

The effects of emotional labor on work engagement and boundary spanner creativity

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper aims to examine the effect of employees' emotional labor on work engagement and boundary-spanner creativity based on the job demands-resources model from the perspective of salespeople.

Design/methodology/approach – To analyze the data, a confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modeling procedure using LISREL 8.5 were used. Next, the conditional process modeling was fitted to test the moderated mediation hypotheses.

Findings – The analysis results showed that deep acting has a positive effect on work engagement, whereas surface acting has a negative effect, indicating that work engagement of sales representatives is differently related to each factor of emotional labor. Second, work engagement of salespeople has a positive effect on boundary spanner creativity. Next, entrepreneurship has a moderate effect in the relationship between emotional labor and work engagement with customer stewardship and has a positive moderating effect in the relationship between work engagement and boundary spanner creativity.

Practical implications – Considering the positive effect of boundary spanner creativity on work engagement, it is important to maintain interaction with customers, including adaptive behaviors and customer orientation, as customers' demand increases. The individual competence and capability of salespeople such as entrepreneurship are directly related to interaction with customers, so when the right strategy is defined for each type of entrepreneurship of salespeople, it will create a positive corporate culture and lead to performance improvement.

Originality/value – Compared with most studies, more direct factors of emotional labor were assessed to detect positive effects in this study. More specifically, when salespeople were forced to fake their feelings, they were more likely to recognize stress or burnout due to emotional dissonance between what they really felt and what they had to express to comply with organizational regulations.

Keywords Emotional labor, Entrepreneurship, Work engagement, Boundary spanner creativity, Customer stewardship

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

Emotional labor is the process of regulating both feeling and expression for organizational goals (Grandey, 2000). Grove and Fisk (1989) suggest that emotional labor is a type of impression management by which an individual attempts to direct his/her behavior to enhance social perception or foster a certain interpersonal desired climate (Johnson, 2004).



Emotional labor has three features. First, it is generated from face-to-face contact and voice interaction with customers. Second, emotional expression affects the emotion, attitude and behaviors of others. Third, emotions should be expressed in emotional-display rules (Hochschild, 1983). As the number of salespeople increases and competition intensifies, they sometimes have to fake emotions that are different from their actual feelings; recently, the distress of emotional labor has become a social. Even when they are faced with derogatory and inhumane treatment, they still have to show customer-oriented kind responses and behaviors that comply with strict corporate and organizational rules; as such, emotional labor workers suffer from severe stress and psychological anxiety, which leads to an increasing rate of defection, with growing dissatisfaction and declining productivity. Moreover, most emotional laborers workers are temporary workers, and some work in indirect employment schemes, such as dispatching or subcontracting. Currently, under the pressure of cost reduction and streamlining resource management, companies are beginning to turn to and expand through outsourcing. With organizational changes from continuous restructuring and concerns over the nature and existence of their jobs, emotional labor workers are suffering from job insecurity.

A salesperson is an employee whose purpose is to build and develop customer relationships through direct interaction with customers, representing the company, and who plays the key role of managing and maintaining customer relationships, representing the company (Miao and Evans, 2013). The company's role to protect the emotions of emotional labor workers, especially salespeople, is a critical factor in organizational performance. The management of the emotional exhaustion of salespeople should be interpreted as an investment for the sustainable performance of companies rather than as a cost to the corporation, as salespeople are agents who build relations with customers, representing the company and ultimately improving business performance. Previous studies in the same context have seen salespeople as boundary spanners to affect and build customer relationships, representing companies (Bradford and Weitz, 2009).

However, interactions with customers inevitably and emotionally affect salespeople for various reasons, which in turn affects salespeople's defection rate and performance (Zablah *et al.*, 2012). This leads to cost increases at companies, justifying the need for corporations to manage the emotional aspects of salespeople's interactions with customers. However, despite these insights, most existing studies on salespeople have focused on how to manage and control salespeople at the organizational level to find the key to improving sales performance (Piercy *et al.*, 2006). In fact, frontline employees do not see interaction with customers as pleasant work; rather, they associate it with negative feelings and dissatisfaction, and sometimes, it even causes emotional stress (Dormann and Zapf, 2004). Although most companies realize the importance of customer complaints and establishing measures to handle these complaints, they do not pay much attention to employees' negative feelings and work stress caused by customer behaviors. Moreover, the moment of truth takes place for customers to define and assess service quality at the contact point (Norman, 1984). It is up to employees to decide the level of service quality, so if the stress generated from customer complaints is not properly relieved, it will lead to changes in employees' behaviors and emotions (Bowen and Schneider, 1985; Hochschild, 1983). Thus, reviewing and properly managing employees' emotions is highly important. In fact, managing the way salespeople express their emotions is a key factor in customers' evaluation of a company and in an organization's profits. Salespeople are required to express their emotions in a controlled and standardized manner (Wharton, 1993). Thus, even when they experience negative feelings due to customers' behaviors, they often have to hide their feelings and fake positive responses. This often leads to emotional dissonance between what salespeople

