
**Managing emotional labour consequences during aggressive customers' interactions:
A study of the Cyprus hospitality industry**

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ABSTRACT

This doctoral investigation explores the area of emotional labour in relation to aggressive customers' behaviours. In more detail, it is focussing on the way employees engage in emotional labour, which can be done either by surface acting or deep acting, when they are interacting with aggressive customers and the consequences that may arise due to this method. The thematic and narrative literature review conducted by the researcher on the initial stages of this thesis provided the basis and foundations of the creation of the initial conceptual framework on managing the negative consequences of surface acting when interacting with aggressive customers and achieving the desired deep acting during those interactions.

The researcher follows the constructivist / interpretivist philosophical approach in her study, and adopts the methodological triangulation for conducting her primary research by using a combination of two qualitative methods, semi-structured interviews and focus groups. The semi-structured interviews were conducted first, and the focus groups, as an additional method, had the purpose of either validating the results or adding to them accordingly.

This study revealed that employees are only engaging in surface acting when they are interacting with aggressive customers. This results in a number of negative consequences. The current research has focussed on how to overcome those negative consequences. It further explored the ways that would engage employees in deep acting during those challenging interactions with aggressive customers and the positive effects. The results were presented in the empirically validated conceptual framework that has been created.

The findings of this doctoral investigation have contributed both in theory as well as practice. The theoretical contributions include innovative additions to the existing theoretical gaps in the area of emotional labour in terms of how to overcome the negative consequences of surface acting and enhance the use of deep acting during interactions with aggressive customers. Further on, there are also contributions in the literature of the hospitality industry that has been under-researched in regards to this area. In addition, this research is adding to the existing knowledge of how to handle aggressive customers since it is including important findings on how to handle employees' emotions so that aggressive customers are being treated more effectively. This also benefits the theory of marketing by

offering the opportunity for further researchers to use the current empirically tested theoretical framework in order to test the relationship between engaging in deep acting and eliminating customer dissatisfaction.

In terms of practical contributions, this research is adding knowledge to the hospitality industry employees, the management and the industry as a whole. While utilising this framework, both management and employees will be able to offer more genuine emotions to their aggressive customers and therefore be able to achieve the best possible results for the organisations they are working for.

DECLARATION

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of the University of Gloucestershire and is original. The aspects that reflect literature findings are being indicated by specific reference in the text. No part of the thesis has been submitted as part of any other academic award. The thesis has not been presented to any other education institution in the United Kingdom or overseas. Any views expressed in the thesis are those of the author and in no way represent those of the University.

Signed ...Aspasia Simillidou.....

Date ...21/5/2016.....

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Abbreviations

RQ: Research Question

RO: Research Objective

POS: Perceived Organisational Support

DEDICATION

To my husband for his unconditional love, his support and understanding.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1. Introduction

The first chapter is an introduction to the thesis and a general insight in the area under investigation. Since primary data will be gathered from the hospitality industry in Cyprus, an insight of the country and the industry more specifically, follows. This includes both the importance of the industry in the specific country, its evolution over the years and how it can be affected by emotional labour. Furthermore, the rationale in choosing to do this research in terms of the gaps that merely exist in the literature will be discussed. Since this research follows the qualitative approach, the general role of the researcher and her background will be mentioned as well. Finally, the structure of the thesis will be presented and the chapter will end with the general conclusions and the reference to what will follow.

2. Background and Problem Identification

This thesis is dealing with Emotional Labour, which is a concept that has been studied by various researchers over the years. Emotional labour has been an issue that started interesting researchers a lot more when organisations realised that there is an increased need to understand and manage employees' emotions. Hochschild (1983) was the first who gave a definition to emotional labour. She described it as the need for employees to manage their feelings in such a way so that they can create and display the appropriate emotions at work. This seemed to be especially important during the employees' interactions with their customers when they were providing a service. The more the services industry has increased and gained more attention, the more there was a need for regulating emotions; thus emotional labour emerged as a very important concept (Hoffmann, 2016).

The distinction between the types of emotional labour is the one between deep acting and surface acting. In this introductory chapter, those two concepts will be defined. On the one hand, deep acting has been described as the effort to display the positive emotions that a service organisation is requesting its employees to do, in a natural way, by focussing and working on their own inner feelings (Hoffmann, 2016; Kruml & Geddes, 2000). On the other hand, surface acting has been described as the way of hiding ones true feelings so that they will be able to display the right emotions that they need to display for their customers (Bechtoldt *et al.*, 2011; Ruth & Marjorie, 2016). Those two ways of engaging in emotional labour will be analysed and discussed in the second chapter of this thesis, which is analysing the existing literature in the area under investigation.

It has been indicated, that after the important and revealing work of Hochschild (1983) in this area, there has been an evolution in the research of emotions. Emotional labour became one of the most important concepts with which researchers were dealing with when they were focussing on service organisations (Constanti & Gibbs, 2004; Kim & Choi, 2016).

When the concept of emotional labour started becoming more and more popular, researchers began focussing on various industries and they realised that being more focussed and industry specific gave a better insight (Karatepe & Nkendon, 2014). Emotional labour seemed to be different among the various industries since both the customer demands and the organisational demands are different (*ibid*). For example the challenge of working in the health industry is much more different than working in the hospitality or the banking industry. All of the employees have to deal with their customers' emotions and they all have to follow organisation emotional display rules but those are different so they should be considered as such when they are being under investigation. Scholars and professionals, therefore, started gaining more knowledge and understanding

on how to deal with the various challenges that are brought along when engaging in emotional labour in the various industries.

Some of the industries that researchers were focussing on for this important area of emotional labour, are the education, health, consulting and hospitality industries. This thesis will be focussing on the hospitality industry for a number of reasons. The industry has evolved in terms of research on emotional labour over the years. At first, in the early 1980's when the concept of emotional labour was emerging, very few studies were focussing on the hospitality industry (Harrington *et al.*, 2014). During those times, frameworks that had been designed for other industries were used for the hospitality industry as well (Harrington *et al.*, 2014). After that, the importance of the industry has been identified even more and it gained much more attention than it did before. However, some concepts around the area of emotional labour are still under researched (Goussinsky, 2015; Hoffmann, 2016; Lee, 2016).

An important concept still needs further development and is under researched at the moment in terms of emotional labour in the hospitality industry. This is the way that employees engage in emotional labour when they interact with aggressive customers and how this affects them and the organisations in general (Bechtoldt *et al.*, 2011; Goussinsky, 2015; Huang & Dai, 2010; Karatepe, 2011; Karatepe, 2015; Lu *et al.*, 2013; Wang & Groth, 2014). In the literature review chapter, an analysis of the current findings in terms of how employees engage in emotional labour when interacting with aggressive customers is being presented. Evidence so far showed that employees usually engage in surface acting, for various reasons that are being analysed in the second chapter (Harris & Reynolds, 2003; Huang & Dai, 2010; Goussinsky, 2001; Grandey, 2000; Meirovich *et al.*, 2013). It has been found that stress, anger or other negative emotions are being transmitted through interaction and communication with people that are affected with this emotion

both through verbal communication as well as through body language (Appelbaum & Roy-Girard, 2007). Employees get those emotions from their customers and they need to work through them in a way so that they can interact with them as they should interact according to the organisational rules (Grandey, 2000; Ruth & Marjorie, 2016). Due to that, they tend to engage in surface acting, so they hide their true emotions and display certain positive emotions that are acceptable by the organisations they are working at (Hoffmann, 2016; Huang & Dai, 2010).

On the other hand, affective events theory is being described as another important reason that leads to the use of surface acting during interactions with aggressive customers. It mainly suggests that all events in the workplace directly affect employees in terms of their emotional reactions, feelings and therefore behaviours (Gabriel *et al.*, 2016; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Grandey *et al.*, (2010) concluded that any bad interaction with customers imposed negative feelings and therefore negative behaviours. This was also based on the Affective Events Theory. On the contrary, since it is not accepted by organisations to express those negative feelings during customer interactions, service providers tend to hide those emotions and they perform surface acting (Calabrese, 2000; Goussinsky, 2015; Hoffmann, 2016). Therefore, in summary, it has been revealed through the literature that employees engage in surface acting rather than deep acting when they interact with aggressive customers and this leads to negative consequences (Goussinsky, 2015).

According to Karatepe (2011), dealing with the hospitality industry is something that should be put in practice by the various scholars that are investigating this area. This area is under researched in the specific industry (Karatepe & Nkondong, 2014). Due to the industry having unique characteristics and being different in many ways from other

industries, it has been stated that empirical research needs to focus on this area to produce results (Taegoo *et al.*, 2012).

In addition, there is a gap in terms of how to overcome the consequences that occur when employees engage in emotional labour and more specifically in surface acting, when dealing with aggressive customers (Bechtoldt *et al.*, 2011; Goussinsky, 2012; Hoffmann, 2016; Huang & Dai, 2010; Karatepe 2011; Kensbock *et al.*, 2016; Kim & Choi, 2016; Lu *et al.*, 2013). Research on this aspect of emotional labour is mainly on parts and did not produce a coherent picture that would lead to a framework so far in any industry (ibid). No research has focussed on evaluating all the negative consequences and give answers as to how to help employees overcome them (ibid). As a result, this thesis will be dealing with the consequences and how they can be overcome specifically for the hospitality industry. The specific area of engaging in surface acting when interacting with aggressive customers, therefore, has been very sparse and the results require empirical testing since this area is new (Goussinsky, 2015; Karatepe & Nkendon, 2014; Kensbock *et al.*, 2016).

Finally, the concept of deep acting and how it can be utilised in such situations of interacting with aggressive customers is going to be addressed and empirically tested in this thesis. As it will be further analysed in the literature review findings, so far it has been indicated that deep acting is hardly being utilised during such interactions (Taegoo *et al.*, 2012). This concept of being able to engage in deep acting especially when interacting with aggressive customers has not being empirically tested, so it is among the important gaps in the literature that will be addressed and tested in this thesis (Cha *et al.*, 2009; Cinchy *et al.*, 2007; Goussinsky, 2015; Hoffmann, 2016; Kim & Argusa, 2011; Magnini *et al.*, 2011).

3. Initial Research Questions

The initial research questions of this thesis are the following:

Initial Research Question 1: How is aggressive customers' behaviour affecting the way employees engage in emotional labour (through surface or deep acting)?

Initial Research Question 2: How does engaging in emotional labour when dealing with aggressive customers affect employees' feelings, behaviours or actions?

Initial Research Question 3: What are the ways that will initiate a positive outcome on the negative effects of emotional labour during aggressive customers' interactions?

Initial Research Question 4: What are the ways that would enhance the utilisation of deep acting during the interactions with aggressive customers?

4. Aim of Research

The aim of this research is to develop a framework to assist in overcoming the negative effects of engaging in emotional labour when interacting with aggressive customers that can then be applied in the Cyprus hospitality industry. This will be achieved by researching the existing literature on this area, identifying the relevant gaps and using primary research to develop and propose a framework. Further, this framework will investigate how employees can be engaged in deep acting and consider the potentially positive outcomes that might arise.

5. Research Objectives

Below are the objectives of this thesis:

RO1: To examine the existing literature on emotional labour, particularly in relation to engaging with aggressive customers.

RO2: To identify and discuss how employees engage in emotional labour during their interactions with aggressive customers.

RO3: To investigate the negative consequences of emotional labour during customer aggressiveness among employees in the Cyprus hospitality industry⁷

RO4: To examine the ways of buffering out the consequences of emotional labour (surface acting) when facing customer aggression in the Cyprus hospitality industry

RO5: To develop a theoretical framework consisting of ways to buffer the negative consequences of surface acting, increase the use of more naturally displayed emotions (deep acting) and identify whether this would positively affect the negative consequences of surface acting.

6. Choosing a suitable empirical context

In order to be able to provide the best possible answers to the Research Questions and the Research Objectives above, the right empirical context needs to be identified. This thesis will be based on the hospitality Industry in Cyprus for a number of reasons. The decision on which empirical context to choose has been based on the nature of the area that is under investigation and on the gap that exists in the literature.

At first, the area of investigation, emotional labour in relation to aggressive customers is mainly new and a lot of concepts around this area are under-investigated. As it has been mentioned in section 2 above, there is little evidence on how to handle situations where employees engage in emotional labour when they interact with aggressive customers. More specifically, the existing research is inconclusive and has no clear evidence on how to help employees overcome the negative consequences that arise from the combination of interacting with aggressive customers and engaging in emotional labour (Bechtoldt *et al.*, 2011; Goussinsky 2015; Huang and Dai 2010; Karatepe 2011; Lu *et al.*, 2013). Further, so far, scholars and practitioners have not identified a clear path to follow to enable employees engage more in deep acting, specifically during such interactions (Taegoo *et al.*, 2012). Therefore, taking this in consideration, the researcher arrived at the conclusion that an industry that has continuous interactions with clients is the hospitality industry. Further,

this industry seems to be under-researched on this area, according to the literature (Karatepe *et al.*, 2009; Lu *et al.*, 2013). Those are the important parameters in the existing literature that guided the researcher of this thesis to draw a conclusion as to which industry to focus on.

Taking the above into consideration, past research has also shown that doing research on a three star or a four star hotel brings along completely different results than doing research on a five star hotel. In such hotels, customers are highly demanding and this makes it even more difficult to handle (Karatepe, 2011). Therefore, existing research is asking future researchers to focus on five star hotels to be able to reach the best answers possible for such difficult questions as handling emotions (Karatepe *et al.*, 2009).

Following the above discussion, the important parameters that have been taken into consideration include to investigate the hospitality industry in a country where this industry is really important. Cyprus, the country that has been chosen will be discussed below, and the specific industry in this country will be further analysed.

6.1 Cyprus Hospitality Industry

Given the above parameters that are important for choosing an empirical context for this thesis, this sub-section discusses why Cyprus is an appropriate country to focus this research on and how it has been chosen. It also includes an insight of the Cyprus hospitality industry and the rationale behind choosing this industry as an empirical context. Cyprus is the third largest island in the Mediterranean after Sicily and Sardinia. As of January 2015, the population of Cyprus was estimated to be 1 184 652 people (www.countrymeters.info/en/Cyprus). This population is estimated to increase even more. The number of immigrants outweighs the number of emigrants in the country at the moment, which means that there are more non-native people moving into the country than native people leaving the country (www.countrymeters.info/en/Cyprus). Due to the economic conditions that most of the European countries have been facing, the country has

lost a lot of young people that tend to leave the country searching for employment opportunities abroad.

One of the most important industries of the Cyprus Economy is the hospitality industry. The country started developing the tourism industry in the 1960's. The rationale behind developing this industry, largely dependent on the fact that the country wanted to utilise both its natural as well as its cultural resources to the largest extent possible. Therefore, Cyprus started utilising more its natural resources and put in a lot of effort to attract tourism by demonstrating the aspects in culture that would be interesting for a tourist to meet. The combination of the sea and the beautiful view of the mountains was something that attracted and increased tourism in the island.

The Cyprus hospitality industry has evolved over the years and its importance for the Cyprus Economy has increased. The hospitality industry has always been important since Cyprus is an island that is largely depended on tourism for its economic survival.

Up to 2000, with the onset of the new millennium, tourism was increasing on a continued pace. During that time the country was receiving more than 2.5 million tourists per year, which was almost three times its population (www.visitcyprus.biz). After that year, though, tourism started decreasing and this indicated that the market was reaching stagnation. The industry started depending more and more on the all-inclusive packages and the tour operators and this brought even more negative results to the industry and the country as a whole. The fact that there was a lot of unskilled labour in the market and working a lot with seasonal employees were some of the reasons that lead to the industry stagnation. The Cyprus Tourist Organisation (CTO) started taking actions on this phenomenon so that they could boost the industry. People working for the industry started feeling demotivated and some of the skilled employees began looking for alternatives since they were facing an unsure and unstable working environment. As a result of all these changes, the CTO started focussing on creating a niche market, developing the skills of employees and help them

create a competitive advantage as well as focussing on sustainable tourism (Farmaki *et al.*, 2014). Therefore, in order to develop all these, employees working in the industry became an even more important asset that needs attention.

The increase in the importance of the industry in Cyprus and the huge changes that occurred brought about the need for employee development so that they could be ready to adapt to those changes in the best possible way. This thesis, as discussed above, first of all aims to contribute to the literature development regarding emotional labour and aggressive customers in the hospitality industry. Further, as it has been analysed in this section, this industry has evolved and developed in Cyprus over the years. Therefore, it will also add to the knowledge on how to handle difficult situations, such as facing angry customers, taking into consideration the employees' emotions. This will help the industry in this continuous struggle of developing and implementing new strategies that aim to growth and success.

7. The role of the researcher in the Industry

In any research, the person conducting it plays a huge role, despite the paradigm and the methodological approach that it is going to be used (Stahl, 2014). The researcher of this specific thesis has been conducting research on various aspects in the hospitality industry since 2004 when she was completing her Bachelor Degree. She has a special interest in the industry and how it is and has been developing over the years, so this was a drive for focussing even more on it.

The author has been consulting and training employees in the hospitality industry for the past ten years. Her aim is to always be able to offer more to those people that she could see they were facing various challenges during their everyday interactions with their customers. Therefore, she is aware on a personal level about the problems, concerns and worries of those people. This research will enable her to get a more in depth understanding of their feelings and perceptions when interacting with a challenging group of customers,

the aggressive ones. This will lead not only to theory contribution but eventually it will help in a more practical approach the industry as well.

8. Contribution to Theory and Practice

This research aims to contribute both to theory and practice in various ways. This section briefly describes how the research will contribute. A more detailed analysis of the contributions to theory and practice is included in the final chapter, where the conclusions are being drawn (See Chapter 5).

Contribution to theory:

- This research will be significant as it explores an under-researched area. It will contribute to the limited knowledge that exists so far on overcoming the negative consequences of emotional labour (surface acting) specifically when interacting with aggressive customers.
- A new framework will be developed illustrating the element of deep acting when interacting with aggressive customers and how this can be achieved. This is an element that is missing from the literature at present.

Contribution to practice:

- Due to the high importance of the hospitality industry in the economy of the specific country, Cyprus, this research will be valuable. This is the first research that will only deal with full-time employees in five-star hotels, thus helping this industry sector develop its people's skills in dealing with emotional labour and aggressive customers.
- It will develop a new framework which will guide HR managers in the hospitality industry to assist their employees in such a way as to be able to deal with aggressive customers and use more genuine emotions when interacting with them.

9. Structure of the Thesis

This section of the introductory chapter describes the way that the thesis has been structured.

Chapter 1: Introduction:

Starting from the current chapter, the introduction, which aims to give an insight of the current situation and seeks to address and analyse the path that this research will follow. This chapter describes the theoretical background and gives an insight on the problem and the literature gap that this research will be addressing. Further, the chapter analyses the rationale behind choosing the right empirical context and then gives evaluates the country at which the empirical research is taking place. An insight and an evaluation of the industry at which the research will be taking place, the hospitality industry follows as well. This first chapter, in mainly a summary of the thesis and it includes all the important areas that will be analysed and discussed in the next chapters.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The second chapter has two purposes. The first purpose of this chapter is to review, discuss and analyse the existing literature on the area under investigation. The second purpose, is to derive the research questions out of the literature and design the preliminary theoretical framework that will be tested during the primary research phase. The literature review chapter begins with an in-depth evaluation of emotional labour and the important components around this area. An explanation of emotional labour and the two parameters that act as a way for someone to engage him/herself in emotional labour is the initial discussion on the second chapter. Once deep acting and surface acting are being explained, the author identifies what we mean with the term of “aggressive customer” and the types of such customers that exist. There is also a focus on the types of aggressiveness that employees may be facing. The author then identifies that this research will be dealing with simple aggressive episodes (such as shouting, complaining etc.) and not the more rare

aggressive events (such as the ones that customers use physical power). Following this discussion, the author starts discussing the various issues that will be forming the research questions.

The research questions as they have been formed in the literature have been presented above in section 4 of the current introductory chapter. The first issue out of which the first research question has emerged has to do with the way employees engage in emotional labour specifically when they deal with aggressive customers. Existing literature has shown that employees mostly engage in surface acting when they deal with aggressive customers (Harris & Reynolds, 2003; Huang & Dai, 2010; Goussinsky, 2011; Grandey, 2000; Meirovich *et al.*, 2013). Due to the uniqueness of the hospitality industry and more specifically the unique demands of the customers of five star hotels, the first research question focusses on how employees engage in emotional labour in the hospitality industry specifically when they deal with aggressive customers.

The second research question deals with the consequences that employees are facing when they engage in surface acting during their interactions with aggressive customers. Those consequences as they exist so far in the literature are being explained and analysed in the literature review chapter. Therefore, the second research question focusses on those consequences if they exist and in what extend in the hospitality industry.

The third and the fourth research questions are then being analysed in the rest of the second chapter, ones that are focussing on the main gaps in the literature as they have been addressed above. As they have been mentioned on the second section of the current chapter, those gaps are on the area of how to overcome the consequences and how to help employees engage more in deep acting when they interact with their angry customers.

This chapter finishes with the presentation of the theoretical framework that will be further tested during the primary research phase.

Chapter 3 Methodology

The third chapter includes the methodology and the rationale behind choosing those methods and following a certain philosophical approach for this thesis. As it will be presented and analysed on the third chapter, the philosophical approach that is being followed for the collection of the primary data is the constructivist / interpretivist approach. The main aim of the thesis and the gaps in the literature are among the most important reasons for following this approach as it is being described in the third chapter. Further to that, the fact that this research is dealing with emotions that are difficult to be quantified is another reason (Allan, 2005; Harris & Reynolds, 2006). Finally, the personal characteristics of the researcher have also led to this decision.

Further in this chapter, the author analyses and evaluates the inductive approach that is being used for the purpose of this research. As it is being discussed in the third chapter, this approach is the most usual approach being used by the interpretivists due to its theory building nature. It is an approach that is being utilised in this research and aims to help in achieving the best results possible in answering the research questions. This approach is being used in order to enable the observer to be part of the process and avoid the pre-determined variables in the research which is mainly what needs to be done to close the existing literature gap.

Within the methodology chapter, there is also an in-depth discussion on the methods for obtaining the primary data. As it is being discussed on chapter 3, the method to be used is the qualitative data approach. The qualitative approach mainly uses discussion and an in-depth evaluation of the participants' views on the area under investigation (Qu & Dumay, 2012). On the other hand, if the quantitative approach would be used, then the observer would have to form hypothesis and then pre-determine the variables that would be used in the primary research (Inuiguchi & Mizoshita, 2012). This is not the desired approach for this specific topic that is under investigation, since the gaps mainly exist refer to the need

to investigate this area in depth and use different approaches to reach the most valid results for this topic (Karatepe *et al.*, 2009; Taegoo *et al.*, 2012). The specific methods to be used within the qualitative data approach, interviews and focus groups, are being described as well in this chapter. The rationale behind using those two methods within the triangulation method includes a number of reasons. At first interviews are being used to research the phenomenon in depth and reach the appropriate results through an analysis and a thorough evaluation of the participants' responses. On the other hand, the focus groups are being contacted after the interviews to validate the results and make further additions to the findings. This will happen through allowing participants to interact in a small group, share ideas and complete each other's thoughts so that more valid conclusions can be drawn. This chapter therefore analyses the rationale behind the decisions taken to follow the specific philosophical and methodological approaches. It ends with an evaluation of how the data obtained will be analysed. The software to be used and the methods to analyse the data is the final part of the third chapter.

Chapter 4: Analysis of the results

The way that the results are being analysed is something that will be included in the third chapter. In the chapter that follows, the fourth chapter of this thesis, the data obtained from the primary research is being interpreted, discussed and in-depth analysed. This chapter includes an analysis that combines both the interviews and the focus group results. As it is being explained on the third chapter, Data has been analysed using a systematic evaluation of the transcripts of all interviews and the interviews notes and it has been combined to the focus groups notes. This process has been structured using the iterative process advocated by Reynolds & Harris (2006) as well as Harris & Daunt (2013) that has been deemed appropriate when analysing data dealing with customers' aggressiveness consequences. The results of this analysis are being shown in this chapter. It is being presented in themes and sub-themes and they arise from the interpretation of the results.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

This last chapter, is a very important one since it includes the final conclusions as they are being derived from the research. This chapter includes the main findings to each of the objectives and the research questions that have been derived from the literature to answer the research objectives. The chapter includes a summary of the conclusions drawn from the current study. Furthermore, this final chapter includes the research limitations and the suggestions for future researchers that will be studying this topic. The final framework is also presented and analysed in this chapter. Finally, the contributions both to theory and practice are being analysed, reaching the final conclusions of the thesis.

10. Conclusion

This introductory chapter has provided an overview of the procedure that has been undertaken for the current thesis. It includes an overview of the topic under research, the industry that has been chosen and the country. Further, it presents the research questions, the aims and the objectives. Finally, the structure of the thesis is presented and a description of each chapter is included. The next chapter provides the theoretical foundation of the topic under investigation.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Introduction

The second chapter of this thesis is analysing and discussing the existing literature findings of the area under research. The chapter begins with an introduction on the topic, following with an in-depth analysis of the theory of emotional labour. The two types of emotional labour, deep and surface acting are being discussed and the first Research Question is presented. Following, the literature review continues with an evaluation of the consequences of engaging in surface acting when interacting with aggressive customers and how they can be overcome. Those sections lead to the rest of the Research Questions. This chapter ends with the presentation of the initial theoretical framework that will be tested when conducting the primary research.

2. Introduction to the topic

Emotional Labour and its impact in employees have received considerable attention in the recent decades. According to Horo (2014) there are three types of labour.

These types are being offered to the organisation in return for rewards; the most usual reward being the wages or salaries. The first type of labour is what is being called mental labour (ibid). This refers to the skills, knowledge and expertise of employees. Those skills and knowledge are being offered to the organisation and its customers in return for monetary and non-monetary rewards. The organisation appreciates those skills and rewards employees accordingly. Those skills are mainly being used to offer high-quality services to employees if you are a service organisation, or high-quality products if you are a non-service organisation (Diefendorff & Richard, 2003). Physical labour is the second type of labour that actually refers to any physical efforts by employees to achieve the goals that are being set by the organisation they are working for (Horo, 2014). Those physical efforts

include anything the employees do that exerts physical effort on behalf of them such as lifting, standing up, driving, etc. The third type of labour is emotional labour, which represents the extent to which an employee needs to exert certain emotions that are appropriate and important for the efficient and effective performance of a job (Diefendorff & Gosserand, 2003; Hoffmann, 2016).

The term emotional labour has been first described by Hochschild (1983:7) as ‘the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display’. Grandey (2000) describes emotional labour as the need to display certain emotions so that the employees will comply with organisational rules. All service providers are engaging in emotional labour in one way or another (Goussinsky, 2012). They do that since they all need to display certain emotions when interacting with their customers (ibid).

The emotions that employees need to display vary among happiness, enjoyment, love, compassion, sadness. Those emotions are not always felt by employees (Huang & Dai, 2010). Sometimes employees deeply work on an emotion that will be displayed which is being called Deep Acting and some other times they simply act which is being called Surface Acting (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Marwah & Jindal, 2013; Robinson *et al.*, 2016). Emotional labour is undertaken by these two acting strategies (Goussinsky, 2015; Hochschild, 1983; Robinson *et al.*, 2016). They are both defined and discussed below.

A number of researchers identified and discussed the consequences of emotional labour when dealing with aggressive customers (Goussinsky, 2011; Goussinsky, 2015; Harris & Reynolds, 2003; Booth & Mann, 2005; Fitness, 2000). The impact of aggressive customers’ behaviour on employees engaging in emotional labour has received too much attention in the literature at the last decades. This existing literature on this area has concluded that when customer service representatives interact with aggressive customers this leads to a number of negative results. This research will examine the impact of such a

customer behaviour on employees when they engage in emotional labour and expand the research on finding ways to overcome those negative consequences.

In detail, this research will be working towards the direction on closing a gap in the existing literature in terms of how to overcome the negative effects of engaging in emotional labour while dealing with aggressive customers. Furthermore, it will evaluate how employees may enable themselves to engage in deep acting rather than surface acting when they interact with aggressive customers. This gap is being discussed in the next section of this chapter.

3. Literature Gaps and inconsistencies

This section analyses in detail the literature gap as it appears in the following sections of the Literature Review Chapter. The various concepts to which this gap is addressing to are being analysed and discussed further in this chapter.

Research on emotional labour in relation to customers' aggressive behaviours has been so far incomplete (Goussinsky, 2015). It has focussed mainly on imposing inauthentic emotions, which is being called surface acting, as it has been explained above (Hoffmann, 2016). There is a gap in the literature in terms of how to engage employees more in deep acting rather than surface acting, especially when they are interacting with aggressive customers (Goussinsky, 2015).

The fact that employees engage in surface acting only when they are interacting with aggressive customers, has resulted in a number of negative consequences that are being discussed in this literature review chapter. There were some attempts to investigate the ways to overcome those negative consequences. Those attempts are on parts and not giving the full picture; they are not coherent (Bechtoldt *et al.*, 2011; Goussinsky, 2015; Huang & Dai, 2010; Karatepe, 2011; Karatepe, 2015; Lu *et al.*, 2013; Wang & Groth, 2014). Just a few of those attempts is focussing on overcoming the effects of surface acting when interacting with aggressive customers specifically (ibid). They are rather very general,

focussing only on surface acting but not in combination to interactions with aggressive customers. Even those attempts are still on parts and therefore did not enable the creation of a solid framework (ibid).

There has been some research on how to overcome the negative consequences of surface acting and the results are being presented in the literature review below. The specific area of engaging in surface acting when interacting with aggressive customers, though, has been very sparse and the results require empirical testing since this area is new (Borralha *et al.*, 2016; Goussinsky, 2015; Karatepe & Nkondong, 2014). It is very important to empirically test the ways to overcome the negative consequences of surface acting specifically when engaging with aggressive customers and not in general as it has been done in most studies (ibid).

In addition, current research on this area assumes that engaging more in deep acting when interacting with aggressive customers would lead in better results such as an increase in motivation, service performance and employee engagement and decrease employees' emotional dissonance, absenteeism, emotional exhaustion, stress and burnout (Goussinsky, 2015; Huang & Dai 2010; Hur *et al.*, 2015; Karatepe, 2010; Karatepe & Nkondong, 2014; Taegoo *et al.*, 2012). As the above authors state, though, this have not been empirically tested to be able to create a solid framework, therefore, future researchers should do that to develop a more coherent picture.

As it has been stated above, research has been so far focussed on inauthentic emotional displays (surface acting) during interactions with customers, especially the aggressive ones that create a challenging situation for the employees (Hoffmann, 2016; Lee, 2016; Yagil, 2014). The most recent studies in this area, though, indicated that it is being required to perform empirical research that will indicate how employees can engage in more authentic emotional displays, thus engage in deep acting (Lee, 2016). Therefore, this is a gap that researchers should address. This gap focusses on how to enable employees to display more

natural emotions and thus eliminate the negative consequences of surface acting, when they are interacting with aggressive customers (ibid).

