Emotional labor of frontline employees: Generational differences and intention to stay

Abstract

Emotional labor often takes the form of displaying fake or genuine feelings toward customers, showing interest in customer needs, and engaging in employee-customer emotional interactions. The purpose of this research was to investigate the emotional labor states adopted and practiced by frontline employees in the hospitality industry. We analyzed significant differences of emotional labor among Generation X and Y, and socio-demographic characteristics of frontline employees. The influence of emotional labor states on frontline employees' intention to stay is also examined. The emotional labor states applied here were surface acting, deep acting, genuine acting and emotive dissonance. A quantitative approach was adopted, and data were collected from three-, four-, and five-star hotels in Hong Kong. The study found that Generation X respondents adopted genuine acting and emotional dissonance more often, while Generation Y respondents used surface acting and deep acting more frequently. The findings suggest that although surface acting has a significant effect on employees' intention to stay, genuine acting and sincere feelings toward one's job have a stronger effect.

Keywords: emotional labor, Generation X, Generation Y, frontline employees, intention to stay

Introduction

Hochschild (2003) described smiles, moods, feelings, and relationships as products. In the hospitality industry, these products have become one of the distinguishing features of hotel services. To provide high quality services, hotels deliver their products through service providers, including frontline employees who interact more directly with customers. Frontline employees, such as front desk staff, restaurant staff, and housekeeping, play a crucial role in customer interaction, customer engagement and satisfaction, and therefore customer loyalty. Moreover, through frontline employees' emotional labor, organizations can offer positive emotional displays to improve customer satisfaction and future purchases (Li, Canziani & Barbieri, 2016).

Service employees do not only do physical work, but also perform mental and emotional tasks by providing quality and timely services (Johanson & Woods, 2008). In the hospitality industry, emotional labor takes the form of displaying fake or genuine feelings toward customers, showing interest in customer needs, and engaging in employee-customer emotional interactions (Johanson & Woods, 2008). Human capital management trends are changing as the quality of customer service can depend heavily on the emotional engagement of employees (Chu & Murmann, 2006). Consequently, companies no longer hire employees based solely on their skills and intelligence, but also look for workers who can deliver sincere and genuine customer service. In addition to employees' personal characteristics and the context of their service delivery, their emotions are affected by the display rules of the organization. Display rules refer to organizational norms describing how and when emotions should be expressed in a service environment (Rafaeli & Sutton, 1989). In addition to social, occupational, and organizational standards (Grandey, 2000), adherence to display rules is achieved by hiring the right employees, relevant training, socializing new employees with experienced staff members who can convey the service delivery culture, and a fair reward system (Seymour, 2000; Van Dijk & Kirk, 2007; Johanson & Woods, 2008). The literature suggests that employees do not instantly adjust their inner feelings or emotions to the display rules (Sharpe, 2005), rather they face with "emotive dissonance" situation when there is a conflict in their authentic and lived feelings. Hochschild (1983) states that service employees often cope with this 'emotional dissonance' situation through the use of 'surface acting' or 'deep acting'. In other words, emotional labor can be defined as service employees' efforts to perform and demonstrate organizationally-accepted emotions when interacting with customers (Shani, Urieli, Reichel, & Gingburg, 2014).

The consequences of emotional labor have been identified. Previous research has shown that emotional labor is closely related to employees' work stress and job satisfaction, organizational attachment, and customer satisfaction and intention to leave. Frontline employees may experience emotive dissonance when displaying their emotions, such as surface and deep acting, when their inner feelings conflict with their displayed non-genuine feelings. Although previous research has found a strong correlation between emotional labor in the workplace and negative consequences, such as burnout and job dissatisfaction (i.e., Langhorn, 2004; Grandey, 2000; Lv, Xu & Ji, 2012), these perceptions also vary across generations. According to Twenge and Campbell (2008), the formation of different traits, attitudes, and personalities in different generations can be affected by the historical context in which a generation lives. Moreover, research has shown that Generation Y members have higher self-esteem, anxiety, and depression than Generation X members (Twenge & Campbell, 2008; Gibson, Greenwood & Murphy, 2009). As different generations have different work values and perspectives on their work environment and standards, they may experience emotional labor and emotive dissonance differently. More specifically, they may have different perspectives on the perception and acceptance of emotive dissonance and emotive effort resulting from surface acting, deep acting, and genuine acting.

Several theoretical and empirical studies have examined the effect of emotional labor in the hospitality industry (Chu & Murrmann, 2006; Karatepe & Aleshineloye, 2009; Lv et al., 2012; Li et al., 2016). However, despite numerous studies on the harmful effects of emotional labor, to date, no research has examined the link between different generations and emotional labor in the hospitality industry. Indeed, as hotels involve employees of different age groups with different work characteristics, the influence of emotional labor among them can vary from generation to generation. Therefore, we investigated how different generations (i.e., Generation X and Generation Y) are related to four states of emotional labor, surface acting, genuine acting, deep acting, and emotive dissonance, among frontline employees. Generations X and Y are the largest generational groups in the workplace (Inelman, Zeytinoglu & Uygur, 2012). Therefore, we included these two generations in the study. As the issue of emotional labor is still emerging in the hospitality industry, we aimed to provide the industry with a better understanding of emotional labor. Accordingly, the objectives of the study were to examine the emotional labor strategies of frontline employees in the hospitality industry, by measuring the significant differences between different generations (Generation X and Y) and by analyzing the effect of emotional labor strategies on frontline employees' intention to stay.