actually feel and what they express; when they handle customer complaints frequently, their emotional resources are generally depleted. These emotional responses affect job satisfaction (Grandey, 2000) and have a negative impact on employees' physical health (Hochschild, 1983). To improve corporate performance and increase corporation members' satisfaction, it is important to address such emotional exhaustion. Additionally, although organizations strengthen their management and supervision of employees with corporate regulation, they tend to see employees' stress and feeling as a personal issue. In this context, it is meaningful to shed light on the causes of deep and surface acting in frontline employees' individual experiences in the process of conducting emotional labor, selling a product or service. Although, previous studies have examined the types of emotional labor, empirical studies on additional moderating factors related to types of emotional labor have not been sufficiently performed.

Thus, this study was designed to define the features of emotional labor with customers based on findings from previous studies and categorize factors of emotional labor into deep and surface acting to observe how they are related to work engagement and boundary spanner creativity and examine the moderating effect of employees' customer stewardship and entrepreneurship from salespeople's perspectives. Although researches on the employee's emotional labor may not be limited, the interplay of both personal characteristics of sales employees with their emotional labor is not well understood. A primary contribution of the research relates to strengthening our understanding of the formation and influence of a frontline employee's personal factor such as customer stewardship and entrepreneurship in the emotionally drained situation.

2. Literature review and hypotheses

2.1 Emotional labor

The first study on emotional labor that defined emotion as one of the factors of labor was by Hochschild (1983), and since then, many following studies have been conducted. The studies on emotional labor have looked into the sub factors (Hochschild, 1983; Adelman, 1989), precedents and results of emotional labor (Ashforth and Humphrey, 1995; Morris and Feldman, 1996) and how to develop tools to assess emotional labor (Davies, 2002; Kruml and Geddes, 2000; Morris and Feldman, 1996), but there has been no general consensus on basic factors or universal standards on emotional labor. Even among scholars, definitions of emotional labor vary. Although Hochschild (1983) defined it as a way of managing emotions to make facial expressions or gestures, Ashforth and Humphrey (1995) saw it as a behavior of expressing socially required emotion during service transactions, and Morris and Feldman (1996) defined it as emotional effort, plan and control that are seen as being desirable in an organization. Meanwhile, Pizam (2008) said it is a behavior to initiate or repress one's emotion to please others, and Grandey (2000) saw it as a process of controlling one's emotions in performing job responsibilities. All of these definitions of emotional labor vary among scholars, but one thing they have in common is that emotional expression is controlled in the field of service work. Additionally, employees conducting emotional labor make efforts consciously or unconsciously to minimize stress when they choose to perform emotional labor, and in the process, they choose between deep or surface acting as a strategy to perform emotional labor (Hochschild, 1983).

Most emotional labor conceptualizations suggest that to display appropriate emotions at work, individuals must sometimes hide or fake felt emotions (surface acting) or try to experience the desired emotion (deep acting). In deep acting, employees endeavor to express authentic emotions, and though not every attempt succeeds, emotions expressed as a result of deep acting are more likely to be authentic than those expressed through surface acting,

which occurs when employees only change their outward emotional display without genuinely altering how they actually feel (Yoo, 2016). Brotheridge and Grandey (2002) categorized emotional labor into job-related and employee-related factors. Job-related emotional labor was assessed based on frequency, period and level of diversity, whereas employee-related emotional labor was defined as deep or surface acting. Finally, Kruml and Geddes (2000) defined emotional labor with the two factors of genuine acting and emotional dissonance. Meanwhile, factors related to employees can be seen in the theoretical framework or conceptual factors of behaviors that Hochschild (1983) defined.

Based on these definitions, researchers decided that assessing emotional labor based on deep or surface acting would be most suitable for the purpose and objectives of the study and thus categorized emotional labor into deep or surface acting during the course of the research. Surface acting means expressing emotions to comply with rules and regulations only on the surface. In other words, to create motional expressions that are in compliance with organizational regulations, employees display disingenuous emotions with tone of voice, facial expressions and gestures to make their emotions look genuine. To make sure their emotions and attitudes seemingly comply with rules and regulations, they control their behaviors, which means they fake emotions to make them look genuine, but they are not so. Brotheridge and Grandey (2002) said that members corrected and controlled emotional expression in the execution of surface acting. Deep acting means members make efforts to actually feel the emotion internally. In pursuing organizational goals, members manage to actually feel the emotions required as social norms or organizational requirements.