Further to the findings above, there is no research on this area dedicated exclusively to the hospitality industry using only full time front line employees of five star hotels (Karatepe & Nkondong, 2014; Lee, 2016; Li *et al.*, 2016; Shahvali *et al.*, 2016). This research aims to address that, by using only full time employees that have more than five years of full time experience in five star hotels. It is stated that people that have more years of experience with clients that demand more when they visit five star hotels, will be able to help more in identifying those ways of overcoming the negative consequences of this under-researched area (Karatepe & Nkondong, 2014; Lee, 2016; Li *et al.*, 2016; Shahvali *et al.*, 2016; Taegoo *et al.*, 2012). Since the hospitality industry is highly characterised as one that requires a lot of face-to-face interaction, it has been stated that employees need to be able to manage their own emotions so that they can understand and manage the emotions of their customers (Karatepe 2011). Therefore, it has been discussed that it is vital for the hospitality industry to be developed in this area and researchers should focus on how employees can engage in deep acting. This is mostly important when employees are dealing with aggressive customers (Goussinsky, 2015; Karatepe 2011; Karatepe & Nkondong, 2014; Taegoo *et al.*, 2012). Since there is no empirical research focussing and being dedicated only on this area, this doctorate aims to address this gap. The ways that this will be done are being described in the next chapter, which explains and analyses the methodological approach of this thesis.

An analysis of the current theory in this area is being presented below. An initial conceptual framework deriving from the existing literature is then being demonstrated clearly identifying the existing literature results and the gaps that will be addressed.

4. The theory of emotional labour

To begin with, emotional labour has three major characteristics. The first characteristic is that emotional labour occurs not only on face-to-face interaction but also on voice contact (Alexander Clarke, 2014; Bolger, 1990). Employees need to display certain organisational rules not only when they interact with their clients personally but also when they talk to them through the phone or more recently even through social media. The second characteristic of emotional labour is the fact that emotions are mainly being displayed in order to influence the emotions of others (Abraham, 2000; Hoffmann, 2016). According to Huang & Dai (2010), emotions are contagious. Therefore, employees need to display those emotions so that they can pass them on to their clients. As such, employees have to smile in front of a complaining customer to make them feel happy and fulfilled. Also, they need to put on their sympathetic smile if they are dealing with a bad situation that has occurred and thus help their customers feel better (Walsh & Bartikowski, 2013). As it will be analysed further in this section, employees do that by either using deep acting or surface acting. Those two terms will be explained below. The third characteristic of emotional labour, is that any kind of emotion that is being expressed under any circumstance has to follow certain rules (Gruber, 2011; Tamer, 2015). According to Ekman (1973), when we socially interact with people, we always follow rules. Those rules are being mentioned by Ekman (1973) as display rules. There are certain emotions that are most appropriate in certain situations and those emotions are what we call the proper display rules. Employees in organisations need to engage in emotional labour because of those display rules that are actually demands and expectations that organisations have (Kamp & Dybbroe, 2016; Van Dijk & Andrea Kirk Brown, 2006). As various cultures have written and unwritten rules the same happens with organisations. According to Horo (2014) organisations have both written and un-written display rules. The written ones are usually well defined and easier to follow. On the other hand, though, the ones that are being established by the

organisational culture and are not written down, and those are the ones that are not only needed to be followed but first they needed to be learned. As a result, people tend to engage more in emotional labour to be able to follow both the written and the unwritten display rules.

Hochschild (1983) has first identified two ways of engaging in emotional labour. Those two ways are deep acting and surface acting. Further research has supported these two ways (Grandey, 2000; Goussinsky, 2015; Hoffmann, 2016; Kumar-Mishra, 2014). When employees are being asked to perform emotional labour they do that by using one of the two different strategies (deep and surface acting). Deep acting has been described as the shaping out of inner feelings and emotions to enable the employees to first experience those desired emotions before expressing them (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Grandey, 2000; Collishaw *et al.*, 2008). Surface acting has been described as suppressing or hiding true emotions in order to display emotions that will be publicly acceptable (Blau *et al.*, 2010; Hochschild, 1983; Grandey *et al.*, 2004). On one hand, deep acting is achieved through shaping up feelings and changing perceptions in order for the behaviour of a front line employee to be as natural as possible (Bechtoldt *et al.*, 2011). This usually creates positive feelings but it takes too much effort and mind training to do that. Hochschild (1983) states that many service employees have managed to engage in deep acting after working a lot on their own feelings and perceptions. On the other hand, when engaging in surface acting, the individual is not imposing real emotions but fake ones. When engaging in surface acting the service provider works on acceptable behaviours that have to be imposed by them with suppressing real feelings. For example a hotel clerk may put on a sympathetic smile towards a customer's complaint but in reality he feels unhappy or irritated as Grandey *et al.*, (2005) state.

Recent literature shows that deep acting is being considered as the approach that aims to enhance the customer experience through providing genuine emotions (Kumar Mishra,

2014). On the other hand, in surface acting, employees express emotions irrespective of their own personal inner emotions so that they can comply with the expected and desired organisational rules (Goussinsky, 2015; Kumar-Mishra, 2014).

3.1 Deep Acting Method

During exploring these two very important emotional labour strategies, various researchers distinguished different types of deep and surface acting. Employees that engage in deep acting focus on their own inner feelings in order for them to be able to display the right and expected organisational emotions (Kruml & Geddes, 2000; Walsh & Bartikowski, 2013). For example in their attempt to display understanding or empathy for a customer they attempt to “actually feel” those emotions. There are two ways of deep acting, passive and active (Bono & Vey, 2005; Hoffmann, 2016; Kruml & Geddes, 2000). In passive deep acting the employee actually feels the emotion they are displaying. On the other hand, during active deep acting, the employee needs to change his/her own feeling and perception in order for them to display the work related expected emotion. Those authors discussing about deep acting, have identified active deep acting as the only true deep acting method. This is because this method needs actual effort and personal development in order for an employee to be able to display more “natural” emotions as Blau *et al.*, (2010) explain. On the other hand, passive deep acting occurs only when an employee really feels the emotion he is displaying and this deeply depends on one’s personality. The only type of deep acting that organisations can work on with their employees is active deep acting. That is because as it has been mentioned above, passive deep acting mainly depends on the person and it has to do with one’s personality. Taking that into consideration, on the one hand, organisations are able to choose certain personalities that will be able to display the right organisational rules naturally and thus follow passive deep active. On the other hand, they can work the other way around and “teach” their employees on how to achieve active deep acting (Peng *et al.*, 2010).

Building on that, there are two ways to achieve active deep acting. Attentional deployment is one method, that is actually based on “method acting” in theatre as Turner & Edgley (2006) state. This method actually requires a person to think about certain events that in reality are relevant to the situation as well as the emotion that they need to display. For example, a person may have to think of a happy situation in their life when they need to impose feelings of happiness. They then draw a picture of this situation in their minds and use this picture to enable them to display those certain emotions when needed at work. According to Beal *et al.*, (2006) this first way of achieving active deep acting needs training and development as well as a lot of effort on behalf of the employees. When this is achieved, though, organisations achieve better customer service results and they gain a competitive advantage. As Grandey *et al.*, (2005) state, attentional deployment is a method of active deep acting that suggests the so called “positive refocusing”. The employee is being asked to remember happy situation in their lives and then draw a picture which in the end makes them feel happy as well. Even though this method is more actively used in theatres, many organisations have used it effectively and trained their staff to be able to apply it at work.

The second way of enabling an employee to be engaged in active deep acting is cognitive change. According to Grandey *et al.*, (2007) this involves re appraising the whole situation so that the employee will be able to reduce the emotional impact and thus feel positive and display the required feelings and behaviours. Whereas Attentional deployment focuses on changing one’s feelings, this method is merely trying to change a person’s perception of the current situation (Beal *et al.*, 2006). For example a bank assistant, while using this method, will have to make an effort to understand a client’s feelings when expressing anger. This will therefore enable the employee to change his perception of facing a difficult client to perceiving the client as someone that feels bad and needs support.

Positive feelings that are expected to be created in such situation will then be more easily displayed.

According to Bolton & Boyd (2003) and Hochschild (1983) to practically apply any deep acting method, employees need to receive extensive training from organisations.

Hochschild (1983) describes the training that a flight attendant has received in order for her to understand customer's frustration. She describes it as not only a simple training course but a whole process that will cause a change in employee's mind sets. Further development of deep acting method has introduced more ways that will teach employees how to be engaged in active deep acting. One way is through role playing, when employees will keep practicing their skills until they can fully adopt the deep acting method (Blau *et al.*, 2010). Grandey (2003) says that deep acting workers are not only working on their own feelings, and thus change them in order to meet the standards, but they also feel empathy about the customer. Understanding the customer's feelings is really important and people engaging in deep acting do that as well. Therefore, deep acting helps employees display natural feelings.

Even though the current literature has introduced a number of ways to train employees to be able to engage in deep acting, there is a paucity in the empirical research in how to achieve that in specific situations. For example, as it will be analysed in this chapter, employees tend to engage only in surface acting when they are interacting with aggressive customers (Gooussinsky, 2015; Hoffmann, 2016). This brings along a number of negative consequences, so there is a need for empirical research to identify how employees can engage in deep acting rather than surface acting during their interactions with aggressive customers (Lee, 2016).

3.2 Surface Acting Method

Building on the initial distinction between Surface and deep acting that Hochschild (1983) has created, many authors worked on the Surface Acting Method and how it is achieved.

Surface acting is performed by many employees on an everyday basis. They display certain emotions by just faking them. For example, an employee may smile to a dissatisfied customer but their inner feeling is not compatible to the smile (Adelmann, 1989). They may feel sad or disappointed, but they just put on a happy face because this is what they should do. It has been argued by Bechtoldt *et al.*, (2011) that surface acting is being used on a greater extent than deep acting. Current research has shown that using surface acting requires too much effort on behalf of the employees so they tend to engage more in surface acting (Goussinsky, 2015; Hoffmann, 2016).

Ashforth & Humphrey (1993) have initially identified that talking about Surface Acting in general is not enough. There are two different ways of engaging in surface acting. Wang & Groth (2014), building on the existing theories support and discuss about the two different ways of engaging in surface acting. Those ways are faking positive emotions and suppressing negative emotions. When using the faking positive emotions method, the employee is actually displaying positive emotions without working in any way to make them more natural. So, unlike the active deep acting method, during engaging in surface acting, the employees work towards displaying faking positive emotions (*ibid*). Since service with a smile is very important during any customer interaction, employees are faking this smile when using this method (Glomb & Tews, 2004; Kumar-Mishra, 2014). According to Taegoo *et al.*, (2012), even though many employees are engaging in surface acting; more specifically in faking positive emotions during their interactions with customers, this is not always working. They state that most customers are able to distinguish between a genuinely felt positive emotion and a fake one. This creates many problems in organisations, because even if employees seem to display the right emotions when being engaged in surface acting, this is not actually reflecting how customers feel. Engaging in surface acting through faking positive emotions may seem to be the “easy” way according to Grandey *et al.*, (2004) but this is not the real case. Despite the fact that

faking positive emotions is causing exhaustion, customers can easily identify that those emotions are not really felt and this brings along many negative consequences.

On the other hand, according to Brotheridge & Lee (2003), there is a second way of engaging in surface acting. It is what is being called as suppressing negative emotions. This occurs when an employee has negative emotions such as anger, frustration and stress. By using this method, the employee is suppressing those negative emotions in order for them to be able to express positive emotions towards a customer. Employees tend to use this method on many occasions. This thesis focuses on emotional labour during aggressive customers' interaction. During such interactions, employees tend to use this method in order for them to hide their negative emotions. Employees feel unhappy and dissatisfied when facing aggressive customers. These emotions need to be suppressed so that they can display the positive emotions that are required by the organisation they are working for. As it is noted by Beal *et al.*, (2006), employees usually need to engage in emotional labour (either deep or surface acting) when they face difficult situations, such as an angry or a dissatisfied customer. During these situations, they need to either work intensively on imposing positive feelings (deep acting) or display faked emotions (surface acting). Either way they use it, employees need to work hard and this requires time and effort both on their behalf as well as the organisations in general. As it has been identified in the literature, dealing with aggressive customers can be very challenging (Grandey *et al.*, 2007).

Further in this literature review chapter, the author will discuss about existing literature findings in terms of engaging in emotional labour during facing customer aggressiveness. Before elaborating on that, the author discusses the literature around emotions in organisations and what aggressive customers' behaviour is as well as what forms it can take.

5. Emotions in organisations

Emotions are an important part to consider in every organisation, as important as it is to consider them in any social interaction we have with people in our personal lives (Mann, 1997; Mann, 1999). Since emotions have started gaining attention among researchers, there was always a strong debate as on how they should be defined and studied (Tronvoll, 2011). According to Bagozzi *et al.*, (1999: p.1) “emotions are positive or negative reactions, or mental stages of readiness, that arise as a consequence of specific events or circumstances”. This quote shows that emotions in reality derive from another person or even sometimes a specific situation that we can attribute the certain emotion to. Therefore, in result, we feel what other people or circumstances make us feel.

Emotions are being described on a wide variety and they come in many forms (Svari *et al.*, 2012). Some studies suggest that emotions should be categorised into positive and negative ones (Phillips & Baumgartner, 2002). This distinction shows that on the one hand, we have a main type of emotions, the positive ones, such as happiness, fulfillment, and enjoyment. On the other hand, we have the negative emotions, such as anger, dissatisfaction and sadness. Those have been widely used in the literature (Dube *et al.*, 1996; Oliver, 1994). On the contrary, Dube *et al.*, (1996), brought us in front of two types of negative emotions, the ones that are related to errors done by others and the ones that are being related to situations. Smith and Ellsworth (1985) has first identified the emotions as the ones brought about by certain circumstances and the ones that are brought about by one self. This has been similarly argued by Dube *et al.*, (1996) later on.

While further analysing emotions in organisations, researchers have made more distinctions between emotions. Latest research has started searching the relationship between emotions and customer complaints, which has been scarce so far (Svari, 2010). This latest research assorted emotions in three types: Internal, external and situational emotions (Svari, 2010). Those types of emotions, distinguish which component of the

organisation the customer blames when they are angry about a situation that has happened during their customer service experience. The first type, internal emotions, arises when the customer is blaming him or herself for the situation that has happened and made them angry (Dubé and Menon, 2000; Krampf *et al.*, 2003). The second type, external emotions, occurs when the customer blames others (more usually the company) about a specific bad situation (Svari *et al.*, 2012). The third type, situational emotions, refers to the extent to which customers do not blame either themselves or the company, but rather the specific situation. This distinction among emotions plays a huge role in the area of emotional labour that this thesis is dealing with (Goussinsky, 2011).

When customers are dissatisfied with a service experience they receive, they may either blame themselves, the company or simply the situation according to the above discussion on emotions. This really depends on the circumstances under which this service experience has been considered as a bad one (Robertson & Shaw, 2009). The way they will perceive the bad service and the elements they will consider to choose who is to blame for the bad experience will then influence the way they will complain and thus how they will treat the service providers during this complain (Meirovich *et al.*, 2013).

When customers perceive that an organisation has literally failed to achieve the high service standards that the customers were expecting, this provides them with an external target for their negative emotions (Svari *et al.*, 2012). This means that they will express those negative emotions to the specific target. As a result, the customers will blame the company for the perceived problem that has aroused. Feelings that occur when customers face such external emotions vary among anger, irritation, discouragement, frustration, rage and distress. These emotions will be expressed towards the service providers and those service providers will have to handle them accordingly (Goussinsky, 2011). On the other hand, if customers feel that there is an internal issue that has caused the bad service, i.e. themselves, they will feel guilty, shame, embarrassment, sadness, loneliness, unhappiness

and regret (Goussinsky, 2012). According to Grégoire *et al.*, (2009) if the customers feel that the company is to blame for the bad situation, then they will directly complain to the company and mainly express anger, as it is one of the most usual emotions that are being felt when blaming the external forces, as it has been mentioned above. On the other hand, if the customers feel that they themselves (internal) or even the situation (situational) is to blame for the bad experience they will usually complain anonymously through various blogs online (Grandey, 2004; Sviri *et al.*, 2012; Sviri, 2010). In general, research has shown that if customers receive a bad service, they usually try to hide the fact that they believe they themselves are to blame for the situation, so they attribute blame to the external forces (the company) and thus they express anger towards the service providers (Sviri *et al.*, 2012).

Emotional labour plays a huge role in the way customers perceive and express their emotions (Bailey & McCollough, 2000). As it has been discussed on this section, customers will express anger towards service providers when they feel that the organisation is to blame for a bad service. As discussed, also, even though the customers sometimes feel that they are to blame for the bad situation, they try to hide it and direct the blame towards the organisation, thus they will still express their anger towards the service providers. As a result, the service providers need to face those feelings of anger and frustration that are being expressed by customers but also display the right organisational rules (Grandey *et al.*, 2007). The question here that needs to be evaluated and analysed, is how employees manage their own emotions and how they engage themselves in emotional labour when they handle anger and frustration coming from their customers. Below, the customers' aggressive behaviour is being discussed and then the way employees engage in emotional labour when they face aggressiveness will be analysed.

6. Explaining aggressive customers' behaviour

According to Appelbaum (2007), behaviour is deemed inappropriate when an organisation's rules, regulations, customs and peoples' feelings are being violated by a person or a group of people. This violation of rules and customs leads to violation of emotions as well (Reynolds & Harris, 2006). Aggressive behaviour in the workplace has been addressed and discussed by a number of authors in the existing literature. A great number of those studies are identifying and evaluating the types of aggressive behaviours that exist in the workplace. At first, researchers were dealing with the issue of aggressive behaviour that happens internally, among employees (Browning 2008). According to Erkutlu & Chafra (2013) the study of inappropriate or aggressive behaviour mainly consisted of internal misbehaviour that lead to various consequences. This involved not only bad behaviours among employees but also the ones coming from the management level. Since a great number of literature dealt with the deviant behaviour among employees, recent researchers have started dealing with such behaviours on behalf of customers (Harris & Daunt, 2013; Fisk *et al.*, 2010; McColl-Kennedy *et al.*, 2009). In this section, the author will discuss the forms and types of aggressive behaviour that comes along from customers to employees.

Harris & Reynolds (2003), use the term jaycustomers that was originally introduced by Christofer Lovelock (1994) to refer to dysfunctional customers that cause "trouble" to employees with their behaviour, by either complaining or treating them in a bad manner. In general terms, we call this inappropriate behaviour, despite the reason that has led to such behaviour. Various classifications of dysfunctional customer behaviour has been brought up by many researchers in this field.

6.1 Customer – employee interactions

The customer – employee interactions have various unique characteristics that explain why customers have certain behaviours during such interactions. The interactions between

employees and customers seem to be uneven (Grandey, 2007). There are two reasons why this happens. First of all, there is the quality of relationship which is a really important area and then is the emotional display expectations (ibid).

The first reason why interactions between customers and employees seem to be uneven, which as it has been stated above is the quality of relationship, states that customers usually see the relationship between themselves and employees as one which is most of the times anonymous. The two parties involved may not have any interaction history or may not even interact again in the future. According to Ben-Zur (2009) and Ben-Zur & Yagil (2005) this causes an uneven relationship that puts customers on a situation where they feel more in control since they can react in any way they feel appropriate, especially if they have the idea of not having to interact with those employees or the specific organisation in the future. Further to this argument, the customers also have the choice of controlling the number of interactions they have with a specific organisation (Grandey, 2007; Grandey *et al.*, 2010). They are more in control than the customers are, as to when they will re-visit a specific organisation and ask for the same service. The employees cannot choose whether the customers will come again and interact with them or not. The only think they can do is to do their job in the best possible way and according to the organisational rules. This will likely increase the odds of having repeated customers. As a result, this is what helps researchers of this field explain the fact that the customers have an increased frequency of verbal abuse and therefore may get angry with employees for any service they receive that seems unfair or inappropriate (Grandey, 2007; Gutek *et al.*, 1999). They can easily do that due to the fact that they can completely control whether they will return or not.

The second reason as stated above is the fact that there are certain emotional display expectations. It is well known, that customers visit an organisation to buy either tangible goods that this organisation is offering or intangible services (Parasuraman, *et al.*, 1988). In the case of buying tangible goods, the customers are of course expecting to be offered a

good service during this interaction, but if they buy services their expectations are much higher (Hochschild, 1983). The interaction that customers and employees have during a services exchange has the important aspect of emotions being involved as well (Harris & Reynolds, 2003). People have certain expectations, such as to be treated with a smile, politeness and to receive the best service they could get, according to what they perceive as being a good service. On the other hand, customers are not expected to behave on the same way (ibid). They are not expected to interact with the service providers with a smile, and there is no expectation for politeness during their interactions. This makes it easier for them to complain and provoke in anger events without being criticised that they do something wrong or that they engage themselves in an unaccepted behaviour. On the other hand, service providers are expected to behave appropriately, therefore they will be judged for any behaviour that is deemed inappropriate (Hochschild, 1983; Grandey et al., 2010). As a result, the above indicate that customers may easily behave aggressively, but this is not the case with employees, especially the ones that are working in services organisations. They have to work on their own feelings and thus create the appropriate services experience for their employees.

6.2 Types of misbehaving customers

According to Neale and Fullerton (2010) as well as Poddar & Madupalli (2012), there are different types of misbehaving customers including abusive, insulting, hysterical shouters, dictators and freeloaders. Lovelock (2007) who was the first one who introduced this concept in 1994, identified aggressive customers in terms of verbal and physical abusers, breaking company policies, having lack of cooperation, thieves and vandals. As more and more theorists and practitioners started dealing with the types of customers' behaviours, this issue was taking many forms. An extreme case of customer aggression that could also lead to violence is another aspect that has gained both practitioners and academic researchers attention (Goussinsky, 2015). Aggression can take the form of verbal and

emotional misbehaviour, but it may also take the form of a physical abuse (ibid). This may lead to a much harder to handle situation by employees and organisations in general. Even though aggressiveness may take the form of physical abuse this is a situation that is less frequent (Goussinsky, 2011).

According to Harris & Reynolds (2003), it is not only the type of aggressive customers we should be dealing with, but get in more depth by identifying the causes of such behaviours, the consequences and the ways to deal with them. Unfortunately, the old misconception of the “customer is always right” has led to customers treating employees in a bad manner and employees having to dispose the right organisational rules at any expense (Felleson *et al.*, 2013).

Grandey *et al.*, (2004) have discussed about the different types of customer aggression. It has been found that verbal aggression is the most common one since it happens most of the times. It has been stated in their article that usually researchers were focussing on the rare violent episodes from customers. So, they had indicated the importance to address the fact of how verbal aggressive behaviour and more ‘mild’ episodes affect employees. These ‘mild’ episodes may be aggression because of a complaint. This thesis will focus on these types of customer misbehaviour and their consequences.

The degree to which employees are facing aggressive customers, of any type, is very high according to existing literature. Specifically, the most dominant events that provoke anger are the ones that are being caused by customers’ aggressive behaviours during their interactions with the service providers (Goussinsky, 2012). Many service providers, in various industries, have witnessed aggressive and inappropriate behaviour during providing service to their customers. This aggressiveness takes many forms, as being described above. Despite the type of aggressiveness that employees are facing, the consequences and the outcomes of such events seem to be similar (Felleson *et al.*, 2013).

As in many service industries, aggression is taking place in the hospitality industry as well. Service providers in the hospitality industry may face both verbally and emotionally aggressive customers but at the other end they may face physical abusers as well (Harris & Reynolds, 2003). Due to the increased rate of aggressive events towards service providers, many researchers have started dealing with the ways that employees actually manage to provide a good service and on the other hand abide to the organisational rules. The main difficulty that is being faced is the fact that employees need to display certain organisational rules and also work with their own feelings in order to enable themselves to do that successfully (Liu *et al.*, 2013). As it has been discussed above, emotional labour plays a huge role in this.

According to the discussion above concerning emotional labour, it has been identified that all employees engage in emotional labour while providing a service, either by practicing surface acting or deep acting. Further in the literature review analysis, the author will discuss how employees engage themselves in emotional labour when they face customer aggressiveness.

7. Engaging in emotional labour when interacting with aggressive customers

There is a considerable attention in the literature regarding the aggressive customers' behaviour and its impact on emotional labour. The behaviours and consequences on both service providers and customers have been greatly discussed in the existing literature. The very demanding role of service providers has increased the need of regulating emotions in the last decades (Goussinsky, 2011). Service providers are being asked to display certain emotions and organisations are nowadays more demanding on these issues due to the increased need for surviving in the highly competitive environment. Anger provoking events have increased this need of emotion regulation even more, since employees are now facing demanding and angry customers more than before (Grandey, 2000). Harris & Reynolds (2003) have found that almost 82% of service providers working

in the hospitality industry have been subjected to their customers' aggressive behaviour in the last year. It is clearly stated that aggressive behaviour is very usual among customers in the hospitality industry and this is mainly due to the increased demands of those that are spending money for leisure. Goussinsky (2011) states that even though people need to engage in emotional labour as part of their duties when interacting with customers, doing that during facing aggression has been very challenging. Both studies concluded that customer service representatives face customer aggressiveness on a great extent on a daily basis. This means that while customer service providers need to engage in emotional labour, they are also facing customer aggressiveness and they need to deal with it. This makes it even more difficult for them to deal with both the consequences of engaging in emotional labour and thus dealing with aggressiveness.

Service providers go through various emotions when they deal with customer aggressiveness (Meirovich *et al.*, 2013). The fact that employees go through certain emotions has a lot to do both with the way they engage themselves in emotional labour but also how they deal with it later on. "In the public world of work, it is often part of an individual's job to accept uneven exchanges, to be treated with disrespect or anger by a client, all the while closeting into fantasy the anger one would like to respond with" (Hochschild, 1983, p. 86). As this quote clearly states, service providers do feel anger on a regular basis, especially if they face anger. Grandey (2007) states that even if employees face anger, either from their colleagues and supervisors or from their customers, it is not acceptable for them to express anger as well. Unfortunately, this makes them feel that they are not free to express their feelings and therefore alienate themselves from the situation just to be able to handle it and thus engage in surface acting (Goussinsky, 2015, Hoffmann, 2016; Karatepe, 2015). According to Hochschild 1983, treating customers has its dark side as well and people have to deal with it. Further to that, they have to deal with their own feelings as well. Employees feelings when they face aggressiveness vary among anger,

dissatisfaction, a feeling of not being fulfilled and satisfied and sometimes feelings of guilt, deriving from the fact that they did not do their job right and this is why their customers are angry and dissatisfied (Harris & Reynolds, 2003). Those emotions have to be either suppressed or changed in some way, so that service providers will be able to do their jobs right according to what they learn once they decide to enter the services organisations environment (Goussinsky, 2015, Hoffmann, 2016; Karatepe, 2015).

As it has been identified above, customer service providers will either shape their feelings (deep acting) or suppress their true emotions (surface acting) in order for them to be able to display the desired emotions. In what extent do customer service providers engage in either deep or surface acting when dealing with customer aggressiveness? This can be answered through the literature, by first identify and explain how emotions are transferred from one person to another and the consequences of that to the emotional labour process.

7.1 Contagious emotions

It has been identified in the literature that emotions are contagious (Huang & Dai, 2010).

The authors state in their article that when people are interacting with happy customers they really face no difficulties to display the desired emotions that organisations are asking them to display. On the contrary, when people are facing aggressiveness they cannot display those positive emotions and they feel negatively so this affects the customer interaction outcome (Karatepe, 2015; Vandewaa *et al.*, 2016). Customer service representatives feel happy and satisfied when facing happy customers and they have a feeling of dissatisfaction and unhappiness when facing aggressive customers (Gardner, 1985; Goussinsky, 2015).

Many researchers have concluded that emotions are contagious. According to Barsade (2002) as well as Bechtoldt *et al.*, (2011) when customer service representatives are facing aggressiveness they find it very challenging to change their emotional stage and impose positive feelings. This is mainly due to the fact that emotions are contagious and they are

very easily being transferred from one person to another through interaction (either face to face or through the phone). Bakker *et al.*, (2005), while investigating contagious emotions between nurses, has found that negative emotions are easier to be transferred than positive ones. An example being given in this article is stress. This is an emotion that can be easily transmitted to the people around you, colleagues or customers. Stress or other negative emotions cannot only transmit through interaction and communication with people that are affected with this emotion but also through body language (Appelbaum & Roy-Girard, 2007). So a negative emotion can be easily adopted and passed on to employees. On the contrary, those employees may pass on the negative emotions to their colleagues.

Therefore, through these existing findings, it can be concluded that people share negative emotions between them as well as the negative consequences that come through these emotions.

Due to those existing literature findings, it has been proved that service providers are engaging in surface acting when interacting with aggressive customers (Deepthi, 2015; Goussinsky, 2015; Grandey, 2000). Since people tend to feel what other people feel around them, they find it difficult to engage in deep acting during handling customer complaints and anger (Goussinsky, 2015; Huang & Dai, 2010). When service providers are interacting with customers in good moods, they find it very easy to display the feelings that are imposed by organisations and they engage in deep acting usually subconsciously. They impose the real feelings that their happy customers make them feel. This is what makes deep acting a more usual strategy when interacting with satisfied customers. On the other hand, when service providers face customer aggressiveness, they tend to feel angry and dissatisfied. This is mainly supported through the theory of contagious emotions that has been explained above. Therefore, customer service representatives tend to engage in surface acting through alienating the negative feelings being caused by the angry

customers. They suppress those feelings so that they will be able to display the right feelings and behaviours.

7.2 Affective events theory

Affective Events Theory is another aspect that has been used in various articles that discuss whether employees engage in deep or surface acting during their interactions with aggressive customers. It mainly suggests that all events in the workplace directly affect employees in terms of their emotional reactions, feelings and therefore behaviours (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Various authors based their research of engaging in emotional labour while interacting with aggressive customers on that theory. Rupp & Spencer (2006) concluded that people that are unfairly treated experience great levels of dissatisfaction and unhappiness in the workplace environment. Unfair treatment on that aspect involved both customer and colleagues' anger and any other interaction that people felt was bad. Adding to that literature, Grandey *et al.*, (2010) concluded that any bad interaction with customers imposed negative feelings and therefore negative behaviours. This was also based on the Affective Events Theory. On the contrary, since it is not accepted by organisations to express those negative feelings during customer interactions, service providers tend to hide them. Calabrese (2000), building on the Affective Events Theory, states that during any negative interaction in their workplace such as anger or sarcasm, people tend to hide their true feelings in order to impose those behaviours that will be organisationally appropriate. Due to Huang & Dai (2010), the more negative feelings people have during interaction with angry customers the more they will be engaging in emotional labour through surface acting. Similarly, Goussinsky (2015) said that it is easier for employees to simply hide their true emotions and thus show fake emotions towards their angry customers. This is what seems to be needed by organisations when they impose the various organisational rules (ibid).

