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Emotional Labor, Occupational Burnout and Job Satisfaction – The Moderating Role of the Service Sector (Commercial Versus Social)

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Abstract

Objective: The main objective of the study was to examine whether there are associations between emotional labor and occupational burnout and job satisfaction, as well as to determine whether the service sector (commercial and social) serves as a moderator of these relationships. The study also aimed to assess whether employees in the commercial services sector differ from those in the social services sector in the intensity of emotional labor, occupational burnout, and job satisfaction.

Method: The study included 150 participants, of whom 77 were employees from the commercial services sector and 78 were employees from the social services sector. To measure the variables, the *Surface Acting and Deep Acting Scale*, the *Maslach Burnout Inventory – General Survey*, the *Job Satisfaction Scale*, and the *Work Affect Scale* were used. Comparative analyses, correlation analyses, and regression analyses with interaction terms were conducted using Hayes' PROCESS macro.

Results: Employees in commercial services significantly more often perform surface acting in the form of faking emotions than employees in social services. The associations between emotional labor and its consequences pertain mainly to surface acting and are mostly significant only among employees in social professions.

Conclusion: The profession performed, classified within the commercial versus social services sector, may serve as a moderator of the relationships between emotional labor and its consequences.

Keywords: emotional labor, services sector, occupational burnout, job satisfaction

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The concept of emotional labor was introduced into the literature by Arlie Hochschild (1983/2009) in the early 1980s. The American sociologist described it as a process of managing one's emotions in an occupational context, in which employees must express specific emotions in order to effectively perform their duties. Emotional labor is most often performed in service professions, which include salespeople, waitstaff, teachers, and members of medical services. Hochschild (1983/2009) argues that the growing importance of services and the increasing competition in this sector have led to the "commercialization of emotions", and that emotion regulation has become part of the job and professional role, subject to compensation similarly to other occupational activities (Grandey, 2003; Szczygieł et al., 2009).

Although many models of emotional labor exist (cf. Szczygieł et al., 2009), according to Hochschild's (1983/2009) classic approach, emotional labor can take one of two forms: deep acting or surface acting. Deep acting involves attempting to adjust one's internal emotional experience to the demands of the occupational situation. When engaging in deep acting, an employee modifies their emotional experiences to fit the professional context, evoking emotions that are beneficial from the perspective of organizational goals. Surface acting, in contrast, involves expressing emotions that are not authentic – although they are desirable in interactions with the service recipient. The employee, in a sense, puts on a mask during the interaction with the customer, expressing emotions that contradict their internal experiences.

Hochschild's classic perspective serves as the foundation for other scholars who conceptualize emotional labor as a process of emotion regulation (e.g., Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Brotheridge & Lee, 2003; Grandey, 2000). Grandey (2000), drawing on Gross's (1998) process model of emotion regulation, notes that deep acting activates an antecedent-focused strategy – the individual exerts regulatory effort before the emotion is elicited and expressed in the form of emotional display. The expression of desired emotions is therefore merely a by-product, rather than the goal, of the regulatory effort undertaken. In contrast, surface acting requires expressing an emotion different from the one already activated – thus necessitating a response-focused strategy. This strategy involves two processes: downregulating the expression of the undesired emotion and upregulating the expression of the desired emotion. Brotheridge and colleagues (Brotheridge, 2006; Brotheridge & Lee, 2003; Brotheridge & Taylor, 2006; Lee & Brotheridge, 2011) refer to these two processes, respectively, as hiding feelings and faking emotions.

Emotional labor is performed by representatives of various occupational groups, both in the commercial services sector (e.g., salespeople, sales representatives) and in the social services sector (e.g., teachers, healthcare workers; cf. Szczygieł et al., 2009). Although the emotional labor performed by employees in commercial professions resembles the emotional labor of employees in social professions, there are important differences between them.

In the commercial services sector, rules governing emotion regulation are established by the employer and are determined by the nature of the work (Hochschild, 1983/2009). Display rules in an organization specify which emotions

are considered appropriate and how they should be expressed in the workplace to align with the organization's prevailing norms (Diefendorff & Croyle, 2008; Goldberg & Grandey, 2007). These rules are often communicated to employees during training, employers monitor compliance, and compensation may depend on the quality of customer service (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002). Moreover, interactions with customers are typically brief, and customer satisfaction generally translates directly into economic outcomes.

