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Conceptualizing emotional labour, interaction quality and service continuity connections

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Introduction

All jobs require people to manage their emotions to an extent. This management of emotions also leads to specificity in the display of emotions, which could either accord to how staff feel or be different from it (Liu, Chi & Gremler, 2019). Emotional labour, as this process is termed, is defined by Hochschild (1983) as "the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display" (1983, p.7). Many jobs contain an emotional component that goes beyond the normal burden on feelings caused by work and thus require "emotional labour" (Liu et al., 2019). Such work has three things in common: (a) requires face-to-face or voice-to-voice contact with public, (b) requires the employee to produce an emotional state in the customer, and (c) allows the employer, through training and supervision, to exercise some control over the emotional life of employees (Hochschild, 1983).

Hochschild (1983) distinguishes between two approaches available to the emotional labourer - *surface* and *deep acting*. These terms have been derived from world of theatre and are techniques used by actors. In surface acting (SA) actors deceive others about what they actually feel, and the aim is primarily to get the 'right emotion' (here, this can be taken to be the emotion desired by the employer) across to the audience, although the emotion is not felt by the actor as such. In deep acting (DA), actors deceive themselves to produce the feeling that is required for them to have the outward appearance that induces the desired emotion in the audience. Deep acting is of two types, one works by directly exhorting the feeling and the other is through trained imagination, which is also known as *method acting* (Stanislavski, 1965). In the method acting technique, the actor primarily exhibits an emotion by digging into their past pool of incidents, which act as an emotion 'bank', and recall situations relevant to the emotion that they need to deliver at that moment. For example, if a scene has to be performed where the actor is required to show condolence towards an ailing confused co-character, they may wish to draw the emotion out of a similar situation from their life, say when they may have looked after an aged and unwell parent, or when they perhaps attended to someone at a care home. Another example - say a flight attendant delivers their statements in a particular manner denoting politeness, synchrony of tone and respectful usage of words with the aim that the customer feels cared for - *"Sir, kindly fasten your seat belts since we are encountering bad*

weather." This can be an example of deep acting by the employee where genuine concern is being projected to passengers on board through a conditioned mode of message delivery. However, a flight attendant may also exhibit surface acting by not feeling any genuine concern while they greet passengers with a smile when getting aboard on the flight - *"Good morning! Welcome aboard!"*

Aim: This conceptual paper explores the dimensions of emotional labour and its interconnections to interaction quality and service continuity in both service encounters and service relationships. This provides the basis from which to develop new avenues for research to take account of the plausible layers of EL treatment and their interconnections to interaction quality and service continuity as outcomes.

As such, the various definitions of EL are examined, as is how the term has evolved and been explored from organizational, employee and customer perspectives. An attempt is then made to forge possible interconnections between EL, interaction quality and service continuity with logic derived from developments within research on EL thus far. Furthermore, the paper considers the differences that may exist in the nature of EL in contextual settings that can be seen as service encounters or as service relationships (Albrecht et al., 2015; Chi & Chen, 2019; Liu et al., 2019). The conceptual interconnection of EL with other service marketing dimensions is an attempt to pave way for further empirical research that would enrich existing literature and offer benefits to industry practitioners for planning and integrating EL in the design, plan and execution of their service strategy.

The next section presents the different approaches that have been taken to define EL and presents the definition of EL that forms the basis of this paper.

Definitions of EL

The management of feelings and its display are interrelated in Hochschild's (1983) definition. Her approach focuses on how employees need to manage their emotions to suit the display expected by the organization to serve their customers well. The expression and display aspects of EL are connected to the internal management of feelings and expressed emotions are considered as a part of 'management' in Hochschild's (1983) definition. Wharton and Erickson (1993) however segregate the aspects of *managing* emotions and its *display* in their EL definition. While Morris and Feldman (1996) focus on employees' *expressed* behaviour; and

Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) deal with their *observable* behaviour conforming to the organization's rules and expected display (see Diefendorff & Gosserand, 2003 for further discussion).

Irrespective of the singular or separated treatment of the management of feelings and its display in EL definitions, there is a clear view that the emotions staff display need to be aligned to the rules and expectations of their employer. Conformance to an organization's display rules (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Diefendorff & Gosserand, 2003) is an external influence on the employee's emotional expression. Many other external triggers such as supervisor and customer influence (Totterdell & Holman, 2003) and internal triggers, such as personality traits, could also initiate employees' efforts to manage their emotions (Grandey, 2000). Given this, Hochschild's (1983) definition is more inclusive in defining all aspects of EL, since employees actually manage multiple triggers and influences to perform EL, using it as a tool to render their interactions towards multiple stakeholders, customers being chief amongst these (Totterdell & Holman, 2003).