The important conclusion of the above studies is the fact that the customer mood stage directly affects employees and on the contrary the way they engage in emotional labour. Grandey *et al.*, (2004) also support the above findings by their conclusions after conducting a research on the consequences of customer aggression on employees. They say that service representatives tend to engage in surface acting when they feel stressed because of customer aggression. Generally, the more negative feelings people perceive, the more emotional labour they perceive (Huang & Dai, 2010). According to that, there is more and more frequent use of surface acting during those interactions (Booth & Mann, 2005). People feel positively when they face happy customers and therefore they act more positive and they tend to use deep acting because of that. On the other hand, they have negative feelings when they face angry or dissatisfied customers and they feel the need to react negatively (Grandey, 2004). Since they cannot do that, due to the imposed organisational rules to treat customers well and give a good service, they tend to use surface acting. They therefore hide their true emotions in order to display the right organisational rules and treat customers in a respectful manner. According to Goussinsky (2012), even though it is more natural to get angry when people get angry with you, employees in the services industries suppress their anger since this is the right thing to do. Therefore, all the above literature has proved that employees mainly engage in surface acting during such interactions with customers and they do that at any expense.

As it has been also analysed in the literature gap section above, this area is under researched as far as the hospitality industry is concerned (Karatepe & Nkondong, 2014; Lee, 2016; Lu *et al.*, 2013; Taegoo *et al.*, 2012). Even though the area of how employees engage in emotional labour had been investigated in a number of ways, the hospitality industry seems to be a unique industry with various characteristics that are not compatible with the rest of the industries that have been researched so far (*ibid*). Since this is the case

and through the above discussion on the evidence derived from the existing literature, the following Research Question arises:

Research Question 1 (RQ1): How do employees engage in emotional labour while interacting with aggressive customers?

Since the existing literature review findings concluded that service providers engage mostly in surface acting during facing angry customers, the consequences will be examined. Existing literature is dealing with the consequences on employees as well as customers. For the purpose of this research the author will deal with the consequences on employees and the ways that these negative consequences can be buffered.

8. The negative consequences of engaging in emotional labour when interacting with aggressive customers

Many authors have investigated the consequences of emotional labour on employees. Engaging in both surface and deep acting affects employees on different ways. In general, it has been found that it is not really emotion work that affects employees in a number of ways. What really affects them is when they have to display certain emotions that are inauthentic (Goussinsky, 2011; Heuven *et al.*, 2006; Lewig & Dollard, 2003). Therefore, emotional labour affects them mostly when they engage in surface acting during their interactions with their customers. Since they display emotions that are not really felt, they have a feeling of dissatisfaction that leads to the negative consequences (Diefendorff *et al.*, 2005). Employees will be even more affected when they engage in emotional labour while interacting with aggressive customer (Brotheridge & Lee 2002; Goussinsky, 2011; Goussinsky, 2015; Hoffmann, 2016).

In this section of the literature review, the author will discuss about the consequences of interacting with aggressive customers while engaging in emotional labour. This discussion will be directed towards the consequences of customer aggressiveness during surface

acting since this is the most common way of engaging in emotional labour when facing aggressiveness, according to the findings above.

In the last two decades, attention has focussed on the impact of customer aggressiveness. In the previous years, more attention was given on customers and how they are affected, but more recent literature came to the conclusion that how employees feel is equally important. Also, the literature was focussing more on the consequences of co-workers' or supervisors' aggressive behaviours. It has been found that this type of aggressive behaviour affects employees' feelings and productivity negatively (Appelbaum & Roy-Girard, 2007). So a number of authors started questioning if the same happens during customers' aggressive behaviours. This section gives a clear picture of all the existing literature findings on this issue.

8.1 Decreased sense of well-being

Ben-Zur (2009) has indicated that interaction with aggressive customers while engaging in surface acting leads to a decreased sense of well-being among service care providers. This was also supported by a number of authors concluding on the same results (Boyd, 2002; (Joy) Huang, 2014; McCollough, 2000; Van Dierendonck & Mevissen, 2002; Winstanley & Wittington, 2002). They all concluded that any interaction that customer service providers have with aggressive customers leads to a decreased sense of well-being.

Employee well-being is an important issue for all organisations. Research has taken place at all levels, trying to identify how it can be improved (Moss & Cooper, 2016). Research has shown that employee well-being may be reduced for a number of reasons and this leads to a lot of negative results both for employees as well as for the organisations they are working for (Moss & Cooper, 2016; Robertson & Cooper, 2010). It has been proved to be highly important for employees to feel well within their working environment so that they can perform better when interacting with their customers at all levels (Robertson & Cooper, 2010). Since surface acting is causing a decreased sense of well-being, this leads

to negative results in interactions between employees and their aggressive customers (Boyd, 2002). According to Robertson & Cooper (2015), employee engagement is more likely to be sustainable if employee well-being is at a high level. As it has been reported before, engagement will eventually lead to better results when employees engage in emotional labour while they are interacting with aggressive customers, thus a reduced sense of well-being due to surface acting will eventually lead to more negative results (Huang, 2014).

This is also supported by Grandey *et al.*, (2004) with their customer aggression model. Their model shows that continuous interaction with aggressive customers leads to a very strong state of both emotional as well as physiological arousal. Customer service providers are not only affected emotionally, according to this model, but different physiological conditions arise, such as a general feeling of fatigue. It has been argued that the general feeling of fatigue as well as the decreased sense of emotional well-being will eventually lead to emotional exhaustion and burnout (Grandey *et al.*, 2004; Kim & Choi, 2016).

Current research concluded that interaction with aggressive customers that leads to an increase use of surface acting causes even more decreased sense of well-being (Kim & Choi, 2016). People mention a lot of physiological symptoms including headaches, issues with their stomachs and even more severe symptoms such as shortness of breath and chest pains (Grandey, 2010). Those symptoms have been mentioned as being from mild into severe, lasting for hours and even days. It has been also reported that those symptoms have mostly being emotions related according to doctors' diagnosis (Grandey, 2004).

Therefore, the above findings conclude that there is most of the times a serious decreased sense of well – being that affects peoples' interactions with colleagues, managers and customers. This leads to other consequences as well that are being discussed below.

8.2 Emotional Dissonance

In her article discussing the consequences of customers' aggressive behaviour, Goussinsky (2012) discussed and analysed the effects of aggressive behaviour on employees and their engagement in emotional labour. She concludes through her study that continues aggressive behaviour towards employees leads to what is being known as "emotional dissonance". This is the separation between the emotions that are being displayed and the ones that are actually being felt. In more detail, Emotional Dissonance occurs when employees engage in surface acting that is when they either have to show happiness when feeling sad or showing sadness when feeling happy (Dormann & Zapf, 2004). This separation of a person from his / her emotions causes what is being called Emotional Dissonance.

Various studies perceive Emotional Dissonance in different ways. At first, emotional dissonance has been considered as an antecedent to emotional labour (Zapf *et al.*, 1999). Later on, emotional dissonance has been perceived as the component of labour when employees are displaying emotions for organisational purposes (Zapf & Holz, 2006). Latest research is considering Emotional Dissonance to be one of the main consequences of performing emotional labour that has led to various negative outcomes (Hülshager *et al.*, 2010; Kim & Choi, 2016; Van Dijk & Andrea Kirk Brown, 2006).

According to Goussinsky (2011), the term "emotional dissonance" started gaining more attention after an understanding of the role of surface acting during an interaction with a "difficult" and angry customer. This finding also supports the fact that employees are engaging in surface acting during these types of customers' interactions which has been discussed above (Goussinsky, 2015). Emotional dissonance will eventually result in reduced sense of well-being as well according to Heuven *et al.*, (2006). Another explanation being given by Bailey & McCollough (2000) is that since customers' aggressive behaviour is not a rare event but it usually happens on a daily basis this leads to

more negative emotions. Employees are trying to hide those negative emotions when they deal with customers, thus they engage in more surface acting and their sense of well-being is being reduced even more (Karatepe & Nkondong, 2014).

As a results of those findings, it is concluded that employees' engagement in surface acting is being increased the more they interact with aggressive customers. Therefore, the more they interact with aggressive customers, they use more surface acting and thus there is even more increase in emotional dissonance. This leads to other problems and consequences, which become more severe as people experience those situations on a daily basis. It is being proved that a one-off interaction with aggressive customers has not been blamed for emotional dissonance, but it is rather the continued interaction that brings those results (Karatepe *et. al.*, 2009).

As it has been mentioned earlier on the Literature Gap section, this is one parameter that needs more focus and empirical research. The existing literature is not really focussing on full time employees that are working for at least five years in a services industry, so results in terms of consequences when engaging in emotional labour during customer aggressive events and how to overcome them lack research and need further analysis and development to arrive to generalisations and conclusions.

8.3 Increase in psycho-physiological stress

Stress has been described as the response to a stressor or a stimulus. It is a person's body reaction to a challenging situation (Cooper, 1995; Im, 2009). Most scholars, including psychologists, assume that stress is a recent phenomenon; a "disease" of the late 19th century (Cooper, 2004). Despite, that, stress has been an issue that has been widely researched in a variety of disciplines (Cooper, 1995; Cooper, 1998; Robertson & Cooper, 2015). Organisations that seem to be able to reduce the stress levels of their employees are likely to be the ones that will maintain a workforce that will be characterised by both physical as well as mental health (Cooper & Cartwright, 1994).

Employees feel stress at work about various situations. Work plays a huge role in peoples' lives, and stress becomes a very important issue not only for employees but also for the organisations they are working for (Bradley & Sutherland, 1994; Karatepe & Nkondong, 2014; Kumar, 2015). It has been found that reduced stress levels which lead to increased levels of employee well-being will eventually result to more productive employees (Robertson *et al.*, 2012). This will lead to more positive work attitudes which is very important during any interaction within the working environment (ibid). Therefore, an increase in stress negatively affects employees at all levels (Jain *et al.*, 2013; Kinman, 2009). Furthermore, current literature shows that increased levels of stress and reduced well-being in a working environment does not only lead to dissatisfied employees but they also tend to be unhappy in their personal lives too and even live less (Cartwright & Cooper, 2008). In addition, an increase in psycho-physiological stress decreases commitment in organisations (Jain, *et al.*, 2008). As a result, high stress levels at work eventually lead to more negative results (Cartwright & Cooper, 2002). A very important negative consequence of increased stress is an increase in job dissatisfaction which then increases the engagement of employees in surface acting (Antoniou *et al.*, 2016)

Stress as a general consequence of emotional labour has been greatly discussed in the literature. Recent literature has focussed on the psycho-physiological stress being caused by engaging in surface acting while interacting with aggressive customers (Kinman, 2009). It has been identified that work-related stress is being increased in the services industry where people have to hide their true feelings to be able to display the right emotions in front of the customer (Kinman, 2009). This is also the case especially when employees are facing anger and they have to suppress their own anger so that they can deal with their customers and thus create the right service environment that they should be creating (Goussinsky, 2011).

Furthermore, if people need to suppress their negative emotions more regularly as part of their job requirements, this leads to an even higher level of psycho-physiological stress (Becktoldt *et al.*, 2011; Cartwright & Cooper, 2008; Robertson *et al.*, 2012). Having this in mind, employees' stress levels are increased since they do not only need to suppress negative emotions when interacting with angry customers but also go a step beyond and display positive emotions. This leads to even more stress and emotional exhaustion which is another reason why employees are being driven to burnout. Comparing that to the Emotional Dissonance model, employees do not like the idea of faking emotions in general (Cote, 2005). When employees have to fake positive emotions when feeling negatively about a situation, this causes even more stress and as a result employees need to put in more effort in order to achieve the desired emotions in front of the customer (Bryant *et al.*, 2006).

Since employees dislike the fact that they need to use fake emotions their stress levels increase more. The more they increase their stress levels the more they get closer to burnout and its consequences. Burnout will be further discussed in this section.

The Social Interaction Model being introduced by Cote (2005) indicates that people need to be authentic. Using this model as a reference, it seems that employees really want to display authentic emotions when interacting with customers. This is very difficult to be achieved during interactions with aggressive customers as it has been explained through the existing literature. Therefore, as a consequence of this non authentic behaviour, people tend to feel alienated and dissatisfied in their work environment.

Clients expect employees not only to be friendly but to display authentic emotions during their interactions (Bakker *et al.*, 2004). Since employees feel this during their interactions with their customers this is another source that increases their stress levels as well.

Customers that are angry will usually feel that employees are not displaying true emotions (Goussinsky, 2015; Lazarus, 1999). This may eventually lead to more anger and

employees will need to struggle more to convince those customers that they care. This is something that makes employees feel more irritated and dissatisfied, thus their level of stress is being increased because of that as well.

As it has been discussed above, a decreased sense of well – being takes both physiological and psychological forms. Stress is mainly psychological, leading to a feeling of dissatisfaction at work. This kind of stress that is being caused by engaging in surface acting while interacting with aggressive customers has further consequences. Emotional Exhaustion and Burnout are two of them, but there are more negative consequences being attributed to stress that are analysed and discussed below.

8.4 Emotional exhaustion

Stress leads to emotional exhaustion, when performing emotional labour while dealing with customers aggressive behaviours towards the service providers (Abraham, 1999; Hartel *et al.*, 2002; Hülshager *et al.*, 2010; Morris & Feldman, 1997; Robinson *et al.*, 2016). Emotional exhaustion has been described as the consequence that mainly derives out of increased stress levels, but many researchers have attributed emotional exhaustion to emotional dissonance. In definition, emotional exhaustion is the psychological discomfort that is being felt by a person when they take part in activities or get involved in situations that actually attribute this feeling (Van Dijk & Andrea Kirk Brown, 2006).

Taking this consequence in more detail, it has been stated by Hwa (2012), that it is not really emotional labour as such that results in emotional exhaustion. The outcome lies on the way that emotional labour is being performed; through deep or surface acting. Since so far it has been proved that when dealing with aggressive customers employees mainly engage in surface acting then we can clearly see the relationship between that and emotional exhaustion. According to Grandey (2004), it has been proved that while employees engage themselves more in emotional labour when facing difficult situations with their clients, this automatically increases the level of emotional exhaustion. Karatepe

et al., (2009) that have based their research on emotional labour in the hospitality industry, have analysed the fact that the more experience employees have in dealing with these matters and engaging in surface acting, the more their emotional exhaustion would be. Therefore, surface acting has been positively related to emotional exhaustion while on the other hand deep acting has been negatively related to emotional exhaustion (Hwa, 2012; Lee, 2016). This suggests that while performing surface acting seems to be the main method while facing aggressive customers, this seems to be a major disadvantage for the employees' general well-being (Goussinsky, 2011; Hwa, 2012; Lee, 2016; Wang & Groth, 2014). As a result, those researchers suggest that if employees start using more deep acting, this would be the ideal scenario for avoiding not only emotional exhaustion but most of the negative consequences of surface acting. This is something that has not been empirically tested, though, and it is not definite how employees can be assisted so that they can engage more in deep acting while dealing with aggressiveness (Lee, 2016). Further, this thesis will work towards closing this gap.

8.5 Burnout as the extreme negative effect

Job burnout is a concept that has mainly emerged in the early 1970's and people considered it as very critical in the work environment generally (Andela, 2015; Seery & Corigall, 2009). At first, it was a concept that people were not paying too much attention to as they thought that it is inevitable, especially if you really need to perform emotional labour at your job (Hochschild, 1983; Santos, *et al.*, 2015). Eventually it received more attention (Santos *et al.*, 2015). Recently, it has been attributed as a major negative consequence when people engage in surface acting during their interactions with customers and more specifically ones that act aggressively for various reasons (Santos, *et al.*, 2015).

The first question that most researchers were trying to answer at the beginning is what actually burnout is and how it is developed. In one of the most recent studies on burnout,

Schaufeli et al., (2009) have described it as another word to be used for extreme draining of energy. It has been also described as the stage at which employees can no more contribute to the success of the organisation, since they are not only emotionally but also physically unable to do that (Maslach & Schaufeli, 1993). In another extend it has been also described as the time in a service providers' career that they cannot even perform the necessary job requirements and the everyday activities due to this lack of energy that they usually cannot personally explain how it has emerged (Kim, 2008; Savicki, 2002).

Chronic increase of stress levels and emotional exhaustion as it has been discussed above, leads to burnout (Adelmann, 1989, Dewe *et al.*, 2010). This is the extreme consequence of emotional exhaustion, emotional dissonance and the increased stress levels. It has been identified that a great percentage of people that are exposed to customers' aggressive behaviour will eventually face burnout. This very negative effect is being described through psychoanalytical research as extreme physical as well as emotional exhaustion (Kim, 2008; Winstanley & Whittington, 2002).

People do not even know that they suffer from burnout until this has consequences on their physical well-being. People may face several symptoms because of burnout such as extreme fatigue, not being able to perform simple daily tasks, headaches and an overall feeling of physical exhaustion (Dewe *et al.*, 2010).

It has been argued that it is not emotional labour that leads to emotional exhaustion and then to burnout, but the way that people perform emotional labour. This means by either engaging in deep or surface acting. Adding to that, it has been found that customer aggressiveness makes people feel alienated and dissatisfied which is what actually enhances surface acting and thus creates more burnout in the long run (Kim, 2008; Wharton, 1993).

Burnout is not only a personal issue. It has been identified in the literature that burnout works the same like the rest of the emotions. As it has been discussed above, emotions are contagious. The same happens with burnout. It can pass on from one employee to another and create an organisational challenge (Bakker *et al.*, 2005). When a service provider is completely out of energy due to burnout, this can be easily passed on to the people they are working closely with, or any other colleagues that are around them. As a result, a person suffering from burnout harms the whole organisation due to the fact that it increases the chances of other people around them to become “affected”. It is very important, though, to identify how burnout is transmitted from one person to the other. This is usually being done subconsciously, since when employees have a certain feeling (such as extreme emotional exhaustion) they usually have certain behaviours (Adelmann, 1989). These behaviours are being observed and passed on to their colleagues with all the extreme negative consequences that this may imply (Bakker *et al.*, 2005).

The fact that burnout is contagious can create many problems in terms of dealing with the negative consequences of engaging in emotional labour during interacting with aggressive customers. It means that employees do not only need to handle their own emotions but also try not to be affected by the negative emotions of others (Wang & Groth, 2014). In the next session, the author will discuss the impact of the group influence among other factors as a way to handle and overcome those negative consequences.

8.6 Depersonalisation

People that interact with aggressive customers and thus engage in surface acting when they do that, face depersonalisation at a great extend (Boyd, 2002; Goussinsky, 2011; Grandey *et al.*, 2007; Harris & Reynolds, 2003). Depersonalisation is mainly a component of burnout. According to Byrne *et al.*, (2013) when we use the term depersonalisation we are actually referring to the degree to which employees relate to their jobs. When people face depersonalisation, they feel alienated from their jobs and thus their customers (Byrne *et al.*,

2013). When facing this issue, employees do not really feel satisfaction and energy when performing their job duties, but they rather feel that they need to do what they have to do and do not go the extra mile and try to increase their performance (Goussinsky, 2011). It has been identified in the literature that depersonalisation mainly occurs after facing prolonged burnout and thus people create feelings of disengagement from their jobs, keeping the performance of their everyday activities at the minimum requirements (Byrne *et al.*, 2013; Grandey, 2004; Goussinsky, 2011).

Depersonalisation affects organisations both in the short run but also in the long run. Service organisations are mainly being affected the most. If employees experience this, the organisation will face the issue of having employees that are not committed and dedicated to their jobs. Another important aspect, is the fact that they will not feel close to their customers (Byrne *et al.*, 2013). As a result, whenever they face aggressive behaviours from their customers they will become rather defensive and try to alienate themselves as much as possible from the situation (Goussinsky, 2011). This has proved to be a reason that may harm the way customers' complaints will be handled. Therefore, customer aggressiveness may be negatively affected and customers become angrier since they feel that employees are simply trying to do their job at the minimum level.

8.7 Increase in absenteeism

Among the various consequences, an increase in absenteeism is one that affects many organisations when employees face aggressive behaviours on behalf of customers. The issue becomes more intense, and there is an even more increase in employee absences when they are working in services organisations and they have not only to deal with aggressiveness but also engage in emotional labour and display the right emotions (Grandey *et al.*, 2004). Regular aggressiveness from customers is something that creates a negative working environment and this increases the likelihood of being absent from work. On the one hand, people get tired and they want to help themselves relax away from work.

On the other hand, there is stress, emotional exhaustion, a decreased sense of well-being and burnout, as mentioned above. All those consequences cause employee absenteeism (George, 1989; Hackett *et al.*, 1989; Liu *et al.*, 2013).

Employees have feelings and they need to regulate them from time to time. According to Lu *et al.*, (2013) that has researched emotional labour in the hospitality industry, the more employees deal with aggressive customers and the more they hide their true emotions there is an increase in stress that leads to absences. Employees need to alienate themselves from the “problematic” situation and the negativity that is being created around this. Since they cannot do that when they are at work, the only way to manage this is to go away and distance themselves from the situation (Karatepe, 2009; Karatepe & Nkondong, 2014). Therefore, absences really act as a way for employees to distance themselves from the difficult situation of not being able to express their feelings and at the same time having to deal with other peoples’ feelings and emotions.

There are various forms of absences among employees. They may take a few hours off work, a few days or a more prolonged period. This largely depends on many factors, one of them being how intense is the aggressiveness they are facing from their customers and how organisations deal with it. The absences take various forms just because of the above mentioned reasons (Muraven & Baumeister, 2000). The main reason that causes employees to be absent for a longer period from their job is burnout (Firth & Britton 1989; Karatepe, 2015; Saxton *et al.*, 1991). As mentioned above, burnout is a very likely effect of surface acting and customers’ aggression. When employees start facing symptoms of burnout, both physically and emotionally, they need to do something to help themselves. Absenteeism seems to be the main technique that they are using to manage that (Hackett *et al.*, 1989). According to Hackett *et al.*, (1989), employees are absent from work for a longer period of time when they face burnout. Since burnout, though, is not something that can go away when employees get some rest, throughout the year absences will increase

due to the fact that symptoms of burnout will definitely come back and sometimes are even stronger than the first time they were felt.

Absenteeism affects both employees and the organisation they are working for as a whole. According to Grandey *et al.*, (2004), an increasing number of absences is one reason that leads to a decrease in productivity and customer satisfaction in organisations. Therefore, this creates further problems and challenges for organisations. On the one hand, employees face negative reactions because of the issue of customer aggressiveness and continuous engagement in surface acting. On the other hand, this causes more dissatisfied customers which may lead to more aggressiveness due to complaints in the future (Grandey, 2004). Absenteeism, among the rest of the consequences, is something that needs to be monitored and handled so that the negative outcomes can be avoided.

8.8 Decrease in job satisfaction

According to Spector *et al.*, (2000) job satisfaction is the variable that counts how an employee feels about his/her job. Job satisfaction is increasing for various reasons and the same happens for dissatisfaction. When employees face dissatisfaction about their job, they feel that they are not happy with what they are doing, that there is no positive purpose for performing their job in general they have a negative attitude towards their jobs, their colleagues and customers (Blau *et al.*, 2010). Surface acting has been associated with dissatisfaction whereas deep acting has been associated with job satisfaction (Hur *et al.*, 2015).

There are many reasons that cause a decrease in job satisfaction, and facing aggressive customers in combination of engaging in surface acting while dealing with them is one of the most well-known (Bono & Vey, 2007; Hur *et al.*, 2015). Employees may have a feeling of general dissatisfaction or a feeling of specific dissatisfaction due to the fact that they have to face aggressiveness (Mann, 2005). Either way, dissatisfaction is visible not only to their customers but to their colleagues as well. As a result, this makes it harder to handle,

since both customers and colleagues can “see” that an employee is dissatisfied and due to the fact that this feeling is contagious as well as the rest of the feelings (Grandey, 2004; Hur *et al.*, 2015; O Leary-Kelly *et al.*, 1996).

Due to the fact that job satisfaction has been associated to positive or negative organisational culture, research on this area has given attention on how a decrease in job satisfaction can influence culture in the long term. It has been identified that a decrease in job satisfaction due to customer aggressiveness and continuous engagement in surface acting has led to a more negative culture (Blau *et al.*, 2010). People within the organisation face negativity due to the fact that their colleagues share the feeling of dissatisfaction with them and as a result they may feel dissatisfied as well in the long run; this is mainly due to the fact that feelings are contagious that has been discussed above.

8.9 Work – life conflict

It has been identified that having to perform emotion regulation (surface acting) has been associated with stress and depersonalisation which leads to various conflicts on peoples’ personal lives. The more people have to suppress their emotions and perform surface acting, the more they need to work on their inner feelings and sometimes even change their attitudes and way of thinking to be able to abide to organisational regulations (Kinman, 2009; Wharton & Erickson, 1995). All this personal strain to regulate emotions at work will eventually take its place into people’s personal lives (Kinman, 2009). Especially when people regulate anger, this makes it even more possible to become a factor that will intervene in an employee’s personal life (Kinman & Jones, 2001).

Work-life conflict is a type of conflict that can create various problems both in an employee as a person and in the organisation as a whole. It occurs when people feel that there is a role conflict in their lives (Kinman, 2009). On one hand, they have the pressures that are associated from being a member in an organisation (their job). On the other hand, they have the pressures that are associated from being a member in another group, which in

this case is the family (Montgomery *et al.*, 2006). Sometimes, due to pressures coming from within the work environment, there is a role-conflict between those two roles, the work and family role. People have to be able to display the right emotions in front of an angry customer for example and then they have to look happy and be able to spend time and engage into leisure activities with their kids. All this creates a conflict which is sometimes not very easy to handle (Kinman & Jones 2001). This extra effort that people have to impose to be able to do well in both roles in their lives, creates a general discomfort. This can manifest in sleeping difficulties, a feeling of irritation when having to perform various tasks, withdrawing from various social activities and sometimes not being able to participate in various family leisure activities (ibid). As a result, work intervenes in family life. Even though it is clear that work effort can intervene in family life, there is not clear evidence on how organisations can handle this and thus create a better emotional environment for their employees (Kinman, 2009). It has been argued that organisations should be able to understand the various conflicts between work and family roles but even though there is a lot of discussion in the literature on this area, there is no clear evidence on how to handle this when employees engage in emotional labour.

Emotional labour makes this work-life conflict even more difficult and more intense so that it makes it even more difficult to handle. According to Kinman (2009), if employees have to deal with aggressive customers and perform emotional labour, (which is most of the time surface acting), there is a high possibility that they will face work-life conflict. As a result, this conflict will therefore interact in their job performance as well, which will be lowered because of that aspect. Both Kinman (2009) and Montgomery *et al.*, (2006) agree that there is a huge need in organisations to engage their employees in emotional labour. Despite that, as it has been discussed, this creates a conflict between work and family roles. This conflict needs to be addressed further and future researchers should try to give more answers as to how to handle it and even eliminate it.

More studies have shown that supporting employees to engage more in deep acting would be the ideal way of handling this (Song & Liu, 2010). In most studies that have been contacted, deep acting is much less associated with work-life conflict as well as the rest of the negative consequences of surface acting (Deery, 2002; Grandey & Fisk 2006). The way that we can help employees engage more in deep acting while handling aggressive customers, and thus eliminate those negative consequences is an under-researched area that needs development (Goussinsky, 2015).

8.10 Effects on service performance

Even though emotional exhaustion, stress and reduced feeling of well-being, burnout and the rest of the consequences are very important consequences of customer aggressive behaviour, there are also other negative effects. The effect on service outcomes has been also greatly discussed in the existing literature. In general terms, surface acting affects customer experience negatively according to a number of authors (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Boyd, 2002; Johnson & Spector, 2007). During interaction with abusive or aggressive customers those negative effects become even more. Therefore, performance of employees is negatively affected (Wang & Groth, 2014). Customers demand employees to perform on a higher level when they are angry or dissatisfied. Due to the negative effects of surface acting during aggressive customers' interaction, though, performance lowers and customers remain unsatisfied. So not only employees get negative feelings because of this situation but they also perform on a lower level which increases their stress, level. It has been argued in the literature that not buffering out those negative effects will create a tremendous cost both on organisations as well as their people (Lu *et al.*, 2013).

After the discussion on the consequences as they appear in the literature, the second Research Question emerges. It has been indicated that research in the hospitality industry is not focussing on this specific area of emotional labour when interacting with aggressive customers (Karatepe, 2009). Combining emotional labour with the effects it brings along

when interacting with aggressive customers it is a rather under-researched phenomenon for the specific industry. Therefore, the second Research Question that focusses on this aspect is the following:

Research Question 2 (RQ2): What are the negative consequences of employees' engagement in surface acting when interacting with aggressive customers?

Further in this literature review paper, the author will investigate the ways that will help employees to buffer out those negative effects and work more effectively and efficiently.

9. Buffering out the negative effects of surface acting during aggressive customers' interactions

According to Goussinsky (2012), even though it has been greatly discussed that employees face customer verbal aggression regularly, little is known on how employees actually cope with this. The evidence that we have so far, according to the literature and as it has been analysed above, is that the main way that employees use to cope with the difficult stressor of handling aggressive customers, is through engaging in surface acting. This of course has brought along the negative consequences that have been analysed on the previous section. We have some evidence on how to deal with aggressive behaviour but this has been mainly focussing on such behaviour coming from supervisors or co-workers (Djurkovic *et al.*, 2005; Hogh & Dofradottir, 2001). This has left the area of how to cope with the impact of aggressive customers on employees and further address the negative consequences due to the increase use of surface acting under-researched. Even though aggressiveness is more coming from customers and less often from supervisors, managers and colleagues, the area has been left with not much empirical research (Goussinsky 2015; Grandey *et al.*, 2007). As a result, very recent studies have started questioning how people can work on those consequences and eliminate them as much as they can since they create problems on both employees personally but also in organisations as a whole (Goussinsky, 2015). This section discusses the existing literature findings on the ways to buffer out the consequences and

discusses the gaps that will further be addressed later on. It should be noted here, though, that research in how to overcome the negative antecedents that occur due to the fact that employees engage in surface acting when they interact with aggressive customers specifically is very sparse and needs further development (Goussinsky, 2015).

9.1 Behavioural disengagement

Even though there is still a discussion whether this is an effective tool to handle situations of customer aggressiveness, the limited research that exists on how to cope with the negative consequences came to the conclusion that behavioural disengagement would be a way to do that (Reynolds & Harris, 2006; Skinner *et al.*, 2003). Behavioural disengagement happens when an employee avoids a stressful situation, such as an anger event, by doing something else rather than providing a service to an angry customer, leaving the stressful place or take a break (Bailey & McCollough, 2000).

Coping with customer aggressive behaviour and its consequences through this way is not effective most of the times (Goussinsky, 2012). Even though research has shown that this may be a possible strategy, it has been indicated that this is mainly an emotion-focused strategy which cannot be used effectively and for prolonged periods of time (Semmer, 2003). As it has been indicated by Semmer (2003), if employees develop the habit of behavioural disengagement during an interaction with an aggressive customer, that would cause many problems to the organisation as a whole. More specifically, service organisations need to display certain emotions in front of the customer to keep them satisfied as discussed earlier on in this chapter. If the customer faces an employee who just leaves the scene or avoids to handle the situation, this would bring along more anger on behalf of the customer and thus will create an even more dissatisfied customer. According to Reynolds & Harris (2006) which have specifically researched the hospitality industry, using behavioural disengagement will not work as a long term buffering effect but only as a limited, short term effect.

As a result, this buffering effect seems to be a way that is being used so far and may be used in the future, but it needs further empirical research to identify how it will become a more helpful tool and how, by using it, employees will avoid harming the organisation and thus create more problems with customers in the future (Goussinsky, 2012; Goussinsky, 2011; Reynolds & Harris, 2006; Semmer, 2003; van Dierendonck & Mevissen, 2002).

