

Emotional Labor among Fashion Models: A Scoping Review

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ABSTRACT

Emotional labor is the effort, planning, and control needed to express appropriate and desired emotions during interpersonal transactions. It is particularly relevant in the service and hospitality industry and has garnered attention from researchers over the years. However, there have not been any significant attempts in exploring emotional labor among fashion models, a profession in which emotional labor plays a crucial role in carrying out occupational roles. Models perform emotional labor when they are acting on-ramp, posing in front of the camera or interacting with clients. The aim of this review paper was to explore the representation of emotional labor in scientific literature, and assess its relevance and effects among individuals working in the fashion industry, specifically fashion models. The antecedents of emotional labor along with its consequences on individuals from various careers have also been discussed, with specific emphasis on fashion models. After reviewing research articles from the existing literature on emotional labor, evidence of both negative (depression, anxiety, burnout, emotional exhaustion, etc.) and positive consequences (feeling more confident, with knowing how to perform emotions, job satisfaction, etc.) of emotional labor were found. However, evidence for the negative consequences of emotional labor was more apparent in literature. Furthermore, the review highlighted the need to study the impact of emotional labor on fashion models' wellbeing through systematic research studies. Based on the review, recommendations were also made on how employees and employers can utilize psychological training to help them better manage their emotions and perform at the workplace, which inevitably has positive impacts on job satisfaction and long term success.

Keywords: *Emotional labor, Fashion models, Wellbeing, Psychological consequences, career*

Emotions have been defined by the American Psychological Association (APA), as “a complex reaction pattern, involving experiential, behavioral and physiological elements”. Emotional labor can be understood as the efforts or labor needed in managing those three elements. It can be defined as the effort, planning, and control needed to express appropriate and desired emotions according to situational needs. It is a functional part of many organizations and industries including the fashion industry. The fashion industry is heavily reliant on appropriate emotion expression by models and it is a key to

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gaining success in the fashion industry (Wissinger, 2007). The concept of emotional labor has gathered attention from many researchers in the hospitality and service industries in recent years (Kruml & Geddes, 2000). However, there has been no credible attention towards exploring emotional labor among fashion models, an industry in which emotional labor plays a significant role. Compared to other professions, models are required to perform emotional labor more often in their daily occupational roles. Fashion models are often required to perfectly manage their bodily capital and perform emotional labor appropriately in order to succeed. Hence, professional models are often superb communicators without even uttering a word (Wissinger, 2007). Emotional labor also helps them to cope with the many unpleasant aspects of modelling (Mears & Finlay, 2005). Fashion modelling is often regarded as a very challenging career and models often face ordeals of rejection, humiliation, comparison with young and thinner models, and also in maintaining their physical appearance and fitness (Wacquant, 2004). In that regard, the aim of this review is to determine the importance of emotional labor among fashion models and also assess its scope in terms of research so far. The review also outlines the different ways in which emotional labor is manifested at the workplace and also its consequences in terms of job performance and overall wellbeing.

Need for a Review

In this review paper, the concept of ‘emotional labor’ has been explored through relevant literature to assess its scope as a research variable and its relevance among fashion models and the fashion industry. A number of standard online databases were chosen to look up research articles on emotional labor which included Google Scholar, JSTOR, ProQuest, EBSCOHost and Research Gate. The search strategy included trying out iterations of the keywords of ‘emotional labor’ and ‘fashion models’ to identify published and unpublished research articles, dissertations, reports, etc. available online. Multiple iterations of the key words and Boolean functions were used to identify relevant research articles. The time period between 1983 and 2022 was set as one search parameter to include only recent publications.