The results of the study provide hotel professionals with information on the values and attitudes of each generation to improve employees' working conditions, turnover, environment, job structure, and human resource policies (Gursoy, Chi & Karadag, 2013). By understanding how employees of different generations with different values react to and cope with emotive dissonance, managers will be able to offer the right mitigation solutions to the right employees.

Literature Review

Emotional Labor

The concept of emotional labor is derived from Hochschild (1983), who defined it as an effort made by employees to show the expected emotions to customers, positively affecting customers' positive inner state during service encounters (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Henning-Thurau, Groth, Pual & Gremler, 2006). Emotional labor has also been defined as "the act of expressing socially desirable emotions during service transactions" (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993, pp. 88-89).

Hochschild (1983) defined emotional labor from the perspective of employees as "the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display; emotional labor is sold for a wage and therefore has exchange value" (p. 29). Selling emotions has become a work role and is considered a product of the service sector. Employees experience emotional labor when they need to adjust their emotions to match the organization's service standards for their specific position. During the process of showing the desired emotions to customers, service providers can experience a conflict between their inner feelings and the emotions they display (Karatepe & Aleshinloye, 2009).

Hochschild (1983) identified two emotional labor strategies, which he called surface acting and deep acting. Surface acting occurs when employees hide their internal feelings and display fake emotions when interacting with customers. Deep acting occurs when employees suppress and modify their internal feelings to align them with organizational rules. The idea of genuine acting comes from Ashforth and Humphrey (1993), based on previous studies by Hochschild (1983). They identified genuine acting as a major emotional labor state, in which employees display sincere and actual feelings to customers to comply with the organization's display rules. Because it does not involve fake emotions, employees tend not to experience emotive dissonance in their work role when engaged in genuine acting (Chu & Murrmann, 2006).

A number of studies have shown that emotional labor is directly related to employees' physical and emotional stress, well-being, and job performance (Mann & Cowburn, 2005;

Morris & Feldman, 1996; Goussinsky, 2011). Van Dijk and Brown (2006) found a positive relationship between surface acting and emotional exhaustion, leading to employees' physical discomfort (Van Dijk & Brown, 2006). Grandey, Kern, and Frone (2007) argued that by suppressing their felt emotions, employees are more likely to experience emotional exhaustion induced by emotional discrepancy. Heuven and Baker (2003) also found that emotive dissonance leads to emotional exhaustion among service employees and has an effect on employees' job stress.

Surface Acting. As previously mentioned, Hochschild (1983) identified two strategies: surface acting and deep acting. Surface acting is seen as fake feelings displayed by employees who hide their internal emotional state and strive to meet the organization's performance standards. When employees perform surface acting, they make no effort to change their true feelings to sympathize with customers (Brotheridge & Lee, 2002). Grandy (2003) gave the example of frontline employees showing empathy when interacting with a guest, when their inner state may be one of irritation.

Deep acting. Deep acting also called modified feelings, occurs when employees change their actual emotions to match expected emotions. When performing deep acting, employees try to modify their emotions to display the expected feelings (Brotheridge & Lee, 2002). Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) found that deep acting requires more effort than surface acting because it forces employees to invoke thoughts, images, and memories to induce the associated emotions.

In general, surface acting increases emotional discrepancy, or emotive dissonance, while deep acting reduces emotive dissonance by modifying internal feelings to match the level of organizational service required (Mikolajczak, Menil & Luminet, 2007).

Genuine Acting. Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) identified another type of acting in addition to surface acting and deep acting, which they called genuine acting. They suggested that by showing natural emotions, employees make a conscious effort to align their emotions with the organization's norms or expectations (Diefendorff, Croyle & Gosserand, 2005). Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) argued that naturally felt emotions should also be included in emotional labor states alongside surface acting and deep acting, and that researchers have overlooked the expression of naturally felt emotions, which is a common attribution in the workplace. Diefendorff, Croyle, and Gosserand (2005) also found that no published research has been done

on naturally felt emotions compared with surface acting and deep acting, which were well established by Hochschild (1983). This may be due to the fact that emotional labor states are perceived as planned behavior and are reflected when they are experienced. However, even with genuine emotional expressions, employees may make little emotional effort to comply with the display rules of the organization. Involving a certain degree of effortful emotions, employees may experience a minimum level of emotive dissonance even if they express naturally felt emotions (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993). Therefore, genuine acting was included as a component of emotional labor with surface acing and deep acting in this study.

Emotive Dissonance. A conflict between the genuine and counterfeit feelings felt by employees can lead to emotive dissonance, which is related to emotional exhaustion, burnout, and harmful physical effects on employees (Andela, Truchot & Van der Doef, 2016). Conflict in emotions occurs when an employee has to display specific emotions that contrast with those genuinely felt. Emotive dissonance has been described as a type of person–role conflict (Mesmer-Magnus, DeChurch & Wax, 2012) because the individual does not identify with the role requirements and must alter their response in order to satisfy role expectations (Hochschild, 1983; Wharton & Erickson, 1993). According to Hochschild (1983), surface acting is positively correlated with emotive dissonance, as there is a gap between genuine and displayed emotions, leading to emotional conflict in employees. In contrast, deep acting narrows the gap between internal and displayed feelings and is therefore negatively correlated with emotive dissonance. The smallest level of emotive dissonance is seen in genuine acting, which requires little effort to display emotions socially.

Generations and Generational Differences

According to Kupperschmidt (2000), a generation is "an identifiable group that shares birth years, age, location, and significant life events at critical developmental stages." (p.66). In the literature, modern generational groups are identified as Baby Boomers (1946-1961), Generation X (1965-1981), and Generation Y (from 1981). Each generation has its own general characteristics due to the influence of key environmental and critical events (political and economic) during their lifetime, leading to the development of different personalities, values, and beliefs (Macky et al., 2008). Different generational groups also have their own work habits. This can be a considerable challenge for employers, as they have to use different strategies to manage each generation.