In contrast, in the social services sector, employees are generally not compensated based on performance outcomes, and emotional display rules stem more from professional ethos than from explicitly imposed organizational standards. Working in social service professions is also associated with fulfilling a social mission. This mission is characterized by societal significance, the desire to provide help, the presence of trust and relational bonds between provider and recipient, and an emphasis on moral standards and high-quality service (Czerw & Borkowska, 2010).

These differences in emotional labor requirements may influence the frequency with which particular forms of emotional labor are performed. For example, Brotheridge and Grandey (2003) emphasized distinctions between individuals who have frequent contact with people and those in higher-level positions or manual labor roles. Another study showed that individuals in commercial professions – compared with those in social professions – significantly more often fake emotions in interactions with customers and more frequently hide their true feelings toward them (Finogenow et al., 2015). Similarly, Springer and Oleksa (2017) found that teachers engage in surface-level emotional labor less often than representatives of commercial services.

Numerous studies indicate that emotional labor – particularly its surface form – through the need to regulate emotional states and align them with workplace requirements, may lead to various negative consequences (Jeung et al., 2018). Deep acting, in turn, may have a less detrimental impact on emotional costs (Brotheridge & Lee, 2003) and, according to the classic conceptualization, may even lead to positive outcomes (Hochschild, 1983/2009). However, research findings on the effects of deep acting are inconsistent and point either to somewhat weaker negative consequences, a lack of significant associations, or occasionally even positive consequences such as increases in job satisfaction (see meta-analyses: Humphrey, 2021; Kariou et al., 2021).

Many studies analyzing the negative impact of emotional labor on subjective outcomes have focused on occupational burnout, which was originally described in the context of helping professions. According to the classic conceptualization by Maslach and Jackson, burnout comprises three dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach et al., 2001). Since then, numerous other models of occupational burnout have been developed, such as the job demands–resources model (e.g., Demerouti et al., 2003). With the development of the construct, Maslach suggested that the phenomenon is not limited exclusively to helping professions, which led to the formulation of a more universal conceptualization of burnout. "Emotional exhaustion" was replaced simply with "exhaustion," referring to both physical and

emotional fatigue. "Depersonalization" was replaced with the broader term "cynicism", reflecting distancing and a desire to detach from the work itself. Finally, "reduced personal accomplishment" was expanded to encompass a sense of diminished professional efficacy in both social and non-social occupations (Maslach & Leiter, 2008).

Research also examines the impact of emotional labor on job satisfaction, defined as subjective occupational well-being. It refers to a relatively stable attitude an individual holds toward their job – an evaluation of the extent to which the job is beneficial for them (Zalewska, 2003a). Similar to life satisfaction/subjective well-being, job satisfaction is understood as a multidimensional construct comprising two components: cognitive (often referred to as job satisfaction) and affective. Cognitive evaluations are expressed through value-laden judgments and reflect what an individual thinks about their job and how they assess it. Affective evaluations, by contrast, reflect the intensity and/or frequency of various affective states – both positive and negative – associated with work (Otrębski, 2023; Zalewska, 2003a). A high level of job satisfaction/subjective occupational well-being is reflected in a high level of job satisfaction, a high level of positive affect at work, and a low level of negative affect. In a literature review (Sanjeev, 2017), the author emphasizes that studies often fail to clearly distinguish between cognitive and affective components, which makes it difficult to determine their distinct antecedents and consequences. Empirical findings indicate, however, that although these components are correlated, they may show different temporal dynamics and distinct predictors (e.g., Elfering et al., 2016). Furthermore, as Otrębski (2023) points out, affective experiences at work may serve as an independent source of cognitive evaluations of job satisfaction.

