

Sales Professional's Commitment to Smile: Is Social Support a Moderator between Emotional Labour and its Consequences on Well-being?

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Abstract

A pre-requisite for sales professionals is to exhibit positive emotional outlook during service encounters so as to influence the customer's buying decisions and ultimately their satisfaction level. The present study evaluates how the performance of emotional labour strategies during service encounter has a consequential effect (i.e., emotional exhaustion and psychological distress) on the sales professionals. Further, the study investigates the moderating role of social support in the relationship between emotional labour performed by the sales professionals and its consequences on their well-being in the context of organised retail service. Using structured schedules, the data was collected from 600 sales professionals employed in the Indian organised retail industry (branded clothing retail stores) in Delhi NCR and to analyse the data, moderated multiple regression analysis was carried out. Based on the findings of the study, the implications in the workplace and recommendation for future studies are suggested.

Keywords

Emotional Labour, Sales Professionals, Social Support, Emotional Exhaustion, Psychological Distress

Introduction

In the recent times, organisations have realised that emotion lies at the heart of the workplace communications, thus, the researches regarding emotions of the employees has progressively gained importance (Hochschild, 1983). The importance of emotions in the service sector as indispensable is undoubtable as the service employees are required to involve in considerable level of interpersonal communication with their customers (Mayer & Solvey, 1997). The service organisations usually follow predetermined criteria to regulate the emotions of their employees during the service encounters. While articulating organisationally desired emotions, service employees engrosses in a different type of labour known as emotional labour (Grandey, 2000; Hochschild, 1983). According to the employer's perspective, emotional labour is regarded as a part of the job, which is sold and bought as a commodity (Kukreja & Handa, 2013).

The present study focuses on the Indian organised retail industry which is a significant part of the service industry. The front-line employees directly deal with the customers thus, serving as a crucial link between the organisation and its customers. The key to sustainable competitive advantage lies in providing premium quality services that satisfy the customers (Attri, 2014). Exhibiting positive emotions during service encounters may fetch benefits to the organisation such as, greater customer satisfaction, customer's return intentions, positive word of mouth (Pugh, 2001; Tsai, 2001), that eventually result in customer loyalty and increased sales. However, only 1% of the studies have empirically analysed the role of emotional labour in the Indian service sector (Modekurti-Mahato et al., 2014).

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