Although there are small differences between studies, most researchers have defined

Generation X as people born between 1965 and 1980, when technology was just starting to influence life (Bova & Kroth, 2001). Jurkiewicz (2000) described Generation X members as selfish because they are independent and autonomous. Generation X members prefer to be recognized by their organization for their skills, productivity, and work-life balance rather than their status at work. They generally avoid the lifestyle of Baby Boomers, as they are more likely to be autonomous and self-reliant, while Baby Boomers are committed to work.

Members of Generation Y, also known as Millennials, are more self-centered and highly dependent, and emphasize privacy and work-life balance. Millennials are people born between 1981 and 2000, representing a large population of 71 million people in the United States. Their population is similar to that of Baby Boomers and currently constitutes a large part of the US population. Compared with their parents, Generation Y members are likely to be more open-minded, more educated, more tolerant of diversity, optimistic, and confident (Zemke, Raines & Filipczak, 2000). Moreover, Generation Y is highly connected to technology and the lives of its members depend heavily on communication via technological devices.

Generational and Socio-Demographic Differences

When working in the hospitality industry, employees of different generations may have different work values due to generational value trends (as in other workplaces). According to Walsh and Taylor (2007), Generation X and Generation Y members share similar work values, such as finding a challenging job, because they both focus on personal growth opportunities through which they can be recognized by the organization and their seniors. Their study also showed that both generations try to develop their professional skills and actively make decisions. Chen and Choi (2008) revealed that Generation X and Generation Y members see the supervisory relationship as one of the most important aspects when working in hotels. However, compared with Generation X members, Generation Y members value their freedom, autonomy, and work-life balance more (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008). Moreover, a modern leadership style, involving coaching, counseling, and ethical leadership, is one of the most important factors of job satisfaction for Generation Y members, while independence and autonomy are more important for Generation X members (Jereb, Urh, Strojin & Rakovec, 2019).

Park and Gursoy (2012) argued that due to the demanding nature of the hospitality industry and its lack of rewards, its working conditions are not suitable for younger generations. Moreover, Generation Y members tend to have high self-esteem and self-actualization. Solnet and Hood (2008) pointed out that the unique characteristics of Generation Y members mean that they tend to seek intrinsic values to be satisfied with their work in the hospitality industry.

They also revealed that unlike other generations, Generation Y shows high job satisfaction in careers that emphasize training, involvement, development, and supervisor support.

Based on their characteristics of high self-esteem and low work engagement, we predict that Generation Y members have a higher tendency to practice surface acting and deep acting. Therefore, when the work characteristics and values of Generation Y members are related to emotional labor, they are likely to show a larger discrepancy in their emotional state than those of other generations. In contrast, as most Generation X employees are experienced workers, they are more likely to practice deep acting and genuine acting, leading to less discrepancy in emotive dissonance. Therefore, the following hypotheses between emotional labor strategies and generations are proposed:

H1a: There is a significant difference in surface acting state between Generation X and Generation Y frontline employees.

H1b: There is a significant difference in genuine acting state between Generation X and Generation Y frontline employees.

H1c: There is a significant difference in deep acting state between Generation X and Generation Y frontline employees.

H1d: There is a significant difference in emotive dissonance between Generation X and Generation Y frontline employees.

In addition to generational differences, we analyzed the difference in means between the socio-demographic backgrounds of frontline employees. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed among emotional labor states and gender, monthly income levels, work experience and hotel categories. Hochschild's (1983) study showed that female workers have the ability to suppress their anger and make an effort to communicate happiness and friendliness, which in this case can be considered deep acting. In addition, male bill collectors tend to display their anger and emotional detachment more easily than female collectors. The following hypotheses are proposed:

H2a: There is a significant difference in surface acting state between genders of frontline employees.

H2b: There is a significant difference in genuine acting state between genders of frontline employees.

H2c: There is a significant difference in deep acting state between genders of frontline employees.

H2d: There is a significant difference in emotive dissonance between genders of frontline employees.

Previous studies have suggested that experienced employees tend to have a greater ability to control and display their emotions more appropriately (i.e., Hochschild, 1983; Kruml & Geddes, 2000). In other words, older employees are more likely to control their emotions and display them appropriately, for instance, using genuine acting rather than surface acting. Below hypotheses are developed to analyze the significant differences between years of work experiences and emotional labor.

H3a: There is a significant difference in surface acting state between years of work experience of frontline employees.

H3b: There is a significant difference in genuine acting state between years of work experience of frontline employees.

H3c: There is a significant difference in deep acting state between years of work experience of frontline employees.

H3d: There is a significant difference in emotive dissonance between years of work experience of frontline employees.

The relationship between emotional labor and wages has not been studied widely. A few studies examined the relationship with the low-income jobs and emotional labor demands. For instance, Glomb, Kammeyer-Mueller and Rotundo (2004) found that, higher levels of emotional labor demands are associated with lower wage rates for jobs low in cognitive demands and with higher wage rates for jobs high in cognitive demands. Therefore, it is essential to analyze the significant differences between income levels and emotional labor of frontline employees. The following hypothesis are developed:

H4a: There is a significant difference in surface acting state between monthly income levels of frontline employees.

H4b: There is a significant difference in genuine acting state b between monthly income levels of frontline employees.

H4c: There is a significant difference in deep acting state between monthly income levels of frontline employees.

H4d:There is a significant difference in emotive dissonance between monthly income levels

of frontline employees.