Despite a relatively consistent pattern of findings indicating a more detrimental impact of surface acting compared to deep acting, results obtained across diverse groups of employees show varying magnitudes of these relationships. Therefore, contemporary research increasingly seeks moderators of these associations. Researchers point, among others, to individual resources – such as emotional intelligence (Szczygieł, 2018; Wróbel, 2013) – and organizational factors, such as organizational support (Nixon et al., 2010), or cultural factors. For example, a meta-analysis conducted by Humphrey (2021) shows that emotional labor has a less harmful impact on employees in collectivistic cultures compared to individualistic cultures. The author also demonstrated that the private versus public employment sector additionally moderates these relationships: correlations between deep acting and job satisfaction are weaker in samples from the private sector.

The main objective of the study was to examine whether there are associations between emotional labor and occupational burnout and job satisfaction, as well as to determine whether the services sector (commercial versus social) serves as a moderator of these relationships. The study also aimed to assess whether employees in the commercial services sector differ from those in the social services sector in the intensity of emotional labor, occupational burnout, and job satisfaction. Based on the premises presented regarding differences in the demands placed on employees in the commercial versus social services sectors, as well as the research findings cited, the following hypotheses were formulated:

H1: Individuals working in the commercial services sector, compared with those in social service professions, engage more frequently in surface acting and less frequently in deep acting.

H2: Individuals working in the commercial services sector differ in the intensity of occupational burnout and job satisfaction from individuals working in social service professions.

H3: Emotional labor is associated with the intensity of occupational burnout and job satisfaction.
- H3.1: The higher the level of surface acting, the higher the level of occupational burnout and the lower the level of job satisfaction.
- H3.2: The higher the level of deep acting, the lower the level of occupational burnout and the higher the level of job satisfaction.

H4: The service sector (commercial versus social) moderates the relationship between emotional labor and occupational burnout and job satisfaction. It can be anticipated that performing emotional labor at the surface level – due in part to the long-term nature of interactions and the lack of immediate gratification – may place a greater burden on employees working in social service professions.

Method

Participants

The study included 150 professionally active individuals aged 21–60 (M = 41.91, SD = 10.03), employed in occupations involving emotional labor. An additional inclusion criterion was full-time employment and work involving direct contact with the service recipient. In the sample, 53% were women and 47% were men. Most participants had higher (74%) or secondary (26%) education. The group was occupationally diverse. Nearly half of the participants (n = 77) were representatives of the commercial services sector, aged 21–60 (M = 40.45, SD = 9.64), including salespeople, sales representatives, and restaurant and café employees. The remaining participants (n = 78) represented professions in the social services sector (aged 21–60, M = 43.34, SD = 10.27), including teachers and healthcare workers.

Instruments

Deep Acting and Surface Acting Scale

Emotional labor was measured using the *Deep Acting and Surface Acting Scale*, the Polish adaptation (Finogenow et al., 2015) of the revised version of the *Emotional Labor Scale* by Brotheridge and Lee (2003; Lee & Brotheridge, 2011).

The scale consists of nine items referring to interactions with clients during a typical workday, rated on a five-point scale from 1 – *never* to 5 – *always*. The items form three subscales: *Deep Acting*, *Hiding Feelings*, and *Faking Emotions*. The *Hiding Feelings* and *Faking Emotions* subscales together constitute the surface form of emotional labor. Higher scores on each subscale indicate higher intensity of emotional labor. The scale is characterized by good psychometric properties. Internal consistency for the subscales, based on Cronbach's alpha, ranges from .67 for *Deep Acting* to .80 for *Hiding Feelings* (Finogenow et al., 2015).

Maslach Burnout Inventory

Occupational burnout was measured using the *Maslach Burnout Inventory – General Survey* (MBI-GS, Polish, Mind Garden) developed by Schaufeli and colleagues (1996), in the Polish language version (Ślazyk-Sobol & Dobrowolska, 2018). The MBI-GS consists of 16 items referring to feelings associated with one's work and can be used to measure occupational burnout across various professional groups. The items form three scales corresponding to the classic dimensions of burnout: *Exhaustion*, *Cynicism*, and *Professional Efficacy*. Responses are given on a six-point scale (from 0 – *never* to 6 – *every day*). A high level of occupational burnout is indicated by high scores on the *Exhaustion* and *Cynicism* scales and low scores on the *Professional Efficacy* scale. The Polish version of the questionnaire demonstrates good psychometric properties; internal consistency for each subscale, assessed via Cronbach's alpha, exceeds .70 (Ślazyk-Sobol & Dobrowolska, 2018).

