



## Research Note

# Moderating role of hotel employees' gender and job position on the relationship between emotional intelligence and emotional labor



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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to identify the effects of deluxe hotel employees' emotional intelligence on their emotional labor, and the moderating effects of employees' diversity (gender and job position) on the relationship between emotional intelligence and emotional labor. The results showed that the use of emotion (UOE) had the largest effect on surface acting during emotional labor, and self-emotion appraisal (SEA) had the largest effect on deep acting. In addition, the study found moderating effects of employees' diversity on the relationship between emotional intelligence and emotional labor, and the effects of others' emotion appraisal (OEA) on surface acting were shown to be significantly higher among female employees than among males. Furthermore, the effects of the use of emotions (UOE) on deep acting were larger in the FOH than in the BOH. However, results showed that the effects of regulation of emotion (ROE) on deep acting were significantly stronger in the BOH than in the FOH.

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## 1. Introduction

Emotional intelligence is the general ability to understand others' emotions and to experience and express appropriate emotions (Mayer et al., 2002), whereas *emotional labor* is the positive expression of emotions related to duties in situations that should require an emotional response (Hochschild, 1979; Grandey, 2000). In particular, deep acting requires more effort in order to experience expressed norms in situations where emotional labor is performed, and it is regarded as a sort of emotional labor that can be much more easily expressed by those who have a high degree of emotional intelligence. Surface acting is defined as artificially controlling and expressing emotions to meet the norms of expression required by organizations, without actually feeling the emotions (Ashforth and Humphrey, 1993).

What, then, is the relationship between emotional intelligence and emotional labor? Few studies have examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and emotional labor, and those have yielded different opinions on the subject (see Table 1). Karim and Weisz (2010), Lee and Ok (2012), and Prentice et al. (2013) suggested that employees' emotional intelligence is positively related

to emotional labor. Also, Brotheridge (2006) and Ramachandran et al. (2011) found that emotional intelligence has positive influence only upon deep acting out of emotional labor. On the other hand, Lee et al. (2010) and Kim et al. (2012) mentioned that emotional intelligence has positive influence upon deep acting, but has negative influence upon surface acting. Austin et al. (2008) and Psilopanagioti et al. (2012) noted that employees' emotional intelligence has negative influence only upon surface acting. Also, Totterdell and Holman (2003), and Johnson and Spector (2007) argued that there is no significant relationship between emotional intelligence and emotional labor. In this way, diverse contradictory results exist in the relationship between emotional intelligence and emotional labor. However, present study synthesized the results of prior researches (Karim and Weisz, 2010; Lee and Ok, 2012) and then supposed that employees with excellent emotional intelligence will have even efficient emotional labor in a working situation. This is because the effective control in own emotion or other's emotion and the excellent ability in regulating or utilizing emotion will lead even to very effective emotional labor in the inner aspect, as well as emotional labor in the superficial aspect.

Also, the diversity of employees in organizations may be divided into surface-level diversity and deep-level diversity (Harrison et al., 2002; Robbins and Judge, 2013). Jackson et al. (2003) said that diversity represented to the distribution of personal attributes among interdependent employees of a workplace. Meanwhile, although groups of employees consisted of males in similar age

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**Table 1**  
Previous studies on the relationship between emotional intelligence and emotional labor.