9.2 Venting negative emotions

Venting negative emotions is another emotion-focussed strategy that has been suggested initially, but also a strategy that recent researchers have disagreed with for various reasons. To begin with, venting means expressing your emotions such as anger, frustration, stress to others on an open way so that they can see how you feel and you can help yourself be relieved from those emotions (Carver *et al.*, 1989; Carver & Connor-Smith, 2010; Folkman & Lazarus, 1985). Venting could either happen by expressing those emotions in words or combine it with the use of body language as well.

Recent research is not in agreement with this strategy for various reasons. At first, researchers indicated that venting negative emotions is not in compliance with the desired organisational rules that each employee should be able to display (Carver & Connor-Smith, 2010; Grandey *et al.*, 2004). Also, it has been indicated that recent research did not find reports that this method is been used by employees as a buffering effect since it seems to be very against the organisational rules (Goussinsky, 2012). This method will eventually lead to more anger and frustration on behalf of the customer which is something that will even cause more stress to employees both in the short term, while dealing with the situation, but also in the long term.

Further than that, it has been indicated that this method does not help employees relieve their emotions but it works on the opposite way. According to Tschan *et al.*, (2005) as well as Grandey *et al.*, (2010), venting negative emotions will cause more stress to employees and make them feel unhappy. The same way that suppressing negative emotions (surface

acting) increase stress and emotional exhaustion, is how venting negative emotions will work on employees mental and physiological health (Tschan *et al.*, 2005). It is, therefore, more likely that venting negative emotions will not work very effectively for all employees and it is thus a buffering effect that is still under discussion in the literature.

9.3 Job autonomy and self-monitoring

Authors paid attention to the role of job autonomy in the attempt to buffer out the negative effects of emotional labour. Job autonomy is the extend at which an employee's job provides him/her with freedom of choice, a high degree of independence as well as discretion in the way they will perform and execute their job (Abraham, 2000; Goussinsky, 2015). If an employee seems to be allowed to perform their job in a way that they can personally implement their own ideas and develop their own ways of executing various tasks, then this means that they are working under a degree of job autonomy. There are of course many degrees of job autonomy, ranging from high autonomy to less autonomy (Hackman & Oldham, 1975; Goussinsky, 2015). Even if employees have just a low degree of autonomy in the workplace this could be helpful in coping with customers' aggressive behaviour and emotional labour. On the other hand, if employees have no autonomy in their workplace while having to deal with difficult customers and impose certain behaviours, this leads to dissatisfaction, lack of commitment and an increase in stress levels as well as a decrease in well-being (Abraham, 1999; Goussinsky, 2011). According to Semmer (2003), the psychological effects of engaging in surface acting while dealing with aggressive customers could be decreased on a great extend if employees are given more job autonomy. Job autonomy could even take the form of allowing employees to choose each time how they will handle an angry customer (Goussinsky, 2015). Thus, to be able to choose according to the situation. This of course would have a huge impact on the original management role that is usually the one that imposes those behaviours to employees (*ibid*). If managers are being told that they should allow more autonomy that

means that the whole organisational culture should be re-formed to accommodate that (Holman *et al.*, 2002). A good example is Grandey *et al.*, 2005 research, that have argued that the sense of job autonomy brings along some intrinsic rewards such as a positive mood in employees and a feeling of satisfaction. They state that this will compensate for the stress and the feeling of exhaustion that is being created by the emotion regulation that happens through surface acting. If employees have high job autonomy this can compensate for the loss of energy they experience when they face emotional dissonance (ibid). The same study reports that if employees feel that they cannot control parts of their job and they have very low or no autonomy, this will lead to more severe consequences, additional stress and dissatisfaction when having to deal with difficult situations and engage themselves in surface acting.

Job autonomy goes along with self-monitoring, another aspect that has been taken into consideration when dealing with aggressive customers and emotional labour. It has been argued that people that are high in self-monitoring are being affected less by emotional labour and more specifically surface acting consequences (Huang & Dai, 2010). On the other hand, people that are low in self-monitoring feel more negatively when they perceive the negative consequences of emotional labour during handling rude or angry customers. This has been validated by studies that combined self-monitoring with job autonomy. It has been found that having job autonomy and a great extent of self-monitoring will lower the levels of stress for employees (Grandey *et al.*, 2004). It has been stated above that stress is one of the most difficult consequences of engaging in emotional labour during interaction with aggressive customers. The reason is that in the long term, it leads to burnout with all the negative consequences that this may imply. Therefore, in an attempt to buffer out this negative effect, researchers indicated that job autonomy will help in a great extend (Goussinsky, 2015; Wang & Groth, 2014). As it has been stated by Grandey *et al.*, (2004) if management gives employees more job autonomy and allow them to self-monitor, this is

one way to reduce their stress levels. Adding to that, Wang & Groth (2014) support that if employees feel that they have the right of taking a break or take a decision during a difficult situation with a client this will help them feel less alienated and more important. Having in mind this aspect, those researchers break the norm of giving strict instructions to employees in terms of customer service and let them take initiatives and responsibilities in what they are doing. Further, Wang & Groth (2014) as well as Grandey *et al.*, (2007) say that both job autonomy and self-monitoring are new terms in the area of buffering out negative effects of surface acting when facing aggression so they perceive that there is a gap in the existing literature. They call for further research to validate and further analyse these results.

9.4 The role of organisational, group and family emotional support

According to Yagil (2008), emotional support is being derived when an individual seeks for any kind of either emotional comfort or simple understanding from their colleagues, associates, managers or any other social groups and family members. Comfort and understanding may be requested when employees feel that they need to talk about a difficult customer, share their negative experiences and even engage into venting emotions with their colleagues that usually share the same experiences with them (Bailey & McCollough, 2000).

Existing literature has identified that both work group support and family support may be a good way of buffering out the negative effects of surface acting when handling customers' aggressive behaviour. It has been stated that surface acting's negative effects, especially during facing aggression may be severe without the support of others (Goussinsky, 2011). People need to feel that they are not alone and they have other people close to them to share their dissatisfaction about any negative outcome that has to do with customers' interactions (Appelbaum & Roy-Girard, 2007). As it has been discussed in the section analysing the consequences, there is most of the times work-life conflict created because of

the conflict between the emotions and the role that employees need to have at work and at home. As a result of this, it may be more difficult for employees to seek emotional support from their families, due to the fact that they usually need to display certain positive feelings at home to keep their family members happy and their personal life on a good balance (Deery, 2002; Kinman, 2009; Kinman & Jones, 2001). Because of that, even though it would be very helpful to seek for emotional support at home, this is often in conflict of ones role at home and it may create a negative consequence. It is usually easier to seek for emotional support from colleagues and various work groups, since most of the times employees share the same challenges and can support each other more effectively (Goussinsky, 2012).

9.4.1 Perceived organisational support (POS)

Authors in the existing literature have discussed about the perceived organisational support and its outcomes on both how employees engage in emotional labour as well as how they handle the negative effects. Perceived organisational support is the perception of employees of how much the organisation they are working for cares about them, their feelings and how much they value their opinions (Moon *et al.*, 2013). It has been found that the more support that employees perceive they get from the organisation they are working for, the more they will be able to cope with the negative consequences of surface acting (Moon *et al.*, 2013). Interestingly, though, findings suggest that not only employees will be more able to cope with the negative consequences, but they will also engage more in deep acting (Kumar Mishra, 2014; Moon *et al.*, 2013). Adding to that, Wang & Groth (2014) suggest that when employees feel that they have support from their colleagues and managers they will be more able to cope with aggressive customers and the negative consequences of such interactions.

Thus, it is important to consider the value of helping employees feel part of a ‘company family’ in order for them to be able to buffer out any negative effects. Many authors have

been trying to find ways to eliminate the use of surface acting during handling customers, and more specifically angry ones (Ben-Zur, 2009; Tse & Dasborough, 2008). In the most recent studies, as they have been discussed above, it has been identified that this is not the case, and that employees are mostly engaging in surface acting. These recent studies came to identify the role of group and organisational support as the one that will help organisations move their employees towards the use of deep acting (Kumar Mishra, 2014). As it has been stated, though, both perceived organisational support and group support are new concepts and they need to be further examined by researchers (ibid). Furthermore, it has been identified that if employees feel that they are getting the support they need and therefore feel satisfied in their job this will enhance the use of deep acting as well (Hur *et al.*, 2015). In the recent literature, it has been stated that even though POS has been positively associated with deep acting, this is a new addition to the literature that needs further development. Further research should attempt to find how POS would more specifically help in achieving deep acting, since POS is a rather general term that is being used so far in the literature (Brn-Zur, 2009). This should be specifically tested in terms of how this would increase the use of deep acting when interacting with aggressive customers since during those interactions things are changing in regards to how employees feel and behave (Kumar Mishra, 2104; Song & Liu, 2010).

9.4.2 Family Support

The role of group support is as important as the role of family. It has been identified that work family interference is an important element that may help in eliminating the negative effects process. Work family interference is actually experienced by employees when the work and family stressors are not compatible in such a way that participating in one makes it difficult to participate in the other (Wallace, 1999). It's been argued that this may increase the levels of burnout, especially when having to deal with difficult situations at work, such as engaging in emotional labour (Geurts *et al.*, 1999). If employees are

engaging in surface acting with their family this will impact the way they engage in emotional labour at work. Employees do not only display certain emotions at work but they also do that at home. So it has been found that the role of family is positively related to how employees perceive stressors at work and in what extent they can handle it (Wang & Groth, 2014). Taking that into consideration, Wang and Groth (2014) state that Work family Interference is an element that has not been given too much attention by emotional labour researchers. They call for further research to validate the existing outcomes.

9.5 The role of stress appraisal

According to Grandey *et al.*, (2005), research on work aggression, especially if it is coming from customers, has very unique consequences for the employee. As it has been discussed above, stress can be one of the negative consequences that need attention by researchers. Minimising stress can be a good approach towards buffering out the negative effects of surface acting during aggressive behaviour (Grandey *et al.*, 2005). According to Lazarus (1999), stress appraisal (i.e. how threatening is this situation to me?) is considered to be a very important element when being engaged in emotional labour. As it has been discussed above, stress is a negative consequence occurring when employees engage in surface acting when they are interacting with aggressive customers. The role of stress appraisal is affecting the way people feel and therefore behave within their working environment (Cooper & Cartwright, 1994). If employees feel that the situation they are facing is not stressful then it is more likely to behave positively (Robertson & Cooper, 2010; Robertson *et al.*, 2015). Productivity increases and employees feel happier and become more motivated (Robertson & Cooper, 2011; Robertson *et al.*, 2015). Grandey *et al.*, (2007) suggests that minimizing the stress appraisal will be a good way of working towards minimising the negative effects of surface acting as well as helping employees to be engaged in deep acting more.

Minimising stress, though, is not something that can be done very easily. One must take into consideration the stressors (what causes stress) and work on those ones so that stress can be minimised on a great extent. Various organisations may be focussing on overcoming stress itself and not the reasons (stressors) that have caused it (Cooper, 1995; Moss & Cooper, 2016). Once organisations manage the situations that cause stress to their employees effectively, they will be able to create a highly performing environment that would lead to a number of positive results (Robertson & Cooper; 2015). In their research, Grandey *et al.*, (2004) discuss about those stressors and their importance. One stressor is job autonomy that has been discussed above. Increasing job autonomy will eventually decrease stress. Other stressors include the job stability, job role and ambiguity (Beehr *et al.*, 2000). Working on those will also have a positive effect on stress decrease. This will impact the way employees perceive emotional labour and help them use more deep acting in their interactions with customers. It has been clearly stated by Grandey *et al.*, (2004) that we cannot avoid stressful situations at work, but minimising stress by working directly on the causes will help employees buffer out this negative consequence. It is also a way to increase the use of deep acting during interacting with aggressive customers, which in the long term will help organisations succeed (ibid). Stress is still a source of discussion among researchers in terms of how it is reduced in the work environment and it should be included in any new models aiming at reducing the negative consequences of surface acting.

9.6 The role of positive, negative affectivity and self-efficacy

In order for researchers to identify the ways that will work towards buffering out the negative effects, they also worked in making distinctions between the people that are affected more and the ones that are less affected. This identification has helped many authors discuss the buffering out effects more effectively. Since this is a new concept, that

has started emerging in the last years, it is argued that this area needs further research as well.

A lot of research has been made so far on the aspect of identifying who is affected more and why. First of all, authors have started researching whether different personalities are affected more from the negative effects of surface acting during customers' aggressive behaviours (Goussinsky, 2012). Positive and negative affectivity as well as self-efficacy are discussed by a number of authors that have investigated the relationship of the characteristics of positive and negative affectivity and the way this helps in buffering out the negative effects of surface acting.

To explain the terms, positive affectivity is characterised by people looking at the positive aspects of life, being in a good mood even if they face a bad situation and having an overall feeling of satisfaction and fulfilment in life (Bowling *et al.*, 2008). People that score high in positive affectivity, seem to be able to handle difficult situations easier and in the contrary accept them and try to help themselves work through a solution. On the other hand, negative affectivity is characterised by being dissatisfied, with a reduced sense of well-being and pessimism (Bono & Vey, 2007). People that score high in negative affectivity seem to take life in general in a more negative way and find it difficult to work through solutions when bad situations occur both in their personal and professional lives. It has been also indicated that people with Positive or Negative Affectivity are stable and this characteristic does not change over time or through various experiences. It is rather one of the most stable characteristics in an individual (Larsen & Katelaar, 1991; Watson & Slack, 1993).

When talking about self-efficacy, we mean "the belief in ones' capabilities to organise and execute the course of action required to produce given attainments" (Bandura, 1997, p.3).

This concept has been further described by Evers *et al.*, (2001) as the actual belief of a person in his/her abilities to achieve certain things both in personal as well as in

professional lives. The work-related definition of self-efficacy, refers to the belief of an employee in their personal ability to perform the emotion work that it is required by them through the organisation, to cope with customer aggressiveness in an effective and successful way.

According to Li & Yang (2009), people with high self-efficacy are much more likely to be able to handle both aggressive customers and the negative consequences of emotional labour. People that have a strong believe in their abilities on displaying the emotion rules that they are obliged to display, find it much more easier to handle both aggressive customers as well as the negative consequences of emotional labour that come along with that. Self-efficacy, as stated above, is more related to attitudes towards job, leaving out the overall personality of an employee and how they deal with difficult situations outside the work environment. On the other hand, Positive affectivity is a more general term that discusses the beliefs and attitudes of one as a person in general, both in their personal as well as professional lives.

In terms of Positive and Negative Affectivity, it has been identified that an affective personality is really a predictor of how well people can cope with stress and thus stressful situations that occur in their lives. It has been found that people with high negative affectivity personalities are more affected from the consequences of emotional labour and find it more difficult to accept ways of handling and buffering out those negative effects (Goussinsky, 2012; Goussinsky, 2011; Judge *et al.*, 2009). On the other hand, people with a positive affectivity personality are less affected by their customers' aggressive behaviour and the consequences that come along when engaging in surface acting. (Appelbaum & Roy-Girard, 2007). In more detail, people with high Negative Affectivity seem to be able to adopt less successful ways of dealing with stressful situations, such as avoiding the situations, becoming disengaged and being in denial (Carver *et al.*, 1989; Kluger & DeNisi, 1996). On the other hand, people with high Positive Affectivity address more

problem-focussed solutions, such as the ones being discussed above (Yamasaki *et al.*, 2006). It is more likely that they will ask for support from their colleagues, managers and family.

In terms of emotional labour and affectivity, it seems that people with high Negative Affectivity do not easily accept the fact that they need to display certain emotions due to organisational rules than people with high Positive Affectivity do. (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Brotheridge & Lee, 2003). As a result, people with high Negative Affectivity find it hard to engage in surface acting, thus suppressing their true emotions. Also, they get affected more. People with high Positive Affectivity do engage in surface acting more “naturally” and they are affected less (Schaubroeck & Jones, 2000).

Recent studies have identified a gap in the literature in terms of how these different personalities are affected as well as accepting the ways that will help them reduce those negative effects. (Goussinsky, 2012). It has been argued through some studies that due to the fact that people that have high Positive Affectivity are usually used to receive positive stimuli and perceive things more positively, may react negatively and face a lot of physical health issues when they feel dissatisfied (Hochwarter *et al.*, 2003; Judge 1993; Shaw *et al.*, 2000).

According to Goussinsky (2012) findings, people with high positive affectivity may be more likely to be offended by their customers’ aggressive behaviour and thus feel more negatively. The rationale behind that may be the fact that customer aggressiveness may feel as an injustice for people with high Positive Affectivity. Due to the fact that they perceive life more positively, this may affect them since they feel that angry, offensive and dissatisfied customers are mostly negative people and they complain simply due to their negativity Francis & Barling, 2005; Gilliland & Chan, 2001; Tepper, 2001; Vermunt & Steensma, 2005). This is something that deserves more empirical research to be able to identify whether employing more people that are extroverts and have positive personality

may be a buffering effect on its own, or whether this may create more problems, since they will feel offended from aggressive behaviours on behalf of their customers (Goussinsky, 2012). On the other hand, it has been evidenced, that it is easier to train and develop employees that have high Positive Affectivity to be able to handle difficult situations with customers (Deery, 2002). As a result, this may be a good starting point to help organisations better handling those issues, by re-forming their standards of recruitment and training, especially if they are facing regular customer aggression. According to Goussinsky (2012), this is something that needs to be developed further and empirically tested to be able to conclude on how it will work.

What has also not been confirmed yet in the literature, is if and how people with high self-efficacy and Positive Affectivity will be able to engage more in deep acting while dealing with aggressive customers and what the results would be (Ibid). This is another aspect that needs further development and empirical research to add in the existing literature.

9.7 Initial and on-going training of employees

Organisations play a very important role on how to help employees overcome the stressors and consequences they are facing. Their role and contribution can be enhanced through offering not only initial but also continuous training to their employees (Goussinsky, 2012). Special attention in terms of training and developing their staff should be given to those employees that are offering customer service and are in a continuous interaction with clients on a daily basis (Grandey *et al.*, 2004).

Training of employees can take various forms to help them be more capable of both handling difficult situations but also being able to overcome stress and other negative consequences that may arise from their engagement with aggressive customers. First of all, Goussinsky (2012) states that organisations should be providing employees with coping skills and tools that will enable them to handle situations that are hard to be handled. Such situations are aggressive behaviours of their customers, demands from customers that

cannot be easily satisfied and also any other difficult events. By having the skills to cope, employees will feel more capable, gain confidence and see customers in a less threatening way which will be a very helpful tool (Grandey *et al.*, 2004; Goussinsky, 2012; Karatepe, 2009; Karatepe & Nkendon, 2014).

Furthermore, training will help employees in another important aspect as well, the one of social support needed to help in buffering the negative consequences, as it has been discussed above. Training sessions give the opportunity to employees to interact with their colleagues, exchange experiences and discuss the various challenges they are facing (Goussinsky, 2012). Even that simple interaction will help employees develop this social support needed to help them not only cope with negativity on behalf of customers, but also feel that they are not alone into this and they have other people to rely on for support and comfort. This, along with learning ways to cope with aggressive customer can be a good beginning.

Training should have been initiated to teach employees ways to engage in deep acting as well (Wang & Groth, 2014). As it has been stated in their article, employees should be prepared and able to engage themselves in deep acting when interacting with aggressive customers. Even though there are various techniques to teach employees how to engage in deep acting, existing literature does not give certain answers whether this is possible when interacting with aggressive customers and how it could be achieved (Goussinsky, 2015; Karatepe & Nkendon, 2014). The only thing that has been proved in the literature, is the fact that by using deep acting instead of surface acting will lead to less negative consequences and more positive outcomes for employees (Hochschild, 1983; Blau *et al.*, 2010; Peng *et al.*, 2010). Further empirical research should be initiated to find out how training will help employees engage more in deep acting during the difficult situations of interacting with aggressive customers, since there is a gap in the literature regarding this aspect (Goussinsky, 2015; Karatepe & Nkendon, 2014).

9.8 An increased use of deep acting

It has been identified that there is a positive relationship between deep acting and the performance of employees during service recovery performance (Lin, 2009). When talking about service recovery, this means any interaction that an employee is having with a dissatisfied, complaining or angry client (ibid). During those interactions, employees are actually trying to recover a service, by working on those things that would help a client feel happy again about this service interaction and more generally about the company as a whole (Taegoo *et al.*, 2012). Several studies including customers, that were trying to search what they would need to be happy again after they perceive that the service they have received was not good, arrived at the same conclusion. Customers need to see people that are happy to serve them, ready to listen to them and show that they understand and care (Goussinsky, 2015; Grandey, 2003; Higgs, 2004; Karatepe & Nkendon, 2014; Lee, 2016; Lin, 2009; Pugh, 2001; Taegoo *et al.*, 2012). What most of the studies agree, though, is that customers do not only need to see those things on behalf of employees, they also need to feel that those emotions that employees display are real (ibid).

As it has been discussed at the beginning of this chapter, there are two main ways for employees to engage in emotional labour and those are deep acting and surface acting. As it has been identified above, customers would be happier and more satisfied if they see natural emotions on behalf of employees when they are unhappy about the service they have received; thus they would be happier if employees perform Deep acting. On the other hand, as it has been analysed in this literature review chapter, existing literature has demonstrated that employees mostly engage in surface acting during their interactions with customers that impose aggressive behaviour (Barsade, 2002; Deephi, 2015; Goussinsky, 2015; Grandey, 2007; Harris & Reynolds, 2006; Hoffmann, 2016; Huang & Dai, 2010). Since customers need employees to display more natural emotions, it has been identified that customers can “feel” whether the emotions being displayed by employees are not

natural and thus remain unhappy and dissatisfied (Grandey, 2003; Groth *et al.*, 2009; Karatepe, 2010, Lee, 2016).

This discussion leads to the fact that Deep acting is really important in the service recovery procedures, when dealing with a customer who is angry and dissatisfied and the employee needs to recover the situation (Goussinsky, 2015; Lee, 2016). Therefore, in the services industries, there is an increased need to eliminate the use of surface acting and enhance the use of deep acting during all customer interactions, especially when facing difficult situations with customers (Goussinsky 2015; Lee, 2016; Totterdell & Holman, 2003). As it has been demonstrated in the existing literature, the increase use of deep acting during such interactions will lead to various positive consequences. Some of the negative consequences that will be reduced as a result of an increased use of deep acting vary among reduced stress and emotional exhaustion, eliminate the possibility of burnout, less employee dissatisfaction and absences as well as less feelings of depersonalisation and conflicts between their role as an employee and a family member (Boshoff & Allen, 2000; Taegoo *et al.*, 2012). As it has been discussed in the literature, the negative consequences that occur due to the fact that employees engage in surface acting may be eliminated if they manage to engage in deep acting instead (*ibid*). This is, though, an area that requires empirical testing since there is no research that has been undertaken in order to find out how employees could engage more in deep acting specifically when they interact with aggressive customers and thus what the positive consequences would be or rather find out how this would eliminate the negative consequences of surface acting during those interactions (Goussinsky, 2015; Lee, 2016). This current study is focussing on this gap and is aiming at providing evidence in regards to this under-researched component of emotional labour.

An increase use of deep acting seems to be a subject under discussion for various industries that need to impose certain emotions for their customer satisfaction. One of

those industries is the hospitality industry with which this thesis is dealing with as well. It has been demonstrated, that even though researchers have tried to identify ways to increase the use of deep acting, it seems that the hospitality industry is under-researched on this area (Karatepe, 2009; Karatepe, 2010; Karatepe & Nkondong, 2014; Taegoo *et al.*, 2012). There is no research at present that is actually focussing only on how employees can manage to engage in deep acting when they are specifically interacting with aggressive customers (Goussinsky, 2015; Karatepe & Nkondong, 2014). This is a gap that will be addressed in this current study as discussed earlier.

In the most recent studies, it seems that the area of Emotional Intelligence has been added as a variable that could help employees engage more in deep acting during their difficult customer interactions (Grandey, 2003). To explain this term, Emotional Intelligence is the ability of an individual to understand and handle their own emotions, as well as understanding, evaluating, controlling and handling the emotions of other people (Law *et al.*, 2004; Van Rooy & Viswesvaran 2004). Several authors have tried to identify the importance of Emotional Intelligence on various levels on both one's personal as well as professional life. It has been argued that a person with high levels of Emotional Intelligence can identify, evaluate and control his/her own feelings first, so this will then enable them to evaluate and handle the feelings and thus behaviours of other people as well (Wong & Law 2002; Mayer *et al.*, 2002). As a result, through their interaction with aggressive customers, employees that have high Emotional Intelligence will be more able to understand the feelings of their customers, empathise and thus create a better and a more trusted relationship with them (Taegoo *et al.*, 2012). Therefore, those employees will be able to engage in deep acting as well, since what employees need to be able to do to engage in deep acting, is to really transform their feelings and be able to feel happy when they have to look happy. One way to do that, besides being trained, is by understanding why the person in front of them is unhappy, so that they can do their best to make them

happy (Prati *et al.*, 2009; Karatepe 2009). Further than that, high levels of Emotional Intelligence can on their own eliminate stress, burnout and the feeling of emotional exhaustion (Abraham 2000; Johnson & Spector 2007). People actually feel happier since they can understand why other people behave the way they do and they can work on their feelings since they have the “intelligence” to realise that a person is unhappy and angry and this is the reason why they behave aggressively.

To conclude, increased levels of Emotional Intelligence and the increased use of deep acting seem to be a way to eliminate the negative consequences of surface acting during aggressive customers’ interactions. Emotional intelligence has been identified to be a possible moderating effect of Emotional Labour in general and has been discussed in the literature as a way to increase the positive outcomes for employees that are dealing with their customers’ difficult situations.

After this discussion, two Research Questions emerge. As it has been indicated on the above section of this literature review, the gaps on how to overcome the consequences of engaging in surface acting when interacting with aggressive customers do not only appear in the hospitality industry but are rather more general. This thesis, focussing on this industry, will tend to answer the two questions below:

Research Question 3 (RQ3): How can employees overcome the negative consequences of engaging in surface acting when interacting with aggressive customers?

Research Question 4 (RQ4):

a) How can employees engage more in deep acting when interacting with aggressive customers?

b) How is this going to affect the negative consequences of surface acting in a positive way?

10. Initial Theoretical Framework

After discussing and analysing the existing literature on the area that is under investigation, this chapter is closing with an initial theoretical framework (See figure 1 below). This framework will be explained in this section. This framework has been designed after a consideration of the Research Questions as they emerged from the existing literature. The Research Questions as they appear above in the discussion of the findings are the following:

- **Research Question 1 (RQ1): How do employees engage in emotional labour while interacting with aggressive customers?**
- **Research Question 2 (RQ2): What are the negative consequences of employees' engagement in surface acting when interacting with aggressive customers?**
- **Research Question 3 (RQ3): How can employees overcome the negative consequences of engaging in surface acting when interacting with aggressive customers?**
- **Research Question 4 (RQ4):**

4a) How can employees engage more in deep acting when interacting with aggressive customers?

4b) How is this going to affect the negative consequences of surface acting in a positive way?

Those research questions are then being used as a guidance to derive the interviews' as well as the focus groups' questions that will form the primary research of this thesis (See next chapter for the analysis of the primary research methodology). Below, is an explanation of the initial conceptual framework as it emerged from the above literature review findings.

The conceptual framework, as it can be seen on Figure 1 below, begins by testing whether people engage in surface acting during their interactions with aggressive customers. As it has been indicated in the existing literature findings, people do engage in surface acting rather than deep acting during their interactions with angry customers, due to the reasons that have been aforementioned. In summary, a number of scholars have researched the rationale behind engaging mostly in surface acting when interacting with aggressive customers. The main outcome out of those researches, is that employees tend to impose inauthentic emotions and hide their true feelings during their interactions with aggressive customers (Barsade, 2002; Bechtoldt *et al.*, 2011; Bakker *et al.*, 2005; Goussinsky, 2015; Deephi, 2015; Huang & Dai, 2010; Rup & Spenser, 2006). Therefore, this research will be testing whether surface acting occurs in the hospitality industry in Cyprus, where this research is taking place.

The next aspect, that this framework is dealing with and testing, is the consequences of engaging in surface acting while interacting with aggressive customers. After a very careful review of the existing theory, a number of consequences have been identified, that merely explain what happens when employees engage in surface acting while interacting with aggressive customers. Those consequences have been identified by various scholars that were dealing with this important issue, which gain a lot of attention in the recent decades (for example Goussinsky, 2011; Goussinsky, 2015; Karatepe, 2009; Karatepe & Nkendon, 2014; Kim & Choi, 2016; Lee, 2016). The consequences that emerge in this sensitive area are: Emotional Dissonance, an increase in psycho-physiological stress, emotional exhaustion, burnout, depersonalisation, an increase in absenteeism, decrease in job satisfaction, work-life conflict and effects on the service performance (Goussinsky, 2011; Goussinsky, 2015; Karatepe, 2009; Karatepe & Nkendon, 2014; Kim & Choi, 2016; Lee, 2016). Those effects, why they occur, how they appear as well as the harm they do to both organisations and employees are being analytically discussed on Section 7 of the

current literature review chapter. This research will therefore test whether those consequences or more are occurring among the employees of the hospitality industry in Cyprus.

After considering the consequences, the framework tests the ways to buffer out those consequences. The gap in the literature emerges out of those ways since as it has been identified by various scholars, research on buffering out the consequences of engaging in surface acting while interacting with aggressive customers is very sparse and does not provide a coherent picture (Bechtoldt *et al.*, 2011; Goussinsky, 2015; Huang & Dai, 2010; Karatepe, 2011; Karatepe, 2015; Lu *et al.*, 2013; Wang & Groth, 2014). The existing ways to buffer out the consequences, even though they still need investigation according to the various researchers in this area are the following: behavioural disengagement, venting negative emotions, job autonomy and self-monitoring, organisational, group and family emotional support, stress appraisal role, positive, negative affectivity and self-efficacy, training of employees and an increase in deep acting. This framework is testing those ways and looking at any new ways that can be added to the final framework. As it has been discussed in the literature gap section, the ways to overcome the consequences have been empirically tested only in parts and therefore more empirical research is needed to identify those ways.

Further to this, it has been identified in very recent literature, that the use of more genuine and natural ways when interacting with aggressive customers, such as deep acting, have not been tested (Goussinsky, 2015; Huang & Dai 2010; Hur *et al.*, 2015; Karatepe, 2010; Karatepe & Nkendon, 2014; Lee, 2016; Taegoo *et al.*, 2012). There are a few scholars that discuss the possibility of deep acting being a good way to overcome the negative consequences of surface acting. Furthermore it is suggested that deep acting would have positive results if being utilised when interacting with aggressive customers (Goussinsky, 2015; Karatepe, 2009; Karatepe, 2010; Lee, 2016; Taegoo *et al.*, 2012). It is agreed,

though, among those scholars that the area of deep acting and how it can be applied when interacting with aggressive customers is under-researched (ibid). Therefore, there is no solid evidence to support how this can be achieved and how it will lead to both a decrease in the negative consequences as well as a better interaction with aggressive customers. As a result, this framework adds deep acting and it is testing how it can be achieved and the positive results it can lead to.