The present review aimed to synthesize past research to outline current knowledge about the psychological impact of emotional labor among fashion models and identify areas for further research on concepts related to emotional labor. However, there were only a small number of research studies that looked at emotional labor, specific to fashion models or fashion industry. Other research studies that explored the review variables within service sector employees as well as from organizational perspectives were also taken. Given the dearth of published research on emotional labor, this review is also one of the first attempts to adopt the concept of emotional labor to a specific occupational group.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Conceptualization of emotional labor

There are various theories and definitions currently in scientific literature surrounding the concept of emotional labor. One of the first definitions of emotional labor was from sociologist Arlie Russell Hochschild’s book titled *The Managed Heart* (1983), in which she defined emotional labor as "the management of feelings to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display". According to her, any occupation involving emotional labor ideally requires the workers to possess key skills in building facial or voice contact with people and producing appropriate emotional state during those interactions. Thus, emotional labor has an exchange value and is traded for wages in occupation. Morris and Feldman (1996) went further and conceptualized emotional labor as the effort, planning, and control

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needed to express organizationally desired emotions during interpersonal transactions. This definition extended the concept of emotional labor into employee- employer interactions and organizational expectations in terms of interacting with customers.

Emotional labor has also been conceptualized in terms of the effectiveness of behavior in terms of enhancing impression management in social situations (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1995; Gardner & Martinko, 1988). According to Ashforth and Humphrey (1995), emotional labor is an act of displaying appropriate emotions for impression management in order to foster certain perceptions about themselves. Ashforth and Humphrey were more concerned with emotional labor as an observable behavior than as management of one's feelings. Grandey (2000) defined emotional labor as "the process of regulating both feelings and expressions for organizational goals". The notion of emotional labor within the context of organizations is taken further by Johnson (2007) who defined it as "the expression of organizationally desired emotions by service agents during service encounters". It is apparent that researches and theorists have not clearly agreed on the conceptual definition of emotional labor, and there have been differences due to various scientific perspectives towards understanding of emotional labor and emotions in general. However, the common theme across previous research and theories on emotional labor is that through emotional labor, individuals can regulate their emotional expressions according to the demands of the situations. The level of emotional labor required in different occupations can vary, and in the fashion industry in particular, it is more pronounced (Johnson & Spector, 2007).

Differentiating emotional labor from related concepts

It is crucial to differentiate between emotional labor from other related concepts on emotions or affect. For instance, emotional intelligence, emotional regulation, emotional performance and emotional work refer to related aspects of one's emotional domain which is often implicated in everyday life similar to emotional labor. Emotional regulation refers to various factors that determine how employees should control and express their emotions (surface acting and deep acting); emotional intelligence refers to an employee's ability to control their emotions and empathize with others. Emotional performance is the effectiveness of using verbal and nonverbal cues to communicate. Nonverbal communication is a form of expressing oneself using space, time, and body movements whereas verbal communication is one in which information is conveyed through language (Dodd, 1991). Although these concepts refer to similar domains of the affective system, what sets apart emotional labor is its connotation with the organizational space, particularly what employees or workers need to do to best control, regulate and utilize their emotions for the workplace, hence proving to be a crucial capital towards improving organizational productivity (Hochschild, 1983).

Emotional labor strategies

Hochschild (1983) emphasized that emotional labor occurs when organizations attempt to manage employees' feelings in order to create observable and acceptable facial and body features. Surface and deep acting are strategies based on notions from acting and are often used by employees to perform acts of emotional expression required by their organization (Hoffman, 2016). The act requires the employees to manufacture substitutes for the emotions they genuinely want to display (Choi & Kim, 2015). Surface acting requires the person to simulate emotions that are not actually felt by manipulating features of their outward expression (facial gestures and expression, tone of voice, etc.). Surface acting can thus be understood as the difference in labor between the displayed and experienced emotions (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1995). Surface acting is sometimes regarded as faking too since the employee conforms to certain display rules to maintain their employment rather

than help the customer or employers (Rafaeli & Sutton, 1987). In deep acting, the individual comes to accept these displayed feelings as his or her own. It requires the person to immerse completely in the role they are fulfilling, like actors and almost to the point of believing their emotional expressions as genuine (Hochschild, 1983). Deep acting often channels the person's inner feelings (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993) and is also enhanced by the individuals' past experience and trainings (Kruml & Geddes, 2000). However, both strategies require conscious and active effort to regulate emotions in order to comply with display rules (Grandey, 2003). Furthermore, genuinely expressing felt emotions is also regarded as a third emotional labor strategy. Its proponents argue that although the discrepancy between expected and experienced emotions might be low, a cognitive effort is still required to express those emotions in a contextually appropriate manner (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Morris & Feldman, 1996).

