



A Study on the Effect of Emotional Exhaustion on Service Initiative Behavior of Hotel Front-line Employees--The moderating effect of Organizational Identity

Yuhang Wang^{1*}

¹ Faculty of Business Administration, Bangkok Thonburi University, Bangkok, 10170, Thailand

*Corresponding author's e-mail:w18222278202@gmail.com

ABSTRACT. The purpose of this study was to explore the influence of emotional exhaustion on service initiative behavior of hotel front-line employees, and further consider the moderating role of organizational identity. Data on emotional exhaustion, service initiative, and organizational identity were collected through surveys and questionnaires of front-line employees at multiple hotels. Statistical analysis was used for data analysis. The results show that emotional exhaustion is negatively correlated with the service initiative of hotel front-line employees. The higher the level of emotional exhaustion, the lower the service initiative of employees. In addition, organizational identity partially moderates the relationship between emotional exhaustion and service initiative. When employees feel a higher sense of organizational identity, the negative impact of emotional exhaustion on service initiative is weakened ; when the organizational identity is low, the negative impact of emotional exhaustion on service initiative is more significant. These results suggest that in the hotel business, emotional exhaustion has a negative impact on employee service initiative. Organizational identification plays an important role in alleviating the negative impact of emotional exhaustion on service initiative.

Keywords: hotel staff; emotional exhaustion; organizational identification; service initiative

1 Introduction

1.1 study on the background

The hotel industry is an important part of the service industry, and the quality of service affects customer satisfaction and loyalty [1]. In hotels, front-line employees are key players in direct contact with customers, and their proactive service behavior is critical to providing a superior customer experience. However, front-line employees often face the challenge of emotional labor, which may have a negative impact on their proactive service behavior [2]. Emotional labor requires employees to adapt to

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emotions to meet customer needs, and long-term high emotional labor pressure may lead to emotional exhaustion. Emotional exhaustion is a negative work experience, including emotional exhaustion, reduced personal accomplishment and emotional exhaustion. When front-line employees experience emotional exhaustion, they may lack motivation and ability to proactively provide quality services, showing negative service attitudes and reduced service efforts [3]. This may lead to a decline in customer perceived service quality, affect their satisfaction and loyalty, and have a negative impact on the hotel's reputation and business results. However, organizational identification is considered to be an important factor that may regulate the relationship between emotional exhaustion and proactive service behavior of front-line employees [4]. Employees with high organizational identification may be more able to cope with the negative impact of emotional exhaustion and maintain a high level of service proactive behavior to provide a superior service experience.

2 Literature review

2.1 Definition of emotional exhaustion

The concept of emotional exhaustion was first proposed by Maslach & Jackson [5] in the job burnout model. It is a degree of burnout caused by work stress and also a state of feeling, that is, employees' emotional resources are exhausted and unable to play their own value from the heart [6]. Michael D. Baer et al. [7] argued that the solution to emotional exhaustion is to acquire resources, that is, to make up for lost mental resources by generating deeper positive emotions. But this way can not completely offset the loss of the part, only by reducing the loss to get comfort. Emotional exhaustion, as the core of job burnout model, is the primary stage and main symptom of various burnout states [8]. Although most of the current research cuts through different angles, there is a general agreement on the connotation of emotional exhaustion [9].

2.2 Definition of organizational identification

Organizational identification was first proposed by March and Simon in 1958, but it was not until the 1980s that scholars began to distinguish the concepts of organizational identification and organizational commitment. Albert & Whetten [10] believed that organizational identification is core, unique and lasting, reflecting the nature and characteristics of the organization. Blake & Fred defined it as an individual's perception of the membership, values, and emotional connections of the organization. Riketta [11] divided organizational identification into different perspectives, including conscious, emotional and sociological perspectives. Domestic scholars started late. Xu Guang et al. [12] believe that organizational identity is an individual's perception of the consistency of organizational values. Zhou Wencheng et al. [13] defined it as employees realize that they are part of the organization and show support and loyalty to the organization.

Based on the environment of the hotel industry, this paper adopts the view of Ashforth and Mael [14]. Organizational identification is that individuals regard themselves as a member of the organization based on identity and psychological connection, and form a consistent cognition with the values and goals of the organization. This identity allows individuals to feel the sense of belonging to the organization, show loyalty and commitment to the organization, and be willing to work for the interests and success of the organization.

