



Negative affectivity and tipping: The moderating role of emotional labor strategies and leader-member exchange



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ABSTRACT

Negative affectivity (NA) is a personality trait that is likely to impede hospitality employees' ability to perform service due to their tendency to experience negative emotions that are inconsistent or even contrary to normative display rules.

This study examined whether emotional labor strategies and the quality of the relationship with the manager (i.e., LMX) could help NA employees to perform service (expressed as financial gains measured in tip size).

The sample was composed of 304 Israeli restaurant servers. The findings show that NA had a positive effect on tip size when engaging in high surface acting or deep acting; however, this effect was not significant for employees who were less engaged in emotional labor strategies. LMX moderated the relationship between NA and tips such that NA was positively related to tips for employees with a high quality LMX relationship but was negatively related to tips for employees with a low quality LMX relationship.

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1. Introduction

Tipping has become an important economic phenomenon, as documented by economists, psychologists and hospitality management researchers (for a review, see [Lynn, 2006](#)). Since tips are not mandatory and are not necessary to ensure good service, a substantial body of empirical research has attempted to determine why people tip and what factors influence consumers' tipping behavior ([Azar, 2008](#); [Saunders and Lynn, 2010](#)). Recent studies have focused on personality differences ([Lynn, 2000, 2008, 2009](#)) and consumer demographics and their impact on tipping behavior ([Lynn and Thomas-Haysbert, 2003](#); [McCall and Lynn, 2009](#)). Despite this growing database, one particular area that has not received much attention concerns hospitality employees' perceptions of consumers' tipping patterns ([McCall and Lynn, 2009](#)). The goal of this article is to examine whether emotional labor strategies and leader-member exchange (LMX) intersect with negative affectivity (NA) employees' personalities to predict consumers' tipping behavior.

Previous work has emphasized the contribution of positive affective displays to organizational outcomes ([Goodwin and Smith, 1990](#); [Pugh, 2001](#); [Schneider et al., 1998](#)). "Service with a smile" is associated with customer satisfaction and intentions to return ([Barger and Grandey, 2006](#); [Pugh, 2001](#); [Tsai and Huang, 2002](#)).

Therefore, it is not surprising that there are strong norms regarding the emotions that service workers should or should not reveal to their customers (e.g., [Ashforth and Humphrey, 1993](#); [Hochschild, 1983](#)). Hospitality employees (e.g., waiters/waitresses) are particularly vulnerable to these demands for two reasons. First, a hospitality organization's long term survival and competitive advantage mainly depends on its ability to establish emotional bonds with its customers ([Jain and Jain, 2005](#)). Second, because there is a direct relationship between service performance and financial gain (i.e., tips), hospitality employees maintain a positive, friendly and smiling disposition even in circumstances that evoke negative emotional reactions ([Pizam, 2004](#)).

Negative affectivity is a personality trait that is likely to increase stress appraisal and impede hospitality employees' ability to carry out their service duties. A person who is high in NA is more likely to have a negative world view and to interpret ambiguous comments as negative ([Spector et al., 2000](#); [Watson and Clark, 1984](#); [Watson et al., 1988](#)). Employees who are high in NA have fewer coping resources and thus may perceive an event as more threatening ([Spector et al., 2000](#)). Since emotional display rules are inconsistent with or even contrary to high NA employees' feelings, they must engage in emotional labor strategies; i.e., modify outward emotional displays, often by suppressing their own emotions (e.g., unhappiness, tiredness, anger) and "faking" the required mood (e.g., happiness, cheerfulness).

Emotional labor is a significant job requirement in hospitality service jobs ([Lucas and Deery, 2004](#)), and as [Chu et al. \(2012\)](#) noted, there continues to be a lack of quantitative research in the

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hospitality academic field on the antecedents and consequences of emotional labor. Researchers have argued that individual characteristics affect how an individual performs emotional labor (Diefendorff et al., 2005; Zapf and Holz, 2006). Therefore, emotional labor studies must include individual differences when attempting to account for the variation in the outcomes of emotional labor. By studying hospitality employees while including an individual difference variable (i.e., NA), this research may shed new light on the psychological process of emotional labor and extend emotional labor theory in the field of hospitality.

Leader-member exchange (LMX) theory focuses on the dyadic relationship between a leader and a follower (Graen, 1976; Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995; Gerstner and Day, 1997). The quality of a leader-follower relationship is likely to affect followers' (employees') emotions and influence their ability to display appropriate emotions in service encounters with customers (Dasborough, 2006; Medler-Liraz and Kark, 2012; Tangirala et al., 2007). Although previous studies have stressed the importance of LMX on organizational outcomes (e.g., Gerstner and Day, 1997; Hackett et al., 2003; Wang et al., 2005), the literature has paid limited attention to the effect of LMX on employees' emotions and managers' ability to buffer employees against stressful events. Most of the existing literature has focused on managers' emotions as a predictor of the quality of the LMX (Engle and Lord, 1997; Steiner, 1997), and not as a factor that is likely to relate or possibly impact employees' emotions.