The sub-constructs of SA and DA (Hochschild, 1983) are used to define the attributes of EL. SA (Grandey, 2000; Smith et al., 2009) is defined largely by most researchers as it is by Hochschild (1983). DA has been defined by some as having as two parts - active DA, where an employee invokes the feelings and passive DA, when employees genuinely feel the emotions. However, Hochschild's (1983) definition captures DA as one component of EL. The argument against the other definitions is that it might be very difficult for an individual to segregate between invoked and genuinely felt emotions since they may appear to be the same to some (particularly as unlike actors – they are unlikely to have received formal training in this respect). Also, when someone tries to invoke feelings, this could overlap with the attribute of 'pretending to have emotions that one doesn't have' which is a part of SA (Hochschild, 1983). Thus, the constructs of SA and DA are best dealt as two sub-constructs of EL, with no further segregation in DA.

Table 2.1 gives a summary of EL definitions, sub-constructs, and major differences from Hochschild's (1983) definition.

Table 2.1: Summary of EL definitions

Author & Year	Definition	Salient focus areas
Hochschild (1983)	The management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display	• Sub-constructs- DA and SA • Concentrates on management of feelings
Wharton and Erickson (1993)	Emotion management as the extent to which work or family role calls for an intentional display of emotions, and type of emotional display refers to the particular emotions that are expressed in the role	• Segregate the aspects of managing emotions and the display of those emotions as two separate dimensions of EL
Morris and Feldman (1996)	The effort, planning and control needed to express organizationally desired emotions during interpersonal transactions	• More concerned with expressed behaviour than felt feelings
Ashforth and Humphrey (1993)	The act of displaying the appropriate emotion (i.e. conforming to a display rule)	• Concentrates on observable behaviour • Believes that DA and SA become more a routine act over time for employees
Grandey (2000)	Emotion regulation defined as modifying feelings by thinking good thoughts or reappraising the event (deep acting), or modifying expression by faking or enhancing facial and bodily signs of emotion (surface acting)	• Deals with emotion regulation • DA and SA constructs are similar to those of Hochschild (1983)
Diefendorff and Gosserand (2003)	The process of regulating one's emotional displays in response to	• Concentrates on employing EL strategies based to

	display rules so that work goals can be achieved	match organization's display expectations (a control theory method)
Smith, Dorsey & Mosley (2009)	EL is defined as two components - "emotive effort" that captures active deep acting and "emotive dissonance" that captures surface and passive deep acting	• Sub-constructs - emotive effort (active deep acting) and emotive dissonance (passive deep acting and surface acting) • Focuses on the aspect of actually feeling as a separate component of DA

It is interesting to note from considering these definitions that Hochschild's encapsulates the interaction component, the felt emotions and the observed emotions of the EL bearer in a single frame, while others focus on one or the other elements of EL. Also, previous research primarily concentrates on EL as rendered from the employees' perspective, thus denoting the *flow* of EL from employees to the other entities - such as customers, co-workers, and supervisors. An opposite flow such that customers influence the EL rendered by employees is possible too (Liu et al., 2019).

The following section examines the evolution of EL literature and the various perspectives it has been researched through.

Evolution of Emotional Labour research

EL, as a concept, evolved from an organizational perspective and is widely understood from an employee perspective. Aspects of the concept were also examined from a customer standpoint and the following sections delineate the evolution of EL from these varied viewpoints and set out the key concerns of EL that help conceptualize the interconnections between EL, interaction quality and service continuity.

Organizational Perspective on EL

The organizational culture, the nature of jobs, the intensity of interaction component in the jobs, and EL display expectations could greatly influence EL and the interaction perceptions ensuing from the EL generated.

Influence of organizational culture on EL

Organizations might create a culture, setting demands of EL from their employees (Albrecht et al., 2015; Karabanow, 1999, Liu et al., 2019) to achieve their organizational objectives of positive customer engagement (Grandey, Fisk & Steiner, 2005; Sutton, 1991). Organizational control of employee EL (ability to direct, demand and influence the amount of EL) could also result in employees employing coping strategies that allow them to share and alleviate their pain (if any) (Grandey, Foo, Groth & Goodwin, 2012; Korczynski, 2003). Positive organizational culture could influence employees to have a positive disposition towards EL (more DA and less SA) (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Grandey 2000; Grandey, 2003 Morris & Feldman, 1996). This adds credence to studying employee-customer relationships with respect to the how EL may influence interaction quality between employees and customers.