2.3 Definition of service initiative

As early as the 1990 s, scholars at home and abroad have noticed and studied the behavior of initiative. Bateman and Crant [15] proposed in the study that initiative is a personality trait that is not easily affected by external influences. And this proactive personality trait can affect people or the environment around them [16]. Frese & Fay [17] defined initiative as an act of showing self-motivation and actively overcoming difficulties to achieve goals, which is placed more expectations in the organization.

With the continuous development of service-oriented industries such as hotels, tourism and catering, the concept of initiative applicable to these full-service areas has gradually been proposed. Rank et al. [18] first defined service initiative as employees' long-term adherence to spontaneous service behavior beyond work requirements. This definition covers the autonomous behavior of employees to provide additional services spontaneously, as well as employees' ability to predict and respond to customer needs. Among them, the three characteristics of service initiative are: spontaneity, that is, employees actively provide services to customers outside their own work; long-term orientation, that is, employees maintain forward-looking thinking, predict customer needs and respond to emergencies; persistence, that is, employees continue to repeatedly implement additional services.

2.4 Conservation of resource theory

The conservation of resources theory was first proposed by Hobfoll [19]. This theory was initially applied to the research field of coping stress and post-traumatic recovery, and then gradually expanded to the field of organizational behavior and resource management. The theoretical model of resource conservation divides resources into four categories: material resources (money, property, equipment, etc.), mental resources (self-esteem, self-confidence, optimistic attitude, adaptive thinking, etc.), social resources (interpersonal relationships, supportive social networks and organizational support), knowledge resources (knowledge, skills, experience and learning opportunities). At the same time, the theory points out that resources are limited. Individuals not only passively accept the supply of resources, but actively participate in the process of acquisition, utilization and protection of resources. When limited resources are lost or exhausted, individuals may face an increase in emotional burden, such as feeling depressed, anxious or stressed. Individuals may be difficult to effectively regulate emotions, more vulnerable to negative emotions, emotional fluctuations, and difficult to recover from negative emotions. In addition, the loss of emo-

tional resources will lead to individuals' doubts about their abilities and values, a decline in self-efficacy, and feeling helpless and incompetent.

3 Research hypothesis and research design

3.1 Research hypothesis

3.1.1 Emotional exhaustion and service initiative.

The conservation of resources theory holds that individuals will dynamically allocate and adjust resources in the face of organizational task requirements to balance task completion and self-protection. Emotional exhaustion involves front-line employees facing a highly emotional environment for a long time at work, which may lead to the consumption of emotional resources, which in turn leads to emotional fatigue and discomfort, and has a negative impact on employees. Service initiative requires employees to actively support customers at work, which requires additional psychological and emotional resources, but emotional exhaustion may limit the effective mobilization of these resources. The conservation of resources theory points out that in the case of lack of resources, individuals tend to protect their own resources and reduce the input of resources to others. Therefore, in the state of emotional exhaustion, employees may reduce service proactive behavior to protect emotional resources and relieve emotional stress. Based on these theoretical premises, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1. The degree of emotional exhaustion of hotel front-line employees is negatively correlated with their service initiative behavior, that is, the higher the degree of emotional exhaustion, the lower the service initiative behavior.

3.1.2 The moderating effect of organizational identification.

From the perspective of conservation of resources theory, organizational identification can be seen as a positive resource that provides employees with a way to gain support and satisfaction at work [20]. In the state of emotional exhaustion, employees' emotional resources will be exhausted and limited. However, organizational identification can provide employees with emotional support and a sense of belonging, which can help them reduce emotional stress and restore emotional resources. A high level of organizational identification can guide employees to focus more on the goals and interests of the organization [14], enhance their sense of organizational belonging and responsibility, and then show more positive engagement and behavior in their work. In the state of emotional exhaustion, although the individual's emotional resources may be limited, strong organizational identification can stimulate employees' work motivation and positive emotions, which helps to alleviate the negative impact of emotional exhaustion on service initiative. Based on these theoretical premises, the following hypothesis two is proposed:

H2. Organizational identity has a moderating effect between emotional exhaustion and service initiative, that is, high level of organizational identity can reduce the negative impact of emotional exhaustion on service initiative.

3.1.3 model construction.