The framework is presented in figure 1 below.

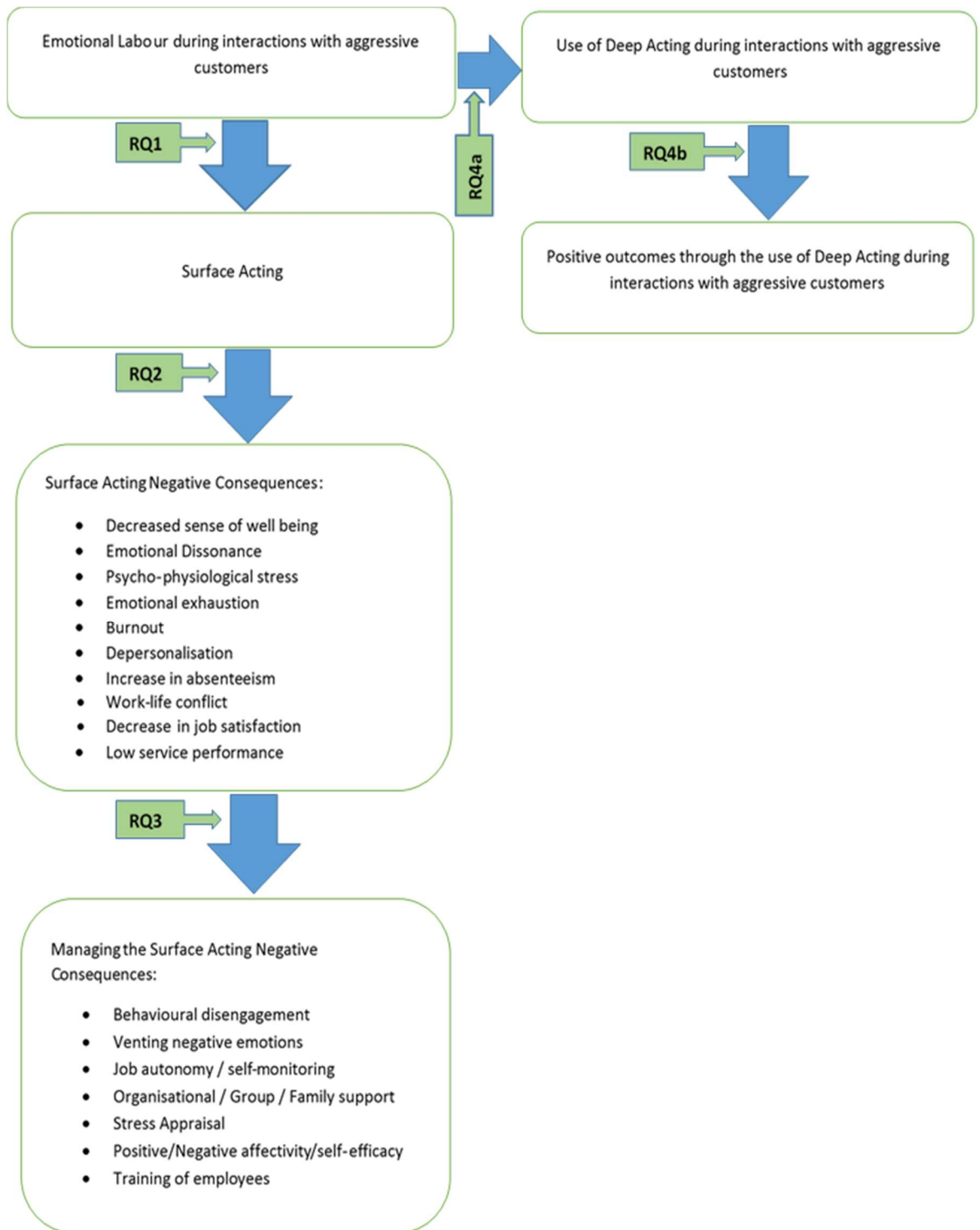


Figure 2.1: Initial theoretical framework created for this thesis.

11. Conclusion

This chapter provides the theoretical foundations of this research. It presents the conducted narrative literature review that reveals the up-to-date knowledge on the key concepts that have been identified. After the discussion of the main concepts that concern the area under investigation, this chapter synthesises the results and formulates the initial conceptual framework on managing the negative consequences of surface acting and the concept of deep acting which is being tested in the primary research. This conceptual framework provides the basis for further empirical investigation and validation, which is the main focus of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1. Introduction

This chapter describes and analyses the methodology that will be used in conducting the research of this thesis. In addition, it includes the ways of data collection and data analysis. Specifically, the first section includes the thesis general research questions and objectives. Further, then next section includes the philosophical positioning of this thesis. After that, the purpose of the research, the approach and rationale behind the strategy follow. An explanation of the qualitative data will be provided and the rationale of choosing it as opposed to Quantitative. Further, this chapter provides an insight in semi-structured interviews and focus groups, the reason of choice and the way of analysing the primary data that has been collected.

2. Philosophical Positioning

It is of great importance for all researchers to identify, evaluate and analyse their philosophical positioning. It is not only a tool that guides the research, but it also provides the researcher with the opportunity to position him/herself on the desired approach. Thus, this approach helps the researcher choose the research method(s) to follow. The Research Questions, Research Objectives and the aim of the research are among the factors that contribute to taking a decision about which research paradigm to follow as well as the research methods that will be used. In this section of the Methodology chapter, the researcher analyses all the research paradigms and explains the rationale behind the decision of choosing a specific research paradigm to follow. According to Bryman (2004), it is really important for researchers to be able to describe, analyse and even evaluate their philosophical approach. This does not only help them conduct their research but also helps the readers as well as future researchers of the topic to understand the rationale behind each decision that has been taken for the research (Maggetti *et al.*, 2013; Terman, 2011).

2.1 Ontology & Epistemology

Ontology is mainly defined as the science of being (Burrell & Morgan, 1985). What it actually relates to, is to the question whether an objective reality actually exists or not.

Ontology in general reflects the reality of the research and identifies the type of reality, the way that this reality is presented and the relationships between the various entities of this reality that exist (Furrer *et al.*, 2000). Each researcher has an ontological position which actually reflects their view of reality. Therefore, our ontological position reflects our personal view of the nature of reality. This has an effect on the epistemology and the methodological approach that will be used.

Further to the discussion on ontology, epistemology is defined as how we perceive and understand the world and how we communicate this perception and this understanding to other people around us (Tronvoll *et al.*, 2011). It actually refers to how knowledge is acquired. In general, epistemology is the philosophy of knowledge. According to Burrell & Morgan (1985), no single epistemology is right or wrong. It depends on the means we use to obtain knowledge about the world which may vary according to various factors (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988).

Generally, our ontology (the way we think the world is), affects epistemology (what we think can be known about it). This further affects methodology and research techniques, which is the way we think the world can be investigated (Fleetwood, 2005).

2.2 Research Paradigm: Explaining the various paradigms

This section describes the research paradigms that exist at the moment in theory. Further, it describes and analyses the chosen research paradigm and the implications of this choice on the actual research. Various scholars define and explain research paradigm as the beliefs that will guide the way a research will be conducted and implemented and how the results of the research will be analysed and presented (Babbie, 2012; Babbie, 2004; Blaikie, 2000; Bryman & Bell, 2007). Below there is a brief description of the two main types of

paradigms, Positivism and Critical Realism. Following that, the author will explain and analyse the Constructivist / Interpretivist paradigm that is being used in this specific research and the justification for this decision.

On the one hand, there are the Positivists, who are arch-scientists. Those following this paradigm, see the world as being real and they perceive that this world is stable as well (Boisot & Mckelvey, 2010). Positivism suggests that the various phenomena can be researched and observed in a logical and rational way (Gergen, 1992; Sobh & Perry, 2006). The theoretical models that derive from a positivist perspective are usually being characterised as generalizable. They mainly explain and evaluate cause and effect relationships (Camillery, 2012; Colton *et al.*, 2010).

On the other hand, Critical Realism suggests that the world exists in an independent way of our personal knowledge of the world (Archer, 2000; Easton, 2010; Fleetwood, 2005; Mingers, 2000). Saying that, it means that “it can exist independently of its identification, implies that it can exist without someone observing, knowing and constructing it” (Fleetwood 2005, p.1). Unlike positivism, critical realism does not work on a cause-effect relationship. Therefore, reality depends on each one’s perception (Ackroyd & V Fleetwood, 2000; Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2001; Sayer, 1992. Critical realism is not predicting, but rather provides explanations by deeply understanding the otherwise unobservable mechanism (Archer, 1998).

Having explained the positivism and the critical realism paradigms, an explanation of the constructivist / interpretivist follows. This will lead to an evaluation of the decision of the researcher on why this paradigm is being used, instead of the other two that have being described above.

According to Bryman (2001), the interpretivism / constructivism paradigm supports that reality is subjective. It is being argued that there is no reality or knowledge that has an objective and absolute value. Adding to that, this paradigm suggests that even if such a

reality or knowledge exists, there is no way of knowing this reality (Camillery, 2012). The reality changes according to the observer's ideas, beliefs, experiences and attitudes. (Kwan & Tsan, 2001).

The difference between positivism and constructivism / interpretivism is the fact that positivism supports that reality is separate from the individual that observes it. There is a reality out there that is completely separate from the observer, who is actually the researcher (Goldkuhl, 2012). Thus, according to positivism, the researcher and the phenomena in the world at which they are focusing are two different and unique things (Bryman, 2001; Goldkuhl, 2012). On the other hand, interpretivism believes that the individual that observes the phenomena and the actual reality they are observing cannot be separated (Mingers, 2004). Thus, the observer, which is the researcher, is not only an observer but is actually part of the process and makes assumptions and interpretations according to various factors that lie within the personality, the beliefs, the values and the attitudes of the observer (Plunkett & Sundel, 2013; Kim, 2003).

According to Stahl (2014), constructivists support that the only way to understand and evaluate reality is by actually being part of the research process. In that way, the researcher used his/her own experiences in life and evaluates the results of research. This is based on phenomenology (Peters *et al.*, 2013). Phenomenology supports that the researcher should be part of the whole process and allow participants to express their views and beliefs in an open way. Since the interpretivists believe that reality is both relative and multiple, than means that there can be more than one realities and more than one way of understanding and interpreting that reality (Nicholson *et al.*, 2009). Further to that, knowledge that derives from an interpretivist approach is generating value-laden socially constructed interpretations. Therefore, the researchers that follow this paradigm choose among research structures that are fairly more flexible and even more personal than in the positivist paradigm (Taylor & Callahan, 2005).

Constructivist paradigm believes and supports discussion between the observer and the reality under study (i.e. the participants) in order to study certain phenomena (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Therefore, constructivism / interpretivism is associated with induction building theory that will be discussed and evaluated further in this chapter. Various scholars, discussing and analysing this paradigm, associate constructivism with qualitative research, using interviews, focus groups and any other techniques that keep the observer to be part of the process and interpret results throughout the whole research procedure (Taylor & Callahan, 2005; Nicholson *et al.*, 2009; Stahl, 2014).

After an evaluation and a general discussion on the three main paradigms, the author of this thesis discusses and evaluates the decision of choosing the constructivism / interpretivism paradigm for this specific research. The reasons and the general rationale behind this decision are being analysed in the following section.

2.2.1 Application of Constructivism / Interpretivism in the specific research

The chosen research paradigm for the thesis is constructivism / interpretivism as it has been described above. In general, the ontological and epistemological views of the researcher play a vital role in both the research general aim and objectives as well as in the general decisions of methodology and methods to be used in conducting the research. Therefore, in this part of the methodology chapter, after evaluating the alternatives, the author of this research explains the paradigm that has been followed.

At first, the decision to apply the interpretivism approach, derives from the general research aim. As it has been described above, this research is aiming to close a gap in the literature, in terms of how to overcome the negative consequences of surface acting, specifically when interacting with aggressive customers. Further, the research investigates the ways that would possibly lead to an increased use of deep acting while facing such situations. There seems to be an unanswered question in the literature as in what would drive employees in deep acting when facing difficult situations with customers. The

decision to research that through the interpretivist approach, has been taken both because of the researcher's personal views and beliefs but also has been guided through the existing results on this area. Various scholars have identified that the already existing literature on overcoming the negative consequences of surface acting mostly included pre-determined variables that would lead to further questions and this serious issue remained unanswered (Goussinsky, 2015; Goussinsky, 2012; Karatepe, 2009; Lu *et al.*, 2013). Those researchers have identified that there is a gap in the existing literature on this topic and this is mainly because the research has been conducted mostly by actually working on pre-determined effects that could buffer out the consequences and asking participants to identify whether those variables would help them or not, usually through quantitative research methods. It has been identified by various researchers, that since the area of overcoming the effects and especially the need for an increase in deep acting, is very new and under-researched, new researchers should find other ways of getting the information needed to give some answers to this topic (Goussinsky, 2015; Karatepe, 2009; Wang & Groth, 2014).

Therefore, this research is following the aforementioned advice of the previous scholars (ibid). Through this paradigm, the researcher will be able to construct an idea of the area under investigation without relying on the existing theory and by allowing an in-depth discussion between the researcher and the respondents.

In addition this research is dealing with feelings and emotions of employees. If it was using the positivist approach, the researcher should have to address the phenomenon in a different approach, by forming hypothesis and then most probably use a quantitative technique to work on them. It has been identified, though, that feelings are very difficult to quantify, and researchers dealing with emotions should carefully design their methodology to gain the most out of the research (Allan, 2005; Harris & Reynolds, 2006). Therefore, since the area of emotions in general is a challenging topic to research, the author of this thesis will follow the interpretivism paradigm for this specific research. The research will

create an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon by following this paradigm, which is what is needed to reach the best possible results (Harris & Reynolds, 2006).

As it has been stated and analysed above, the interpretivists support that reality cannot be separated from the observer. They state that the observer should always be part of the process to be able to understand and evaluate the phenomena under study (Stahl 2014). As a result of this, due to the nature of the topic under study, the researcher follows the interpretivism approach so that she can be part of the process and be able to evaluate and understand the participants' point of view, how they feel and what their perceptions are on the area under study. According to Qu & Dumay (2011), allowing the participants to openly and freely express themselves, would reveal information that could not be revealed otherwise, using different approaches. Aiming to work closely on the buffering effects of surface acting during customer aggression as well as trying to identify how employees could engage more in deep acting, this research needs participants to openly discuss this and reveal any possible information that could help in analysing this phenomenon. In addition to that, Garcia & Gluesing (2013) state that phenomena that are difficult to be evaluated are being researched, there is more tendency now to move away from the classical approach of forming hypothesis and testing them (positivism paradigm) to trying and evaluating the topic from a more open perspective, having the observer being part of the process (constructivism / interpretivism).

Lastly, the researcher, by using this paradigm, is not aiming to form generalisation in the area under investigation. The constructivist paradigm is aiming at getting in-depth information on the topic that does not have to apply to all cultures, places or industries (Stahl, 2014). Therefore, this thesis is not aiming to providing generalisations, like the positivists, but rather results that apply to the area and the industry that is being used for the study. Also, it provides future researchers with a non-existing tool, which is the conceptual framework, to be used for further research.

3. Research Strategy – Application of Inductive Approach in the Research

Generally, research has taken many forms over the years. There are various approaches in research, and scholars usually adopt this approach that suits their research but most of the times, they use the approach that suits them individually as well (Haider & Birley, 1999). Those strategies show the relation between theory and data (Dubois & Cadde, 2002). The two main research strategies that have been adopted throughout the years by the researchers, are the deductive and inductive approaches (Tsanis, 2013). After that, the abductive approach has been added. Those three main types that form the research strategy will be explained and analysed below. Following the general discussion, the author will provide the rationale and analysis behind the decision to follow the inductive reasoning. The deductive approach, which has been called hypothetico-deductive approach as well, is been mainly used by positivists (Haider & Birley, 1999). On the other hand, there is the inductive approach, which is mainly being used by the naturalists, contextual or interpretative (Mingers, 2012). To begin with, the deductive approach is the one that focusses on existing theories and suggestions and have those theories as their initial starting point (Galitsky, 2006). The deductive approach gives emphasis on universal laws of cause and effect, presented usually on an explanatory framework. It mainly assumes and supports that the world is consisted of facts that can be objectively defined and explained (Ormerod, 2010; Haider & Birley, 1999). When following the deductive approach, the researcher actually starts with a set of theoretical perspectives that form the hypothesis. Then the research moves into specific empirical evidence that have been testing the hypotheses that were generated before (Sullivan & Venter, 2010). Therefore, the initial and most important difference between deductive and inductive research is the fact that in the deductive approach, the existing, established theory plays a huge role in the development of the hypotheses, what variables will be used for the research and the resultant measures that the specific research will be using (Haider & Birley, 1999). Within the deductive

approach, the researcher will develop a theoretical framework and then test it to see whether it is valid or not. The conclusions that derive from a research that uses the deductive approach are complete and specific statements that discuss whether the hypotheses that have been formed out of theory are valid and correct or not. The value that derives from the deductive approach is the fact that the researcher can make a very useful use of the existing theory (Obalola & Ismail Adelopo, 2012). On the other hand, the research that is using this approach develop a theory and their results only focus on a hypothesised relationship between variables. This does not give the chance to the researcher to develop other unanticipated factors that may exist and have not been identified yet (Wengraf, 2001). New variables and constructs are difficult to be developed, since this approach is focussing on pre-determined variables (Bryman & Bell, 2007; Tsanis, 2013).

On the other hand, the inductive approach, which is being adopted in this thesis, works on a different perspective. According to Bryman & Bell (2007), the researchers that are using the inductive approach are usually searching for new phenomena that have either never been researched before or have been researched only to a limited extend. As a result, they use the inductive approach to be able to build a new concept or work on an area that is new and has not been researched to a great extend so as to build a substantial theoretical background (Tsanis, 2013). Unlike the deductive approach, the inductive one is not based on existing theory, or at least not completely (Kovács & Spens, 2005). In fact, the inductive approach is a theory building process (Hyde, 2000). The purpose of the research that is following the inductive approach, is to build a theory on an under-researched topic, or to search the phenomenon under study from a different perspective so that new variables or factors can be found and discussed (Goldkuhl, 2012; Mingers, 2012). Therefore, as it has been stated above, when following the inductive approach there is no formation of hypotheses and the researcher is not using pre-determined variables to search and

understand a specific phenomenon that is under study. The researcher rather tries through in-depth discussions with the participants of the research or through other techniques to understand the rationale behind various areas that need further development. As a result of this, unlike the deductive approach, the inductive one mainly focusses on qualitative techniques to research a topic, whereas the deductive approach uses quantitative ones (Galitsky, 2006; Haider & Birley, 1999). Both qualitative and quantitative techniques will be analysed and discussed on the next section of this chapter.

Further to the distinction between inductive and deductive approach in research, there is the abductive approach as well. This approach lies somewhere in between deductive and inductive theory (Tsanis, 2013). The abductive theory has been mainly used by Critical Realists (Kovács & Spens, 2005). According to Kovács & Spens (2005), this approach uses both creativity as well as intuition to reach a new theory. What abduction does, is analysing and evaluating existing phenomena and then looks at them from a different perspective (Danermark, 2001). As a result, abductive theory, in a different perspective of inductive theory, accepts the existing theoretical results that derive from the literature and supports that those results can enhance the analysis of the new ones (Andreewsky & Bourcier, 2000). In addition to that, this specific approach is being used only if the researcher is trying to find something new, such as different relationships between variables or new factors that could lead to the development of the phenomenon that is under study (ibid). Therefore, the main difference between the abductive and inductive or deductive approach, is the fact that the framework that is being designed under the abductive approach will be partially or sometimes even completely changed according to the findings that derive out of the empirical research as well as the unexpected results that could derive not only from the empirical research but also through the theory during the process of the specific research (Taylor & Callahan, 2005).

As the three methods have been described and analysed, this research follows the inductive approach. As it has been mentioned and explained in the previous section that was dealing with the paradigms, the one that is being applied for this research is interpretivism. This paradigm is mainly using the induction process due to its nature and due to its way of analysing and interpreting information on various phenomena that are under study (Bryman & Bell 2007). As it has been discussed above, the inductive approach is a theory building process, so the interpretivists are applying it in a great extent, since they support that reality is subjective (Camillery, 2012). As a result, they apply the inductive approach so that they can research the reality and thus the phenomenon under study, by using techniques that would allow for the observer to be part of the process and evaluate the results by not using pre-determined variables. Therefore, this research follows this approach at first due to the chosen paradigm.

More specifically, taking into consideration the research aim and objectives, the researcher is looking into a concept which is fairly new and under-researched, according to the existing literature review findings (Goussinsky, 2011; Goussinsky, 2012; Karatepe, 2009; Lu *et al.*, 2013). The inductive approach, due to its theory building process, is being used in such cases to enable the researchers, through the research techniques that are available, to build new theory on the area that is under researched. According to various scholars that have been mentioned in the Literature Review chapter as well, the area of emotional labour while interacting with aggressive customers is not established on the extend that it should have been. Further to that, as they mention, it is fairly new and needs development (Goussinsky, 2012; Grandey *et al.*, 2007; Grandey *et al.*, 2010). Therefore, the inductive approach is being used in this specific research since the general aim is to identify the non-existing ways on overcoming the negative effects of surface acting when interacting with aggressive customers. Also, the inductive approach is being used since this research is looking to add a fairly new, under-researched concept, the one of engaging more in deep

acting when engaging with aggressive customers. It has been stated by Wang & Groth (2014), that this would be very beneficial, but has not been empirically tested. As a result of the above, the researcher has decided to follow the inductive approach for this research. In addition to the above rationale on why to follow the inductive approach, there is the gap in the literature that supports such a view. It has been stated, that the fact that existing literature on this topic is being based on pre-determined variables on how to overcome the consequences of engaging in surface acting during customer aggressiveness, has made it difficult to find different ways of doing that (Grandey *et al.*, 2007; Grandey *et al.*, 2010; Goussinsky, 2012). Specifically, Harris & Reynolds (2006), mention in their article that future researchers should start using different approaches to tackle and research this area, to avoid arriving to the same conclusions and thus confirming the things that we already know. Due to this findings, the researcher has decided to use the inductive approach that is not using pre-determined variables, but rather uses different techniques that require discussion and opening up of ideas with the participants and does not rely to existing theories. If the researcher was using the deductive approach, she would have to form hypotheses from the already existing literature. Since the existing literature, though, states that is not well established and new on this area, this would not be feasible and would not lead to the desired results.

A further reason why this research follows the inductive approach is the fact that it is dealing with feelings and emotions. As it has been stated above, feelings are difficult to be quantified, thus measuring them in such approaches may lead to mis-conceptions. Due to this, if this research was using the deductive approach, it would determine various elements that could act as buffering effects on overcoming the negative consequences of surface acting during interactions with aggressive customers. Therefore, participants would not be able to discuss openly and give their personal and true perceptions on this area.

To conclude with this section, as explained and analysed above, this research follows the inductive reasoning. According to Hyde (2000), inductive reasoning is a theory building process. Since the theory on how to overcome the consequences is not yet well established, inductive reasoning will be used to observe and identify various ways that could work as buffering effects and then establish the new factors that will arise for the area that will be investigated.

4. Research Purpose

The basic research purposes are descriptive, exploratory or explanatory. When conducting a research, there are various approaches that are being followed. Some researchers may be using only descriptive, exploratory or even combine one, two or all of the ways together (Adams, 2007). To explain the terms in short, exploratory research is mainly dealing with a phenomenon that has not been researched at all by previous researchers or that has been researched on a limited basis and therefore we have little knowledge about it (Johnson & Yip, 2010). Exploratory research, as it can be interpreted from the name of this term, is actually looking at investigating the under-researched phenomenon in depth and provide as more explanations as possible about it (Adams, 2007). On the other hand, there is descriptive research that is mainly looking to provide a description and an in-depth explanation of the perceptions, the ideas, opinions and general views of the respondents on the phenomenon that is under investigation (Adams, 2007). Finally, there is explanatory research. Its main concern is to establish and maintain a cause-and-effect relationship (Tsang, 1997).

According to this specific research's aims and objectives as well as general research questions, it falls into both exploratory and descriptive research. At first, the subject and the phenomenon under investigation is an under-researched topic as it has been described by a number of authors (See chapter 2 – Literature Gap section). Therefore, the researcher will follow the exploratory approach, to analyse and evaluate the phenomenon of engaging

in surface acting while interacting with aggressive customers and how the consequences that come along with that can be overcome. Further, this research will investigate the phenomenon of deep acting and how employees can engage more in deep acting during facing customer aggression. This is a very new concept that previous researchers have not paid enough attention to, as they focussed mainly on the consequences (See chapter 2- Literature Gap section). Therefore, this is what qualifies this research as an exploratory one. On the other hand, as it has been mentioned above, this research is also descriptive in nature. This research aims to provide the respondents' ideas and evaluate their own perceptions and evaluations of this sensitive area that involves their emotions. As a result, the analysis includes an in-depth description of the participants responds. As it will be described and analysed below, this research is following the qualitative approach and therefore its nature is both descriptive and exploratory. Since this research is following a theory-building approach, it is not looking to provide generalisations or cause-and-effect relationships. It is rather aiming at specific and detailed explanations for the phenomenon under study. As a result, this research does not fall into the explanatory research purpose.

5. The Use of Qualitative Method to Derive Data

Following the above parameters, the main methods of obtaining data is qualitative or quantitative (Long *et al.*, 2000). This section analyses and explains the methods available and continues with the decision of the author and the justification.

As it has been stated above, the two methods that could be used are the quantitative and the qualitative techniques. Moreover, the third methodological way of deriving data, is mixed methods. This is defined as the synthesis that is being based on both quantitative and qualitative techniques ((Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013). There are two ways of using mixed methods, the quantitative dominant mixed analysis and the qualitative dominant one (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013; Greene, 2008). The quantitative dominant one, takes place when the researcher believes that a quantitative approach is more appropriate for the specific

research, but combining qualitative techniques could be helpful in establishing new information as well. On the other hand, when using the qualitative dominant approach, the researcher combines quantitative techniques to its dominant qualitative approach to gain more knowledge on a specific topic that is under study (Bazeley, 2010). As it has been stated in the literature that concerns methodology, the mixed methods technique has not been very well established yet, even though some studies have started providing results and analysing findings by using both Qualitative and Quantitative Techniques (Bazeley, 2010; Greene, 2008).

Quantitative and Qualitative are of course the broad terms. There are different quantitative and qualitative techniques that should be taken into consideration when deciding on which one to follow and why. Those techniques will be briefly described below. The author will then justify the rationale behind the decision on using the Qualitative method and how this method will be used.

In terms of quantitative research, it is a structured way of gathering information involving large numbers of participants. It involves observations and questionnaire surveys (Inuiguchi & Mizoshita, 2012). Quantitative research mainly involves a large number of participants. It uses a large number, so that there is a representative sample of the population to give information on the area and the phenomenon under study (Chang, 2009). This method is usually being used when researchers are dealing with pre – determined elements that are under investigation. Quantitative research is giving emphasis on the data quantification (Bryman, 2004). It is analysing and evaluating relationships between variables and discusses whether this relationships exist and up to what extent. In their majority, quantitative techniques are being used by the positivists. As it has been explained on the previous section, they support formation of hypotheses and evaluation of various relationships, which is clearly part of the Quantitative Research method.

On the other hand, the Qualitative research method is also available and is the one that was used for this thesis. This method involves in – depth interviews, focus groups, questionnaires (open – ended) questions and observations (Qu & Dumay, 2011). Using this method, researchers are able to be involved in the process and identify elements that would not be identified if engaging in a more structured approach such as structured questionnaires. The implication of this method on this specific research is first of all the fact that the author will be able to identify the ways of overcoming those negative consequences in a more open way, by allowing the participants to express themselves freely. A number of qualitative methods such as in depth – interviews and focus groups would allow the author to better understand the participants’ feelings and identify as many elements as possible to help closing the literature gap.

In more detail, many reasons explain why this research is following the Qualitative methodology and is not adopting neither the quantitative one, nor the mix methods. At first, the philosophical perspective that is being followed for this research leads to the adoption of Qualitative techniques. The interpretivism paradigm, as discussed earlier in this chapter, is in favour of qualitative techniques due to the beliefs and values that it supports. The interpretivists use the qualitative techniques since they support that reality is objective and lies upon each individual. Therefore, when adopting the qualitative techniques, the individuals will provide the observers with information that is going to be revealed through discussion. This would not be able to happen when using the quantitative method (Qu & Dumay, 2012).

Qualitative method will be mostly used for theory generation and when researching a new topic, or one that is under-researched and has no well-established theory (Creswell, 2009). As it has been discussed in the literature review chapter of this thesis, the theory on overcoming the negative consequences of surface acting specifically when interacting with aggressive customers is not well established, findings are in parts and do not provide a

coherent picture (Bechtoldt *et al.*, 2011; Goussinsky, 2012; Huang & Dai, 2010; Karatepe, 2011; Lu *et al.*, 2013). As a result of those findings, this research will adopt qualitative methodology which is mainly been used as explained above when the researchers are looking for theory generation and are working on an area that needs development.

Furthermore, this research will also be focussing on how to increase the use of deep acting during offering services to aggressive customers. This is a very new area, that is under-researched and there is no enough evidence to support how this could be achieved during the challenging situations of dealing with aggressiveness ((Huang & Dai, 2010; Wang & Groth, 2014). Since this has not been empirically tested on a great extent, the adoption of qualitative methods would be more appropriate to do that.

In addition to the above rationale behind choosing the qualitative method, lies the area that this research is dealing with, which has to do with emotions. As it has been stated by previous researchers and scholars that are dealing with emotions, they are difficult to quantify and as a result, using qualitative methods would be more appropriate for this area. Thus, this method can reveal more information, keep the observer close to the participants so that she can ask more questions and this will help in revealing more information on this sensitive topic (Karatepe, 2009; Qu & Dumay, 2011).

The topic, is indeed an important component and a very vital factor for the decision whether to use Qualitative or Quantitative techniques. This thesis is dealing with the customers' dysfunctional behaviour, how employees are handling it personally and how they are affected. As it has been stated by Qu & Dumay (2011), when researchers are dealing with the phenomenon of dysfunctional behaviour either coming from them personally or from outsiders, the best approach to do that is to follow the qualitative approach. Their rationale that explain why to do that, says that by using more open techniques, thus using qualitative ones, the participants have more freedom to express their concerns on those issues as well as to give their solutions to this phenomenon. According

to Qu & Dumay (2011), the qualitative approach is the one that offers this freedom to the participants, since the quantitative approach only allows them to give their opinions on the variables that the researcher has determined. Since this research is dealing with dysfunctional behaviour, this is another reason that has led to the decision of using the qualitative approach.

The industry with which this research is dealing with, is another reason why the researcher has decided to use the qualitative approach. According to O'Neil (2014), the hospitality industry is among the most unique ones, which have very specific characteristics that differentiate them from the rest of the industries. The long hours the employees are working, the shifts, the fact that they have to be happy or show happy whatever their own feeling are, makes it much more difficult to deal with (ibid). As a result of this, the above researchers support that the phenomena under study in this industry need to be researched by using the qualitative approach. This will help the participants express themselves more and observers will identify things that would not easily or may never being able to be identified if using a quantitative approach.