Organizational influences and expectations from employees may, or may not, influence their use and the intensity of EL during employee-customer interactions. Positive organzational support could motivate the employees to indulge more in DA than SA, reducing their strain and emotional exhaustion (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Grandey 2000; Morris & Feldman, 1996). Customers, being one of the prime recipients of employee EL (Grandey, 2000; Grandey, 2003; Totterdell & Holman, 2003), could thus formulate different perceptions of interaction quality rendered by employees. EL could also impact other interactions within employees such as co-workers and supervisors (Totterdell & Holman, 2003).

EL in interaction jobs

The prevalence of EL in a job may vary depending on the type of job and the level of employee involvement with regards to interactions (Grandey, 2000; Wu & Hu, 2013). These interactions could vary in terms of the frequency, duration and the variety of EL employed (Guy & Newman, 2004). High versus low interaction jobs would entail variations in EL. Also, different service types and environments would have an impact on the EL generated in the service interactions this would offer several opportunities to test EL in different contextual situations (Albrecht et al., 2015, Liu et al., 2019; Razzaq, Razzaq, Yousaf, Akram & Hong, 2017). Variations in EL

could also impact the perceptions of EL in interactions and impact service continuity outcomes (Liu et al., 2019).

Impact on EL interconnections

Organizational influences could impact the EL that employees may engage in towards their co-workers and customers (Wu & Hu, 2013; Bhave & Glomb, 2016). This could be an interesting area of study to test the influence of EL in different service contexts and how different organizational factors such as organizational culture, EL expectations and co-worker support influence (or not) the employee engagement in EL, customer perceptions of interactions and the ensuing service continuity (Liu et al., 2019).

Here how organizational influences could impact the EL rendered by employees has been outlined. The next section captures other intrinsic (from within self) and extrinsic (external environment) factors that may influence employees to engage in EL, how this impacts the employees and their interactions (Albrecht et al., 2015).

Evolution of EL: Employee Perspective

There are different factors, both *intrinsic* and *extrinsic* that may influence an employee's ability to engage in EL (Bhave & Glomb, 2016) and impact their relationships with the customers (Grandey, 2000; Grandey, 2003) as highlighted in the sub-sections that follow.

Intrinsic: **Employee personality traits**

Individual traits and personalities could give rise to variations in EL behaviour amongst employees, and some could therefore engage more in SA, while others could exhibit more DA, with DA postulated to have a more positive impact on the employee-customer relationships and SA more negative (Groth, Hennig-Thurau & Walsh, 2009; Liu et al., 2019; Liu, Prati, Perrewe & Ferris, 2008; Trougakos & Jackson, 2011).

Personality traits of employees could also influence other entities such as their colleagues, supervisors and the customers they interact with (Liu, Perrewe, Hochwarter & Kacmar, 2004) and traits, such as emotional intelligence, could influence the employment of DA more than SA by employees (Liu et al., 2008). Extraverts tend to perform more DA than introverts (Judge, Woolf & Hurst, 2009), just as highly customer-oriented employees (Allen, Pugh, Grandey & Groth, 2010) and proactive personalities do (Randolph & Dahling, 2013). Most importantly, if

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individual identity traits are congruent with organizational display rules, it results in more DA than SA (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1991; Gosserand & Diefendorff, 2005; Morris & Feldman, 1996).

Thus, different intrinsic factors, such as personality traits, could influence employee EL and affect the customer relationships they hold. Factors inherent to the employees could lead to variations in the intensity and process of engagement in EL. Not only does engagement impact the employee's well-being in different ways, the flow of EL to other entities, such as colleagues and customers, impacts the interactions of the employees with these entities (Liu et al., 2019). These findings strongly support examining the flow of EL and its interconnections to interaction perceptions by involved parties (Albrecht et al., 2015).

Extrinsic: **Employee environment**

Just as with intrinsic factors, extrinsic factors could also impact employee EL variations. A high interaction job component can cause EL amongst employees (Albrecht et al., 2015; Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Grandey, 2000; Grandey, 2003). Intensity, frequency, variety and display rules can also greatly impact the amount of EL performed by employees (Totterdell & Holman, 2003). Supervisor's display perceptions and co-worker's expectations of display could additionally impact the EL behaviour of employees (Diefendorff & Richard, 2003; Wu & Hu, 2013). Employee EL could be impacted by other social factors such as working in a team or alone (Drach-Zahavy, Yagil & Cohen, 2016) with a tendency for DA when in a team. Most importantly, customers may exert a greater power on EL than colleagues and supervisors (Drach-Zahavy et al., 2016; Liu et al., 2019; Totterdell & Holman, 2003). Hur, Moon and Jung (2013) also found that employee EL impacted job satisfaction, which then further mediated customer satisfaction. Emoting to someone who has the power to decide on the delivery of service, interaction quality and thus make decisions that could influence gains to the organization, and the individual employee, is highly likely to influence the EL performed by employees. Hence, customers could influence employee EL engagement and approach (Diefendorff, Morehart & Gabriel, 2010; Li et al., 2019). Customer's emotional experience could mediate the impact of employee EL on the customer outcomes (Tang et al., 2013).