Antecedents of Emotional Labor

The performance of emotional labor by individuals is influenced by a number of factors (Hochschild, 1983). Morris and Feldman (1996) conceptualized emotional labor in terms of four separate dimensions: "frequency of appropriate emotional displayed, attentiveness to required display rules, variety of emotions to be displayed, and emotional dissonance generated by having to express organizationally desired emotions not genuinely felt". Within organizations, various roles may have specific demands in terms of the nature, frequency and intensity of display of socially appropriate emotions by employees. Some display rules can have lots of specifications which can expend employees' psychological energy and physical effort, thus being more emotional labor intensive, such as service sector jobs (Hochschild, 1983). Longer emotional displays require greater attention and emotional stamina, and thus can become more natural and less scripted with time. Hence, instances of emotional display are inevitably associated with emotional intensity, and longer displays of emotions are more likely to be experienced more intensely and requiring more labor (Rafaeli, 1989). Apart from the factors associated with certain occupation roles, emotional labor is also influenced by the following employee characteristics.

1. Individual characteristics. Individuals with emotional contagion empathize easily with others as they are able to express their emotions freely and take others' emotions as their own emotions. However, they are also prone to stress when required to suppress their emotions. Kruml and Geddes (2003) pointed out that emotional contagion can positively affect emotional labor as it directly influences one's deep acting and surface acting (Chu, 2002; Cho et al., 2011). Another individual characteristic that affects emotional labor is empathic concern. Empathic concern is different from emotional contagion and refers to people's acceptance and response towards emotions by others (Choi & Kim 2015). Affectivity and empathy were also highlighted as significant individual characteristics determining emotional labor by Rafaeli and Sutton (1989). Affectivity is the general tendency to experience a particular mood (feeling of happiness or sorrow) in a certain way or react to objects (situation or people) in a specific manner consistent with emotions experienced (Morris & Feldman, 1996; Abraham, 1998). Affectivity can be either positive or negative and in people with high positive affectivity, they feel enthusiastic, driven and active, unlike individuals with high negativity, who tend to be anxious, nervous, and irritable. Empathy has been defined as an affective process of perspective taking (Eisenberg & Strayer, 1990); and also, as one's emotional reaction in the presence of other people and their experiences (Feshbach & Roe, 1968).

2. Gender. There have been differences found between men and women on various aspects and strategies in balancing emotions. Males have a tendency towards assuming control and expressing powerful emotions (pride, anger, etc.) easily whereas women are more inclined to getting along and maintaining peace (Timmers, Fischer & Manstead, 1998). It has also been found that across all age groups, females used more proactive emotional regulation strategies when compared to men (Blanchard-Fields et al., 2004). Women are also more likely to manage emotions effectively both at work and home. Females are also more likely to experience negative emotions when engaging in surface acting (Johnson & Spector, 2007). Gender has also been found to be associated with mostly surface acting strategies (Wharton & Erickson, 1993). Among fashion models however, no stable evidence has been found to show significant gender differences, although there is plenty of evidence of differences between the two genders in managing and regulating emotions.

3. Age. One's physical and mental age also influence the capacity for emotional labor. Older people tend to automatically process and regulate emotions owing to their experiences in adapting and expressing emotions appropriately during various social contexts throughout their lives (Carstensen & Mikels, 2005). Thus, older workers are able to better express the organizationally mandated emotions easily and based on cognitive and affective schemas honed over the years. It has also been found that older workers report higher job satisfaction and overall wellbeing at the workplace based on their prior experience (Gatz & Hurwicz, 1990). Older workers are also less likely to report work burnout compared to younger workers, which can be attributed to their emotional management skills. Among fashion models, it has been seen that young novice models have higher risks of negative experiences such as bullying/discrimination, casting couch and other sexual abuse (Carr & Mercer, 2017)

4. Personality. Personality type, temperament and attitudes also determine employees' emotional displays in the workplace and may additionally influence how individuals handle emotional dissonance (John & Gross, 2004). Emotional expressivity as a personality characteristic is in line with the concepts of surface and deep acting as within personality as well, there are various levels of surface and deep level traits. Employees who are expressive in nature by personality would also be apt at following organizational display rules and complete tasks with low emotional labor (Grandey, 2000).