2.2 Impact of emotional labor on work

In many studies, deep and surface acting show conflicting results. Surface acting is an act of controlling emotional expression only on the surface, and even when emotional labor workers feel negative emotions, they fake or hide their feelings and pretend they feel positive emotions. In surface acting, members of the organization express feeling reflectively and mechanically without making efforts to align their actual feelings with the requirements of the organization (Grandey, 2000). Thus, surface acting is a passive attitude toward emotions, controlling emotional expression only on the surface but not internally (Scott and Barnes, 2011). Surface acting leads to negative results like work stress and emotional dissonance (Hochschild, 1983), and employees performing surface acting are deprived of their human nature and tend to show high rates of burnout and defection (Brotheridge and Lee, 2002; Grandey, 2000). In other words, the negative results may lead to lower service quality and corporate image impairment, not just at an individual level but at the organizational level as well. In contrast, deep acting means making additional efforts to control internal emotion to comply with rules or regulation of the organization and indicates more active engagement in emotional control than surface acting (Hochschild, 1983; Grandey, 2000). In other words, instead of creating fake emotions, they express the feelings they actually feel, and more specifically, they try to remind themselves of past experiences, thoughts and images associated with that feeling (Brotheridge and Lee, 2002). Grandey (2002) suggested a static relationship between deep acting and emotional burnout in a study but did not develop meaningful study results, and no other study proves that deep acting fuels emotional burnout (Brotheridge and Grandey, 2002; Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002). Thus, surface and deep acting should be explained with emotion regulation theory, indicating that emotions are generated consistently, following the emotional process of individual members in organizations (emotion regulation theory) (Brotheridge and Grandey, 2002). Based on these theories, the following hypotheses were defined:

H1a. Deep acting has a positive effect on salespeople's work engagement.

H1b. Surface acting has a negative effect on salespeople's work engagement.

2.3 Moderating effect of customer stewardship

In domestic studies, customer stewardship is explained using stewardship theory. According to agent theory, owners are required to provide more incentives to agents to prevent moral hazard in information asymmetry. However, a results-oriented incentive scheme is not the best or only option for information symmetry (Levinthal, 1988). Stewardship theory, emerging as an alternative to agent theory, was developed to provide better motivation and change the relations between owner and agent from information asymmetry into information symmetry. In contrast to organizational economics, which emphasizes a joint and organization-friendly contract, this approach analyzes behavior and relation with contractual parties (Van Slyke, 2007). In contrast to agent theory, this approach places a higher value on alignment with the goals of the owners rather than pursuing the agent's own goals (Davis *et al.*, 1997a, 1997b). In other words, a steward is different from an agent in agent theory in that the steward recognizes the successful contract and performance of the organization (community) as his/her own performance or success, makes decision for the sake of the owner and does not expect a financial incentive for individual performance (Davis *et al.*, 1997a, 1997b).

Additionally, a steward is motivated with internal rewards like trust, honor, mutual benefits, discretion, autonomy, job satisfaction, stability and commitment. In stewardship, the owner resolves problems, shares information and makes decision together with the steward and conducts managerial activities based on collective interest rather than individual interest with an understanding of the steward's needs (Van Slyke, 2007). In the stewardship model, the earlier stages of the contract have a higher cost of transaction than principal-agent relations. However, as the owner builds a relationship of trust with the steward and a contractual management scheme to align mutual goals in the long term, and as the contractual parties come to understand the motivation, signals and behaviors of each other, eventually, the cost of the transaction will decline over time. In other words, as the goals of the contractual parties become aligned and trust is building, the cost of holding each other accountable will decrease. At that time, the goals of the contractual parties will be well aligned with trust and honor, in mutual rather than unilateral relations, and the steward will consequently receive rewards. The steward also places more value on cooperation even when his/her goal is not perfectly aligned with the goal of the owner due to the owner's self-interest or negligence because the steward sees the execution of contractual duties to be more beneficial than seeking individual benefits (Davis *et al.*, 1997a, 1997b). Accordingly, using stewardship theory to manage relationships between contractual parties based on shared goals may not be suitable for market production or other policy areas but seems to be more suitable for social service areas (Van Slyke, 2007). According to Davis *et al.*, (1997a, 1997b), management develops stewardship with agents, leveraging psychological factors like power, motivation and identification and circumstantial factors like culture and business management philosophy. Thus, in this study, salespeople' commitment to customers was interpreted as stewardship, and it was assumed that for salespeople, individual sales performance was the same as corporate performance and that their commitment to customers associated with performance can be explained with stewardship theory. Additionally, participants of the study work at a membership-based sales company, not in general sales service, so they can be considered individual agents of the business for which individual performance creates incentives and profits. The owner-manager of

business is emotionally more tied to the company than professional management (Gomez-Mejia *et al.*, 2003) and identifies themselves with the company (Kets de Vries, 1993); among circumstantial factors, they put more value on long-term factors, like corporate substantiality, rather than short-term profits (James, 1999; Kets de Vries, 1993). Accordingly, in this study, it was assumed that customer stewardship would have a meaningful moderating effect on salespeople, so the following hypotheses were established:

- H2a. Salespeople's customer stewardship positively moderates the effect of deep acting on work engagement.
- H2b. Salespeople's customer stewardship negatively moderates the effect of surface acting on work engagement.