As suggested in previous studies, employees can modify or control their emotions to conform to their organization's display rules. In the hospitality context, these organizational norms are mainly represented by service standards. Therefore, there may be significant differences in emotional labor between the standards of different hotels.

H5a: There is a significant difference in surface acting state between 3, 4 and 5 star hotels' frontline employees.

H5b: There is a significant difference in genuine acting state between 3, 4 and 5 star hotels' frontline employees.

H5c: There is a significant difference in deep acting state between 3, 4 and 5 star hotels' frontline employees.

H5d: There is a significant difference in emotive dissonance between 3, 4 and 5 star hotels' frontline employees.

Intention to stay

A number of studies have examined the relationship between emotional labor and its outcomes, such as burnout, job performance, job satisfaction, and intention to leave or turnover, showing positive correlations (Erickson & Ritter, 2001; Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002). According to Steel and Lounsbury (2009), behavioral intentions, such as intention to leave or stay, are excellent predictors of employee turnover. Intention to stay, or intent to stay, refers to employees' conscious and deliberate willingness to stay with the organization (Tett & Meyer, 1993). Although intention to leave is used more frequently than intention to stay, they are separate but related concepts (Cho, Johanson & Guchait, 2009; Inelman et al., 2012). Unlike intention to leave, employees' intention to stay can be a better alternative for retaining employees in the organization. Intention to stay is influenced by various employee work attitudes, including organizational commitment, job satisfaction, employee engagement, and workplace spirituality (Saks, 2011).

In addition, some empirical studies have focused on the relationship between emotional labor and gender differences. Erickson and Ritter (2001) argued that agitation due to emotional labor at work leads to burnout and inauthenticity and concluded that the well-being of women is more affected by negative effects than that of men. However, they found no major gender

differences. In addition to identifying the components of emotional labor of different generations, this study aimed to examine the effect of the dimensions of emotional labor on frontline employees' willingness to stay in their organization.

Based on the above discussion, the following hypothesis is proposed between emotional labor strategies, emotive dissonance and intention to stay:

H6a: Surface acting state has a negative and significant effect on frontline employees' intention to stay.

H6b: Genuine acting state has a positive and significant effect on frontline employees' intention to stay.

H6c: Deep acting state has a negative and significant effect on frontline employees' intention to stay.

H6d: Emotive dissonance has a negative and significant effect on frontline employees' intention to stay.

Methodology

Research Design

We used a quantitative approach to investigate the relationship between emotional labor and different generational groups among frontline employees in three-, four-, and five-star hotels in Hong Kong. According to Newman and Benz (1998), the quantitative approach is used when one begins with a theory and tests for confirmation or disconfirmation. Moreover, the quantitative approach uses data in the form of numbers from precise measurement (Kreuger & Neuman, 2006). Therefore, the quantitative approach was suitable for this study as it aimed to confirm or infirm the significant correlation between emotional labor and generational differences using a structured questionnaire survey.

Research Instrument

The purpose of a survey is to collect information and find patterns between constructs (Marsh, 1982). Therefore, we used a questionnaire survey as a research instrument to analyze the patterns of generational differences in emotive dissonance in the hospitality industry in Hong Kong.

Our survey was divided into two parts. The first part investigated the profile of the respondents, which included their demographic information (i.e., age, gender, and income). In the second part we adapted the Hospitality Emotional Labor Scale (HELS), developed by Chu and Murrmann (2006). The reliability and validity of this scale have been tested several times in different studies (i.e., Karatepe & Aleshinloye, 2009; Karatepe, Yorganci & Haktanir, 2009). However, we tested content validity and reliability, as the survey was conducted in a different cultural setting. Following Chu and Murrmann (2006), we selected, eliminated, and finalized the items of the scale, to finally obtain 22 items based on the studies of Kruml and Geddes (2000) and Grandey (2000), after examining the reliability and validity of the scale (see Table 1).

The survey covered four measurements: surface acting, genuine acting, deep acting, and emotive dissonance. Among the 22 items, 8 items measured surface acting, 5 items measured genuine acting, 4 items measured deep acting, and 5 items measured emotive dissonance. For example, the item "My smile is often not sincere" indicated surface acting, while "I am usually a happy worker" referred to genuine acting To determine the level of emotive dissonance among frontline employees in the selected hotels, we used a 5-point Likert scale (5 = Strongly Agree, 4 = Agree, 3 = Neutral, 2 = Disagree, 1 = Strongly Disagree) to rate each item. As the dependent variable, intention to stay was measured using a single-item approach (D'Amato & Herzfeldt, 2008; Nagy, 2002). The respondents were asked to rate the item "I see myself with this organization in three years" using a 5-point Likert scale.

Sampling and Data Collection

The survey population consisted of frontline employees in three-, four-, and five-star hotels in Hong Kong. We conducted the survey using a stratified sampling method, which is a random sampling method used for a survey that requires the researcher to divide the population into different groups. The different groups are also called strata. The strata of this survey were Generation X and Generation Y. The organizational culture factor in a hotel could lead to similar results in the survey as employees in the same workplace are likely to have similar characteristics and ideas about emotional labor. Therefore, to guarantee the representativeness of the sample, data were collected from seven hotels. The respondents were front office employees, who have the most contact with customers.

Data Analysis

After collecting data from the respondents, we analyzed them using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), an independent t-test, a reliability test, regression analysis, and a one-way ANOVA.