Consequences of emotional labor

There are various individual, environmental and work-related factors that determine the nature, frequency and intensity of emotional labor experiences. Since emotional labor is a crucial part of many occupations, one must also consider the consequences of having expended one's emotional labor beyond capacity or ability to handle it. Emotional labor has been linked with poor physical and mental health and a range of various work related and personal negative outcomes, which underline its importance (Bono & Vey, 2005). A few of them are given below.

1. Mental health issues. Emotional labor also plays a crucial role in the mental health of employees. In order to improve corporate performance, employee motivation, and job satisfaction, it is important to consider the emotional labor issues faced by the employees. Previous studies have found significant associations between emotional labor and various psychological disorders including depression and anxiety, suicidal thoughts, somatization, etc. (Kim et al., 2013). Other studies have found that emotional dissonance is associated with more burnout and is often the crucial link between emotional labor and employees' well-being (Noh & Nah, 2015). Similarly, studies have also found that emotional labor

through rigid organizational norms can negatively impact employees' well-being (Park et al., 2019). Emotional labor can affect workers' job satisfaction which in turn has implications for employee attendance and turnover, and also the overall health of the employees (Grandey, 2000; Yoon & Kim, 2013).

2. Psychological wellbeing. Psychological wellbeing at work describes the employees' state of deriving subjective positive experience at the workplace (Dagenais-Desmarais & Savoie, 2012). Psychological wellbeing of the employees is crucial for the individual employees as well as the organization since happy and healthy employees who feel comfortable at the workplace can contribute earnestly and more significantly to the organization's goals (Garg & Rastogi, 2009). Psychological wellbeing at work is often conceptualized in terms of five work-related dimensions; interpersonal fit, success at work, feelings of capability at work, perceived recognition of work and willingness for work connections. For employees to thrive, they need to be able to perform works for which they can utilize their skills and get recognition when tasks are accomplished. Apart from the work, employees need a dynamic social environment as well as chances for further growth. Maintaining psychological or emotional wellbeing also becomes an important consideration in terms of facing interpersonal conflicts or challenges at the workplace (Charles & Carstensen, 2007). The performance of emotional labor tasks as a part of one's occupation has direct implications on the wellbeing of the employees (Mirvis & Hall, 1994).

3. Burnout. It is a condition of physical, mental, and emotional exhaustion caused by prolonged or intense stress and often exhibited in terms of decreased job performance and physical/mental health problems (Taris, 2006). Burnout is typically found more in employees from the service sector and helping industries owing to the effects of the nature of the jobs. When employees regulate or suppress their emotions as a part of their occupation, it creates emotional labor and increases chances of burning out. Research in the link between emotional labor and burnout have also found that high emotional labor demands leads to increase in exhaustion and stress, and can also cause symptoms of depression or distress (Cheung, Tang & Tang, 2011). There is a direct positive association between emotional labor and burnout (Hochschild, 1983). Jeung et al. (2017) also found that three of the five factors of emotional labor were directly related to burnout, namely overload and conflict, emotional disharmony and hurt, and lack of support; thus indicating a direct link between the two.

4. Job satisfaction. Job satisfaction is a yardstick of the employee's assessment of the job and has usually been used as a substitute for employee well-being at work (Grandey, 2000). Employee wellbeing, compensation, working conditions, etc. directly affect the overall job satisfaction that employees derive and also their commitment to the organization and rates of turnover (Cheung et al., 2011). When individuals are required to actively manage their emotions, the emotional labor can take its toll and lead to stress, burnout and other symptoms, which inevitably also affect the employees' job satisfaction (Grandey, Rupp & Brice, 2015).