2.4 Effect of work engagement on boundary spanner creativity

The job demands-resources model is a theory to define how the elements of job demand and resources affect performance through emotional aspects of organizational members such as work engagement or burnout (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004). Schaufeli *et al.* (2009) attempted to explain members' work engagement based on the job demands-resources model in a comprehensive way, and the importance of work engagement was emphasized as a way to improve corporate performance. In contrast to burnout, work engagement means an attitude of organizational members who display vigor about, dedication to and absorption in their work (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002). Specifically, the key factor to activate work engagement includes job resources; an extensive amount of studies exists on this subject (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004).

Boundary spanner creativity is the key to securing customer satisfaction and competitive advantage (Strutton *et al.*, 2009). This means developing customized solutions to resolve customer problems and thus requires employees' creative thinking (Coelho *et al.*, 2011; Wang and Netemeyer, 2004). For salespeople, the range of decision-making and autonomy are clearly defined, but boundary spanners often make creative decisions of their own. Thus, as Wang and Netemeyer (2004) defined in their study, we saw boundary spanner creativity as generating numerous new ideas and visible actions while performing certain tasks. Boundary spanner creativity continues to face issues and complex situations requiring creative solutions (Sousa and Coelho, 2011). Creativity enables boundary spanners to resolve customer issues and meet excessive demands. In other words, they improve and upgrade customers' perception of services at customer contact points (Bitner *et al.*, 1990). Wang and Netemeyer (2004) indicated that capabilities of leveraging different and unique perspectives can help achieve task objectives. Boundary spanner creativity has a positive impact on work performance. Job performance is related to how boundary spanners meet their individual goals (including quotas allocated to the salesperson) and how they take advantage of the active and non-structural nature of pre-order services in a more flexible and creative way. Thus, individuals with high creativity tend to build and maintain relations more easily and are better positioned to achieve greater performance (Agnihotri *et al.*, 2014). Sousa and Coelho (2011) said that personal value, organizational commitment and customer orientation were driven by employees' creativity and Coelho *et al.* (2011) said that internal motivation, work complexity and customer relationships had a positive effect on creativity. Based on these theories, the following hypotheses were established:

- H3. Work engagement of salespeople has a positive effect on boundary spanner creativity.

2.5 Moderating effect of entrepreneurship

The definition of entrepreneurship varies among scholars. With regard to entrepreneurship, three key factors – risk taking, progressive and innovativeness – are considered, and these factors are also key elements of business success (Wang, 2008). Kaufmann and Dant (1988) defined entrepreneurship using three factors. First, they defined it with respect to individual personalities that are unique to entrepreneurs. Second, they defined it with an emphasis on the process and results of entrepreneurship. Third, they defined it with a focus on the behaviors of entrepreneurs in the entrepreneurial role. Mintzberg (1989) defined entrepreneurs as those who lead an organization, motivate employees, collect necessary information and keep changing and reframing the organization to respond to changing environments. Burisch (2002) explained it as personal resources to overcome emotional exhaustion likely to occur during job performance; these personal resources have the functionality to help meet personal goals, provide protection against external risks associated with psychological and physical costs and promote personal growth and development (Judge *et al.*, 2004).

Shane *et al.* (2003) defined entrepreneurship as entrepreneurial opportunities and saw it as a process of identifying business opportunities, developing ideas to act on, fabricating products or services, assessing feasibility, designing the organization, combining resources and expanding and creating markets. In this study, we define entrepreneurship as the status of having an entrepreneurial mindset, identifying business opportunities in the process of sales from a salesperson's perspective and executing diverse activities in serving customers to seize these opportunities. For the impact of market orientation on business performance, Li *et al.* (2008) and Hernández-Maestro and González-Benito (2011) assessed the moderating effect of entrepreneurship in their studies to determine its effect on service quality and business performance. As defined in these studies, we assumed that entrepreneurship would have a meaningful moderating effect on boundary spanner creativity and thus established the following hypothesis:

- H4.* Entrepreneurship positively moderates the effect on salespeople's work engagement on boundary spanner creativity.