Job Affect Scale

The instrument used to assess the affective component of job satisfaction was the *Job Affect Scale* (SAP) by Burke and colleagues, adapted by Zalewska (2002). The scale consists of 20 words describing emotions experienced at work, including 10 items assessing *Positive Affect* and 10 assessing *Negative Affect*. Participants respond by entering a number indicating the intensity of the emotion experienced at work. Responses are given on a seven-point scale, where 1 indicates *very weak* and 7 indicates *very strong*. Higher scores on each subscale indicate higher levels of the respective affect at work. The scale is characterized by good psychometric properties. Internal consistency for the individual subscales, based on Cronbach's alpha, is as follows: .84 for Positive Affect and .79 for Negative Affect (Zalewska, 2002).

Job Satisfaction Scale

The *Job Satisfaction Scale* was developed by Anna Zalewska (2003b) and is used to measure the cognitive component of job satisfaction. It consists of five statements related to one's work. Using a seven-point scale (from 1 – *strongly disagree* to 7 – *strongly agree*), participants indicate the extent to which the statements correspond to their feelings. Higher scores imply higher job satisfaction.

The instrument demonstrates good psychometric properties. Internal consistency assessed using Cronbach's alpha is .86 (Zalewska, 2002).

Procedure

The study was conducted using the paper-and-pencil method and included completion of a brief demographic questionnaire and four measurement instruments. Before participating, individuals were presented with an informed consent form, which explained the aim of the study, the procedure and conditions of participation, as well as possible benefits and risks. Participants were also informed about the voluntary nature of participation and their right to withdraw at any time without consequences, as well as about the anonymity of the study and the use of the collected data solely for scientific purposes. No data were collected that could allow identification of the participants.

Data Analysis Methods

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS 29 and Hayes' PROCESS macro 4.2 (2022). Correlation analyses with confidence interval estimation were performed, along with comparative analyses using Student's t-test and regression analyses with interaction terms (PROCESS, moderation analysis – model 1, with 10,000 bootstrap samples). Effect sizes were interpreted in accordance with Cohen's (1988) recommendations.

Results

To determine whether individuals working in commercial professions differ from those working in social professions in the intensity of emotional labor, occupational burnout, work affect, and job satisfaction, Student's t-tests were conducted. The obtained results (Table 1, p. 164) indicate significant differences for two variables. Individuals employed in commercial professions report more frequent use of faking emotions at work (a moderate effect) and higher levels of positive affect at work (a small effect).

To examine the relationships between specific forms of emotional labor and occupational burnout and job satisfaction, correlation analyses with confidence interval estimation were performed. The results (Table 2, p. 164) show that performing deep acting is significantly and positively associated with experiencing positive affect at work. For hiding feelings, significant positive correlations were found with cynicism and negative affect at work, and significant negative correlations with positive affect at work and job satisfaction. Faking emotions was also significantly and positively associated with cynicism and negative affect at work. A significant negative relationship was found only with job satisfaction.

Table 1

Differences between individuals working in commercial and social professions in emotional labor intensity, occupational burnout, work affect, and job satisfaction

	Commercial (n = 77)		Social (n = 78)		*t(148)*	*p*	Cohen's *d*
	M	***SD***	***M***	***SD***			
Deep Acting	2.90	.82	2.93	.71	–.27	.790	–.04
Hiding Feelings	2.85	.87	2.65	.80	1.51	.133	.25
Faking Emotions	2.70	.77	2.31	.72	3.23	.002	.53
Exhaustion	1.44	.81	1.77	1.24	–1.90	.060	–.31
Cynicism	1.07	.93	1.19	1.02	.27	.792	.04
Professional Efficacy	4.49	.91	4.46	1.16	.18	.860	.03
Positive Affect at Work	5.40	6.85	47.88	8.82	1.98	.049	.32
Negative Affect at Work	27.62	5.46	27.78	8.07	–.14	.886	–.02
Job Satisfaction	23.87	6.41	23.06	6.23	.79	.429	.13