Directions	Authors	Sample	Main results
$EI \xrightarrow{\text{positive}} EL$	Mikolajczak et al. (2007)	Nurses (124)	Individuals with higher trait EI scores experienced more positive consonance and performed less emotional effort than individuals with lower trait EI scores, in terms of both SA and DA.
	Karim and Weisz (2010)	Public organization (92)	EI, DA, and SA were indicated to have positive correlation. Out of this, EI was mentioned to have positive influence upon DA.
	Lee and Ok (2012)	Hotel (309)	EI negatively affected emotional dissonance while positively affecting emotional effort, and suggested that EI contributed to positive expression of emotions.
	Prentice et al. (2013)	Hospitality (578)	It suggested the positive relationship between EI and SA with saying that SA has positive relationship out of EI and EL, and that the influence of DA and SA upon burnout reduces in the more excellent EI.
$EI \xrightarrow{\text{positive}} DA$	Brotheridge (2006)	Customer service (188)	The higher the score of a person's EI, the higher the possibility of DA, implying that EI is positively related only with DA during EL.
	Ramachandran et al. (2011)	Resort (152)	EI had a significant positive correlation with DA during EL but had nothing to do with SA.
$EI \xrightarrow{\text{positive}} DA$ $EI \xrightarrow{\text{negative}} SA$	Lee et al. (2010)	General company (401)	It was noted that EI has positive influence upon DA, but has negative influence upon SA in a research of targeting general companies such as electronic, heavy industry, retail, finance, manufacturing, resort, and security.
	Kim et al. (2012)	Hotel (353)	EI was differently related to SA and DA. Hotel front-line employees' EI is positively related to DA, and negatively related to SA.
$EI \xrightarrow{\text{negative}} SA$	Austin et al. (2008)	Students (Univ.) (247)	It was claimed that EI and DA has no significant relationship and that EI has significantly negative influence only upon SA.
	Psilopanagiotti et al. (2012)	Physicians (130)	EI and SA during EL were negatively correlated, and that the ability to appraise one's own emotions had the largest effects.
$EI \xrightarrow{\text{Not significant}} EL$	Totterdell and Holman (2003)	Call center (bank) (90)	They argued that EI had no connection with EL.
	Johnson and Spector (2007)	Customer service (176)	EI did not moderate the relationship between the EL strategies and personal outcomes

Note: Emotional intelligence (EI); emotional labor (EL); surface acting (SA); deep acting (DA).

groups and from the same ethnic group with the same religious conviction in the past, most work groups today are characterized by varieties in gender, nationality, ethnicity, age, education level, career paths, values, and personalities (Mikolajczak et al., 2007). In particular, Petrides and Furnham (2000) observed that females had greater ability to express their emotions than males, and Tamres et al. (2002) found that, although females experienced more stress than males in work situations, they dealt with the emotional aspects of such situations more effectively. Also, Jung and Yoon (2012) advised that the characteristics of job positions played a role in moderating the relationship between emotional intelligence and employees' behavior. Moreover, studies have shown how employee diversity greatly affects performance in the hospitality industry (Sourouklis and Tsagdis, 2013). Therefore, employee diversity should be efficiently managed in order to enhance the productivity of organizations (Garib, 2013). In this study, the diversities of employees in the hotel industry were divided into surface diversity and deep diversity, and gender and job position were chosen as a representative surface factor and a representative deep factor, respectively.

In the present study, emotional intelligence was divided into four sub-factors: others' emotion appraisal, self-emotion appraisal, use of emotion, and regulation of emotion (Wong and Law, 2002). Also, based on Chu and Murrmann (2006)'s study, the current study divides traits of emotional labor into surface acting and deep acting. This study not only explores the sub-factors of emotional

intelligence that significantly affect employees' emotional labor (H1,2) but also attempts to establish the moderating effects of the diversity of organization employees on the causal relationship between emotional intelligence and emotional labor (P1,2) (Fig. 1).

## 2. Research methodology

The data used for the current study were collected from November through December 2012 from employees of deluxe hotel in Seoul of Korea. With the permission of the human resources manager, employees were provided with a voluntary survey and were asked by the researcher to complete the self-administered questionnaires. A pilot test of 50 employees was conducted to ensure the reliability of the scales to be used in a questionnaire, and several modifications were made based on feedback. In total, 500 questionnaires were distributed. After eliminating incomplete questionnaires, 308 usable questionnaires were obtained for processing – a response rate of almost 61.0%. The sample included 49.7% males and 50.3% females; 49.3% were 21–30 years of age. As job position, FOH (front of house) of directly facing customers accounted for 66.6%, and BOH (back of house) as the support position accounted for 33.4%. All participants had been working for five years or less in their current hotel (69.8%).

Mayer and Salovey (1997, p. 10) define *emotional intelligence* more precisely as the “the ability to perceive accurately, appraise, and express emotion; the ability to access and/or generate feelings

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