2.6 Research model

In the theoretical review and establishment of hypotheses, research on emotional labor, work engagement, boundary spanner creativity, customer stewardship and entrepreneurship were discussed. For the elements of emotional labor, deep and surface acting were suggested. For the work engagement of salespeople, we focused on the factors of vigor, dedication and absorption. Finally, we propose the model below (Figure 1).

3. Research method and analyses

3.1 Operational definition of variables and measurements

In this study, diverse measurement items were assessed and analyzed. First, in emotional labor, deep and surface acting are defined from employees' perspectives. Work engagement, boundary spanner creativity, customer stewardship and entrepreneurship are also measured with existing scales to promote sales and were defined to establish six base constants in total.

First, emotional labor was defined as an effort to express the emotion required by a corporation for successful job performance, with tone of voice, facial expressions and gesture (Grandey, 2000), and to measure surface acting in emotional labor, the study

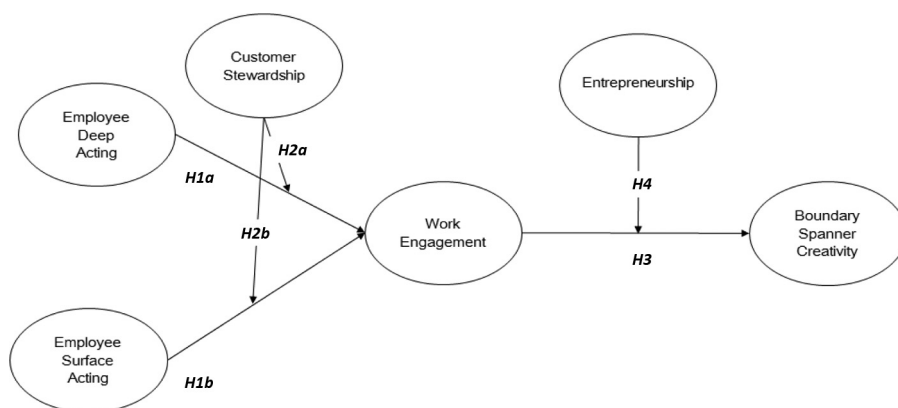


Figure 1.
Research model and hypotheses

adopted nine items that [Diefendorff et al. \(2005\)](#) developed for deep acting after moderate adjustment.

Customer stewardship was defined as a mindset to feel satisfied when employee sacked for the sake of the organization and for the common good rather than being selfish or individualistic ([Davis et al., 1997a, 1997b](#)). Based on [Schepers et al. \(2012\)](#) study, five measurement items were adopted to assess salespeople's customer stewardship. Work engagement was defined as personal passion, effectiveness and positive emotional motivation, such as vigor, dedication and absorption. For this study, work engagement was measured by the Utrecht Engagement Scale with nine items (UWES-9; [Schaufeli et al., 2006](#)). The scale has three dimensions, comprising vigor (three items), dedication (three items) and absorption (three items).

Boundary spanner creativity was defined as creative thinking and unique behaviors to better perform tasks related to sales ([Wang and Netemeyer, 2004](#)); seven items [Agnihotri et al. \(2014\)](#) suggested were adopted to ensure that salespeople assess themselves and to determine how often they are engaged in creative thinking and behaviors. Finally, for entrepreneurship, three sub-dimensions that [Jambulingam and Nevin \(1999\)](#) and [Matsumo et al. \(2002\)](#) defined were adopted. These items were adjusted so as not to lose focus on the personal traits or capabilities required for individuals to create new value in assessing entrepreneurship. The multidimensional construct of entrepreneurship were consisted of risk taking, innovativeness and proactiveness, and three measurement items were used to measure each sub-dimension.

3.2 Sampling procedure and data collection

For the study, a survey was performed with salespeople working for a multi-level sales company in Korea. The membership-based direct sales company was founded in 1951, and Korea headquarters opened in 1991. It now has the number-one market-share in the industry, offering an extensive range of brand lines from daily goods to home and living brands and health products. It was decided after a discussion with the company to conduct the survey on their intranet website to which salespeople have exclusive access, and an assessment was performed based on their experiences with product sales over the most recent three months. The website on which the survey was conducted was the company's homepage that salespeople frequently access to order corporate products, communicate with the company or other salespeople and check their personal information, including sales

performance. Salespeople participating in the survey were given cash points to buy goods from the company. The survey was conducted over six days starting on April 1, 2014, and 1,620 questionnaires were collected and analyzed. Among the respondents, 1,265 (78.1 per cent) were female, and the remaining 355 (21.9 per cent) were male. With regard to age, 640 respondents were aged in their 40s (39.5 per cent), followed by 579 (35.7 per cent) in their 30s, 303 (18.7 per cent) in their 50s and 98 (6.1 per cent) in their 20s. With regard to educational background, 1,443 respondents (89.1 per cent) were college students or graduates, 129 (8 per cent) were graduate school students or graduates, 31 (1.9 per cent) were high school graduates and 17 (1 per cent) were others.