The quantitative approach or even the mixed methods won't be used, mainly due to the nature of the research but even more specifically, due to the existing literature on this area. As it has been mentioned and discussed above, this topic is not well-established, at first because there is lack of research on the specific area and further because the current research was focussing only on pre-determined variables (Bechtoldt *et al.*, 2011; Goussinsky, 2012; Huang & Dai, 2010; Karatepe, 2011; Lu *et al.*, 2013). This has created the lack of evidence to support the ways that could help employees overcome the negative effects of surface acting during their interactions with aggressive customers. In addition, there is even less evidence to guide organisations and employees on how to engage themselves in deep acting specifically during such interactions, so that they could eliminate the negative consequences and create a better working environment (Karatepe, 2009; Lu *et*

al., 2013). As a result, the researcher tried to find out what other scholars suggest on such situations. This research will follow the qualitative approach and not the quantitative, mainly on the above reasons but also because of suggestions coming from various scholars and researchers. According to Creswell (2009) if a phenomenon lacks research and evidence to support it and evaluate it, then the researcher should not be using quantitative techniques. The reason why quantitative techniques should be avoided, according to Creswell (2009), is because if there is not enough evidence to support the variables to be studied, then this will most probably lead to false and inaccurate results. Therefore, the researcher should better use the qualitative approach. This approach is more exploratory and as a result the evidence to be gathered will add to the lack of evidence of the existing literature (Marshall & Rossman, 2010). According to Guba & Lincoln (1994), if there is not strong evidence to support the variables and the relationships that exist between them, then the results of such studies, if being done using the quantitative approach will be ambiguous for the phenomenon under study. The new research question that should be studied in this research, is not only how to enhance the knowledge on the area of overcoming the negative effects of surface acting during customer aggressive events, but also how to engage employees in deep acting when they have to handle those situations. According to Marshall & Rossman (2010) as well as Edmondson and McManus (2007), if there is a new research question to be answered, then researchers should be seeking evidence by using the Qualitative approach.

5.1 Specific qualitative techniques to use for data gathering

In this section, the specific qualitative ways to gather the data necessary for answering the research questions will be analysed. When discussing about data, this includes all the necessary material and information needed for the primary research of this thesis. As it has been discussed above, the qualitative method includes different techniques to gather data. Among the most well-known ones, are the focus groups, interviews, questionnaires,

observations etc. (Qu & Dumay, 2011). The researcher has decided to combine two methods for the specific research, which are the interviews and the focus groups, following the methodological triangulation method. Both methods will be explained and discussed below, and the justification for using those two methods will be provided.

5.1.1 The triangulation method

According to Carter *et al.*, (2014) triangulation is the term that is being referred as the use of various methods or data sources to collect information on a specific phenomenon under investigation in a more comprehensive way. In more detail, triangulation method allows the researcher to combine various methodological approaches such as Qualitative and Quantitative techniques or various data collection techniques within the same methodological approach such as a combination of two or more qualitative methods (Cunningham *et al.*, 2000). The triangulation concept first derived from the military and the navigation strategy (Jack & Raturi, 2006). It had been used multiple reference points to identify the position of various objects (ibid).

In qualitative studies, the triangulation method is being used to increase validity as well as decrease subjectivity (Jonsen & Jehn, 2009). The key objective of this current study is to provide the best possible results for the phenomenon under investigation and thus use the triangulation method to add to the increase of validity of the results.

There are a number of types of the triangulation method. The first type is including the identification of various findings by using a number of methods that would involve different people, space as well as time (Jack & Raturi, 2006). The second type, includes a number of people acting as investigators, thus avoiding the subjective opinion of a single researcher (Jack & Raturi, 2006; Meijer *et al.*, 2002). Thirdly, multiple triangulation is the situation where the researcher includes various observers, evaluation techniques and methodologies in the same study (Hackel & Klebl, 2008; Jack & Raturi, 2006). Fourth, theory triangulation includes more than one theoretical schemes when interpreting the

phenomenon under investigation (Jack & Raturi, 2006). Finally, methodological triangulation is the case at which the researcher is using more than one quantitative or qualitative data collection methods in the same study (Jack & Raturi, 2006; Mangan *et al.*, 2004).

For the purpose of the current study, the researcher is using the fifth method, as it has been described above, the methodological triangulation. Thus, the researcher in this case is using two qualitative data collection techniques: In-depth semi structured interviews and Focus Groups. The reasons for using different data collection techniques in the same research vary according to the study and the purpose. At first, the phenomenon under study is complex since it involves emotions which are difficult to be evaluated (Harris & Reynolds, 2006). Therefore, a single qualitative method would not be adequate to shed light to the specific phenomenon (*ibid*). Most researchers study certain phenomena in a qualitative way by mostly using interviews on an individual basis or as a group through focus groups (Carter *et al.*, Geortzen & Bakkalbasi, 2016; 2014; Walsh, 2003). There are a lot of advantages through, in using multiple data collection methods in the same study. Usually, when using the qualitative approach, researchers are approaching their research through the methodological triangulation if they want to provide more valid results that would be able to provide answers to various areas that require special attention (Carter *et al.*, 2014; Jack & Raturi, 2006; Maxwell, 2016). This is the approach that is being adopted in this study, which is using in-depth semi structured interviews as the initial data collection method and the focus groups as the method that is going to be used in order to validate the results of the interviews and add or differentiate the results accordingly. The major advantage of using both methods for the same purpose in this current study, is the fact that the respondents reply on a different level and discuss the various concept in greater depth if they are in groups (Carter *et al.*, 2014). When the researcher is going to have individual meetings with the interviewees to conduct the semi-structured interviews,

they will be able to discuss and analyse the various concepts on a personal level, without hesitation since they will be alone with the researcher (ibid). On the other hand, when people get in groups to discuss various concepts, there is a tendency to add to the other people comments and identify area that they would not be able or willing even to identify if they were alone (Fetters, 2016). Therefore, the fact that this research is using methodological triangulation, enables the researcher to identify the various areas when conducting the personal interviews and then contact the focus groups to validate the results and identify any new concepts or validate the existing results. This is a way to provide a stronger evidence and the findings will be more valid. As it is being described in the literature, when using methodological triangulation, the researcher should first do the initial data collection with one method, which in this research is the personal in-depth semi-structured interviews and then use the second method as a way to add to the results, validate them or change them accordingly, which in this case is the focus groups (Jack & Raturi, 2006; Mangan *et al.*, 2004; Maxwell, 2016). The analysis of the results should be taking this order as well (ibid).

The questions that guide both the interviews and the focus groups should be very similar or identical so that the purpose of using methodological triangulation will be fulfilled (Fetters, 2016; Maxwell, 2016; Walsh, 2003). The questions that guided the interviews and the focus groups are being presented below in Tables 3.1 and 3.2 respectively.

5.1.2 Combination of semi-structured interviews and focus groups

The interview is a qualitative technique that is widely used by researchers. The term interview, refers to the formal discussion between the observer and the participant that leads to revealing of facts and information about a certain phenomenon that is under study (Mojtahed *et al.*, 2014). A series of interview questions are used to lead the discussion between the observer and the participant that leads to exchange of information on the specific topic, mainly deriving from the participant and being analysed and evaluated by

the observer (Cachia & Millward, 2011). The dominant description of interviews mainly takes the form of either structured or un-structured interviews (Mojtahed *et al.*, 2014). However, during the course of time, other types of interviews have been recognised by various researchers, such as the semi-structured interviews, the group and the focus group interview (Bryman, 2008). To make a first distinction, the structured interviews are being based on specific pre-determined questions that the researcher is being using to guide the discussion between him/her and the participant. On the other hand, the un-structured interviews are the ones that do not use any form of pre-determined questions, thus the observer is responsible to guide the conversation in his/her own way (Creswell, 2007; Mojtahed, 2014).

For the purpose of this thesis, the researcher followed the in depth semi-structured interviews approach as it has been aforementioned. When using this approach, the researcher prepares a number of questions that help in guiding the discussion with the participant. The difference between the structured and the semi-structured interviews though, is the fact that during a semi-structured interview, the researcher can ask further questions to clarify some things. Those questions are not part of the initial ones, but they are rather ones that arise from the conversation between the observer and the participant and the issues that arise within the context of the discussion (Diefenbach, 2009; Ponterotto *et al.*, 2000). The rationale behind using the semi-structured interviews will be analysed below and discussed in detail as opposed to the research questions and objectives.

There are some challenges that need to be taken into consideration when conducting interviews in general. When conducting interviews, and more specifically semi-structured interviews, the researcher needs to take into consideration to derive and negotiate the right meanings and interpretations between the interviewer and the interviewee. Especially when conducting semi-structured interviews, the researcher should be able to determine the right meanings so that they can ask the most appropriate additional questions and thus guide the

discussion into the right direction (Mojtahed, 2014). The biggest challenge that should be addressed during the interviews is to be able to address the right conversational skills so that they can both guide the conversation and derive the right meanings as well.

Focus groups are another qualitative technique that is being combined with in-depth semi-structured interviews for the purpose of gathering data for this research through the methodological triangulation that has been described above (*see section 5.1.1*). This subsection provides information on what focus groups are and how they help in gathering data. The combination of focus groups with interviews will be discussed as well. The next section describes how focus groups are being used specifically for this research as opposed to the research objectives.

Focus groups, are a formal discussion and interview that is being conducted by a facilitator/moderator (Bristol & Fern, 2003). As the name of this technique mentions, those formal discussions or interviews are being conducted with a small group of people (Marrelli, 2008). The aim of a focus group is to gather information of a specific topic, making use of people knowledge, ideas and opinions (Hautzinger, 2012). The main difference of focus groups with the rest of the qualitative techniques, is the fact that the moderator gathers information and observes behaviours in groups and not individually. Thus this creates even a more in-depth understanding of the phenomenon that is under study (Morgan, 1996).

According to various scholars, focus groups have been widely used and are still being used mainly for theory creation and for areas that need development (Kress & Soffner, 2007; Mellinger & Chau, 2010; Zeldenryk *et al.*, 2014). As it has been stated above, initially focus groups have been used only for theory development (Morgan, 1996; McClelland, 1994). Over the years, focus groups have gained more attention and scholars have turned it into a very useful tool that can be used for various disciplines (Marrelli, 2008). In the last decades, focus groups have been widely used in research that is being conducted in the

hospitality industry as well (O'Neil, 2012). It is important to mention, that focus groups have been used as initial stages in forming and understanding new theories in terms of living and working in the hospitality industry (O'Neil, 2012). Those results have then being used to form the hypotheses that were needed to gather information using the quantitative approach.

Focus groups have been mainly used to gather data for a topic that needs a more in-depth approach (Stokes & Bergin, 2006). The rationale behind using focus groups, is the fact that the researcher has the chance to observe the sharing of ideas and information in groups. This helps in the aspect that when individuals interact with other people, then they usually reveal more information, since one person "guides" the other through peer discussions (Zeldenryk *et al.*, 2014). According to O'Neil (2012), focus groups are being used in the hospitality industry mainly in combination to in-depth interviews. While using this approach, the researchers have realised that they can gain more in-depth information when they combine their interviews' results with focus groups (O'Neil, 2012; Zeldenryk *et al.*, 2014). Thus, the interview results show how an individual feels and reacts during certain situations and through the discussion important data is being gathered for the phenomenon under study. On the other hand, the focus groups are there to provide data on how group of people feel and behave when they are together and sometimes it reveals information as to how they are affected with each other. This, according to O'Neil *et al.*, (2014), it is very helpful especially in the hospitality industry, where employees have no other way than interacting with their colleagues during the course of their shift at the job. Therefore, the focus groups are vital in the hospitality industry as well as in various other industries, due to this aspect.

As it has been analysed and discussed in the literature review chapter, feelings are contagious. As a result, both positive and negative feelings are being passed on to other colleagues during their everyday interaction at work. As a result, focus groups give a more

in-depth understanding as in what extend people are affected from each other and how this helps them open up even more and give more information when they are in groups as opposed to being interviewed on a personal basis (Stokes & Bergin, 2006).

Focus groups have various challenges that one needs to take into consideration when they are conducting them. At first, as it has been greatly mentioned in the focus groups literature, the researcher needs to act mainly as an observer but also as a facilitator and a moderator of the process as well (Bristol & Fern, 2003; Zeldernyk *et al.*, 2014). The moderator guides the participants into the right direction so that the focus does not go away of the topic of interest. As it has been noted by Morgan (1996), it is very easy for a small group of people to get carried away and discuss things that are not of interest for the specific phenomenon that is being studied. Therefore, the moderators' job is to keep the discussion to the point. Further, if focus groups are being combined with another method, such as interviews, the results of the interviews that may have been contacted first should not intervene in any way with the discussion and the moderator should keep a clean mind while conducting the focus groups (O'Neil, 2012). Those will be taken into consideration by the researcher of this thesis when implementing this part of the primary research.

In the next section, an analysis of how both semi-structured interviews and focus groups are being used and combined together through the methodological triangulation follows. The rationale behind using focus groups as well as semi-structured interviews is being discussed in the following section as well.

5.1.3 Justification and evaluation

This section discusses and analyses why a combination of interviews and focus groups is being used for each objective specifically.

As it has been discussed on the sections above, this specific research is following the Qualitative method for gathering primary data. If Quantitative technique is being used then the author would have to pre – determine various components that would act as

buffering effects of the negative consequences of engaging in emotional labour when interacting with angry customers. This would have to be done in terms of how to engage employees more in deep acting as well, As it has been discussed in the last section of the literature review though, the literature gap, this is what needs to be avoided since this area is under researched and trying to determine variables would not be successful (Karatepe, 2011; Lu *et al.*, 2013; Wang & Groth, 2014; Bechtoldt *et al.*, 2011; Huang & Dai 2010; Goussinsky, 2012). Research on this area, therefore, should be able to identify and analyse more elements. In this aspect, using a structured questionnaire and asking participants to give their answers according to those pre – determined elements will not be an effective way to close this literature gap. As a result it has been decided to use two Qualitative techniques, as they have been described above: the semi-structured interviews and the focus groups. Therefore, this section includes a justification for using the two techniques as well as the analysis on how they will be applied.

In total, the author has held 30 in depth semi-structured interviews and 4 focus groups. The way that the selection of key informants has taken place and how the sample size has been decided is being discussed and analysed on a great extent on Section 7 below. As it has been explained in the literature review gap section, full time front line employees should be used for the research. Those employees must have at least 5 years of experience in the hospitality industry and daily interactions with clients. The hospitality industry has been chosen for its importance in the Cyprus Economy. This has been analysed on the first chapter of this thesis (See chapter 1 – Introduction). Further, it is an industry with high customer interaction where employees face ‘difficult’ situations on a regular basis.

According to Karatepe (2011), employees that have at least five years of experience are more able to discuss about their feelings when interacting with aggressive customers and the ways that would help in overcoming them because of their continuous interactions.

The first objectives that are being investigated through primary research are the second and third ones (see Chapter 1). At this point, the way that employees engage in emotional labour during aggressive customers' interactions and the various negative consequences that emerge out of this are being identified. There has been a lot of existing literature on this area. For the purpose of this study, primary research is being used to identify whether there are more consequences and to verify the existing ones included in the literature. This mainly helps in taking the research further and investigate the ways to overcome those consequences, thus help in closing the literature gap.

Since the objective of this research is to examine the consequences in depth and understand their implications on employees, in – depth semi structured interviews are being used. The author needs to be part of the process and observe the participants' reactions when talking about the negative consequences. This highly enables her to discuss and analyse the consequences further with the participants and identify how they feel through body signals and non – words as well. As it has been argued by Qu & Dumay (2011), the semi – structured interview is able to identify important and often hidden facets of human feelings and emotions. The fact that the interviewer is part of the process, helps them identify things that a questionnaire would not (Qu & Dumay 2011). On the other hand, observing the participants' reactions and body language signals when talking about the negative consequences will guide the interviewer in asking more questions on the issue being discussed at that point such as “can you elaborate more on that?” This approach enables the respondents to talk more openly about the negative consequences and elaborate more when needed. For example, if a participant mentions stress as a negative consequence, this needs to be further discussed. The researcher, through this method, is able to ask participants to clarify what kind of stress is being caused, how it affects them and whether it leads to more long term effects such as burnout. As it is also argued by Harris & Daunt (2013) that have been researching this area as well, following a qualitative approach is the

only way to gain a more in depth knowledge and understanding of this often not easy to quantify area. Feelings cannot be easily identified in numbers so this method is deemed to be the most appropriate. Further, Harris & Daunt (2013) suggest that if a research needs to focus on consequences of emotions, this is better to be done through the qualitative approach for more valid results.

The fact that the interview has been semi – structured has helped a lot in not only identifying and discussing about the consequences but also, as it has been discussed above, it enabled the interviewer to insist on discussing further a specific element that seemed to be more important for the respondents. Further, according to Garcia & Gluesing (2013) the participants feel closer to the researcher and this enables them to be more open and share more information in their answers. This was also the case when the researcher was conducting the interviews for this thesis.

The themes have mainly guided the interview and the discussion have been derived from the literature. Existing findings on the negative consequences have been used as the initial stage of the interview that has been modified according to the discussion and the issues that have emerged through it. Therefore, this was the most appropriate way to work on this specific objective and get as most accurate results as possible.

The fourth objective of this doctorate is mainly focussing on the literature gap. The same applies in regards to the fifth objective. This study is investigating the ways of buffering the negative consequences that will be analysed on the third objective. Further, the ways to increase deep acting have been evaluated.

According to Wang and Groth (2014), most researchers on this area focus on pre – determined variables that would enable employees to overcome the negative consequences. This research has used semi–structured in- depth interviews to avoid that. According to Tronvoll (2011), the interviews will enable the respondents to talk openly and elaborate on their emotions. When dealing with emotions, participants respond better when they are

allowed to elaborate in an issue rather than having to choose between pre-determined variables (Tronvoll, 2011). Since this is the purpose of this research, the above mentioned method has been used.

The themes that have acted as an initial structure have been derived from the existing literature findings. As it has been mentioned in the literature gap section, though, these are not enough, so this thesis had to investigate the ways to overcome the consequences in depth. For the purpose of this research the existing buffering effects have been used as the main themes of the interview and the researcher was building on those to investigate the issue further. The scope of this thesis was not to test a number of pre-determined ways that may affect the consequences positively, but to allow the participants to openly give more ways that will help in this area. This has been achieved at first through the in – depth semi structured interviews. The researcher has asked questions to identify whether existing buffering effects are valid and then asked the participants to openly discuss any other ways that they believe may help in this issue. Through building rapport with the respondents, the researcher of this thesis has eventually managed to gain an in depth understanding of the needs of those people when facing such situations.

Both scheduled and unscheduled probes have been used, that is a primary technique being used in semi – structured interviews. A scheduled probe would require the interviewee to elaborate on an answer that seems to be surprising or very stimulating. For example the interviewer would immediately ask a question such as “please tell me more about it.....” just after an answer that seems to be revealing information that are of great importance on the topic. Unscheduled probes may be used as well according to the discussion when the interviewer deems appropriate. The reasoning for those probes is to reveal more information and manage the interview in such a way so that the researcher will get as much in depth knowledge as possible from the participants. Such probes have been used for example during the interviews, when the respondents were mentioning the fact that they

need group or social support to overcome the consequences. Part of the literature gap is the fact that it is not clear what kind of social or group support they need (i.e. management, colleagues or subordinates support). Using this technique the author has been able to elaborate on that and thus reveal information that would either way stay hidden.

The use of focus group has contributed as well. The focus groups followed the interviews, where participants each personally expressed their opinions. According to Morgan (1996), there are many ways you can use the focus groups in combination with interviews. One way, which has followed in the current study, is to use the interviews as the primary tool and the focus groups as a way to get more in-depth information and validate the first results. This study is following Morgan (1996) in the way of using the focus groups. The purpose was to identify participants' reactions and ideas when they are in small groups. The discussion has been focussing on the same aspects that the interviews were focussing on, this is why as it can be seen below the questions that are being used to guide both the interviews and the focus groups are more or less the same. There is little variation in the focus groups questions since they have been formed after the analysis of the interviews' results and therefore those have been taken into consideration.

During the focus groups, the participants have been asked to recall real events and even role play the actual interaction with a colleague. The purpose is to remember how they felt, how they reacted, discuss it within the focus group and identify ways that would help them overcome those negative feelings that occurred. The focus groups have revealed whether the results agree or differ from the findings of the interviews and enabled the participants to even add on those findings. Working in a group and sharing ideas has helped participants express ideas and opinions and more importantly add on each other's thoughts. Also, due to the fact that the researcher has taken a less active role in the focus group, biases have also been minimised to a great extent, compared to the personal interviews.

Within the focus groups the researcher acted as a moderator and thus helped participants discuss their ideas in a flexible manner. This will enable the results to be finalised.

More analysis on the actual execution of interviews and focus groups as well as for the sampling procedures follows below in sections 7 and 8.

6. Time Horizon

The way that time is being managed in various studies is something that it is different as well. Research can be conducted in two ways in terms of time. One way is to be conducted as a snapshot, which is called cross-sectional (Hair *et al.*, 2011). The cross-sectional study, is the one that gather data and information from participants at only one point in time and therefore presents those results (Bailey, 1994; Hair *et al.*, 2011). Therefore, the studies that are being taken as cross-sectional ones, ask questions and are looking for information that apply at the specific point of time that the research is taking place. On the other hand, there is another approach, the longitudinal one. When following this approach, the research is taking place over an extended period of time and therefore present the results that apply to this extended period (Taris, 2000). Longitudinal studies are taking place when a phenomenon needs to be addressed and researched over this extended period of time so that the results will be valid in respect to this approach. If the researcher can follow this approach and there is available time to do that, then they are able to present results over time and therefore make it easier for generalisations.

This study has followed the cross-sectional approach. It is looking at emotions of employees and how they are being affected as well as how they can be handled, so it does not need to see changes over a period of time. What it is actually searching for, is the current situation and how it can be overcome. Definitely, there will be changes taking place over time, since both customers as well as organisational demands will change. At the current time and under the situation as it is today, the cross-sectional approach has been deemed as the most appropriate for this research.

7. Selection of Key Informants / Sampling

The selection of the interviewees for both interviews and focus groups has been carefully designed as well so that the best possible results will be presented. There is much more flexibility as to how a specific sample has been chosen than there is when using the quantitative approach. Most of the times, the qualitative sampling decisions are being based on how appropriate they are in guiding the research into the right direction and arrive to the best possible results in term of answering the research questions and objectives. In any way, there should be a careful consideration when taking decisions in respect of sampling procedures and how to utilise them, so that mistakes can be avoided on a large extend. This section explains and analyses the procedures to be followed for sampling selection and the rationale behind choosing the specific sample.

As it has been mentioned above, the participants are Cypriots, working in the hospitality industry for more than five years and in continuous interaction with clients.

7.1 Choosing the sampling technique

When taking sampling decisions, there are two main approaches, which are the probability sampling and the non-probability or purposeful sampling (Tuckett, 2004). Probability sampling refers to the method at which the subject had a known, non-zero chance to be included in the sample (Schillewaert *et al.*, 1998). This kind of sampling is being mainly used when conducting research through the quantitative method. On the other hand, the probability of the chosen unit from the total population is not known (Tuckett, 2004).

When using this approach, the researcher will choose the participants using subjective reasoning.

There are various ways to enable the researcher to choose a sample that is appropriate for the research that will be taking place under the purposeful sampling approach. Taking informed decisions on how to choose the right sample is a very important aspect for every research (Suri, 2011). Synthesising qualitative research is something that has emerged in

the last two decades, out of the growth of qualitative techniques in various researches.

During the process of selecting the participants of this research, the purposeful sampling technique has been adopted.

According to various scholars, the term purposeful sampling is being recognised as having the same meaning as thematic sampling (Tuckett, 2004). This is how it is going to be used for the purpose of this research as well. Purposeful/thematic sampling, refers to selection of research participants according to the research purpose and the extent to which they can serve the research questions of the current study (Tuckett, 2004). Selecting participants under this approach, has helped the researcher to choose among those people that would be able to serve as the guidance into the right direction for the phenomenon that is under study. Using purposeful sampling has also helped in the applicability of findings as it is supported by various researchers as well (e.g. DeFeo, 2013; Khan, 2014; Suri, 2011). More specifically, the researcher has used the heterogeneous sampling, which is a subcategory of purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002). The heterogeneous sampling allows the researcher to choose among a maximum variation of participants. It allows uniqueness and does not exclude any elements. This, according to Patton (2002) allows the qualitative researcher to be more flexible in his/her sampling choices and thus reach the best possible results. This kind of sampling technique has been used for both interviews as well as focus groups. During the procedure of sampling, the researcher has to choose those participants that would provide the best possible information. As it has been discussed in the literature review gap section, the purpose of this study is to reveal new information that would help in overcoming the negative effects of surface acting during facing customer aggressiveness. Further the way of increasing the use of deep acting during such interactions will be researched. As it has been identified by previous researchers and as it has been analysed before, the participants of this research should have at least five years of full time experience and of course high client interaction (e.g. Karatepe, 2009; Wang &

Groth, 2014). Therefore, to fulfil the purpose of this study, the key informants that have been chosen to participate in this study fulfilled this criteria. Another thing that has been taken into consideration, is to have participants that work in various five star hotels within the hospitality industry of Cyprus. No more than five participants were taken from the same hotel. This decision has been taken by the researcher, since having participants from the same environment may be guiding the results to a wrong direction due to any organisational issues that may be in the way. This has followed the guidance of Karatepe (2009) and Lu *et al.*, (2013), that said that since the hospitality industry is a very challenging industry to work for, taking participants from different hotels within the same quality (i.e. five star hotels) would give a better insight and more valid results will be provided.

Appendices A-E provide details of the participants that have been chosen to take part on both the interviews as well as the focus groups. An important notification here, is the fact that the participants of the interviews are different from the participants of the focus groups. There is no single interview participant that has taken part in any of the focus groups. The reason for doing that is to simply avoid repetition of the discussions and the findings and rather keep a clear mind when doing the focus groups, with different people working in the industry. The hotels are the same.

7.2 Sample size

On the other hand, the number of interviews, and thus the number of participants needed is another important aspect in sampling (Tuckett, 2004). Usually, qualitative techniques do not involve a large number of participants, since this may lead to wrong results, based on the fact that it may prohibit depth and richness (Alam, 2005; Bryman, 2004; Cachia & Millward, 2011). According to various scholars, the number of interviews as well as focus groups is much smaller than it is when the research is survey based, where the numbers needed to produce results are much higher (Alam, 2005; Carey, 2012; Diefenbach, 2009).

Those scholars support that a number between 21-40 interviews would be enough to produce results that would be acceptable in using the interviewing approach. As researchers mention, though, smaller and even bigger sizes have been used (Garcia & Gluesing, 2013; Patton, 2002). This mainly depends on the research purpose and how each researcher approaches the topic under investigation.

This researcher has followed the guidance of various scholars that have researched emotional labour using the qualitative approach and has decided to contact 30 semi-structured interviews (Harris & Reynolds, 2003; Julien & Genius, 2009; Webb, 2012). According to Patton (2002), having less than 50 interviews is the usual approach. This research has contacted the 30 interviews and additionally contacted 4 focus groups. For the purpose of this research, 4 focus groups have been contacted and each one involved 10 participants. Theory suggests that an average of 4-6 focus groups is a number that is acceptable, including 6-10 participants in each session to allow interaction and exchange of ideas (Hautzinger, 2012). Following the recommendations of the above scholars, the researcher has decided to perform 4 focus groups as it has been aforementioned, each including 10 different respondents. Therefore, in general, a total of 70 different respondents have taken part in this research, either as interview respondents or as focus group ones.

To conclude with the sampling techniques that have been followed, this research has focussed on purposeful sampling. More specifically, heterogeneous sampling, a sub-category of purposeful sampling has been used. This allowed the researcher to choose the participants according to the purpose of the research. Due to the nature of the heterogeneous sampling technique, no limitations occurred as opposed to sex, age, cultural characteristic etc. As long as the respondents could serve the purpose of the thesis, this was enough for the researcher to choose them to participate.

8. Conducting the Interviews and Focus Groups

This section provides an analysis and an explanation of how the interviews and the focus groups have been conducted. As it will be explained in this section, both the semi-structured interviews as well as the focus groups have been carefully designed to allow the researcher to reach the best possible results.

8.1 Conducting the interviews

The key informants have been contacted face-to-face and the interviews were booked. Due to the network that the researcher has in the hospitality industry, because of various training sessions she has provided to different hotels through her job as a trainer, she had no serious issues in choosing and finalising the sample to be used. Therefore, the researcher handed to each one of the 30 participants a consent form (APPENDIX F). The University of Gloucestershire ethics handbook (2008) has been handed as well so that the researcher would abide to the ethical considerations that have been required for the execution of this thesis. Once agreed and having signed the consent form, the interviews were set up. The participants have been informed that they were allowed to view the results prior publication and also they were informed that they have the right to be dismissed from this procedure at any point in time without having to explain the reason why they took this decision.

The interview questions that guided the discussion have been prepared in advance by the researcher. The table below shows the interview questions (See table 3.1).

The interviews took 30 days to be completed, since the researcher needed time after each interview to transcribe the results and also note down the body language expressions that were important for analysing the results later on. Therefore, each day only one interview was taking place. The researcher used audio recording, after the consent of the participants. None of them declined this so all interviews were tape recorded. Each interview lasted at least one hour, even though some interviews lasted longer. At the end of each interview,

the researcher transcribed it in less than 24 hours, which as it has been explained above helped in analysing the body language signals as well. All transcriptions were stored electronically, which allowed the researcher to transfer them in the qualitative software NVivo 10. The software together with the way that results have been analysed will be explained in section 11 of this chapter.