The above findings indicate that customers could be a major reason for employees to engage in EL. Customer influence could be stronger than that of internal entities such as colleagues or supervisors as the organizational and employees' individual goals, motives and gains are

heavily influenced by customers. Thus, the flow of EL from employees to customers and the other way round, appears to be of paramount importance and may have a possible influence on service continuity between the entities involved (Razzaq et al., 2017).

Evolution of Emotional Labour: Customer Perspective

The evolution of EL has been widely studied from an organizational and employee perspective. However, customer *expectations* of EL have not been explicitly recorded in any prior research.

Customers' expectation of EL from employees could be very high when interpersonal interactions are involved between them (Razzaq et al., 2017; Wharton & Erickson, 1993). Authenticity anticipation could, for instance, be extremely high in personalized service contexts (Salman & Uygur, 2010; Wang & Groth, 2014). DA appears to have a positive impact, while SA has a negative impact on customer perceived service quality (Tang, Seal & Naumann, 2013; Trougakos & Jackson, 2011). However, employee SA does not always impact customer service quality negatively, as long as customers are not able to detect the SA (Albrecht et al., 2015; Drach-Zahavy et al., 2016; Groth et al., 2009; Hur et al., 2013). These findings were applicable in the context of service encounters (Gutek, Groth & Cherry, 2002; Liu et al., 2015; Pugh, 2001). DA's positive impact was reinstated however SA's negative impact on customer satisfaction was not established when the relationship strength and intensity was high possibly because the customers didn't want to be judgmental of the authenticity of EL by the employees (Gabriel, Acosta & Grandey, 2015; Wang & Groth, 2014). The context of the study was set in service encounters and this could possibly change in service relationships (Chi & Chen, 2019).

Longer duration and intensity in interactions could accentuate the prominence of EL (Grandey, 2000). A study done on dyads of insurance agents and customer dyads found that DA has a positive impact and SA a negative one on customer satisfaction and. Also, relationship strength was found to moderate the positive impact of DA and negative impact of SA on customer outcomes such as purchase amount, willingness to recommend and willingness to remain in a long-term relationship (Chi & Chen, 2019). Kiely's (2005) qualitative study tries to understand the customer and employee perspectives in business-to-business interpersonal relationships. Customers' expectations of EL in the service relationships could impact an employees' EL, as well as a customers' perspectives on service quality (Kiely, 2005). Hence it can be suggested that the organizational, employee and customer perspectives on EL all focus on the interplay of EL and the interactions between entities – be they the employee and their colleagues or the

customer, where its impact on quality perception might be thought a chief concern (Albrecht et al., 2015).

Emotional Labour and Interaction Quality Connection

However, interaction quality has not been studied in conjunction to EL despite the high prominence of EL in interactions. Interaction quality has been defined as a sub-dimension of service quality by Brady and Cronin (2001).

Perceived service quality has been defined as "customers' judgment about an entity's overall excellence or superiority" (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988, p.15). Service quality has been defined by a single layer of dimensions (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1985; Parasuraman et al., 1988; Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1994); or through hierarchical models (Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Cronin & Taylor, 1994; Dabholkar, Thorpe & Rentz's, 1996; Gronroos, 1984; Haywood-Farmer, 1988; Rust & Oliver, 1994, Brady & Cronin, 2001).

Service encounter 'rich' contexts, such as retail interactions, could provide opportunities for observing multiple EL encounters between employees and customers (Dabholkar et al., 1996; Groth et al., 2009). Interaction intensive and high-contact service contexts (Karatepe, Avci & Tekinkus; 2005; Lassar, Manolis & Winsor, 2000), also provide an apt environment for employees to indulge in EL towards their customers.

Such an interactive process fosters long-term service relationships (Svensson, 2003; Svensson, 2004).