This paper proposes a three-variable research model including emotional exhaustion, service initiative and organizational identity. Emotional exhaustion, as an independent variable, has a direct impact on service initiative; at the same time, organizational identification as a moderating variable regulates the impact of emotional exhaustion on service initiative. Combined with the combining of the first two chapters, the model concept map is shown in Figure 1:

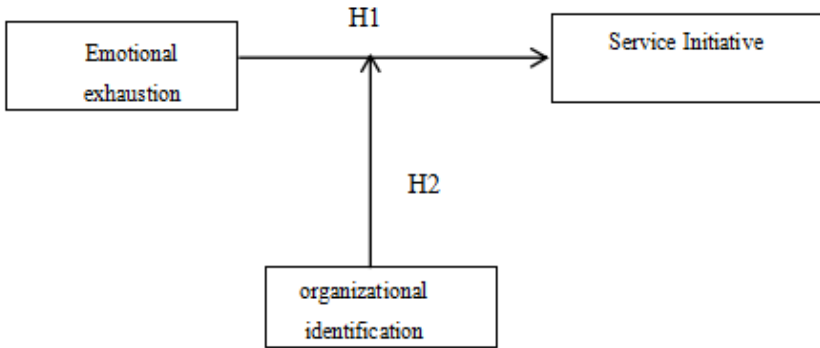


Fig. 1. Research model

3.2 Research design

3.2.1 study sample.

This study takes the front-line employees of five-star and reception hotels in Zhengzhou City, Puyang City, Henan Province and Binzhou City, Shandong Province as the research object, with a total of 7 hotels. The personnel departments are mainly concentrated in the front-line personnel of catering department, housekeeping department, housing department and management center. In this study, a total of 700 questionnaires were distributed by means of online questionnaires, and a total of 666 questionnaires were collected, with a recovery rate of 95.14 %. Among the respondents, 395 were female employees, accounting for 59.31 %, and 271 were male employees, accounting for 40.69 %. The proportion of employees aged less than 20 years old accounted for 8.26 %, employees aged 20-35 years old accounted for 32.58 %, employees aged 36-50 years old accounted for 45.2 %, and employees over 50 years old accounted for 13.96 %. 89.64 % of the employees ' academic qualifications are concentrated in junior college and below, only 8.26 % of the employees and 2.1 % of the employees have received undergraduate and master 's degree or above education respectively.

3.2.2. Measurement tools.

3.2.2.1. Emotional Exhaustion Scale.

In this study, Maslach and Schaufeliet and other scholars revised and integrated the general job burnout scale MBI-GS (Maslach Burnout Inventory-General Survey) for

all walks of life on the basis of MBI in 1996. The emotional exhaustion part of the scale has a reliability of 0.710 and a validity of 0.701, with a total of 5 items.

3.2.2.2. *Organizational Identification Scale.*

Based on the actual situation, this study decided to adopt the single-dimensional organizational identity scale of Mae and Ashforth. The scale has been widely used by scholars at home and abroad after time test, with high universality, validity and reliability. The reliability of the scale is 0.869, the validity is 0.826, a total of 6 items.

3.2.2.3. *Customer Service Initiative Scale.*

Rank proposed the concept of customer service initiative and developed a customer service initiative scale suitable for the service industry. The construction and measurement dimensions of the scale have undergone careful theoretical basis and strict empirical research, which makes it have high theoretical rationality and practicability. The scale has a total of 7 items, and adopts a single dimension to state the problem. The reliability is 0.958, and the validity is 0.875.

4 Authentic proof analysis

4.1 Descriptive statistical analysis of variables

This study conducted a descriptive statistical analysis of the variables of emotional exhaustion, organizational identification, and service initiative. The results are shown in Table 1. In the sample, the average value of emotional exhaustion is 2.825, indicating that the emotional exhaustion of hotel employees is at a medium level; the average score of organizational identification is 4.306, and the average score of service initiative is 4.373, which indicates that the hotel staff shows a middle and upper level in terms of organizational identification and service initiative. In addition, the standard deviation of emotional exhaustion is 0.655, the standard deviation of organizational identity is 0.951, and the standard deviation of service initiative is 0.721. The standard difference reflects the degree of dispersion of data. The degree of dispersion of emotional exhaustion is relatively small, while the degree of dispersion of organizational identity and service initiative is slightly larger.