Interview Questions	RQs	ROs
Interview Question 1: How do you feel about your job in relation to handling customers in general?	Ice-Breaker	Ice-Breaker
Interview Question 2: a) Who do you consider to be an aggressive customer? Describe him/her. How does their behaviour affect you in terms of doing your job?	RQ1	RO2
Interview Question 3: How do you handle your own emotions while interacting with aggressive customers?	RQ1	RO2
Interview Question 4: a) How do you react in front of an aggressive customer? Describe a situation where you were facing customer aggression and how you have reacted. b) Do you feel that the way you react reflects the way you feel at the moment of such interactions?	RQ1	RO2
Interview Question 5: a) How does hiding your true emotions (being called surface acting) in front of an angry customer affects you on a personal level? b) In what level and up to what extend does engaging in surface acting during your interactions with aggressive customers affects the way you feel and behave both at work or/and in your personal life?	RQ2	RO3
Interview Question 6: In what ways does engaging in surface acting when handling difficult or angry customers is affecting your relationships with customers, colleagues and management?	RQ2	RO3

Interview Question 7: a) What kind of support would you expect from people within your working environment (i.e. colleagues, managers or other stakeholders) to help you overcome any negative consequences occurring from hiding your true emotions when you deal with aggressive customers? b) What kind of support would you like to receive from the people that are close to you (family, friends) to overcome those negative consequences? c) Have you received any help of any kind in order to overcome those negative consequences? If yes, was it helpful and in what extend? Mention any other kind of support you would need in general.	RQ3	RO4 & RO5
Interview Question 8: In what level could you personally help yourself overcome those negative consequences?	RQ3	RO4 & RO5
Interview Question 9: a) Do you feel that you could be able to offer more genuine emotions during your interactions with aggressive customers (i.e. when you have to smile you feel happy at the same time)? If yes, how would you do that? b) What kind of support of any kind (from within or outside your working environment) would you need to be able to offer more genuine emotions to your angry customers?	RQ4a	RO5
Interview Question 10: a) What would help you create a better understanding on why your customers feel the way they do when they are angry? b) How would this affect the way you impose the right emotions when you deal with them?	RQ4a	RO5
Interview Question 11: a) How would you feel if you were able to impose positive feelings and actually feel positive in front of an angry customer? b) How would this affect the negative consequences that are occurring due to the fact that you are engaging in surface acting when interacting with aggressive customers? Would it affect them in a positive way? If yes, how and in what extent?	RQ4b	RO5

Table 3.1: Interview Questions in Relation to Research Questions and Research Objectives

8.2 Conducting the focus groups

After the completion of the interviews and after transcribing the results of each one of them, the researcher designed and implemented the focus groups. Before conducting the focus groups, the author investigated all the best practices and procedures to follow when implementing this technique. Mellinger (2010) advises the researchers that use focus groups to prepare a number of open questions and allow the participants to elaborate on the main topics that will be discussed. According to Litosseliti (2003), focus groups should be structured only up to the extent that allows participants to feel free to elaborate and express their opinions as well as having a proper discussion with their co-participants. The questions that guided the discussion of the focus groups are the same as the ones that have guided the semi-structured interviews with limited variations. These are presented in the table below (See table 3.2). The reason that the researcher has used the same questions with very limited variations is due to the fact that the purpose of the focus groups is to validate the results of the interviews through the methodological triangulation, as it has been described above. Therefore, when using this approach, the researcher should be using the same questions and change them only according to the findings of the previous method that has been used so that the results can be validated or altered according to the findings of the second method (Cartel *et al.*, 2014). Therefore, the questions have been the same and the variations occurred by taking consideration the findings of the interviews.

Participants of the focus groups have been full-time front line employees that are working in positions that require regular contact with customers, such as the reception and the restaurant and bar employees in the hotel. Each of the four focus groups that have been contacted included 10 participants. Four focus groups have been contacted in total and each one lasted on average three hours.

During the focus groups the participants were being asked to recall real events and even role play the actual interaction with a colleague. The purpose was to remember how they

felt, how they reacted, discuss it within the focus group and identify ways that would help them overcome those negative feelings that may have occurred. Further they have analysed the important aspect of engaging in deep acting during those interactions. The focus groups that have been contacted verified the findings of the interviews and enabled the participants to add to those findings and thus develop the theoretical framework (Objective 5). The analysis of both the interviews' and the focus groups' results is being presented in the next chapter.

Focus Group Questions	RQs	ROs
Focus Group Question 1: How do you feel about your job in relation to handling customers in general?	Ice-Breaker	Ice-Breaker
Focus Group Question 2: a) Who do you consider to be an aggressive customer? Describe him/her. How does their behaviour affect you in terms of doing your job?	RQ1	RO2
Focus Group Question 3: a) How do you handle your own emotions while interacting with aggressive customers? b) Can you describe a situation to show how this is being handled by you or the people around you in your team?	RQ1	RO2
Focus Group Question 4: a) How do you react in front of an aggressive customer? Describe a situation where you were facing customer aggression and how you have reacted. b) Do you feel that the way you react reflects the way you feel at the moment of such interactions?	RQ1	RO2
Focus Group Question 5: a) How does hiding your true emotions (which is being called surface acting) in front of an angry customer affects you on a personal level? b) If what level and up to what extent does engaging in surface acting during your interactions with aggressive customers affect the way you feel and behave both at work or/and in your personal life?	RQ2	RO3
Focus Group Question 6: In what ways does engaging in surface acting when handling difficult or angry customers is affecting your relationships with customers, colleagues and management?	RQ2	RO3

Focus Group Question 7: a) What kind of support would you expect from people within your working environment (i.e. colleagues, managers or other stakeholders) to help you overcome any negative consequences occurring from hiding your true emotions when you deal with aggressive customers? b) What kind of support would you like to receive from the people that are close to you (family, friends) to overcome those negative consequences? c) Have you received any help of any kind in order to overcome those negative consequences? If yes, was it helpful and in what extend? Mention any other kind of support you would need in general.	RQ3	RO4 & RO5
Focus Group Question 8: a) Do you feel that you could be able to offer more genuine emotions during your interactions with aggressive customers (i.e. when you have to smile you feel happy at the same time)? If yes, how would you do that? b) What kind of support of any kind (from within or outside your working environment) would you need to be able to offer more genuine emotions to your angry customers?	RQ4a	RO5
Focus Group Question 9: a) What would help you create a better understanding on why your customers feel the way they do when they are angry? b) How would this affect the way you impose the right emotions when you deal with them?	RQ4a	RO5
Focus Group Question 10: a) How would you feel if you were able to impose positive feelings and actually feel positive in front of an angry customer? b) How would this affect the negative consequences that are occurring due to the fact that you are engaging in surface acting when interacting with aggressive customers? Would it affect them in a positive way? If yes, how and in what extent?	RQ4b	RO5

Table 3.2: Focus Group Questions in relation to Research Questions and Research Objectives

8.3 Pilot Testing

The pilot testing before conducting the primary research is really important and it helps the researcher spot mistakes and omissions in the questions that will be asked before the actual research takes place. The researcher conducted pilot testing in two phases. The first pilot testing was conducted before doing the actual interviews and the second one before the focus groups. Since the interviews took place before the focus groups, the researcher conducted the pilot testing for interviews first.

8.3.1 Pilot testing for interviews

For the purpose of pilot testing the interview questions, a number of people were used. At first, the researcher conducted a personal meeting with an occupational psychologist and a clinical psychologist. The reason that those two people were included in the testing phase, is because of the area of the topic that is under investigation. The researcher is dealing with people's emotions and the questions being asked, as they can be seen above, include sensitive matters. Therefore, the opinion of psychologists is vital for such topics. Both the clinical psychologist as well as the occupational psychologist received detailed information about the topic under investigation and they were informed about the thesis objectives and research questions. The role of the occupational psychologist was at first to see if the interview questions relate well to the research questions and objectives. Further, his role was to see it from the employees' perspective and discuss whether those questions are appropriate ones to be asked to employees. He was asked to give his opinion on how employees would perceive the questions and how difficult it would be for them on a personal level to reply to those matters. After this evaluation, the clinical psychologist was also asked to see the relationship between the interview questions, the research questions and the objectives. She commented on whether those questions touch very sensitive issues and if they did, how they could be changed so that they help the researcher but also abide to the important ethical considerations.

Both the occupational and the clinical psychologist gave their professional opinion on the questions. After discussing with them, the researcher reached the conclusion that some questions were very general and they would not be easily understood by the participants of the interviews. Therefore, some of the interview questions were changed and for some of them a second part was added to clarify and evaluate the area that was investigated in this question better. Also, two of the interview questions that are related to RQ4 seemed to be touching a very sensitive matter and they needed to be changed accordingly so that they would not sound “disturbing” to the participants, according to the psychologists’ opinions. After conducting the pilot testing with the psychologists the researcher also conducted two pilot interviews with people that are working as front line staff in the hospitality industry for the last 15 years. Those interviews took place after the interview questions were altered using the psychologists’ recommendations and suggestions as explained above. The pilots first identified the time that each interview will last, and this was between 60 to 90 minutes. The discussion focussed on both answering the questions as well as asking for the participants’ opinions on whether the questions were clear to them. The pilots also focussed on revealing information as to how conservative or hesitant participants would be in order to answer the questions. The results of those interviews, helped the researcher finalise the interview questions. Two of the questions have been slightly changed and one of them was re-written in a different way after those pilots since the participants commented that they could not easily give an answer to them as they were being asked at the moment. After finalising the interview questions, the researcher agreed the final version with the thesis supervisors and the actual interviews took place.

8.3.2 Pilot testing for focus groups

The focus groups questions have been re-formed after the completion of the actual interviews. The questions have been kept in such a way so that they could help the

researcher to validate the results of the interviews and reveal any further information that could give any help in closing the literature gap. As it has been aforementioned, the focus groups approach has been chosen due to the fact that the researcher was seeking for information from participants while being in groups. The pilot focus group took place with ten people, working in the hospitality industry for at least five years as front line employees. Those people were gathered in a room and have been explained the reason why this pilot focus group was taking place. After the initial discussion and explanations, the participants started answering the questions. After each question, they were asked to evaluate it and identify anything they could not easily give an answer to or that they were not sure what it was expected from them. The completion of this pilot focus group revealed some important information for the researcher to take into consideration during the actual focus groups.

At first, the participants were a bit hesitant when the researcher asked them to use role playing to reveal the way they deal with aggressive customers. The difficulty was on role playing this with another colleague within the focus group, since they believed they could not show natural behaviours and acting it out was not helpful. Due to this finding, the researcher removed role playing and the answers were kept as single descriptions and discussion. The participants also discussed about one question that has been asked during the interviews, which is Question 8 (See table 3.6 above). This question has been removed from the actual focus groups, since during the pilot testing it has been identified that the participants could not answer anything to that question and it created a bad feeling to them. They believed that by asking what they can do about themselves was a bit annoying since they supported that they do anything possible to help the situation. Since this question did not reveal any kind of information during the interviews as well, it has been completely removed from the focus groups. The pilot also helped in identifying the actual time that would be needed for each focus group which was around two hours. The pilot focus group

helped the researcher finalise the questions. After doing that the actual focus groups took place.

9. Data Quality – Credibility / Validity / Reliability

The data quality issues are really important and every researcher should be addressing those issues when conducting research by either the quantitative or the qualitative approach. According to (Mangioni & McKerchar, 2013) the issues of validity and reliability are regarded in a quite different way, depending on whether research is being conducted by quantitative or qualitative approach. Validity is one test of the quality of research and it needs to be established in three ways: construct validity, internal validity and external validity. Construct validity refers to the extent at which appropriate measures have been used for all the phenomena and concepts that have been under study (Mangioni & McKerchar, 2013; Riege, 2003). Internal validity requires that all the methods that have been used to derive data for the phenomenon under study have been correct and appropriate for the conclusions that have been drawn to be valid and authentic (Sinkovics *et al.*, 2008). In terms of external validity, this refers to the extent at which the results that have been drawn can be generalised to the rest of the population (Mangioni & McKerchar, 2013). Reliability, on the other hand refers to the extent at which study replication can occur so that the findings of that study could be accepted or rejected accordingly (Street & Ward, 2012).

Due to the fact that this research is taking place by using the qualitative approach, this means that it is not looking for generalisations. Therefore, as in all qualitative researches that are taking place, external validity as well as reliability are mostly issues that are not considered, since that concerns the quantitative researches (Mangioni & McKerchar, 2013; Sinkovics *et al.*, 2008). Despite that, the researcher of this thesis took appropriate measures that have been suggested by various scholars in order to make sure that the data collected was of the appropriate quality in terms of credibility, validity and reliability (Mangioni &

McKerchar, 2013; Sinkovics *et al.*, 2008; Street & Ward, 2012; Riege, 2003). The researcher therefore describes below the measures that were put into action for this research, as they were suggested by those researchers mentioned above, in order to improve credibility, validity and reliability of the data collected.

9.1 Credibility

This thesis is following the constructivist / interpretivist paradigm. The correct approach for every research is to use its own paradigm's quality criteria so that the right results will be derived (Healy & Perry, 2000). Credibility is an important quality aspect being taken into consideration when following the constructivist / interpretivist paradigm (Healy & Perry, 2000).

According to Sinkovics *et al.*, (2008) credibility seems to be parallel to internal validity and it is good to be addressed in qualitative researches. The focus is in constructing a match between the reality that has been constructed from the respondents and the realities that are being represented by the researcher. The qualitative research and more specifically both the interviews and the focus groups require a lot of input from the researcher and the collection of data mainly depends on him/her and the credibility they can impose (Sinkovics *et al.*, 2008; Street & Ward, 2012). As a result, this research took this into consideration and has undertaken the appropriate measures to achieve credibility. It has been suggested, that the researcher has an in-depth understanding and most preferably experience on the area that is being under study so that they can achieve credibility (Sinkovics *et al.*, 2008). Firstly, the knowledge and experience that is considered important for credibility purposes has been achieved through the researcher's professional experience. The researcher is a trainer on the area of emotions in organisations for the last 10 years. She has contacted a great number of training courses in the hospitality industry and has researched the industry in a professional approach a lot, due to her job. As

a result, she gained an in-depth knowledge and understanding of the industry and the challenges it is facing both internally as well as with external clients.

In addition it has been suggested that when the research requires qualitative data, credibility should be achieved on behalf of the researcher (Khan, 2014). The researcher gained credibility due to the fact that most of the respondents took training courses with her before. This enhanced credibility due to the fact that the relationship was already established and the respondents were able to identify the knowledge and experience of the researcher, therefore felt confident in answering questions and expanding themselves on the topic of interest.

In addition to that, the respondents need to feel confident to reveal sensitive information about their emotions. Due to the fact that they took the ethical considerations handbook and they discussed anonymity with the researcher, they felt confident and secure and they could open up themselves more easily so as to make the data gathered as credible as possible. According to Khan (2014) the ethical considerations are a very important area that, if done correctly, adds to the credibility of the researcher.

9.2 Validity

As it has been mentioned above, validity refers to data findings that both present and reflect the reality. As it has been also discussed at the beginning of this section, this study is being mainly concerned with interval validity rather than external, since it is using the qualitative methodology and is not aiming to achieve generalisations on the phenomenon under investigation.

In general, especially if the research is taking place under the qualitative approach, the researchers need to make sure that the specific data that has been collected and analysed is really measuring what it needs to measure (Adcock & Collier, 2001). Thus, this will lead to results that will reflect the reality. At first, the researcher followed Healy and Perry (2000) suggestion in increasing validity when using the qualitative approach, which is to use

interviews that are non-forcing and ones that allow the respondents to freely express themselves. This has been achieved by using semi-structured interviews. During conducting each interview, the researcher had the interview questions as a guidance but thus was able to ask for clarifications at any point of time and create a new discussion that could better validate the results and thus reveal more information, usually of a great importance. Therefore, according to the suggestions in the literature, the fact that the interviews were not completely structured is indeed a factor that increases validity. Furthermore, according to Healy and Perry (2000), well-chosen respondents is another factor that increases validity in the context of qualitative research. The purposeful sampling method that has been mentioned above (see section 6) allowed the researcher to choose among a very large number of employees that are working in the hospitality industry of Cyprus, the ones that are in continuous interaction with clients, with years of experience in the same position. Therefore they could give the best possible results. Another way to increase validity, is by comparing more than one qualitative techniques, so that the same researcher can cross-validate their results (Adcock & Collier, 2001). The researcher achieved that through conducting focus groups after the interviews by using the methodological triangulation method. Therefore, the results of the interviews could better be validated and discussed since the researcher could cross-evaluate the results and add to the findings through the focus groups. In addition, the researcher provided detailed description of the research findings as it can be seen in the research findings chapter (See chapter 4). The extensive use of the actual respondents' quotes as well as the very detailed explanation of the findings made the descriptions as rich as possible. This helped in increasing the data validity since the respondents not only had the chance to provide their opinion in an open way, but also those opinions were mostly described and analysed according to their words and their explanation. This has increased the reality of the data for the phenomenon under study.

9.3 Reliability

As it has been aforementioned, reliability refers to the extent at which this research could be undertaken by another researcher and either confirm or reject the results. This research has taken a number of measures to ensure reliability of the data provided on the phenomenon under study. In order to achieve that, the researcher should have ensured participant error, observer error as well as avoiding observer bias (Sinkovics *et al.*, 2008). To ensure accurateness of the findings, the researcher personally transcribed all the respondents' answers. To make sure that data would be correctly analysed and evaluated, the researcher used NVivo 10, to enter the data. All data has been entered in the programme with great accuracy and double checked for any omissions or mistakes during the process. The fact that each interview took place on a separate day, helped the researcher do that in a more careful and detailed approach. The researcher chose NVivo 10 so that she would avoid any mistakes during deriving the themes and the sub-themes in the analysis process.

The researcher has been carefully analysing and describing the process of gathering and analysing data, so she can offer future researchers the chance to implement the same research on exact the same way. The research paradigm that has been followed, the research design and methodology were described in such a way so that any other researcher could do the same research by following the same methods. The way of analysing data, which is being explained below, is also very descriptive and can easily be used by future researchers as well.

10. Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are a very important area that needs to be addressed in this chapter, since every research has to abide to various ethical rules. This research, abides the rules and regulations that are outlined in the University of Gloucestershire's (2008) ethics handbook. As it has been aforementioned, this handbook will be handled to every single

participant that is taking part on either the interview or the focus group. This section provides details of the specific ethical considerations that have been taking place during the course of this research.

Ethical behaviour on behalf of the researcher

The names of the respondents were not revealed under any circumstance in this thesis. The respondents were protected by anonymity throughout the research, by not allowing any access to the recordings of the interviews and focus groups or to the transcriptions. The transcribed text was saved on a password protected document in the researcher's computer and the recordings were locked securely in the researcher's office.

Right of privacy and confidentiality

The researcher has been only given permission to reveal the content of the discussion and the respondents' answers but not the respondents' names and the hotel they are working at. This important ethical consideration helped the respondents being more open when discussing the various concepts on the phenomenon under study, since they knew that anonymity will be held throughout the process.

Participants' personal consent and allowance to withdraw

All the participants have been asked to give permission to the researcher prior the research by signing up the consent form (APPENDIX F). No interview or focus group took place before signing the consent form and getting permission. As it is shown on the consent form, the respondents were given permission to withdraw from the process at any point in time or discontinue the conversation if they felt that the ethical considerations were not being followed to the extent that they should have been followed by the researcher.

Review of research interviews' and focus groups' questions

According to Ponterotto (2010), if research that deals with emotions is taking place under the qualitative methodology, an important ethical consideration needs to take place as well. The researcher has to make sure that an independent scholar in the area of psychology

reviews the questions to make sure that they are ethically correct and they will not create any harm to the respondents' psychological state at any point in time, throughout the interview or the focus group process. This has been followed by the researcher of this thesis. Two different independent academics in the area of psychology reviewed the questions and made sure that necessary changes have been made so that they will not create any ethical or other issues to the respondents.

11. Analysis and Presentation of Data

Qualitative methods have been widely used in areas that involve emotions (Alam, 2005). Ways of analysing and presenting the results being used are quite different from Quantitative Data. Instead of using numbers, qualitative data is usually analysed and presented in a narrative way (ibid). This section explains how data gathered for this research have been analysed and presented. More specifically, in this section, the researcher will analyse the techniques that have used for analysis and development of data, the ways they have been used and their effectiveness.

As it has been identified in the research analysis literature, there are different perspectives and beliefs as on how and when qualitative data should be analysed. Some researchers decide to do the analysis when they finish with the whole procedure, and others analyse it as they go along (Cassel & Symon, 2006). As it is being suggested though, doing it as you go along may be a better approach than waiting until the end (Alam, 2005). Therefore, transcription and coding started when the first interview took place in September 2015 and finished after the last focus group on December 2015. The coding started directly after the transcription of the first interview with the aid of computer assisted software, which in this case is NVivo 10. More details are being given below.

NVivo 10 software has been used throughout the process to enter data and act as an aid in analysing the results. As it has been aforementioned, this software helped in increasing the

validity by cross-checking the data entries as well as decreasing the biases that may occur when analysing qualitative data.

11.1 NVivo 10 software

It has been argued by a number of qualitative data analysts that using computer software when analysing qualitative data makes it easier and avoids human mistakes or even biases (Garcia & Gluesing, 2013). In the last years, a number of software have been designed and used effectively by many researchers that followed the qualitative method (ibid). For this specific research and after a consideration of the advantages and disadvantages of the existing softwares, NVivo 10 has been used. This software has been used as an aid to import information and data from interviews and focus groups and then analyse and examine relationships of the data.

There are some discussions among researchers of the best approaches of analysing qualitative data and whether using software to help the process is good or not. Most of the researchers on this area support that with the aid of the possibilities that a software can provide the researcher, the analysis of qualitative data can become more detailed and biases are avoided to a large extent as it has been mentioned above (Catterall & Maclaran, 1998; Kikooma, 2010). A computer software, such as NVivo 10 that has been used for this thesis, can help the researcher enter data in a systematic way (ibid). This software has helped the researcher of this PhD thesis to structure the data in a very effective way as well as to provide analysis that would not be feasible to be done without the help of the software. More in regards to the use of the software is being discussed below.

11.2 Template analysis

This specific research, as it has been indicated in this chapter calls for an inductive data analysis method, so the researcher did not use any deductive procedures in analysing the data since those were not suitable. The researcher is not explaining the data based on theoretical propositions (Pattern Matching), neither tests a theoretical proposition

(Explanation building); which are both deductive data analysis approaches (Thorne, 2000).

The researcher is focussing on an analytical strategy and procedure that does not involve any pre-determined theoretical basis. As a result, the data collected for this research is being analysed through an inductive strategy, called the template analysis (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). The template analysis is being explained and the way that is being used is being analysed in this sub-section of the chapter.

Template analysis, which is being used in this research, has been first created by King. When using this approach, a list of codes is being produced that will mainly represent the analysis themes as they have been derived from the data that has been collected (King, 2004). Due to the Interpretivist philosophical positioning that has been followed in this research, the template analysis fits perfectly (ibid). A reason for that, is that during this kind of analysis, the researcher remained focussed on providing a rich description of the findings that occurred both from the interviews as well as the focus groups. This is what is expected in regards to the interpretivist approach. Template analysis was very helpful in providing this rich description as it has been desired in regards to the data that has been collected for the purpose of this thesis.

While using the template approach for analysing the data, the researcher first identified and set a number of pre-determined codes as they have been derived from the existing literature. At the initial analysis stage, some of the sub-themes within the main themes were identified a priori from the literature review and the pilot interviews and focus group, as it is being suggested by King (2004), who is the initiator of this approach. Further to that, the rest were identified during the analysis. The initial template that had been created a priori from the literature and the pilot tests is being presented in Table 3.3 below.

RQs	ROs	No	Themes & Sub-Themes
1	2	1.	Engaging in surface acting during interactions with aggressive customers
2	3&5	2. 2.1 2.2 2.3 2.4 2.5 2.6 2.7 2.8 2.9 2.10	Surface acting negative consequences Decreased sense of well-being Emotional dissonance Increase in psycho-physiological stress Emotional exhaustion Burnout Depersonalisation Increase in absenteeism Decrease in job satisfaction Work-life conflict Effects on service performance
3	4&5	3. 3.1 3.2 3.3 3.4 3.5 3.6 3.7 3.8	Managing the surface acting negative consequences Behavioural disengagement Venting Negative Emotions Job-autonomy and self-monitoring The role of organisational/group and family emotional support The role of stress appraisal The role of positive/negative affectivity and self-efficacy Initial and on-going training of employees An increased use of deep acting
4a	5	4.	Use of deep acting
4b	5	5.	Positive outcomes through the use of deep acting during interactions with aggressive customers

Table 3.3: Initial Template including themes and sub-themes identified a priori from the literature and the initial pilot analysis

When analysing the primary data that has been gathered from the interviews, the researcher then modified the codes as they have been derived from the existing literature according to the findings. The initial template acted as an aid to the researcher and has been used in the analysis of the interviews. As a next step, the focus groups analysis was added to either show the same codes or add to them and thus modify them accordingly.

The themes and sub-themes, describe the respondents' perceptions as they have been derived from the interviews and the focus groups on the area under investigation. The interviews indicated important pylons, something that reformed the initial conceptual framework making it more accurate and solid. While the researcher was analysing the data collected, there was a repositioning of the themes and especially the sub-themes. In

addition, new sub-themes aroused as well and have been finalised after the analysis of the focus groups. This has followed the suggestions of King (2004) about putting the template analysis in practice and the suggestions of Jack & Raturi, (2006) and Mangan *et al.*, (2004) about analysing data being derived through the methodological triangulation. The table below (Table 3.4) shows the final template for the data analysis.

RQs	ROs	No	Themes & Sub-Themes
1	2	1.	Engaging in surface acting during interactions with aggressive customers
2	3&5	2. 2.1 2.2 2.3 2.4 2.5 2.6 2.7 2.8	The Negative Consequences of engaging in surface acting during the interactions with aggressive customers Stress & reduced well-being Burnout Increase in smoking & consumption of alcohol Hiding emotions and acting at home / Negative consequences in family life Negative perception of colleagues/ managers/the job in general Increase in absenteeism / sick leave Making more mistakes / decrease in job performance Negative attitudes towards customers
3	4&5	3. 3.1 3.2 3.3 3.4 3.5 3.6 3.7	Buffering out the negative consequences of surface acting when interacting with aggressive customers Increase in job autonomy More training and employee development Management support Forming support groups within the hotel Receiving more positive feedback from management An increase in teamwork and cooperation Family and friends to keep a distance from work issues / show patience and understanding
4a	5	4. 4.1 4.2 4.3 4.4	Increased engagement in deep acting during interactions with aggressive customers Attempting positive thinking / attitude towards customers Positive internal organisational culture Managers to act more as leaders Training on how to achieve deep acting
4b	5	5. 5.1 5.2 5.3 5.4	Positive Consequences of using Deep Acting when interacting with aggressive customers Decrease in stress Decrease in Burnout A decrease in surface acting at home / Less work family conflicts A decrease in the negative perception of colleagues/managers

		5.5	A decrease in absenteeism / sick leave
		5.6	A positive impact in job performance
		5.7	Positive attitudes towards customers

Table 3.4: Final template including the themes and sub-themes and how they correspond to the RQs and ROs.

11.3 Analysis of Interviews

As it has been mentioned in the section “*Conducting the Interviews*” above, each interview has been audio-recorded and transcribed by the researcher. Data has been analysed using a systematic evaluation of the transcripts of all interviews as well as the interviews notes.

This process has been structured using the iterative process advocated by Reynolds & Harris (2006) as well as Harris & Daunt (2013) that has been deemed appropriate when analysing data dealing with customers’ aggressiveness consequences. The process has been guided by the initial template as it has been created and shown in the above section. This process is being described in this sub-section.

The iterative process that has been used to analyse results concluded in the final template analysis as it can be seen in the above section. The steps that have been followed to analyse the data are: familiarisation, identifying a thematic framework, indexing, charting, mapping and interpretation (Harris & Daunt, 2013). Familiarisation stage has begun by reading the notes and listening to the tapes during transcribing and importing the information in the software. Short memos have been created during the identification of a thematic framework step. Those memos included the basic ideas that then turned into themes and sub-themes. Those themes and sub-themes correspond to the Nodes and child nodes in NVivo 10. The indexing step involved sorting like quotes together and make comparisons. The fourth step, charting, involved taking the quotes from the original context and re-arranging them under the appropriate sub-themes that have been newly developed with the aid of NVivo 10. Charting and mapping have been used for the purpose of minimising the data by grouping similar data together. Interpreting of data was the final step. At this point, the researcher needed to take the grouped data and to make use of the

quotes and themes that have aroused so that an analysis is created and results are being finalised.

The data that has been imported in the NVivo 10 software has been used to produce a thematic narrative analysis at the final interpretation stage as it is being presented in the next chapter. Evaluating those themes, the author then combined them together into fewer themes and sub themes. This process continued until no new themes and sub-themes emerged and therefore the researcher concluded to the results of the data analysis.

Themes involve both the consequences of engaging in emotional labour when interacting with aggressive customers as well as ways to overcome them. In addition it involves the concept of deep acting and how employees could engage themselves more in deep acting during their interactions with aggressive customers. The consequences have been discussed as they arouse from the data analysis and then they were compared to the existing literature findings. The next step has been to analyse thematically as it has been described above the buffering effects of those consequences. Since the gap in the literature refers to the buffering effects and how to engage more in deep acting, this is where special attention has been given to. This analysis involves all the sub-themes that emerge in terms of the ways that participants feel will help them overcome the negative consequences. Attention has been given to the buffering effects that have emerged from this research and agree with the existing findings of previous researchers. Special attention on this analysis, though, has been given to the new buffering effects that have aroused out of this data analysis since this is what is requested to close the gap in the literature. Then, the ways that would increase the use of deep acting have been discussed and analysed. The buffering effects as well as the themes that emerged in respect of deep acting have been used to answer the final objective of this thesis, which is aiming to create a theoretical framework consisting of ways to overcome the negative consequences and engaging in deep acting. The preliminary framework can be reviewed in the previous chapter (See chapter 2).

Quotes from the participants have been included in a great extent to help readers of this thesis get a good feeling of how the themes have emerged as it can be seen in the next chapter. Various quotes that have been grouped together have been included both from the interviews as well as the focus groups. Anonymity has been held in the participants' quotes, since this has been included in the ethical agreement between the interviewer and the interviewees.

11.4 Analysis of focus groups

The researcher has taken an analytical role in the focus groups, as it being described in the section "Conducting the focus groups" above. All focus groups have been audio recorded. Notes have been taken while the focus groups were taking place and those notes have been used to analyse the results with the aid of the audio-recorder.

After the completion of each focus group, the researcher was reviewing the notes and added all information in the software. Then an analysis followed, on the same way that the interviews have been analysed by using the final template that has been created from the analysis of the interviews' results. The themes and sub-themes that have emerged have been compared and added to the interviews' ones. The results that supported the interviews' ones were added to the interviews' results and any new information resulting from the focus groups was added to them. Therefore, the final template that has been shown above had been finalised after the additions or alterations from the focus groups' results. As it can be seen in the analysis of the data (Chapter 4), the results of the focus groups have been discussed together with the interviews' results, focussing on whether they agree, disagree or add to them. Final comments and discussion, comparing those results with the literature, have been made after this analysis. The ways to overcome the consequences of engaging in emotional labour while interacting with aggressive customers as well as the ways to increase engagement in deep acting have been finalised and the final framework was created.

11.5 Constant Comparison

This analytical procedure included constant comparison throughout its process. According to Charmaz (2006) constant comparison is when you constantly compare data with data, data with category, category with category and category with concept. By using this method, the researcher avoided being biased since every single finding was being compared to previous ones and this is how each concept emerged.

11.6 Framework design

The final results of this research have been presented on an analytical framework (See Chapter 4), presenting the negative consequences of engaging in emotional labour during customer aggression, the ways to overcome them and the ways to increase employee engagement in deep acting. Therefore, the initial framework was presented in the literature review analysis and the final framework is being presented on the next chapter, after the primary data analysis.

12. Conclusion

This chapter elaborated on the way of collecting the primary data of this research. The epistemological and philosophical position have been described and analysed.

Furthermore, the research strategy and methods have been discussed. The researcher highlighted the importance of ensuring the quality of the collected data as well as the compliance with the provided ethical guidelines. The next chapter analyses the data findings and provides an in-depth discussion in regards to them.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

1. Introduction

The previous chapter has analysed and discussed the methodology that has been followed for the collection of primary data. After the description of the methods that have been used and after gathering the primary data, this chapter analyses the results. As it will be seen in this chapter, the results are being analysed according to the description of the previous chapter. An analysis of the themes and the sub-themes that have been emerged out of the primary data collection from interviews as well as focus groups is being discussed in the rest of this chapter.