Table 2

Correlations between forms of emotional labor and occupational burnout, work affect, and job satisfaction (n = 150)

	Deep Acting	Hiding Feelings	Faking Emotions
Exhaustion	–.13 [–.28; .03]	.15 [–.01; .30]	.13 [–.03; .29]
Cynicism	–.09 [–.25; .07]	.17* [.01; .32]	.20* [.04; .35]
Professional Efficacy	.09 [–.07; .25]	–.04 [–.20; .12]	–.09 [–.25; .07]
Positive Affect at Work	.17* [.01; .32]	–.22** [–.36; –.06]	–.14 [–.29; .02]
Negative Affect at Work	–.10 [–.26; .06]	.27*** [.11; .41]	.23** [.07; .37]
Job Satisfaction	.05 [–.11; .21]	–.25** [–.40; –.09]	–.24** [–.38; –.08]

Note. 95% confidence intervals are presented in square brackets.
* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Type of Work (Commercial Versus Social) as a Moderator of the Relationship Between Emotional Labor and its Consequences

In the next stage, analyses were conducted to determine whether the type of work performed (commercial versus social) moderates the relationship between emotional labor and its consequences. A series of regression analyses with interaction terms was carried out using Hayes' PROCESS macro (model 1; Hayes,

2022) with 10,000 bootstrap samples. Consequences of emotional labor were entered as dependent variables (Y), components of emotional labor as independent variables (X), and the type of work performed as the moderator (W). The results of the interaction effects are presented in Table 3 (p. 166).

Analyses began with the first component of occupational burnout – exhaustion – entered as the dependent variable. For deep acting, the analysis showed that the model fit the data well, $F(3, 146) = 2.72$, $p < .05$, but the interaction effect was not statistically significant. For hiding feelings, the analysis revealed that the model fit was good, $F(3, 146) = 5.62$, $p < .01$, and the interaction effect was statistically significant ($\Delta R^2 = .05$). The relationship was significant and positive only among individuals working in social professions. For the analysis involving faking emotions, the model fit the data well, $F(3, 146) = 6.67$, $p < .001$, and the interaction effect was statistically significant ($\Delta R^2 = .07$). The relationship was significant and positive only for social professions.

Next, analyses were conducted for the second component of occupational burnout – cynicism. For deep acting, the model showed poor fit to the data, $F(3, 146) = .58$, $p > .05$, and the interaction effect was not statistically significant. For hiding feelings, the model fit the data well, $F(3, 146) = 6.18$, $p < .001$, and the interaction effect was statistically significant ($\Delta R^2 = .08$). The relationship was significant and positive only in the group of individuals working in social professions. For faking emotions, the model also fit the data well, $F(3, 146) = 3.92$, $p < .01$, and the interaction effect was statistically significant ($\Delta R^2 = .03$). The relationship was significant only for the social professions group.

The next variable analyzed was the third component of occupational burnout – professional efficacy. For deep acting, the model showed poor fit to the data, $F(3, 146) = .47$, $p > .05$, and the interaction effect was not significant. The analysis for hiding feelings indicated that the model was poorly fitted, $F(3, 146) = 2.27$, $p > .05$. However, the interaction effect was statistically significant ($\Delta R^2 = .04$). The relationship was significant and negative only in the group of individuals working in social professions. For faking emotions, the model showed good fit to the data, $F(3, 146) = 4.02$, $p < .01$, and the interaction effect was statistically significant ($\Delta R^2 = .07$). The relationship was significant and negative only in the group of individuals working in social professions.

Next, analyses were conducted for the dependent variable positive affect at work. For deep acting, the model fit the data well, $F(3, 146) = 3.74$, $p < .05$. However, the interaction effect was not statistically significant. Similarly, for hiding feelings, the model fit was good, $F(3, 146) = 5.05$, $p < .01$, but the interaction effect was not significant. For faking emotions, the model also fit the data well, $F(3, 146) = 4.39$, $p < .01$, but the interaction effect was not statistically significant.