To examine the actual population distribution of the respondents and the participation rate of each generation, we first analyzed their demographic profile. Then, using SPSS, we examined how each of the four dimensions was distributed and rated across the different generations. Next, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was performed to examine the links between the four dimensions of surface acting (S), genuine acting (G), deep acting (D), and emotive dissonance (Di) with SPSS. EFA identified the inherent constructs between the factors. Finally, a one-way ANOVA was used to identify the difference in means of the factors, and independent t-tests were used to indicate significant variations between different generational groups and emotional labor.

Findings

Demographic Profile

We collected 192 questionnaires completed by the respondents out of the 400 questionnaires that were sent to the frontline employees of the selected hotels in Hong Kong. Only seven hotels agreed to participate in this study. Among them, one hotel was a three-star hotel, three hotels were four-star hotels, and three hotels were five-star hotels.

Table 1 is a frequency table of the demographic profile of the respondents. Of the 192 respondents, 94 were men (48.9%) and 98 were women (51.1%). The respondents were divided by age into two groups, 16-36 years old and 37-54 years old, that is, Generation Y and Generation X, respectively. We found that 58.3% of the respondents belonged to Generation Y and 41.7% to Generation X. Most respondents' monthly income was between HK$10,001 and HK$30,000. In terms of years of work experience in the hospitality industry, most respondents worked in the hospitality industry for 7 to 9 years (23%), followed by 5 to 7 years (21.1%). Thirteen worked in a three-star hotel, 86 worked in a four-star hotel, and 93 worked in a five-star hotel.

Table 1 here*

Factor Analysis

We analyzed the four constructs of emotional labor—surface acting, genuine acting, deep acting, and emotive dissonance—using orthogonal varimax rotation with factor loadings, eigenvalues, and variance explained. We used the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test of sphericity to test the suitability of the data for factor analysis. The KMO index was 0.856, between 0 and 1 and greater than 0.5, and was therefore acceptable for factor analysis. In addition, Bartlett's test of sphericity was .001 ($p < .05$), and was therefore also suitable (Williams, Onsman & Brown, 2010).

We extracted some of the items with orthogonal varimax rotation from the questionnaires to keep the most representative variables. We used Principal Component Analysis as an extraction method to explain all variables with the fewest number of principal components and to avoid multicollinearity. To obtain consistent and valid data, we used factor analysis to remove all variables with low values from the 22 initial items. The eliminated variables were items 18 and 19 of the dimensions of deep acting and emotive dissonance, respectively. As a result, 20 items remained under four dimensions, with 0.650 of total variance explained.

After varimax rotation, we grouped the variables identified in the following four emotional labor states.

Surface Acting: This factor explained 24.482% of the total variance with an eigenvalue of 7.139. As shown in Table 2, the surface acting factor had the highest variance of 24.482, positioning it as the first and strongest factor among the four emotional labor states. The items of this factor mainly focused on hiding emotions while dealing with customers and providing standardized customer service. It included items such as "I display emotions that I am not actually feeling" and "My smile is often not sincere."

Genuine Acting: This factor explained 16.798% of the total variance with an eigenvalue of 2.54. This factor focused on emotions displayed genuinely when interacting with customers. It included items such as "I display very genuine hospitality when dealing with customers" and "I display sincere hospitality when interacting with customers."

Deep Acting: This factor explained 12.927% of the total variance with an eigenvalue of 1.915. The items of this factor mainly focused on emotions requiring an effortful development of inner feelings to conform to the organization's expectations. It included items such as "If I pretend, I am happy while interacting with a guest, I actually start to get a sense of happiness" and "I think of pleasant images when I get ready for work."

Emotive Dissonance: This factor explained 10.745% of the total variance with an eigenvalue of 1.396. This factor focused on the emotional conflict experienced by frontline employees when their inner feelings and displayed feelings differ. It included items such as "I

behave differently from how I really feel" and "My real feelings become an obstacle to job performance."

Table 2 here*

Reliability

We tested the reliability and consistency of each dimension (emotional labor strategies) in the data using Cronbach's alpha. An alpha value greater than .6 is acceptable and a range between .659 and .897 is desirable. Table 3 shows the Cronbach's alpha values and descriptive statistics of the emotional labor states, with the means and standard deviations of the four states. The genuine acting state had the highest mean of 3.817, while surface acting had the lowest mean of 2.997 on a 5-point Likert scale.

Table 3 here*

Mean Difference

We used a t-test and a one-way ANOVA to check whether there was a statistically significant difference between the mean of the four emotional labor states and the demographic categories. A significant difference was found for emotive dissonance between the two generations. Table 4 shows the mean differences. According to the t-test results, there is no significant difference between Generation X and Y and surface acting, genuine acting and deep acting. However, significant difference occurs between emotive dissonance. Generation X members felt more emotive dissonance than Generation Y members. Therefore, only H1d is supported. We also found significant differences between *gender* and genuine acting, and between *years of work experience* and genuine acting and deep acting. Consequently, hypotheses H2b and H3a and H3b are supported. We found no significant difference between the four emotional labor strategies and *monthly income* or *hotel star rating*. As a result, hypotheses H4a,b,c,d, and H5a,b,c,d, are not supported. The summary of the hypotheses tests are presented in Table 6.

Table 4 here

Regression Analysis

Linear regression was conducted to explore the effect of emotional labor dimensions on employees' intention to stay. As shown in Table 5, R-squared was .34, indicating that 34% of the variance in intention to stay was explained by the four emotional labor states. The F-value was 18.929 with a significance value of .001, indicating that the test was statistically significant. Of the four dimensions of emotional labor, only surface acting and genuine acting were significant in the regression model, with a significance value less than .05. Therefore, hypotheses H6b and H6c are supported, while H6a and H6d are not supported. Genuine acting had a positive beta coefficient, suggesting its positive effect on the dependent variable. It was also the strongest state among other independent variables. In contrast, surface acting had a negative effect on the dependent variable.