Implications and Future Directions

Based on these study findings, two suggestions can be made. First, the lack of data on fashion models' well-being is the starting point for acknowledging that fashion models' well-being should be a matter of concern to future research. The review aimed to understand the context in which emotional labor took place among fashion models, and also the various issues and challenges faced by them, through study of literature. Since it is a less represented

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group, there is a need to study the impact of emotional labor on the fashion model's well-being in order to better suggest policy change in the industry. It has been found that sub-sectors such as fashion, music/video, sport, and software/games are seen as popular and the most attractive for potential young employees (Nickson et al., 2012). These are often high-stake occupation sectors which require huge deal of emotional labor as well as have better prospects of success. Due to the demands of the fashion industry, it is important to assess the psychological wellbeing of fashion models in order to gauge its impact on individuals. Within the field of psychology research, exploring emotional labor and its implications among fashion models has huge scope.

- There are very few research studies on emotional labor in the fashion industry area that describe the strategies used by fashion models for emotional labor performance and their consequences. There are even fewer studies emerging from India or among Indian fashion models.
- Fashion modelling is a vulnerable area as the occupation is dominated by young females who face lots of risks and challenges. There is already huge exploitation that happens among fashion models, which makes it even more important to examine the kind of emotional labor tactics they utilize (Wissinger, 2007).
- For a niche field like the fashion industry, there is also huge scope for training of various skills and strategies to manage one's emotions better. In recent years, it has become normal to have psychologists, counsellors and experts on board within organizations such that emotional labor skills can be imparted in a scientific manner. However, it is not clear the extent of trainings and skill enhancements that can be carried out among occupations such as fashion modelling that are vulnerable to emotional labor.

In terms of recommendations, future research should look at emotional labor among fashion models and measure emotional labor among them when they are performing emotional labor as a part of their occupation. It was clear from the review that there are hardly any efforts in measuring or working with emotional labor in the fashion industry. The review also posits the need for researchers to think more carefully about emotional labor underpinning industries as well as the lifestyle built on such practices. Only through scientific and systematic research among representative samples of fashion models, we will get a clearer idea regarding the utility of emotional labor as well as the consequences fashion models face in trying to manage their emotions. This is directly impinged on the wellbeing and mental health of fashion models, thus has huge significance. Emotional labor is still a relatively less known term, and further research is warranted in order to define its limits and come up with effective strategies and resources to help professionals better deal with issues related to emotional labor.

CONCLUSION

After Hochschild introduced the concept of emotional labor in the 1990s, many scholars from various disciplines have done research on emotional labor. Apart from the individual level differences in emotional labour due to gender, age, resources, etc., it is also influenced by the kind of occupations people are involved in. This is particularly apparent among people working in the service sector where demands for emotional labor is high. Fashion models are a unique subset within the fashion and/or service industry and are not comparable to other service providers in terms of the range of experiences. Fashion models' emotional labor is a self-protection mechanism to counter the humiliation and harassment

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they often experience in the process of becoming a model (Mears & Finlay, 2005). Models are required to only exude positive emotions and act professionally, which adds more pressure on their workload and their ability to regulate their emotions. Models also often feel that they are continuously being monitored from customers and employers; watching how they display their emotions. This type of emotional labor can even distance the worker cognitively from the situation by acting rather than experiencing the emotions, in order to safeguard their real feelings. There are clear differences between expected and experienced emotions, and the dissonance between the two through emotional labor can have harmful consequences in terms of physical or mental health, job outcomes, social costs, etc.

Emotion labor and emotional regulation/expression have become important components of many job roles and occupations. As per the review, the occupations with the highest levels of emotional labor needs were the service and hospitality sectors. Fashion models are particularly susceptible to the effects of emotional labor as well as the various nuances and challenges that are part of the industry. Individual personality, empathy and age can have huge impact on the way individuals experience emotions and perform emotional labor successfully. However, many times the demands of the workplace are simply beyond individual capacities and can manifest in the form of mental health issues, stress and burnout, lower job performance and satisfaction, etc. The review outlined the concept of emotional labor, its characteristics, antecedents and consequences. However, the nature of these processes are not well known in the fashion industry due to the lack of credible research evidence. This review revealed that most of the research studies until now on emotional labor have been on varied range of occupations. However, with only few research studies among fashion models, it is not sure whether insights on emotional labor from other industries are relevant. Nonetheless, emotional labor is still a very recent concept and there is huge scope in exploring its components and correlates, especially in high risk/demand occupations such as fashion modelling. This review shed some light on the need of high quality research on emotional labor and associated variables among fashion models.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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