The next analyses focused on negative affect at work. For deep acting, the model showed poor fit to the data, $F(3, 146) = 1.80$, $p > .05$, and the interaction effect was not statistically significant. For hiding feelings, the model fit the data well, $F(3, 146) = 7.22$, $p < .001$, and the interaction effect was statistically significant ($\Delta R^2 = .05$). The relationship was significant and positive only in the group of individuals working in social professions. For faking emotions, the model also fit the data well, $F(3, 146) = 7.30$, $p < .001$, and the interaction effect was

statistically significant ($\Delta R^2 = .07$). The relationship was significant and positive only among individuals working in social professions.

The final dependent variable analyzed was job satisfaction. For deep acting, the model showed poor fit to the data, $F(3, 146) = .86$, $p > .05$, and the interaction effect was not statistically significant. For hiding feelings, the model fit the data well, $F(3, 146) = 4.49$, $p < .01$, but the interaction effect was not statistically significant. Similarly, for faking emotions, the model fit the data well, $F(3, 146) = 4.38$, $p < .01$, but the interaction effect was not statistically significant.

Table 3

Services sector as a moderator of the relationship between emotional labor and occupational burnout and job satisfaction – results of moderation analyses

	Interaction			Social			Commercial		
	b	**SE**	**95%CI**	***b***	**SE**	**95%CI**	***b***	**SE**	**95%CI**
DA → E	–.30	.23	[–.75; .15]						
HF → E	**.58**	**.20**	**[.18; .98]**	**.53**	**.15**	**[.24; .82]**	–.05	.14	[–.32; .22]
FE → E	**.74**	**.22**	**[.30; 1.18]**	**.65**	**.16**	**[.32; .97]**	–.09	.15	[–.40; .21]
DA → C	–.17	.23	[–.63; .29]						
HF → C	**.75**	**.20**	**[.35; 1.15]**	**.62**	**.15**	**[.33; .91]**	–.13	.14	[–.40; .14]
FE → C	**.52**	**.23**	**[.07; .98]**	**.57**	**.17**	**[.24; .91]**	.05	.16	[–.27; .37]
DA → PE	.09	.23	[–.35; .54]						
HF → PE	**–.52**	**.20**	**[–.92; –.12]**	**–.33**	**.14**	**[–.62; –.03]**	.19	.14	[–.08; .46]
FE → PE	**–.73**	**.22**	**[–1.17; –.28]**	**–.52**	**.16**	**[–.84; –.20]**	.21	.15	[–.10; .51]
DA → PA	2.20	1.70	[–1.16; 5.56]						
HF → PA	–1.61	1.53	[–4.63; 1.41]						
FE → PA	–2.77	1.73	[–6.20; .66]						
DA → NA	–2.77	1.48	[–5.68; .14]						
HF → NA	**3.79**	**1.27**	**[1.27; 6.31]**	**4.29**	**.93**	**[2.45; 6.14]**	.50	.87	[–1.21; 2.21]
FE → NA	**4.93**	**1.43**	**[2.10; 7.77]**	**4.85**	**1.04**	**[2.79; 6.91]**	–.08	.99	[–2.03; 1.87]
DA → JS	1.45	1.34	[–1.19; 4.10]						
HF → JS	–1.43	.18	[–3.75; .89]						
FE → JS	–1.34	1.33	[–3.96; 1.28]						

Note. 95% confidence intervals are presented in square brackets.

Legend: DA – Deep Acting; HF – Hiding Feelings; FE – Faking Emotions; E – Exhaustion; C – Cynicism; PE – Professional Efficacy; PA – Positive Affect at Work; NA – Negative Affect at Work; JS – Job Satisfaction.

Discussion

The conducted study provided answers to the question of differences in emotional labor, occupational burnout, and job satisfaction between representatives of commercial and social professions. As predicted in Hypothesis 1, significant differences emerged for surface acting, but only for one aspect – faking emotions. Individuals employed in commercial professions more frequently fake emotions in interactions with customers compared to individuals employed in social professions. For deep acting, no significant differences between the occupational groups were observed. This finding supports the earlier line of reasoning suggesting that display rules imposed on employees in commercial professions encourage them, to a greater extent than employees in social professions (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Diefendorff & Croyle, 2008; Goldberg & Grandey, 2007), to engage in emotional labor at the surface level.