Table 1. Descriptive statistical analysis of variables

variable	mean value	standard deviation	minimum value	maximum value
Emotional exhaustion	2.825	.655	1	5
organizational identification	4.306	.951	1	5
Service initiative	4.373	.721	1	5

4.2 Analysis of relationship

The correlation analysis conducted by Stata17.0 shows that the correlation between the three variables of emotional exhaustion, organizational identity and service initiative is significant at a significant level of 0.001. Specifically, there was a significant negative correlation between emotional exhaustion and organizational identity, with a correlation coefficient of -0.380; there was also a significant negative correlation between emotional exhaustion and service initiative, with a correlation coefficient of -0.342. There is a significant positive correlation between organizational identification and service initiative, and the correlation coefficient is 0.823. These results reveal the complex and important relationship between these variables. The specific data are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. analysis of relationship

variable	Emotional exhaustion	organizational identification	Service initiative
Emotional exhaustion	1.000		
organizational identification	-0.380***	1.000	
Service initiative	-0.342***	0.823***	1.000

Note: N=666,***representative P<0.001,**P<0.01,*P<0.05

4.3 Regression analysis

In Model 1, only emotional exhaustion (independent variable) and service initiative (dependent variable) are introduced to construct the model. The analysis showed that emotional exhaustion had a significant negative impact on service initiative (P < 0.001), and the coefficient of emotional exhaustion was - 0.377. This shows that for each additional unit of emotional exhaustion, service initiative decreased by an average of 0.377 units. This verifies the hypothesis H1, that is, there is a negative relationship between emotional exhaustion and service proactive behavior of hotel front-line employees.

In model 2, organizational identification M1 and emotional exhaustion and their cross-terms were introduced. The coefficient of emotional exhaustion was -0.646, which again showed that emotional exhaustion had a significant negative impact on service initiative (P0.05), and the coefficient standard error was 0.304. The cross term coefficient of emotional exhaustion and organizational identification is 0.099, indicating that the interaction between emotional exhaustion and organizational identification M1 has a significant positive impact on service initiative (P < 0.05). These analysis results confirm Hypothesis H2, that is, organizational identification plays a regulatory role between emotional exhaustion and service initiative, and high levels of organizational identification can alleviate the negative impact of emotional exhaustion on service initiative. The specific data are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. regression analysis

Dependent variable: service initiative		
independent variable	model 1	model 2
Emotional exhaustion	-0.377*** (0.000)	-0.646** (0.002)
organizational identification M1		0.137 (0.304)
Emotional exhaustion×organizational identification		0.099* (0.029)
Constant	5.437*** (0.000)	4.420*** (0.000)
amount	666	666
Pseudo R2		
Log lik.	-685.116	-542.852
Chi-squared		

p-values in parentheses

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

5 Conclusion

The results show that employees in the state of emotional exhaustion tend to show a lower level of service initiative. They may become less motivated, less responsive to customer needs and less able to proactively solve problems. Emotional exhaustion makes employees feel tired and lose enthusiasm for work, resulting in a lack of initiative and enthusiasm in the service process. The study also observed that organizational identification plays a key role in this relationship. The study found that employees with a high degree of organizational identity usually show a stronger sense of belonging and value. They identify with the hotel 's cultural values and associate themselves with the organization 's goals and mission. This kind of organizational identity makes employees feel that the work they do is meaningful, and their contribution has an important impact on the development of the organization, thus stimulating employees ' input and enthusiasm for work. In the case of more serious emotional exhaustion, employees with a high degree of organizational identity show higher service initiative than employees who lack organizational identity. They can better cope with emotional stress, more actively respond to customer needs, proactively solve problems, and provide a better service experience. This shows that organizational identification can alleviate the negative impact of emotional exhaustion on service initiative and help employees maintain a high quality of service in a high-pressure work environment. At the same time, employees with a high degree of organizational identity tend to be more teamwork. They are willing to work together with colleagues, support each other and form a close team cooperation relationship. In the case of emotional exhaustion, this team spirit can provide emotional support and resource sharing for employees, help employees relieve emotional pressure and reduce psychological bur-

den. At the same time, teamwork can also enhance employees' work motivation and enthusiasm, and promote them to better demonstrate their service initiative in the service process.

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