



## Research note

# Antecedents and consequences of employees' job stress in a foodservice industry: Focused on emotional labor and turnover intent



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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to understand the interrelationships among employees' emotional labor, emotional dissonance, job stress, and turnover intent in the foodservice industry. The study was administered to 338 family-style restaurant employees. The results showed that employees' emotional labor was positively associated with emotional dissonance, job stress, and turnover intent. However, employees' emotional dissonance did not have a significant, direct impact on turnover intent. In addition, employees' job stress was positively associated with turnover intent.

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## 1. Introduction

As the service industry has greatly expanded, employee appropriate emotional labor, formed at customer contact points, has become an important factor that enhances the competitiveness of service organization and determines their performance. Appropriate emotional labor induces positive customer word-of-mouth and repetitive purchases and also draws positive corporate evaluations (Ashkanasy et al., 2002; Grandey, 2003). Understanding emotional labor in the service industry is important because front-line employees engage in this work as part of their jobs, which include greeting customers with a positive attitude (Cho et al., 2013). When emotional labor was first presented as an entity, it was seen as different from physical or mental labor (Hochschild, 1983). However, as the number of occupations in which emotional expression is part of the job has increased in many industries along with the expanded areas of service to which it applies due to industrial fusion, emotional labor is now a representative form of labor performed by many employees. Emotional labor is perceived as more important in those occupations where employees directly deal with and provide services to customers, such as hotels and the foodservice industry (Pizam, 2004; Lee and Ok, 2012). Leidner's (1993) study on the training of fast-food workers documented the negative emotional and social effects on employees of their engaging in extensive emotional labor with customers.

Employees' appropriate emotional labor while performing their duties induces favorable emotions in customers, and thus plays

a meaningful role in enhancing an organization's competitiveness and improving performance (Grandey, 2003) while inducing employees' positive organizational behavior (Brotheridge and Grandey, 2002; Zapf, 2002; Zapf and Holz, 2006). Therefore, although the value of emotional labor was an individual-level issue in the past, employees' emotions are now managed at the organizational level. In particular, most of the stress experienced by employees of the foodservice enterprises in job contexts is related to emotional labor. Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) emphasized the ambivalent roles of emotional labor indicating that the effects were a *double-edged sword*. He mentioned that emotional labor leads to coming to feel an individual sense of achievement by following emotional expression of being demanded by organization, thereby having positive influence upon performance of organization, but having negative influence, too, due to psychological pressure. Brotheridge and Grandey (2002) observed that causal relationships exist between emotional labor and employees' positive behavior indicating that employees' internal behavior of making an effort to feel the emotions required by organizations during emotional labor was the most helpful in reducing emotional dissonance.

However, Hochschild (1983) said that performing emotional labor damaged the true self resulting in self-alienation. Thus, performing emotional labor as part of an individual's duties negatively affects individuals' attitudes or behavior whether the emotional labor involved positive or negative emotions. Adelman (1989) also emphasized the negative results of emotional labor and observed that when compared to non-emotional laborer groups, emotional laborer groups had worse health conditions and lower job satisfaction and self-regard. A controversial question still exists regarding the effectiveness of emotional labor. However, through a prior study, this researcher supposed that the emotional labor's negative

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**Table 1**

Prior studies associated with the hypothesis (since 2004).

Hypothesis direction		Authors
H1 (+)	Emotional labor → emotional dissonance	Van Dijk and Brown (2006), Van Dijk and Kirk (2007)
H2 (+)	Emotional labor → job stress	Pugliesi (1999), Kim and Lee (2011)
H3 (+)	Emotional labor → turnover intent	Chau et al. (2009), Goodwin et al. (2011), Lv et al. (2012)
H4 (+)	Emotional dissonance → turnover intent	Karatepe and Aleshinloye (2009), Kumar and Bhatnagar (2010), Celik and Oz (2011)
H5 (+)	Job stress → turnover intent	Karatepe and Karatepe (2010), Elci et al. (2012), Jung et al. (2012)

influence upon an individual is not emotional labor itself, but the incongruous state of emotional dissonance, which is accompanied by emotional labor. Based on this, this study progressed with the focus on the negative effect of emotional labor (Chau et al., 2009; Goodwin et al., 2011; Lv et al., 2012).

Studies that deal with emotional labor in relation to hospitality industries have been conducted in tourism (Gursoy et al., 2011; Chu et al., 2012), hotels (Kim, 2008; Lam and Chen, 2012; Lee and Ok, 2012; Lee et al., 2012), etc. Most of these studies investigated emotional labor as a leading variable of exhaustion and examined emotional labor's relationship with job satisfaction or performance. Thus, this study considered the antecedents (emotional labor, and emotional dissonance) and the consequences (turnover intent) focusing on job stress that employees of foodservice industry come to experience in a working situation. Most studies, which have been performed in the meantime, are addressing emotional labor as an antecedent of burnout and were being limited to a study that considered the relationship with job satisfaction or performance.