Hypothesis 2 concerned differences in the consequences of emotional labor. The only significant differences emerged for positive affect at work – employees in commercial professions declared higher levels than those in social professions. The lack of significant differences in occupational burnout may be regarded as surprising. However, findings from large-scale comparative studies examining burnout, health, and life satisfaction among teachers (as representatives of social services) and other occupational groups are mixed and often depend on sample characteristics (cf. Beutel et al., 2023).

The study also addressed the relationships between forms of emotional labor and occupational burnout and job satisfaction (Hypothesis 3), as well as the moderating effect of the service sector (commercial versus social) on these relationships (Hypothesis 4). In the case of relationships between deep acting and the analyzed outcomes, none of the interaction effects were significant. The only significant relationships were found for positive affect at work. The more frequently employees engaged in deep acting, the higher their positive affect, and this was independent of occupational group.

The relationships between both aspects of surface acting (hiding feelings and faking emotions) and the examined outcomes followed a different pattern. Moreover, for both aspects of surface acting, multiple interaction effects were identified, indicating a moderating role of the services sector. Hiding feelings was significantly and positively associated with exhaustion, cynicism, and negative affect at work, and negatively associated with personal accomplishment. However, these relationships were significant only in the group of individuals working in social professions. Regardless of occupation, significant positive associations were found between hiding feelings and positive affect, as well as job satisfaction. For faking emotions, similar relationships emerged. Faking emotions was significantly and positively associated with exhaustion, cynicism, and negative affect at work, and negatively associated with personal accomplishment. These relationships – analogous to those found for hiding feelings – were significant only in the group of individuals working in social service professions. Regardless of occupation, faking emotions was associated with a decrease in job satisfaction.

The obtained results suggest that individuals who, in the course of their professional duties, hide their true feelings toward service recipients and display

emotions they do not genuinely experience but are expected to express, are more vulnerable to occupational burnout, increases in negative affect, and decreases in job satisfaction. These findings are consistent with previous studies showing more adverse consequences of surface acting compared with deep acting (e.g., Brotheridge & Lee, 2002; Finogenow et al., 2015; Hülsheger & Schewe, 2011; Jeung et al., 2018). The lack of significant associations for deep acting (apart from the positive effect on positive affect at work) reflects the inconsistent findings reported in earlier research (see meta-analyses: Humphrey, 2021; Kariou et al., 2021). It also suggests that the consequences of deep acting are more difficult to determine and may depend on additional factors.

Importantly, in line with Hypothesis 4, the verified relationships were significant only in the group of individuals working in the social services sector. Possible explanations may relate to mechanisms accompanying surface acting. For example, Hülsheger and Schewe (2011) argue that during surface acting, an additional burden may arise from the feeling of being insincere, which results in elevated stress levels and lower mood. Moreover, in Polish culture there is a strong tendency to view the display of inauthentic emotions as a sign of falseness and insincerity (Szarota, 2006). For individuals working in professions associated with a social mission, such feelings in interactions with service recipients may be particularly burdensome – the lack of sincerity appears to contradict the very idea of a social mission (Czerw & Borkowska, 2010). Additionally, the long-term nature of interactions and the absence of an immediate outcome – for example, a customer making a purchase – may exacerbate negative consequences, specifically in this group.

The present study has certain limitations. One limitation concerns the selection of the research sample. It is possible that the division into two occupational categories, although emphasized in the literature (Szczygieł et al., 2009), does not fully capture the variability of emotional labor. Future studies should therefore include and compare representatives of a broader range of professions. Another limitation is the correlational nature of the study. Although theoretical assumptions suggest that emotional labor, through its burdensome nature, leads to negative consequences for the individual, the present research does not allow for unequivocal causal interpretations. Longitudinal studies would therefore be valuable for determining the directionality of these relationships.

Despite these limitations, the obtained results confirm that although surface acting constitutes a significant emotional burden, its impact may also depend on other factors. The findings suggest that the profession performed may be an additional important moderator – alongside individual variables, cultural factors, or employment sector (public versus private; cf. meta-analysis by Humphrey, 2021) – of the relationships between emotional labor and its consequences.

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