3.3 Measurement model analysis and confirmatory factor analysis results

Measurement properties and hypotheses were evaluated using multistep structural equation modeling with LISREL 8.53. A two-stage data analysis was performed to assess the measurement quality of the constructs and test the proposed model and hypotheses. In the first stage, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed to assess the measurement model. In the second stage, conditional process modeling (Hayes and Matthes, 2009) was fitted to test the moderated hypotheses. In this stage, the moderating effects of stewardship and entrepreneurship and the mediating effect of work engagement on boundary spanner creativity were tested by means of the bootstrapping method.

The first step in the CFA analysis was to test the hypothesized measurement relationships and evaluate the reliability and discriminant validity of the constructs. The measurement model in this study consists of 43 reflective indicators and six correlated latent factors corresponding to the six constructs of the study (Figure 1).

The multidimensional scale construct of work engagement was analyzed at the second-order factor level to examine the relationships among constructs. To this end, a six-construct CFA was estimated using the covariance matrix as an input.

After the deletion of poorly loading items, the final confirmatory factor model fit the data well. The chi-square (df) was 3096.37 (419), goodness-of-fit index (GFI) was 0.88, comparative fit index (CFI) was 0.98 and the root mean squared error approximation (RMSEA) was 0.067. In addition, the hypothesized factor loadings were all statistically significant at the 0.01 level, and the completely standardized factor loadings were all well above the recommended level of 0.50 (Table I). Table II reports the number of items, factor loading, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability and average shared variance estimates.

As shown in Tables II and III, correlation coefficients are estimated from LISREL 8.54, and all were significant at the 0.01 level. In addition, all average variance extracted (AVE) exceed 0.50, showing construct validity. The results showed that discriminant validity exists when the proportion of AVE in each construct exceeds the square of the coefficient representing its correlation with other constructs (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Therefore, the results of the CFA provided support for the reliable measurement of the model, which enabled me to go ahead and test the hypotheses of this study.

We also tested uni-dimensionality of entrepreneurship construct used in this study. As a multi-dimensional construct, entrepreneurship construct was examined with second-order factor analysis. Results showed that the three-factor solution for entrepreneurship is most appropriate. Compared to the one-factor solution, the three-factor solution shows a significant χ^2 difference (χ^2 difference = 88.33 (3) $p < 0.01$).

3.4 Hypotheses testing

To directly test the proposed research model, as shown in Figure 1, two approaches were used. First, to test the direct relationships among constructs, structural equation modeling

Feature	Category	N	(%)	Feature	Category	N	(%)
Age	20's	98	6.1	Gender	Male	355	21.9
	30's	579	35.7		Female	1265	78.1
	40's	640	39.5		Less than a year	131	8.1
Educational backgrounds	50's or older	303	18.7	1 year	434	26.8	
	High school graduates	31	1.9	2 ~ 3 years	420	25.9	
	College students	423	26.1	4 ~ 5 years	217	13.4	
	College graduates	1020	63.0	6 ~ 9 years	146	9.1	
	Graduate school students/graduates	129	8.0	10 years or longer	272	16.7	
	Others	17	1.0				

Table I.
Demographic profile
of survey
respondents

with LISREL 8.5 was used (Jöreskog and Sörbom, 1996). The overall fit of this model was good. The chi-square (df) was 1975.14 (166), CFI was 0.97, GFI was 0.88 and NFI was 0.96. The structural estimates of this model are shown in Table IV. As shown, the analyses provided support for all direct hypothesized relationships.

H1a and H1b pertained to emotional labor and its influences on employee work engagement. The results indicated that deep acting exhibited the predicted positive influence on employee work engagement (standardized coefficient value of $-0.34, p < 0.01$), and surface acting was negatively related with employees' work engagement (standardized coefficient value of $0.12, p < 0.05$). As a job resource, deep acting increased employee's work engagement; however, surface acting, as a job demand, diminished employee's work engagement. Therefore, H1a and H1b were supported.

In addition, the influence of work engagement on boundary spanner creativity was tested. The results showed that work engagement had a positive influence on frontline employees' creativity (H3: standardized coefficient value of $0.62, p < 0.01$). Thus, employees who are highly engaged in their work showed more creative behavior to need customer's unique needs. Therefore, H3 was supported.

To directly test our proposed moderating effects in the research model, we used a regression-based path analysis with the aid of existing computational tools for estimating and probing interactions and conditional indirect effects in moderated mediation models (Hayes and Matthes, 2009; Preacher et al., 2007). We used an SPSS macro (Preacher et al., 2007) to estimate both the mediation and moderation models.