EL is prevalent in interactive environments and is a medium for employees to render service to the customers, yet the impact of EL on interaction quality has not been examined explicitly (Diefendorff & Richard, 2003; Grandey, 2000; Liu et al., 2019; Totterdell & Holman, 2003), particularly in long-term service relationship service contexts (Chi & Chen, 2019; Kiely, 2005). Employee EL has additionally not been much investigated with regards to its flow to (or influence on) the customer, particularly their perceived interaction quality. Matching customer EL expectations to employee EL has also not received attention, although both employees and customers are involved in performing and receiving EL simultaneously. Chi and Chen (2019) also propose the importance of studying customer expectations of EL. Recording the joint responses of both entities has been limited to a few studies (Chi & Chen, 2019; Groth et al., 2009; Liu et al., 2019; Trougakos & Jackson, 2011). Such studies provide ideal opportunities

for testing the impact of EL on employee and customer interaction perceptions. EL perceptions and interaction perceptions could well impact relationship outcomes, such as service continuity intentions (Razzaq et al., 2017).

Emotional Labour's Impact on Service Continuity

Relationship continuity is an essential prelude to customer loyalty in long-term relationships so that customers consider further engagement with the organization through repeat purchase, and referral (Zeithaml, Berry & Parasuraman, 1996). For example, EL could impact the interactions positively in the case of service encounters and have an impact on customer loyalty in turn (Chi & Chen, 2019; Groth et al., 2009; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2006; Razzaq et al., 2017). The interactions, for example, in private banking can influence customers' investment decisions and thus subsequently affect the organization's tangible (financial) and intangible (e.g. perceptions of service) gains (Horn & Rudolf, 2011; Mittal & Lassar, 1998). The interpersonal interactions with employees strongly impact customers' loyalty intentions, particularly in high-context services (Chi & Chen, 2019; Kiely, 2005; Razzaq et al., 2017; Yavas, Benkenstein & Stuhdreier, 2004). However, before a customer forms any perceptions about the organization, they possibly consider the bond shared with their service provider. This person-to-person bond could be so strong that it influences the customer to even move their association with this employee to another organization when the employee switches employment (Parkington & Shneider, 1979). As the person-to-person bond is likely to impact the customers' bond with the organization, and their loyalty intentions, the intention to continue the service relationship with the employee (Chi & Chen, 2019; Razzaq et al., 2017; Svensson, 2003; Svensson, 2004) could be a function of the perceived customer interaction quality.

The key prelude to customer loyalty intentions would be the continuity of the service relationship itself (Chi & Chen, 2019; Kandampully, 1998). Interactive process can have a continuous influence on the expectations of the service receiver and their perceptions of the interactions. The evaluation of the interactive process could last through a single interaction, as seen in a service encounter, or through multiple interactions in a service relationship. This would lead the service receiver (customer) to evaluate the continuity of the service relationship (Gutek, Groth & Cherry, 2002) on a continual basis through the interactions (Chi & Chen, 2019; Svensson, 2003; Svensson, 2004). This is especially true for high-contact service contexts where the bond between the entities involved in a relationship could be stronger (Chi & Chen,

2019). On certain occasions, service continuity could depend on this interpersonal relationship, rather than the loyalty association of a customer with the organization (Chase, 1978; Chase, 1981).

This connects further to 'intention to continue the service relationship' (Bloemer, Ruyter & Wetzels, 1999; Boulding, Kalra, Staelin & Zeithaml, 1993; Chi & Chen, 2019; Kandampully, 1998; Pollack, 2006; Zeithaml et al., 1996); building a bridge between EL-interaction quality and service continuity.

The context of the service is covered next. Service context may add variations to the extent of EL elapsed, perception and expectation of EL by the involved participants, and its impact on perception of interactions and finally service continuity.

Context selection: Service encounter vs. Service relationship

Morris and Feldman (1996) postulated that frequency, intensity, duration and variety of EL would have different positive negative, or no relationship, with each other. Brotheridge and Lee (2003) also reiterate that EL is the behavioural response to variations in the frequency, variety, intensity and duration of service interactions" (p.367). It can be inferred therefore that service relationships would vary significantly across frequency, duration and variety of EL from service encounters, particularly given that customers and relationship managers meet regularly, and the duration of the meetings are significant (Chi & Chen, 2019). The intensity of each encounter may vary depending on its subject and all four elements (frequency, intensity, duration and variety) would invoke different varieties of EL between the employees and the customers, hence impacting their interaction quality. Investigating EL in the contexts of service encounters vs. service relationships could offer varied outcomes with respect to the perceptions of interactions, EL and service continuity (Chi & Chen, 2019).