Table 5 here

Table 6 here

Discussion and Implications

We calculated the means of the four emotional labor states on a 5-point Likert scale. Genuine acting ($M = 3.82$) had the highest mean, while surface acting ($M = 2.99$) had the lowest. This result makes sense, as surface acting and genuine acting are polar concepts in the emotional states performed by frontline employees. The mean of deep acting was 3.3 and that of emotional dissonance was 3.01. These results suggest that frontline employees in three-, four-, and five-star hotels in Hong Kong prefer to perform deep acting than surface acting. Moreover, employees modify their authentic feelings to match their displayed fake emotions to meet the standard quality of service in their hotel rather than maintaining inner feelings that do not match their displayed fake emotions.

In general, the demographic variables did not show significant differences in emotional labor states. Only *gender* showed a difference in means for genuine acting ($p = .027$) and *years of work experience* showed a difference in means for genuine acting ($p = .002$) and deep acting ($p = .005$). The average mean scores of men were higher than those of women for surface acting, deep acting, and emotive dissonance. These results suggest that men tend to use more acting states with customers than women. The higher mean scores for genuine acting and emotive

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dissonance among women suggest that they experience more emotional conflict than men. In contrast, as previously mentioned, male bill collectors tend to display feelings of anger and emotional detachment more easily than their female counterparts. One possible explanation for the contradiction between our results and previous results may be the nature of the respondents' work environment. For frontline employees in the hospitality industry, it is necessary to display emotional acting states because customer interaction is strongly correlated with service quality, customer satisfaction, and customer retention (Oh, 1999).

Years of work experience also showed significant differences between the four emotional labor states. Employees with more than 9 years of work experience tended to display more genuine acting than those with fewer years of work experience. As mentioned in previous studies (i.e., Hochschild, 1983; Kruml & Geddes, 2000), older experienced employees are likely to have more control over their emotions. While experienced employees had the highest mean score for genuine acting in this study, they had the lowest mean score for surface acting and deep acting. These results suggest that with more years of experience, they are able to offer sincere customer service and personal interaction with customers. Moreover, as these experienced employees belong to Generation X, it can also mean that Generation X members tend to provide genuine customer service instead of using acting states to comply with the service standards of a hotel.

Dahling and Perez (2010) recently demonstrated that older employees perform better in jobs involving emotional labor. Older employees are more likely to control their emotions and display them appropriately, for instance, using genuine acting rather than surface acting. The results of this study also suggest that Generation Y members are more likely to adopt a surface acting state than Generation X members. As mentioned earlier in the study, using a surface acting state can lead to poor physical and psychological outcomes for employees' well-being. The level of surface acting is important as it is strongly and positively correlated with depersonalization and emotional exhaustion, and negatively correlated with job achievement and job satisfaction (Brotheridge & Lee, 2003; Johnson & Spector, 2007). Therefore, although the difference in means was not remarkable in the study, it indicates that Generation Y members may experience more emotional burnout and a higher turnover rate (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002).

Genuine acting is also described as naturally felt emotions (Diefendorff et al., 2005), commonly found in the workplace. However, this concept is not well recognized by researchers who have tended to eliminate naturally felt emotions from emotional labor states. Nevertheless, the effect of genuine acting is important because, unlike surface acting, it does not lead to

emotional exhaustion among employees. By not adopting surface acting and deep acting and by adopting genuine acting, employees may be able to reduce their emotional burnout and turnover rate. In this study, genuine acting had the highest mean score ($M = 3.82$) among the three emotional labor states (genuine acting, surface acting, and deep acting), suggesting that frontline employees are more likely to express naturally felt emotions than the other two states in their interaction with hotel guests. This result is consistent with that of Diefendorff et al. (2005), who suggested that employees use genuine acting more often than adjusting their emotions to adhere to their organization's rules by displaying surface acting and deep acting.

Our results showed that Generation X respondents displayed genuine acting a little more often than Generation Y respondents. Because Generation X members are better able to control their emotions and use their skills to gain personal satisfaction, they may show genuine emotions to customers to demonstrate their job commitment to the hotel. This suggests that Generation X members have a relatively healthier work-life balance than Generation Y members, because there will be less burnout, less work-family interference, and greater affective well-being(Dahling & Perez, 2010) as they show their naturally felt emotions to hotel customers.

Similar to surface acting, deep acting can lead to depersonalization and emotional burnout (Brotheridge & Lee, 2003). As shown in Table 4, Generation Y members rated deep acting higher than Generation X members. This suggests that Generation Y members may experience higher levels of emotional burnout and intention to leave their job than Generation X members. In Generation X, older employees tend to control and display their emotions more effectively, while Generation Y members, due to their lack of experience, may fake or change their internal emotions to demonstrate their appropriate quality of service as imposed by a hotel via a surface or deep acting state.

Employees with more job commitment have been shown elsewhere to have a stronger relationship with emotional labor, such as surface acting and deep acting (Gosserand & Diefendorff, 2005). As mentioned in the literature review, one of the work characteristics of Generation X is job commitment. According to Gosserand and Diefendorff (2005), Generation X should have higher mean scores for emotional labor states (i.e., surface acting and deep acting) than for genuine acting. However, the results of this study contradict this result.