Tables V shows results from the moderated mediation model. Table V shows a negative and significant relationship between surface acting and stewardship, providing support for H2b. The results from the mediation model indicate that the interaction effect of employees' surface acting with stewardship was negatively associated with work engagement ($\beta = -0.06, p < 0.05$). However, stewardship has no significant moderating effect on the link between deep acting and work engagement, resulting in a lack of support for H2a.

Next, in the right side of Table V, the results also show a positive interaction effect of work engagement with entrepreneurship on employees' creativity, according to the different type of emotional labor as influential factor respectfully ($\beta = 0.14, p < 0.05, IV = \text{deep acting}$ and $\beta = 0.03, p < 0.05, IV = \text{surface acting}$). Therefore, employees who have more entrepreneurship showed more positive relationship between work engagement and boundary spanner creativity. Thus, H4 was supported.

4. Discussion

This study extends and links existing research in the areas of emotional labor, work engagement, boundary spanner creativity, customer stewardship and entrepreneurship using the job resource and demand model as a theoretical base. To extend our knowledge on the emotion labor, the study was conducted based on the theories of

Table II.
Measurement items
and CFA results

Construct	Path loading	C/R	Cronbach's alpha	AVE
Deep acting	0.82-0.95	0.94	0.945	0.81
Surface acting	0.72-0.90	0.89	0.890	0.67
Work engagement	0.73-0.87	0.90	0.942	0.62
Customer stewardship	0.86-0.92	0.91	0.912	0.72
Boundary spanner creativity	0.74-0.88	0.92	0.922	0.67
Entrepreneurship	0.69-0.80	0.90	0.901	0.56

Construct	Average	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Deep acting	3.987	0.695	<i>0.81</i>					
2. Surface acting	2.618	0.862	-0.028 (0.000)	<i>0.67</i>				
3. Work engagement	3.698	0.693	0.553** (0.305)	-0.064** (0.004)	<i>0.62</i>			
4. Customer stewardship	3.998	0.706	0.649** (.421)	-0.060* (.003)	0.629** (0.395)	<i>0.72</i>		
5. Boundary spanner creativity	3.387	0.657	0.445** (0.196)	0.083** (0.006)	0.657** (0.431)	0.520** (0.270)	<i>0.67</i>	
6. Entrepreneurship	3.579	0.600	0.421** (0.177)	0.035 (0.001)	0.544** (0.295)	0.451** (0.203)	0.599** (0.358)	<i>0.56</i>

Notes: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; Diagonal: AVE; 0 means square value of coefficient

Table III.
Verification of
discriminant validity
(comparison of
square value of
coefficient and AVE)

emotional labor to see how performance factors affect boundary spanners. In the previous studies, researchers applied common job-related factors to salespeople, but in this study, to expand the scope, we attempted to consider and reflect sentiments and work characteristics unique to salespeople. Especially, this study includes employee's personal factors such as customer stewardship and entrepreneurship as moderators and examined the interaction effects in the relationship among emotional labor, work engagement and boundary spanner creativity.

Findings from the analysis of the survey of salespeople working for a direct membership-based sales company are as follows. First, *H1a* assumed that deep acting would have a positive effect on work engagement in emotional labor and that surface acting would have a negative effect, as defined in *H1b*; both of these hypotheses were supported. This means the passive management of emotion, or controlling salespeople's emotional expressions on the surface, would have a negative impact on work. In other words, our results suggest that the resource depletion possibility seems a likely concern in relation to the development of employees work engagement within sales environments where high levels of self-regulation would be expected.

Next, *H2a* and *H2b* focused on the effect of customer stewardship of salesperson in the relationship between deep/surface acting and work engagement in emotional labor. The outcome of the analysis using bootstrapping showed, with the moderating variable of customer stewardship, that deep acting did not have a significant effect on work engagement in emotional labor, so *H2a* was not supported. However, results showed that perceived customer stewardship weakens the negative effect of surface acting on work engagement. General employees who have more customer stewardship showed more tolerant attitudes toward disguised and regulated emotional display and regarded it as a job resource. Thus, by monitoring and managing employee's customer stewardship levels, managers can reduce the detrimental effects of stressful surface acting.

This study suggests the internal benefit of salesperson's work engagement. The analysis of *H3* shows how the work engagement of salespeople influenced on boundary spanner creativity. Ultimately, to salespeople, work engagement means being motivated for sales work and becoming engaged in creative sales activities. As shown in the results, work engagement is the driver of employees' creativity. Considering the positive results of work engagement, perhaps most obvious is the suggestion that work engaged workers should be placed in high-customer-contact positions to magnify internal benefits to build external profit. Of greater concern, perhaps, is the placement of a worker who has a lower work engagement in a high-contact position.

