In order to test these hypotheses, a questionnaire was conducted on 174 health care personnel working in Bayburt Province. The results of the required analyzes are presented below:

As a result of the correlation analysis conducted to reveal the relationships between the variables of the study, it was found that there was a positive relationship between emotional labor and leader-member interaction as two main variables of the study. In addition, as sub-variables of the study, it was observed that surface acting, deep acting and genuine acting were positively correlated with leader-member exchange. At the same time, positive relationships were found between emotional labor and its sub-dimensions. In other words, it can be said that the sub-dimensions have the ability to represent emotional labor at a high level.

After the correlation analysis, multiple regression analysis was started to test the main and sub-hypotheses of the research. For this purpose, two multiple regression models were established. In order to reveal the interactions between variables clearly, gender, age, marital status, title, organizational tenure and educational level were added as control variables to these multiple regression models. As a result of the analysis, no significant effects of control variables on leader-member exchange were found in both models. In the first model, emotional labor had a positive effect on leader-member exchange. H1 hypothesis was confirmed by this finding. It can be said that when the emotional labor impressions of the employees increase, the quality of their interactions with their leaders increases. In other words, as employees' emotional labor increases, their supervisors can give them more value and responsibility, and they can rely more on them.

In the second model, which was established in order to see the cause-effect relationship between emotional labor and leader-member exchange in more detail, it was revealed that only genuine acting had a positive effect on leader-member exchange and both surface acting and deep acting ' had no significant effects on leader - member exchange. Based on this finding, H2 and H3 hypotheses were rejected and H4 hypothesis was confirmed. In other words, it can be said that the use of surface acting and deep acting as the emotional labor of the employees does not cause any change in their relationship with their supervisors. On the contrary, it can be said that because employees who act as genuine, experience the emotions expected of them naturally and adapt to organizational display rules, leaders can develop more sincere and trusting relationships with them, be more tolerant and optimistic towards them, and give them more initiative.

In the light of the above-mentioned results, the best suggestion for organizations in this study would be to prepare organizational environments in which employees can easily reveal their genuine emotions. Thus, if they show their genuine emotions automatically without any change effort, this sincerity will contribute to better quality interactions between supervisors and employees.

This research has some limitations. Most importantly, the results of this study are valid only for the sample of this study. In order to obtain more general results, it is recommended that such research be conducted in a wider sample and in other areas. Furthermore, it is thought that studies that will be conducted by mediation or moderation of other variables that may be related to both variables will contribute to a better understanding of the relationship between emotional labor and leader-member exchange.

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