Kruml and Geddes (2000) identified two constructs of emotional labor, emotive dissonance and emotive efforts, suggesting that emotive dissonance is higher if the mean score for surface acting is higher and that it is lower if the mean score for surface acting is lower. However, the results of this study disagree with this theoretical concept. Although the mean score for surface

acting of Generation Y ($M = 3.07$) was higher than that of Generation X ($M = 2.89$), Generation X had a higher mean score for emotive dissonance than Generation Y. To be consistent with previous studies, the mean score for emotive dissonance of Generation Y should have been higher than that of Generation X. This result suggests that although Generation X displays less surface acting and express genuine emotions to customers, its members still experience emotive dissonance, which predisposes them to experience a conflict between their expressed feelings and their felt emotions.

We found evidence that Generation X members tend to express more genuine emotions, while Generation Y members use more emotional acting strategies (i.e., surface acting and deep acting). By frequently using emotional acting states and experiencing emotive dissonance, many employees may suffer from emotional burnout and job dissatisfaction. Therefore, to reduce emotional burnout and emotive dissonance among employees, managers should pay attention to their emotional intelligence (EI), defined by Goleman (1996) as "the capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves and for managing emotions well, in ourselves and in other relationship." (p.317) According to Mikolajczak et al. (2007), emotional labor states, such as surface acting and deep acting, are negatively related to EI in terms of job stress. They proposed that employees with low EI experience emotive dissonance and display greater emotive effort (i.e., surface acting). Therefore, it is crucial for managers to understand the concept of EI and to train employees to improve their level of EI to minimize the serious effects of emotional labor in the workplace. We advise managers to encourage their employees to discuss their internal feelings with them and to be aware of the effects of employees changing their feelings. Indeed, Bagshaw (2000) suggested that EI training is not meant to counsel individuals. It is meant to develop their sensitivity, and to bring them new understanding of the emotional dimensions."

By applying the concept of EI, managers in the hospitality industry should be able to evaluate the emotional behaviors of employees in the workplace. They should also pay more attention to the general behavior of different generations and acknowledge that Generation Y members tend to use emotional labor states such as surface acting and deep acting more often, while Generation X members use genuine acting more frequently. After identifying the trends in employees' emotional expression by age group, managers should offer EI training applicable to different generations to help them become more involved at work, reduce emotional burnout, and improve job satisfaction.

The regression analysis results indicated that regardless of the generation, the intention to stay of all frontline employees was negatively affected by surface acting, which makes sense,

as these attitudes can lead to negative outcomes. For frontline employees, employee retention in the organization was primarily based on the genuine feelings they developed during their service delivery and their interaction with guests. Deep acting and emotive dissonance also had a negative effect on intention to stay, but the variables were not significant in the model. It is clear that although surface acting occurs in the hospitality industry and has a negative effect on employee retention, the most effective acting state is to act with heartfelt and sincere emotions, which underlines the importance of selecting the right employees for the hospitality industry.

Conclusions

We examined the relationship between emotional labor states between two generational groups. To collect primary data, we used a quantitative approach to survey hotel frontline employees in Hong Kong. Specifically, we used the HELS framework to measure the influence of four emotional labor states on Generation X and Generation Y, and made several recommendations to help managers understand the work characteristics of different generations and the importance of EI in the workplace.

In general, genuine acting had the highest score, followed by deep acting, while surface acting had the lowest score among the four emotional labor states. There were significant differences between Generation X and Generation Y in emotive dissonance. The results showed that Generation X had a strong relationship with genuine acting and emotive dissonance, while Generation Y had a strong relationship with surface acting and deep acting.

Regardless of the generational differences, the results indicated that surface acting and genuine acting significantly affected frontline employees' intention to stay in the organization.

We propose several recommendations for management in the hospitality industry. To reduce the effect of emotional labor, such as emotional burnout and exhaustion, managers are urged to acknowledge the differences in emotional expression states between different generations. By understanding and developing EI, managers will be able to evaluate the emotional behaviors of employees and encourage them to discuss their inner feelings with them to improve the negative influence of emotional labor on their well-being.

Our study has several limitations. The respondent pool was relatively small. The respondents who participated in the study were 192 frontline employees from only 7 hotels in Hong Kong. Therefore, the number of respondents and hotels may not be sufficient to be representative and may affect the generalizability of the results.

To increase the accuracy of the results, we recommend that future research increase the number of items in the genuine acting, deep acting, and emotive dissonance states, and balance them with those of surface acting. In addition, there may be other reasons for the high mean score for emotive dissonance among Generation X respondents, as the result obtained is not consistent with previous research. Future studies should also investigate the latent aspects that may influence the level of emotive dissonance other than emotional labor states. Moreover, generational groups should be identified more precisely, using an appropriate definition of each generation that takes into account critical events in the social, political, and economic context.

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TABLES

Table 1 *Demographic Profile of the Respondents (N = 192)*

Gender	N	%	Years of Work Experience	N	%
Male	94	48.9	Less than 1 year	22	11.5
Female	98	51.1	1 - 3 years	30	15.6
			3 - 5 years	22	11.5
Age Range	N	%	5 - 7 years	40	20.8
16 - 36 (Generation Y)	112	58.3	7 - 9 years	44	22.9
37 - 54 (Generation X)	80	41.7	More than 9 years	34	17.7
Monthly Income (HK$)	N	%	**Star Rating**	N	%
Less than 5,000	19	9.9	3-star	13	6.8
5,001 - 10,000	2	1.1	4-star	86	44.8
10,001 - 30,000	152	79.2	5-star	93	48.4
30,001 - 50,000	18	9.3			
50,001 - 70,000	1	.5			

Table 2 *Exploratory Factor Analysis Results for Emotional Labor States (N = 192)*