This paper considers the nuances of a service encounter vis-à-vis a service relationship context to examine EL and its interconnections. Service relationships differ from service encounters with respect to the frequency of interactions, intensity of the interactions and the tendency that the service is rendered by the same service provider over time. "A single interaction between customer and provider is referred to as a 'service encounter'. A service relationship is when the two individuals - employee and customer - have repeated contact with each other over time

and get to know each other as role occupants and sometimes even become friends" (Gutek, Bhappu, Lia-Troth & Cherry, 1999, p.133).

Previous EL studies have predominantly chosen service encounters spanning contexts such as retail, convenience store, healthcare and call centres. The prevalence of EL has been found to be high in interaction-intensive contexts. This may also indicate a high prevalence of EL in the service relationships, where many interactions may span a period of time between the two entities (Chi & Chen, 2019; Kiely, 2005). The interactions in a service relationship can lead to participants knowing each other well on a person-to-person level. The intensity of interaction would additionally be higher in a service relationship, since the propensity for future interactions and transactions exist between the two entities (Chi & Chen, 2019; Gutek et al., 2002; Kiely, 2005).

Customers are less affected by service employees' emotional labour, or the lack of it, when the service encounters are low-affect, low-intimacy types such as in a convenience store (Gabriel et al., 2015; Grandey, 2000; Price, Arnould & Deibler, 1995; Wang & Groth, 2014). This is probably because the customers also realize that service providers do not always express 'real' emotions, and the customers do not expect, or care, when they perceive that such an effort is being made. In an extended service relationship context, the employee EL is valued more since it is a way of communicating trustworthiness (Chi & Chen, 2019; Grayson, 1998). Both service encounters and service relationships, would provide different kinds of opportunities for exploring the impact of EL on interactions and service continuity.

Service encounters are anonymous in nature and avoidance of another contact with the same employee is possible (Wang & Groth, 2014; Gabriel et al., 2015). This anonymity could lead to verbally abusive relationships. However, this could drastically contrast to the situation in service relationships, where the tendency for multiple contacts and the longevity of the relationship exists over time (Chi & Chen, 2019; Grandey, Kern & Frone, 2007). The possible negative impacts of EL on the interactions between the two entities is an area for further exploration.

Lin and Lin (2011) conducted a study across several service encounters, and different types of service contexts. Independent viewers marked their observations of the encounters and also took feedback from the customers to find that the service environment, the group mood amongst peers and self-emotion influenced employee affective delivery, which in turn had a

positive effect on the customers' service encounter satisfaction and loyalty intention. This is an important study as it emphasizes the impact of different contexts on EL strategies followed by employees (Albrecht et al., 2015; Liu et al., 2019). Lin and Lin's (2011) study also underscores the variations in the interconnections of EL-interactions-service continuity intentions, owing to different contexts. Different contexts could generate service encounters and service relationships of varying intensity and with a frequency of interactions and the focus of this paper is to bring to attention to those overlooked opportunities for further exploration (Chi & Chen, 2019; Liu et al., 2019).

A strong association and difference exist in the demands of EL in response to the interactional nature of services. A longer service duration could demand heavier emotion regulation, than a shorter one, as postulated by Grandey (2000). Greater familiarity between a service provider and their customer could actually enable them to map each other's emotions far better, since they meet over several encounters and probably even generate a rapport or friendship over time. The employee's EL and a customer's perception could also be much more pronounced and an expectation set by the customer in such a context (Chi & Chen, 2019). An employee's EL could be smooth, or difficult, depending on the kind of service relationship that they share with the customer. A customers' perception could also vary from being extremely demanding to being predominantly tolerant in terms of the extant of EL adopted by the employee. Differences may also exist due to diverse services types (Silvestro, Fitzgerald, Johnson & Voss, 1992). For instance, the intensity of the interactions could be much more pronounced in service relationships than in service encounters, and thus, the consideration of the EL intensity (Grandey, 2000) generated could provide interesting insights on the study of EL in different service types, service encounters and/or service relationships.

Kiely (2005) studied emotions in the context of business-to-business service relationships in the shipping industry. Adopting an interpretive style, it is one of the first steps towards understanding emotional labour in complex service relationships. Kiely's (2005) findings depicted that most employees engaged in DA, although there were occasions where they subjugated their real emotions to emote otherwise. The interesting aspect was that most of the employees felt an anguish at not being able to deliver as per the customer expectations, and this was an innate feeling rather than a monitored, centralized or trained emotion (Kiely, 2005). It is one of the first studies to consider a service relationship in the business-to-business context where both the employees and customers were associated with firms involved in business

transactions with each other. Kiely's (2005) work further enforced the impact of EL in service relationships and its impact on service continuity supporting avenues for further research as outlined in this paper. Chi and Chen (2019) also found EL to impact the customer outcomes in a service relationship context.