Finally, the higher level of entrepreneurship salespeople had, the greater the positive effect on work engagement and boundary spanner creativity. In other words, salespeople with a higher level of entrepreneurship were more passionate and eager to be engaged in creative sales activities. Accordingly, *H4* was empirically supported.

Category	Hypothesis path	Loading	Standard error	<i>t</i>	Outcome
<i>H1a</i>	Deep acting → Work engagement	0.60	0.03	21.84	H1 support
<i>H1b</i>	Surface acting → Work engagement	-0.05	0.02	-2.23	H2 support
<i>H3</i>	Work engagement → Boundary spanner creativity	0.68	0.03	22.72	H4 support

Notes: $\chi^2 = 1975.14$; $p = 0.00$; $df = 166$; RMSEA = 0.086; RMR = 0.048; GFI = 0.88; CFI = 0.97; NFI = 0.96; RFI = 0.96

Table IV.
Results of structural equation

The study was designed to expand studies on the management of salespeople's emotions, going beyond organization or customer-oriented perspectives and reviewing it based on the core job competence of salespeople, as previous studies have not covered. How work engagement works and its effect on boundary spanner creativity in the emotional labor of salespeople was reviewed. The study was designed to determine the moderating effect of customer stewardship and salespeople's entrepreneurship. The findings of the study would be meaningful starting points for diverse academic and practical discussions.

First, hypotheses on the effect of emotional labor perceived by salespeople on work engagement were all supported. Deep acting in emotional labor has a positive effect on work engagement, whereas surface acting has a negative effect. Most studies covered emotional burnout or depletion, in contrast to emotional labor or work engagement, but in this study, more direct factors of emotional labor were assessed to detect positive effects. More specifically, with regard to deep acting, when salespeople did their jobs, it had a positive effect on the work when they behaved voluntarily and proactively. With regard to surface acting, the study supported outcomes from previous studies that it had a negative effect on emotional burnout and work engagement. This means when salespeople were forced to fake their feelings, they were more likely to recognize stress or burnout due to emotional dissonance between what they really felt and what they had to express to comply with organizational regulations. Second, it was validated that customer stewardship had a moderating effect on the relations between deep/surface acting and work engagement in emotional labor. However, deep acting in emotional labor did not show a moderating effect. This indicates that in deep acting, salespeople already had self-regulated stewardship for customers. Customer stewardship is a psychological factor salespeople perceive, and elements of customer stewardship include voluntary self-management and regulation of salespeople for customers. To ensure this, sustainable social environments and structures need to be developed. Self-management supported by various techniques and researches is required for training at an individual level and team level. Third, boundary spanner creativity was verified to have a positive effect on the work engagement of salespeople. As [Sousa and Coelho \(2011\)](#) and [Coelho et al. \(2011\)](#) suggested in their study, boundary spanner creativity was proven to have positive effect on work engagement. This means it is important to maintain interaction with customers, including adaptive behaviors and customer orientation, as demand from customers increases. Additionally, in approaches to customers' demands, additional flexibility is required, and it is important to adopt an extensive solution to this issue. In other words, addressing customers' issues in boundary spanner creativity is the key to performance improvement.

Finally, the greater the level of entrepreneurship, the more positive the effect work engagement tended to have on boundary spanner creativity. The individual competence and capability of salespeople are directly related to interaction with customers, so when the right strategy is defined for each type of entrepreneurship of salespeople, it will create a positive corporate culture and lead to performance improvement. From the manager's perspective, managing employee's entrepreneurship is not easy to control. However, if managers can recruit and place employees who have more entrepreneurship the managers will increase the positive effect of work engagement leading to better creativity.

This study reviewed how work engagement in emotional labor affected salespeople's boundary spanner creativity. However, the study has certain limitations.

First, most previous studies have focused on salespeople's emotional labor from customers' perspectives. However, in this study, salespeople's emotional labor was reviewed from salespeople' perspectives, and the need to more deeply study the issue from

salespeople's perspectives was identified. Furthermore, it is necessary to consider various other factors like the importance of products, characteristics, brand and image, in addition to focusing only on the aspect of emotional labor. Thus, it would be meaningful to further study how these diverse variables would affect emotional aspects of salespeople's work.

Second, in this study, verification of a moderating effect in salespeople's emotional labor was limited only to customer stewardship and salespeople's entrepreneurship. Further study to determine the effect of individual preference of salespeople to reflect their characteristics would be meaningful.

Third, the data in the study were collected from salespeople of a direct membership-based sales company. Salespeople in a single direct membership-based sales company cannot represent the entire group of salespeople in diverse industries; thus, it would be premature to draw generalized conclusions from the study. Given this, it would be necessary to further study salespeople and emotional labor workers in diverse industries to draw more generalized conclusions.

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