This study builds on theoretical ideas regarding personality and emotional labor (Bono and Vey, 2007; Chi et al., 2011; Judge et al., 2009) and draws on LMX theory to propose that the service performance (as measured in tips) of hospitality employees who are high in NA depends on their emotional labor strategies as well as on the quality of the relationship between manager and employee. It makes three major contributions. First, this study advances emotional labor research, specifically in the hospitality context, by exploring the role of individual differences in predicting emotional labor and its moderating impacts. Second, it sheds light on managers' ability to buffer employees' negative emotions by creating a high LMX relationship. Third, in terms of potential managerial implications, the results suggest managerial guidelines for training designed to increase employee service performance by assisting employees in controlling their negative emotional reactions to customers.

2. Literature review and hypothesis development

2.1. Affectivity: Negative and positive affectivity

Positive affectivity (PA) and negative affectivity (NA) define a general tendency on the part of an individual to experience positive or negative emotions over time and across situations (Larsen and Ketelaar, 1991; Watson and Slack, 1993). High NAs are individuals who experience more negative than positive emotions such as irritation, nervousness, dissatisfaction, pessimism, and have a tendency to be reactive to the normal stresses of daily life and dwell on the negative side of the world (George, 1992; Watson and Clark, 1984). High PAs are individuals who typically experience greater life satisfaction, self-esteem and control than low PAs; they possess an overall sense of well-being and have been characterized as joyful, active, friendly and enthusiastic (George, 1992; Larsen and Ketelaar, 1991).

2.2. Emotional labor

The concept of emotional labor – the “process of regulating both feelings and expressions for the organizational goals” (Grandey,

2000, p. 97) – has received ample attention in existing research in an effort to understand how service organizations can better deliver “service with a smile” to their customers (Groth et al., 2009).

The two main strategies of regulating emotion used by employees to comply with expectations of emotional display are surface acting and deep acting (Hochschild, 1983; Kruml and Geddes, 2000; Zapf, 2002). In surface acting, employees modify behaviors by suppressing or faking expressions and displaying emotions not actually felt (Brotheridge and Lee, 2002; Grandey, 2000). In deep acting, employees modify behaviors through internal change so that a genuine emotional display can follow. Thus, individuals try to influence what they feel in order to “become” the role they are asked to display. This involves changing cognitions through perspective-taking, or positive refocus (Grandey et al., 2004).

As research on emotional labor has accumulated, researchers have argued that emotional labor studies should take individual differences into account when explaining variations in emotional labor consequences because individual traits affect the ways in which an individual performs emotional labor (Bono and Vey, 2005; Diefendorff et al., 2005; Zapf and Holz, 2006). However, personality has only received scant attention in emotional labor research. Judge et al. (2009) found that surface and deep acting had more positive (or less negative) effects for extroverts (compared to introverts). Chi et al. (2011) found that restaurant servers who tended to use deep acting exceeded their customers' expectations and had greater financial gains regardless of whether they were extroverted or not, whereas surface acting improved tips only for extroverts. In their second study on a call center simulation, deep acting improved emotional performance and increased the likelihood of extra role service behavior beyond the direct and interactive effects of extraversion and other Big Five traits. In contrast, surface acting reduced emotional performance for introverts but not for extroverts, but only during the extra role interaction.

Personality traits such as NA and PA may also play a key role in emotional labor (Bono and Vey, 2005). Research demonstrates that individuals with different affect tendencies evaluate and perceive the same display rules differently (Diefendorff and Richard, 2003; Schaubroeck and Jones, 2000), and thereafter choose to engage in different acting methods. It has been found that NA is generally positively related but PA negatively related to surface acting (Brotheridge and Grandy, 2002; Diefendorff et al., 2005). In a recent study, Chu et al., 2012 confirmed that hospitality employees with higher positive affect tended to experience less emotive dissonance (i.e., a continuum with surface acting and genuine acting on each end) whereas individuals with higher negative affect exerted more effort to enact emotional labor.

2.3. Emotional labor as a moderator of the NA–tipping relationship

The present study explored whether emotional labor strategies are effective for NA hospitality employees' service performance. It posited that NA hospitality employees who engage in surface acting or in deep acting can exhibit the required emotions and increase their tips, but NA employees who are less engaged in emotional labor strategies will get fewer tips.

Hochschild (1983) noted that emotional labor is required when employees feel emotions that are inconsistent with organizational requirements. When feelings are congruent with organizational requirements, such as in the case of high PA, less or no regulation is required. Therefore, when high PAs are asked to display positive emotions, almost no emotional labor is presumably required. Conversely, for NAs, emotional display rules are inconsistent or even contrary to their feelings. Therefore, if NAs want to fulfill their job requirements (i.e., present positive displays) and reap the financial rewards (i.e., tips), engaging in surface or deep acting may be

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