	Factor Loadings	Eigenvalue	Variance Explained
Surface Acting		7.139	24.482
1. I fake emotions when dealing with customers.	.728		
2. When interacting with customers, I do not act like myself at all.	.679		
3. I put on an act to deal with customers appropriately.	.778		
4. I put on a mask to express the right emotions for my job.	.864		
5. I display emotions that I am not actually feeling.	.762		
6. I fake a good mood when interacting with customers.	.749		
7. My interactions with customers are very robotic.	.576		
8. My smile is often not sincere.	.505		
Genuine Acting		2.54	16.798
9. I display very genuine hospitality when dealing with customers.	.729		
10. I take initiatives to interact with customers at work.	.776		
11. I display the emotions that help me perform well in my job.	.784		
12. I display sincere hospitality when interacting with customers.	.81		
13. I am usually a happy worker.	.468		
Deep Acting		1.915	12.927
14. If I pretend that I am happy while interacting with guests, I can actually start to get a sense of happiness.	.562		
15. When getting ready for work, I tell myself that I am going to have a good day.	.844		
16. I think of pleasant images when I get ready for work.	.851		
Emotive Dissonance		1.396	10.745
17. I behave differently from how I really feel.	.719		
18. I have to hide my true feelings when dealing with customers.	.774		
19. My real feelings become an obstacle to job performance.	.823		
20. I have low job satisfaction after dealing with customers	.551		
Total variance explained	64.951		
KMO	.856		
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	$c^2 = 1575.5$	df = 190	$p = .001$

Table 3 *Reliability values and descriptive statistics for emotional factors*

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of items
Surface Acting	2.997	1.04035	.897	8
Genuine Acting	3.817	.71944	.804	5
Deep Acting	3.307	1.418025	.659	3
Emotive Dissonance	3.01	1.63718	.830	4

Table 4 *Mean difference*

	Surface Acting	**Genuine Acting**	**Deep Acting**	**Emotive Dissonance**
Generations				
16 - 36 years (Generation Y)	3.07	3.8	3.03	**3.27***
36 - 54 years (Generation X)	2.89	3.84	2.96	**3.83***
Gender				
Female	2.9	**3.88***	2.72	3.26
Male	3.12	**3.76***	3.28	3.35
Monthly Income (in HK$)				
5,000 or less	3.11	3.98	2.65	3.47
5,000 - 10,000	3.42	3.7	2.25	3.17
10,001 - 30,000	3.09	3.75	3.13	3.26
30,001 - 50,000	2.32	4.11	2.47	3.48
50,001 - 70,000	3.63	5	3.25	5
70,001 - 90,000	3.01	3.82	3	3.31
Years of Work Experience				
Less than 1 year	3.04	**3.52****	**2.93****	3.31
1 - 3 years	3.23	**3.77****	**2.75****	3.14
3 - 5 years	3.18	**3.8****	**3.13****	3.49
5 - 7 years	3.14	**3.74****	**3.33****	3.15
7 - 9 years	2.96	**3.83****	**3.14****	3.23
More than 9 years	2.59	**4.13****	**2.68****	3.63
Hotel Star Rating				
3	2.833	3.47	3.33	3
4	3.11	3.7	3.17	3.34
5	2.83	4.01	2.7	3.29

(*) Indicates a significant difference level < 0.05 using an independent samples t-test.
(**) Indicates a significant difference level < 0.05 using a one-way ANOVA.
Mean values on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*totally disagree*) to 5 (*totally agree*).

Table 5 *Regression Analysis of emotional labor factors on Intention to stay*

Dependent variable	Independent variables (Factors)	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Beta	T	Sig.	F
Intention to stay		.34	.322				18.929
	Surface Acting			-.206	-2.434	.016	
	Genuine Acting			.389	5.143	.000	
	Deep Acting			-.069	-.792	.430	
	Emotive Dissonance			-.134	-1.962	.052	

Table 6 *Hypotheses test results*

Hypothesis	Relationship between variables	Proposed Relationship	Supported (Y/N)
H1a	Surface acting and Generation	Sig. dif.	N
H1b	Genuine acting and Generation	Sig. dif.	N
H1c	Deep acting and Generation	Sig. dif.	N
H1d	Emotive dissonance and Generation	Sig. dif.	Y
H2a	Surface acting and Gender	Sig. dif.	N
H2b	Genuine acting and Gender	Sig. dif.	Y
H2c	Deep acting and Gender	Sig. dif.	N
H2d	Emotive dissonance and Gender	Sig. dif.	N
H3a	Surface acting and Work experience	Sig. dif.	N
H3b	Genuine acting and Work experience	Sig. dif.	Y
H3c	Deep acting and Work experience	Sig. dif.	Y
H3d	Emotive dissonance and Work experience	Sig. dif.	N
H4a	Surface acting and Income	Sig. dif.	N
H4b	Genuine acting and Income	Sig. dif.	N
H4c	Deep acting and Income	Sig. dif.	N
H4d	Emotive dissonance and Income	Sig. dif.	N
H5a	Surface acting and Hotel star rating	Sig. dif.	N
H5b	Genuine acting and Hotel star rating	Sig. dif.	N
H5c	Deep acting and Hotel star rating	Sig. dif.	N
H5d	Emotive dissonance and Hotel star rating	Sig. dif.	N
H6a	Surface acting and Intention to stay	Negative	Y
H6b	Genuine acting and Intention to stay	Positive	Y
H6c	Deep acting and Intention to stay	Negative	N
H6d	Emotive dissonance and Intention to stay	Negative	N

Sig. dif.: Significant difference: The mean difference between the variables is significant.
Y/N: Yes/No