Many research gaps can still be explored to study EL from both the categories of services-encounters and relationships, and more so from service relationships given the limited research conducted so far, and the higher prevalence of EL plausible in service relationships.

The next sections analyze the possible research gaps based on the perusal of literature in EL thus far. Further research could enrich the literature in EL and its connectivity to services, interactions and service outcomes.

Discussion: Research Gaps for Exploration

The following outlines the key observations arising from the evolution of EL, and its connections with interaction quality and service continuity:

- EL has been explored from one of entities' perspective (customer or employee). The perspectives of both entities at a given point have not been captured in any previous research, except for the work by Groth et al. (2009).
  - Paired research that involves the dyadic responses of employee-employee (between colleagues) pairs could be conducted to test the flow of EL between employee interactions within an organization. The exploration could be emulated between supervisor-employee pairs within an organization, here perhaps a focus on employee well-being and employee retention might be of particular interest.
  - Customer-employee dyads could be explored to test the impact of EL on the interactions between customers and employees and examine the ensuing interaction outcomes. Customer perspectives alone have been captured previously, however joint responses have not been considered much. This could throw further light on the nature of EL flow and its impact on customers and employees.

      o Customer expectations of EL could also be studied and matched to actual employee acting strategies to consider whether the EL threshold is exceeded, or not met at all, as per a customer's needs.

- EL has been predominantly studied in the context of service encounters, while this paper extends to consider the realm of service relationships as well.
  - o EL could be explored more in service relationship contexts than service encounters to expand on Kiely's (2005) work, which is the one so far to capture EL in the context of service relationships.
  - o Comparative studies could be conducted between the contexts of service encounters and relationships - examining the relative EL flow between different entities (employees and customers) in each of the contexts.
  - o EL interconnections, as shown in this paper, could be particularly explored in service relationships expanding the work of Groth et al. (2009) and Wang and Groth (2014) that was conducted in service encounters.
- Previous studies have not captured the outcomes of EL with respect to service continuity (Chi & Chen, 2019). Most employee perspective studies have considered the impact on employee well-being and customer perspective studies have considered impact on customer loyalty intentions. However, future works could consider the nuances of service continuity from either entities or as dual perspectives.

Exploration of emotional labour along the said lines could help contribute to theory and practice in a considerable manner.

Conclusion

Plausible Contribution to Theory

Despite the ubiquitous nature of EL in service contexts involving high-contact and high-frequency interactions; interaction quality (Brady & Cronin, 2001) has never been explored with regards to how employee EL could impact customers' interaction perceptions and in turn this may affect the customers' service continuity intentions (Boulding, Kalra, Staelin & Zeithaml, 1993; Kandampully, 1998; Zeithaml, Berry & Parasuraman, 1996). The interaction process involves the expectations of service receiver, as well as perceptions of interactions (Svensson, 2003; Svensson, 2004). This paper highlights customers' perceptions of interaction

quality that result from to employee EL in service encounters and relationships (Gutek et al., 2002; Svensson, 2003; Svensson, 2004).

Customers, in comparison to colleagues or supervisors, could exert a higher relative power in influencing employee EL (Diefendorff, Morehart & Gabriel, 2010; Liu et al., 2019; Totterdell & Holman, 2003), yet linkages between employee-customer have not been explored in EL literature (nor indeed have those between employee-employee).

High-contact, interaction-intensive service relationship contexts may involve higher stakes than service encounters, for both the customer and employee. These personalized service relationships could impact revenues, customer service perceptions and even their loyalty intentions (Mittal & Lassar, 1998; Parkington & Schneider, 1979; Seiler et al., 2013; Yavas et al., 2004), with bonds so strong that they continue even when an employee changes firm (Mittal & Lassar, 1998; Parkington & Schneider, 1979). An opportunity to test the impact of EL in service relationships and/or compare these with those found in service encounters has thus remained unexplored, providing rich area of future research (Chi & Chen, 2019).

Customers' expectations of EL have also not previously been matched to employees' actual EL behaviour. The employee puts effort towards into delivering EL to the customer through interactions, while the customer could be expecting the same, less - or more - EL from the employee (Chi & Chen, 2019; Diefendorff, Morehart & Gabriel, 2010; Totterdell & Holman, 2003). This match (or mismatch) between customers' EL expectations and employees' delivery of EL could help understand the flow of EL in the interactions between both entities.