At this point of time, this study aimed to closely examine the stress of employees created through emotional labor and the emotional dissonance experienced in a job context. This stress consequently leads even to turnover intent, which is employees' negative attitude variable, targeting the family-style restaurant (see Table 1).

## 2. Research methodology

### 2.1. Sample and data collection

The data used for this study were collected in 2012 from front employees in family-style restaurants in Korea. Five ranked family-style restaurant chains were chosen in terms of sales in 2011; VIPS, Outback Steak House, TGI Fridays, Ashley, and Seven Springs participated. Before the questionnaire was finalized, three managers at family-style restaurants and three faculty members familiar with the topic area reviewed the questionnaire, and slight revisions in wording were made based on their suggestions. After incomplete questionnaires were eliminated, 338 questionnaires were obtained over the three-week period (a response rate of 67.60%). The majority of the employees (58.5%) were female, 61.2% were 20–29 years of age, and 53.8% had a community college degree. The majority of the respondents (71.3%) had worked at the current workplace for less than 5 years.

### 2.2. Instrument development

The survey instrument used to measure emotional labor, emotional dissonance, job stress, and turnover intent included a 7-point Likert-type scale. A pilot test of 50 family-style restaurant employees was conducted to ensure the scales' reliability. Some terms were modified on the basis of the results of the pilot test. To measure employees' emotional labor, this study adapted the multi-item Glomb and Tews (2004) and Diefendorff et al. (2005) scales: surface acting, deep acting, and expression of felt emotion (12 items). Employees' emotional dissonance (3 items) was based on Brotheridge and Lee (1998). Job stress (4 items) was developed by

Parker and Decotiis (1983). Respondent turnover intent (4 items) was also developed by Seashore et al. (1982).

## 3. Results

### 3.1. Measurement model

Table 2 shows the results of the CFA of the theorized six-factor model (Rindskopf and Rose, 1988). All standardized factor loadings exceeded .700, and each indicator *t*-value exceeded 8.00 ( $p < .001$ ). The Cronbach alpha (.903–.957), CCR (.806–.892), and AVE (.701–.847) of each measurement scale exceeded the minimum requirement of .70 (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988). In addition, confirmatory measurement models demonstrated the soundness of the measurement properties ( $\chi^2 = 789.691$ ,  $df = 210$ ,  $GFI = .839$ ,  $NFI = .901$ ,  $CFI = .925$ ).

### 3.2. Structural equation modeling

SEM was conducted to test the validity of the proposed model and the hypotheses. Fig. 1 presents the standardized path coefficients for all relationships in the structural model. The chi-square statistic indicated that the model did not fit the data well

**Table 2**

Reliabilities and confirmatory factor analysis properties.

Construct (Cronbach's alpha)	Standardized loadings	<i>t</i> -Value	CCR	AVE
Surface acting (.903)			.828	.701
EL <sub>1</sub>	.837	Fixed		
EL <sub>2</sub>	.883	19.628***		
EL <sub>3</sub>	.829	17.894***		
EL <sub>4</sub>	.801	17.125***		
Deep acting (.955)			.871	.825
EL <sub>5</sub>	.904	Fixed		
EL <sub>6</sub>	.950	30.637***		
EL <sub>7</sub>	.887	20.729***		
EL <sub>8</sub>	.892	20.936***		
Expression of felt emotions (.927)			.859	.749
EL <sub>9</sub>	.887	Fixed		
EL <sub>10</sub>	.916	23.414***		
EL <sub>11</sub>	.860	21.066***		
EL <sub>12</sub>	.796	18.277***		
Emotional dissonance (.920)			.806	.794
ED <sub>1</sub>	.860	Fixed		
ED <sub>2</sub>	.913	22.571***		
ED <sub>3</sub>	.900	22.127***		
Job stress (.908)			.872	.766
JS <sub>1</sub>	.981	Fixed		
JS <sub>2</sub>	.797	15.907***		
JS <sub>3</sub>	.974	21.525***		
JS <sub>4</sub>	.723	14.326***		
Turnover intent (.957)			.892	.847
TI <sub>1</sub>	.869	Fixed		
TI <sub>2</sub>	.959	27.783***		
TI <sub>3</sub>	.955	27.529***		
TI <sub>4</sub>	.901	24.094***		

\*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

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