The transpiring flow of employee EL enactment and perception by customers' has not been entirely captured in previous research. This conceptualization thus explores the possibilities of exploring EL:

- From the perspective of the involved entities;
- In the context of service encounters and/or service relationships;
- In conjunction with other dimensions such as interaction quality and service continuity.

Contribution to Practice - Potential Gains

Customer feedback could be captured on an ongoing basis to be able to map their EL expectation to actual employee EL, which could identify the expectations gap that may

otherwise go unnoticed by employees performing EL in isolation. This could impact employees by helping them to engage in appropriate EL and thus positively impact interaction quality and, finally, yield positive encounters and sustained relationships with their customers over time.

Organizations could hire, train and hone the skills of their employees so that they could manage their emotions and naturally align them to the EL expectations of their customers; while also being able to replenish their own emotions due to any drain from engaging in EL. The expected outcomes would heighten interaction quality and high-gaining service encounters and relationships.

Management of emotions and a congenial culture of building and strengthening relationships over time can prove more beneficial than chasing short-term financial gains alone. Strong interactions could harbour lasting and sustainable relationships for customers, employees and the organizations involved.

Final Reflections

Diagram 1.0 provides a diagrammatic representation of the concepts that have been analysed and proposed as having interconnections with EL.
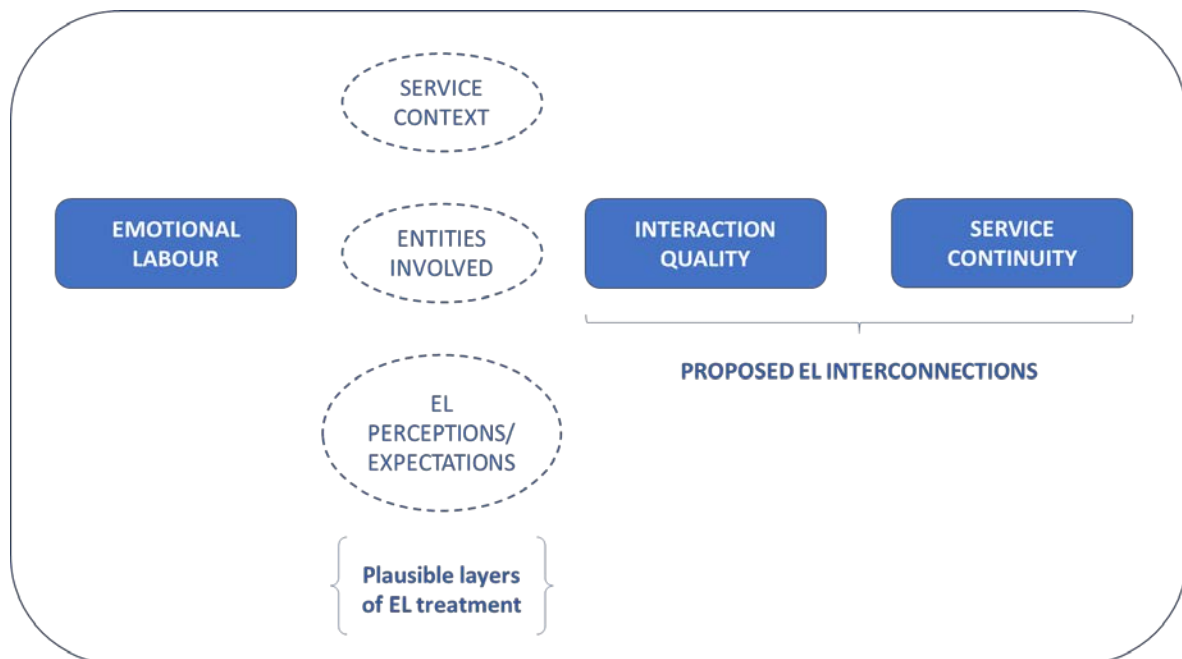

Diagram 1.0: EL interconnections

This paper established the conceptualization of EL and its connections to interaction quality and service continuity. EL could be treated through different filters to examine the variations in the outcomes of other interconnecting dimensions. EL has been researched from - organizational, employee, and customer perspectives. This paper indicates the nuances of service encounter and service relationship contexts that may prime different EL strategies from the service provider *and* different expectations and outcomes from the service receivers. These could variously impact the dimensions of interaction quality and service continuity due to the service contexts, entities involved and/or the perceptions and expectations of EL and interaction quality.

The discussion helps explore the dimension of EL and advance its consideration with other dimensions of marketing for as the basis of further empirical exploration. Such examination has significant potential for the understanding of EL in its varied forms and with its numerous impacts – both in the encounter and in longer-term service relationships.

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