As it has been explained in the previous chapter, the focus groups have been designed and implemented right after the interviews were done and being analysed. The reason why this has been done, is because the focus groups objective was to either support the results of the interviews or add to the existing findings any results that are different from the interviews' findings. Therefore, this chapter includes a combination of both the interviews analysis and the analysis of the focus groups. In addition, this chapter compares the results from both methods and reached the final conclusions that answer the thesis objectives and research questions.

2. Data Analysis and Discussion

This section includes an analysis of the interviews and the focus groups' results. As it has been discussed in the methodology chapter, the focus groups have taken place in order to validate the results of the interviews. Therefore, the discussion below includes the results of the interviews and how these are supported or differ from the focus groups. As it will be seen in the analysis below, the focus groups agreed with most of the interview results. The very minor differences that existed will be analysed below. Integrated within the discussion is the theoretical background as it has been examined and analysed in the

literature review. The researcher is comparing her results with the current literature findings and identifies whether her findings support or differ from the current literature. The innovative aspects and the contributions of this study are also being highlighted.

2.1 Emotional labour and interaction with aggressive customers

The analysis below refers to the way employees engage in emotional labour when they interact with aggressive customers. This is answering RQ1 which is related to RO2. The analysis includes the findings of the Interviews being compared to the findings of the focus groups to end up to the final results. The literature review findings are also compared to the primary data results.

Theme 1: Surface acting as the main way to engage in emotional labour when interacting with aggressive customers

The current literature discusses the area of emotional labour and how employees engage in emotional labour when they interact with aggressive customers. As it is shown in this section, the results of this current research agree with the existing literature results on this aspect. Both the interviews and the focus groups support that employees are engaging in surface acting when they interact with aggressive customers. As it has been analysed in the literature review chapter, through the existing findings, employees tend to engage in surface acting when they interact with aggressive customers (Goussinsky, 2015; Grandey, 2007). The fact that emotions are indeed contagious is something that has been researched by various scholars, that reached the conclusion that due to this employees tend to engage in surface acting since it is unacceptable to show anger for example, which is an emotion that is being passed on naturally to an employee when the customer is angry (Huang & Dai, 2010). When employees perceive customers as aggressive, and thus face aggressiveness, they tend to find themselves in the difficult situation of having to deal with the aggressiveness and follow the organisational rules that does not allow them to get angry as well. The interview respondents as well as the focus groups ones, agreed that they

perceive a customer as an aggressive one when they either complain in an unacceptable way or when they increase the volume of their voice. This makes them feel uncomfortable as they have to deal with it. It brings along negative feelings that they tend to hide so that they can abide to the organisational rules that require them to be positive towards the customer and hide aggressiveness. The respondents were able at first to discuss about the perception of who they believe is an aggressive customers and then how this kind of aggressive behaviour affects them generally on performing their duties, both during the interviews as well as during the focus groups. For example R3 said:

“I would say that an aggressive customer for me is the one that behaves in an unacceptable manner. I mean, I have been told that I cannot shout at any point in front of the customer. I need to stay positive. So if it is unacceptable on my behalf, then I cannot tolerate this from the customer. We are all human beings and we have rights as well as obligations, whether we are a customer or a service provider. Unfortunately I need to stay calm and therefore I hide my feelings and mainly display fake ones.”

Furthermore, it has been identified in the literature that all events in the workplace directly affect employees in terms of their emotional reactions, feelings and therefore behaviours (Goussinsky, 2015; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Various authors based their research of engaging in emotional labour while interacting with aggressive customers on Weiss & Cropanzano (1996) theory. Grandey *et al.*, (2010) concluded that any bad interaction with customers imposed negative feelings and therefore negative behaviours. This was also based on the Affective Events Theory. On the contrary, since it is not accepted by organisations to express those negative feelings during customer interactions, service providers tend to hide them.

When discussing with the participants both during the interviews as well as during the focus groups of who they perceive to be an aggressive customer and how it makes them react, most of them were replying that it is really the one that behaves in an unacceptable

way, by shouting and imposing their opinion without listening. The researcher asked additional questions to clarify the term “unacceptable way” as well, to get a clearer picture from the participants. Most of them perceived an aggressive customer to be the one who is dissatisfied and shares this dissatisfaction in a way that it is passed on to the employees. They therefore hide their frustration and thus engage in surface acting so that they can work their way through the right organisational rules. For example R5 replied by saying:

“An aggressive customer is the one that is shouting, pointing their finger, imposing, behaving in a way that shows they are the king and we are the slaves. Even though it may sound too much to you, this is happening on a regular basis. Customers are now more demanding. This bad behaviour is really passed on to us and is disturbing. We cannot show our real emotions so we simply hide them.”

Most of the respondents showed that this behaviour causes dissatisfaction to the employees and makes them feel annoyed, which is something that brings along hiding feelings and acting on behalf of the employees towards the customers. R10 said:

“I perceive any customer as an aggressive one if s/he is not in the mood and starts shouting, pointing the finger to me, tells me to stop talking and listen. It happens to me regularly, especially during the high-season that we are facing most challenges. Therefore I hide my feelings and act so that I can create the right atmosphere that I need to create towards my customers.”

On the same pace, F1R5 said:

“I believe everybody here agrees that when we interact with angry customers we simply act and all the emotions we display are fake.”

Also, F1R8 said:

“I totally agree with that. No natural emotions really. Just faking”

The respondents of both the interviews and the focus groups said that during those specific occasions that customers act aggressively, they feel that they are keeping their anger deep

inside them and simply trying to satisfy the customer. In addition, participants said that even though they feel that they want to shout back at some point, they try really hard to stop that and behave on the appropriate manner that they should be behaving in front of an aggressive customer. According to R15:

“It makes me start pretending that I am there for them even though I am not really. I hate it when they shout to me, especially when I believe they are wrong. Of course I pretend that I listen but inside me I can’t see the time for them to leave. I must admit that when they get aggressive I get in a defensive mode and I become the nice person that is smiling but would prefer to start shouting back!”

From the above, it seems that when employees interact with an aggressive customer they become angry, irritated and annoyed. What they do though, is to hide their true feelings so that they can serve the customers in the best possible way and as it has been imposed by the organisation they have been working for. It has been also clearly pointed out that the customers’ emotions seem to be contagious and make them feel sad and angry. As per F2R2:

“If I start shouting at you would you feel good or get upset? Well, obviously you would get upset like I do. I am affected from my customers’ emotions. I try to do my best and serve the aggressive customer but my performance is being affected. I try to hide my frustration so that I can make the customer happy. This is my job”

They tend to hide those emotions since they need to look happy and ready to serve with a smile even though they face aggressiveness. Therefore, this part of the primary research analysis, combining both the interviews as well as the focus groups’ results, shows that the employees are hiding their true feelings (i.e. anger, frustration etc.) to be able to deal with the aggressive customer. Thus, they engage in surface acting.

The clarifications that the researcher requested on various occasions during the interviews as well as the focus groups, helped in reaching to this conclusion as well. For example,

participants have been asked to discuss and describe how they handle their own emotions when they interact with aggressive customers. In the literature, scholars have identified that during surface acting people hide their true emotions so that they can display the appropriate emotions according to the organisational rules when they serve the customers (Goussinsky, 2015, Hoffmann, 2016; Karatepe, 2015). With some participants, the researcher had to make clarifications as to what it means handling your own emotions. Thus she gave an example of a person feeling happy and showing out this happiness or feeling sad and showing out his/her sadness, or hiding it.

The respondents' answers were in their majority in an agreement that when they face aggressive customers, which makes them feel annoyed, angry and irritated as it has been aforementioned, they mostly hide those feelings and put on a sympathetic smile. They therefore hide their own emotions and simply act in front of an aggressive customer. For example, R16 said:

"As I have said I get upset but I hide it to put on my service smile. I pretend. I become an actor. What else can I do?"

On the same pace, F4R5 said:

"I don't think anyone can say something different. All the time I have been working in the industry this is what I do. I just hide my stress and frustration."

The respondents were clear in the fact that they do not see that there is any other way rather than hiding their true emotions when they interact with aggressive customers.

Another example that shows that is R20 that clearly stated:

"You know what? If it happened so many times to you as it has happened to me you would have done the same. Simply play your role and that's it. There is nothing you can do rather than hiding your own emotions. Can I show my frustration for example? I will get fired! Can I feel happy during such interactions? No way! So nothing else can be done!"

Only one respondent out of the thirty that have been interviewed said that at some point they cannot hide their anger and they revealed that they sometimes had to forget about the organisational rules and started shouting back. This was R21 that said:

“I try to hide my frustration but there are times that I cannot tolerate people shouting to me. I must admit that I have shouted back to them on a couple of occasions. It just becomes so tiring when you feel upset and you have to hide this all the time!”

The above were some of the respondents answers that have helped the researcher reach the conclusion that employees are hiding their true emotions to abide to the organisational rules, thus engage in surface acting.

The above discussion guided by the respondents’ quotes both from interviews as well as focus groups clearly indicate the conclusion that employees tend to hide their emotions and simply act in front of an aggressive customer. Further, respondents discussed about the way they react in front of an aggressive customer and whether the feelings they impose reflect the way they feel at the moment of interaction. They shared their experiences and showed that through their interactions with aggressive customers they tend to listen, show sympathy and respond but deep inside they have completely different feelings. One example is R19 who said:

“When I have to interact and serve such customers I start shaking and feeling irritated. I put on a rather sympathetic smile and I start explaining myself trying to make them stop complaining and shouting. I sometimes do mistakes and I don’t do my job well due to my feelings. Asking me whether the way I react reflects the way I feel? Simply, no way!”

This shows the lack of naturally displayed emotions when employees interact with their aggressive customers and the tendency to simply act without having any true feelings being imposed. In this aspect, F4R1 gave an example of how this works in their everyday life with customers:

"I had a situation last week that the bride of a wedding that was taking place at the hotel was really unhappy with her cake. She started shouting in the middle of the hotel, she was rather turning hysterical if I may use this word. She told me that she would refuse to pay and she was just going on shouting and at some point I really could not understand what she was saying. I was frustrated but kept calm. I mean it was not my fault; she ordered that kind of cake that could melt. And it happened. I don't know if she knew that it could melt but it was not my fault. So I just said I am sorry and tried to show empathy. I was indeed very upset not with what has happened, but with the fact that she was shouting as if it was my fault. So I just pretended and then called the manager of the wedding department to deal with the situation. I could not handle. You are asking me whether I react the way I feel. The answer is no because I really get so stressed out from those situations that it gets me annoyed. I hide my emotions".

Therefore, this also contributed to the rest of the results, showing that employees engage completely in surface acting during their interactions with angry and complaining customers. Furthermore, the respondents said that the way they react does not reflect the way they feel since they tend to pretend that they are caring and understanding but they feel unhappy and angry. For example F2R10 said:

"I get angry when I face such situations. Their emotions affect me. It affects me in the way that I try very hard to hide my frustration because it is not appropriate to get angry while providing any kind of service. Even when a customer is shouting"

This shows that employees feel negatively but they know that is not appropriate to show or share this frustration with the customers, so this affects the way they behave at their job and the way they perform their job in general. This is being shown in the below quote coming from R11:

"It affects the way I do my job at a great extent. The negative attitudes of my customers are contagious! Well, obviously I have to pretend that I am the happy service provider that is

here to listen to all customer complaints, even though deep inside me I feel annoyed and unhappy”

Below, the researcher summarises those findings in combination with the literature which shows an agreement between those results and the existing literature findings.

2.1.1 Discussion

The above findings have shown that the interview results are completely in line with the focus groups’ results as opposed to the way employees engage in emotional labour when they interact with aggressive customers.

The primary research findings agree with the existing literature results on the area of how employees engage in emotional labour when they interact with aggressive customers. In the literature review chapter (Chapter 2), the author analysed the two ways of engaging in emotional labour, which are deep acting and surface acting. Through the deep acting method, the service providers acting focus on their own inner feelings in order for them to be able to display the right and expected organisational emotions (Kruml & Geddes, 2000). Therefore, they are working on their feelings and manage to feel positively when they need to impose a positive feeling for a customer (Blau *et al.*, 2010). On the other hand, Surface acting is performed by many employees on an everyday basis. They display certain emotions by just faking them. For example, an employee may smile to a dissatisfied customer but their inner feeling is not compatible to the smile (Adelmann, 1989; Bechtoldt *et al.*, 2011).

As per the literature review, and the findings of the various scholars on the area of customer aggressiveness, employees tend to engage in surface acting when they interact with them (Goussinsky, 2015, Hoffmann, 2016; Karatepe, 2015). The discussions within the existing literature in terms of the rationale behind the fact that employees tend to engage in surface acting are explaining the situation well. It has been proved that the fact that emotions are contagious is something that causes employees to engage in surface

acting when they interact with aggressive customers (Huang & Dai, 2010). When customer service representatives are facing aggressiveness they find it very challenging to change their emotional stage and impose positive feelings. This is mainly due to the fact that emotions are contagious and they are very easily being transferred from one person to another through interaction (Bakker *et al.*, 2005). On the other hand, Affective Events Theory (AET) is another aspect that has been used in various articles that discuss whether employees engage in deep or surface acting during their interactions with aggressive customers. It mainly suggests that all events in the workplace directly affect employees in terms of their emotional reactions, feelings and therefore behaviours (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). On the contrary, since it is not accepted by organisations to express those negative feelings during customer interactions, service providers tend to hide them (Calabrese, 2000; Hoffmann, 2016; Goussinsky, 2015; Grandey *et al.*, 2010; Karatepe, 2015).

The current research findings agree with the literature on that aspect. As it has been analysed above, the findings have shown that employees in the hospitality industry tend to engage in surface acting when they interact with aggressive customers. As it is being shown on the above analysis, there is an agreement with the literature in terms of emotions being contagious and the fact that the negative situations that are occurring in the work environment are affecting the employees' emotions and behaviours. Therefore, this aspect of emotional labour seems to be in agreement with the current literature in the specific industry in Cyprus that the research has taken place.

The fact that people engage in surface acting has brought along a number of negative consequences. Those consequences have been researched during this primary research through the interviews. The next section includes the themes that have emerged after the evaluation and the analysis of the participants' responses on the consequences when engaging in surface acting when interacting with aggressive customers.

2.2 Theme 2: The negative consequences of engaging in surface acting when interacting with aggressive customers

The analysis below relates to the negative consequences occurring when employees engage in surface acting during their interactions with aggressive customers. Therefore this discussion is answering RQ2 which is related to RO3. A number of negative consequences have been described in the literature and they will be compared with the results of the primary research below. A number of authors, have researched the negative consequences (Boyd, 2002; Goussinsky, 2015; Karatepe, 2015; McCollough, 2000; Van Dierendonck & Mevissen, 2002; Winstanley & Wittington, 2002). The negative consequences that have been identified in the current literature include a decreased sense of well-being, emotional dissonance, an increase in psycho-physiological stress, emotional exhaustion, burnout, depersonalisation, absenteeism, decrease in job satisfaction, work-life conflict, effects on service performance. This doctorate has researched the negative consequences through the interviews and the focus groups that have been contacted. The sub-themes presented below, represent the negative consequences that have been identified through this thesis' primary data collection. As it will be identified below, some of the findings agree and some of them are different and add to the existing literature.

An important thing that needs to be mentioned here, is that both the interviews as well as the focus groups respondents identified the fact that they are hiding their true emotions and they are acting in front of an aggressive customer, but they didn't know that this is being called surface acting. Before proceeding with each interview as well as in the focus groups, at that point, the researcher explained to them that the term "surface acting" is being used in the literature to explain the hiding of true emotions and faking, to display the right organisational rules. So from that point onwards, all the respondents knew and understood the meaning of surface acting.

Each of the sub-themes that are being discussed below, have been derived after an analysis of both the interviews and the focus groups. After the evaluation of the sub-themes, they will be compared to the existing literature review results as they have been identified in chapter 2.

Sub-theme 2.1: Stress and reduced well – being

One of the first consequences that all participants mentioned both in interviews as well as focus groups is the increase in stress and reduced feeling of well-being. The two methods' results agree on this aspect. When participants were asked to report how they are being personally affected from the fact that they have to hide their true emotions so that they can deal effectively with an aggressive customer, all of them mentioned stress as the number one consequence that has been occurring from the first day that they had to deal with such situations. They reported stress as part of the feeling of reduced well – being. Stress seemed to take a more serious form than the simple stress that we may feel from time to time at work. Respondents mentioned a different kind of stress that was affecting their ability to perform at a great extent both at home and at work. Below, the quote coming from R5 indicates that:

“Well, stress is the number one symptom. If you ask anybody who is doing the same job as I do they will say the same thing. I have so much stress not only at the time of interaction but it continues for the rest of the day sometimes. I am shaking, feeling that I am not well in general. If I may say, I take at least two painkillers per day due to headache which is stress related”.

While interviews' as well as focus groups' participants were discussing the consequences, they stated stress as the number one negative consequence. It was also first on the list since it seems to be taking serious forms in many occasions. The results of the interviews were in line with the results of the focus groups on this negative consequence.

For example R28 said:

“Stress!!! What else can I say about this? I cry a lot of times when I get in my car to go home to release all this stress that those situations are causing me”

On the same pace, F3R1 said:

“I believe that the situations when I have to face aggressive customers are among the most stressful ones occurring in my life”

This finding is in line with the existing literature. It has been identified in the literature, that work-related stress is being increased in the services industry where people have to hide their true feelings to be able to display the right emotions in front of the customer (Karatepe & Nkondong, 2014; Kinman, 2009; Kumar, 2015). The current literature supports that stress is an issue affecting employees and organisations negatively in a number of ways (Moss & Cooper, 2016; Robertson & Cooper, 2010; Robertson & Cooper, 2015). Stress and employee well-being have been an issue of interest for scholars in various disciplines and has proved to affect employee performance, productivity and outcome on a great extent (Cooper & Cartwright, 1994; Jain *et al.*, 2013; Robertson *et al.*, 2012; Robertson & Cooper, 2015).

When asked for clarifications on what forms their stress has been taking, participants said that they faced health issues that were stress related several times during their life as a hospitality service provider. Such health issues include continuous migraines and tension headaches, an increase in their blood pressure and stomach issues. As they said, the doctors that have been monitoring their health mentioned that those symptoms were stress related. For example R30 responded in the following way:

“Stress is really number one for me. I am being affected a lot and I feel stressed out for the whole day. I have taken medication at least twice in my life to reduce stress. I have gastric problems and continuous migraines. Visited five doctors already. They all agree that it is stress related”.

Two participants mentioned a heart problem that has worsen due to the stressful situations that they are facing with customers at work. Five participants mentioned that they had to take medication at least once in their life so that they would be able to cope with stress effectively.

Therefore, stress and a feeling of reduced well – being is something that seems to be bothering all of the respondents and it has been shown that it can become a really serious consequence that needs attention.

Various respondents, as it can be seen in this analysis, also reported stress as a very negative consequence that causes a lot of physiological, health problems that are stress related. According to the respondents, stress is usually happening after a very stressful situation such as handling an aggressive customer and since they have to impose fake emotions this affects them even more. This is being shown in the quote of F3R6 below:

“Stress is an everyday situation. Whenever I have to face an angry customer, as I have said before I tend to impose fake emotions, I am acting. This is stressful. And it is a continued situation, never ending”

F3R9 elaborated on that by saying:

“I feel stress every day, I agree with my colleague. This is reality. And it causes physical symptoms such as headaches, as well as a continuous feeling of dissatisfaction about my job.”

This is also in line with the literature. According to Goussinsky (2011), employees tend to feel more stress when they face angry customers, since they have to hide their own anger so that they can impose the right feelings in front of the customer.

Sub-theme 2.2: Symptoms of burnout

Symptoms of burnout have been reported by a number of respondents both during the personal interviews as well as during the focus groups. The focus groups' results agree with the interviews' results on this negative consequence. Burnout, as it has been described

in the literature, is the chronic increase in ones' stress levels and emotional exhaustion (Adelmann, 1989; Andela, 2015; Hochschld, 1983; Santos *et al.*, 2015). Exposure of someone in chronic stress and exhaustion will therefore lead to burnout (ibid). The results of the primary research have clearly shown symptoms of burnout as these are compared with the way they are being described in the literature. Employees that have been interviewed reported extreme fatigue, the feeling of not being able to perform simple daily tasks such as going to the supermarket or playing with their children and an overall feeling of being sick. Those emotions have been associated with burnout in the current literature (Dewe *et al.*, 2010). An example of a respondent that has reported burnout as a negative consequence is R1:

“Unfortunately it is not only stress though. It is beyond that. I get severe headaches, every day, most of the days I cannot even play with my children. I just lay on the couch and I don't want to talk to anybody. The neurologist I have visited said my headaches are being called tension headaches. Caused from stress.”

In the literature, burnout seems to be a negative consequence when employees engage in surface acting in general, as well as when they are facing aggressive customers more specifically (Dewe *et al.*, 2010). So this finding agrees with the literature.

An important thing to be mentioned at this point, is the fact that the employees that have mentioned such symptoms have been working in the industry and thus facing aggressive customers for more than 10 years. For example R30 who has 22 years of experience said:

“It was easier when I first started work. I was more able to cope. Now, I am not. I go home and I cannot tolerate anything, nobody can talk to me sometimes. I feel sick, cannot even help my children with their homework. It gets worst as years go by. I even thought of changing a job after all those years.”

In addition, F1R3 who is a Head waiter and has 26 years of experience said:

“As years go by, even though I become more experienced and one could say that I could handle stress better, I am not. The more I face frustration from customers, the more I get stressed out. This situation affects my overall health. This year my manager complained that I seem more tired than ever. This is true.”

On the same pace, R2 said:

“I have the feeling of not being well but not as simple as it sounds. I sometimes cannot even go to the supermarket when I finish work. I just stay in bed, not even cooking for kids. It is bad. I feel pain all over my body without really being physically sick”.

The respondents that have less than 10 years of experience in the industry simply reported stress and a reduced feeling of well-being but not on its extreme extend of burnout. As a result, this analysis can conclude that the more years that employees are being exposed to such situations, the more they will be faced with burnout, which brings along a lot of negative outcomes to peoples' health and overall well-being.

This result has been shown both in the interviews as well as in all of the four focus groups. People that have more than ten years of experience reported severe symptoms of burnout. The two methods being used to gather primary data are in line on this aspect. On the other hand, the respondents that had less years of experience stated that they have not faced symptoms of burnout as they were being described by the rest of the respondents. For example, F4R7 said:

“I am here after 10 days of sick leave. It is not the first time that this has happened to me. It was not only stress. It is more than that. I felt like I am losing my mind and extreme fatigue. I am sorry that I have to share this in front of the rest but I am sure some of them may have been into this situation as well.”

During this discussion, a lot of respondents that have more than 10 years of experience agreed with R7. On the other hand, the people that are not working in the industry for so

many years and are also younger in age, reported stress but not extreme symptoms that lead to burnout. For example F4R1:

“I am scared to listen to those things. Yes, I have stress, I know it is rather difficult. But I have never experienced such events like the one that is being mentioned now by an older colleague. I know time will show and I may also get the same at some point. Well, all this exposure, so many years, this is expected I think!”

Therefore, both the interviews and the focus groups’ results concluded that the more years of being exposed to aggressive customers and thus engaging in surface acting during such situations, causes burnout. In respect to that, it has been indicated in the literature that burnout is happening but is not really being recognised until the physical symptoms occur (Bakker *et al.*, 2005; Santos *et al.*, 2015). Therefore, comparing this with the primary data findings, it may be argued that burnout may be happening earlier but people do not really understand that they are overstressed until they get physical symptoms. This can be further analysed in a future research in regards to whether employees could be able to realise that they are approaching the burnout stage and get some help before they actually have the psychosomatic symptoms of burnout.

Sub-theme 2.3: Increase in smoking and consumption of alcohol

A third theme that emerged out of the interview question aiming to give an answer to the negative consequences, is the fact that respondents reported an increase in smoking as well as in consumption of alcohol. This result has been validated through the focus groups as well so the two primary research methods agree on this finding. When being asked how they are being affected personally, the majority of respondents said that they may even increase the number of cigarettes they are smoking or consume more alcohol after their working hours. Eight of them even reported that they had a glass or two of alcohol during their working hours so that they could cope with this demanding nature of their job.

Ten out of the thirty respondents said that they started smoking within a year of working in the industry. They were either non-smokers before or occasional smokers; smoking only socially when they were going out with friends etc. This result has also been found to be a negative consequence during the focus groups. An increase in smoking as well as alcohol abuse has been reported by the respondents in all the four focus groups. During the discussion within the focus groups, the participants agreed that they have increased their consumption of cigarettes and alcohol since they started working in the industry and had to serve angry customers while trying to impose the right emotions in front of them.

For example R10 said:

"I started smoking when I started work. Before, I did not even know what smoking is all about. This is how this situation has affected me on a personal level. I know that aggressive customers among other situations, such as aggressive managers are among the most important factors that have caused this."

They all agreed that the fact that they had to become actors, especially when dealing with aggressive customers, is something that has increased their stress levels on a great extent and they found smoking to be a bad habit but something that at least was helping them to cope.

A quote that shows this is one coming from R8:

"I smoke three packets of cigarettes per day! This is how I am being affected! Three packets! I know it is a bad habit but I cannot do anything about it. It helps me cope with all this stress".

On the same pace, F2R1 said:

"Even though it sounds a bit weird to other people, I tend to smoke more and my colleague do the same. Two of them are here with us today and they can confirm. And I also drink alcohol. It helps me relax even though it is a very short term effect."

This finding is not in line with the literature, so it is an addition to the negative consequences that are already mentioned within the literature.

When smoking and alcohol abuse was reported, the researcher asked additional questions, as to how they felt smoking or alcohol was helping them. All of them said that it was a way to relieve stress and anger, even though they all agreed that is a very short-term effect and it is not helping them in the long term. Among the people that may also consume alcohol while working, some of them said that there is no other way to “forget” for a while about the customers’ bad attitudes and therefore cope with them better.

Respondents said that the number of cigarettes that they are smoking during the high seasonality (in Cyprus it is the summer period with the increase in tourism during this period) increases dramatically.

A quote that shows that is R6 who is saying:

“Besides smoking much more I tend to have a drink or two when the manager is away. Especially during the high season. This helps me a bit. At least for some time”.

Another respondent, F4R8 said:

“I know I smoke more since I have to do all this acting in front of my customers that tend to be angry. After each of those instances I go out and smoke. Since they are a lot, smoking has increased dramatically.”

Since as it has been indicated above this finding is not in line with the literature, further research could focus on the reasons why an increase in smoking and alcohol consumption has been found during this research. Implementing the same research within different cultures for example, may show whether this depends on the culture or on other aspects.

Sub-theme 2.4: Hiding emotions and acting at home / Negative consequences in family life

The respondents of this research, reported an increased tendency to hide their negative emotions at home with their family. Most of them said, that during the years that they are

handling difficult situations in their job, they have realised that they should not pass on their negativity at home. Therefore, they have reported that even though they may feel negatively about a bad interaction they have had with an aggressive customer, they put on a fake smile when they go home.

Negative consequences in family life and acting at home has been also found to be a negative consequence during the focus groups as well so this finding has been validated. The focus groups' participants, in agreement with the interview results, reported negative consequences in their family life to be happening partly due to the fact that they are facing aggressiveness on behalf of customers and partly because they have to impose fake emotions in front of them.

For example R2 said:

“Personally I hide my negative emotions at home since I don't want to harm my relationship with my husband and kids. But this causes more stress”.

On the same pace, F1R10 said:

“I am working in the industry for ten years. All those years I have tried to keep my family out of the everyday problems I face, such as angry customers, which is a regular thing, especially now, that customers are more demanding. Therefore I find myself acting at home as well, putting on a smile in front of my wife so that I don't disturb my family life. This caused even more stress, though, most of the times. My family life is being affected negatively since hiding my feelings makes me dissatisfied and this shows...”

Therefore, it has been argued that they still have to act at home most of the times since they feel that they should not be passing on their negativity to their loved ones, especially to their children. As a result, though, this brings along more stress and frustration and this is something difficult to be handled. R14 reported a change in their behaviour at home by becoming an actor there as well:

“I tend to change my behaviour and become an actor at home as well most of the times.

What else can you do? It is inevitable you cannot pass on negativity to your loved ones all the time.”

Within the current literature, this finding is being presented as work-life conflict (Kinman, 2009). It has been argued, that the fact that employees feel stress and frustration at work is not in line with what they need to show at home, which is love and affection for their loved ones (ibid). Therefore this is what creates a conflict.

The fact that they have to hide their negative emotions at home has been reported to cause negative emotions about their jobs in general and a tendency to leave and find a new job that won't be affecting their personal lives in such an extent. For example R22 said:

“I personally tend to put on a happy face at home. This affects my relationship with them because they know there is something wrong but any time I tried to talk to my husband he wouldn't understand. So why bother?”

Another example is F4R10 who said:

“I have to impose fake emotions at home as well, with my family. I am a wife and a mother. I know it affects my relationships negatively since I don't really act like I feel and this is faking in any respect. My husband complains that I don't talk to him about my job but what can I do. Start complaining about how stressful it is? I better pretend that everything is alright.”

On the same pace, F2R8 said:

“I have to pretend that I am happy while I am not in front of my girlfriend and parents. Unfortunately this affects family life as well.”

This is in line with the current literature, as it has been also indicated above, but it also goes a step further. The fact that a conflict is being created between work and personal lives, is being handled by an increase in surface acting, as it has been shown in the current primary data analysis. As a result, the innovative aspect of this research, is that it adds to

the current literature's findings in terms to the consequences. The addition reflects the fact that work-life conflict actually causes surface acting at home as well which may be bringing along even more negative consequences.

Sub-theme 2.5: Negative perception of colleagues / managers / the job in general

The participants of both the interviews and the focus groups reported a negative perception for their job in general and specifically their colleagues as well as managers. This result has been found during the interviews and completely validated during the focus groups. When being asked whether the fact that they engage in surface acting when interacting with aggressive customers has affected their relationships with colleagues and managers, most of them replied that it has been negatively affected. The respondents said that they sometimes blame the organisation, management or other colleagues for the situation of having to deal with a negative, aggressive and complaining customer. For example R4 said:

“My relationships with my colleagues and managers are negatively affected. I am so stressed out that I cannot smile to them and feel positive. Also the managers are not helping us so I tend to feel negatively and it shows”.

As it has been also reported by F1R6:

“All of us tend to feel more negatively about each other. All those negative emotions come out of the negativity that we face from our customers. And the fact that we are faking.”

During this statement, another respondent within this focus group, F1R7 said:

“I agree to what has been mentioned just right now. This is the reality we are facing today.”

Due to this, they perceive that it is something that their colleagues have done wrong that has led to the negative attitude on behalf of the customer. Especially if the customer is complaining for something that has happened in another department, this makes them feel even more frustrated and it creates a negative attitude towards their colleagues.

The same has been reported in respect to management. They tend to believe that management is not helping them enough when they have to face certain behaviours from customers, so they tend to feel negatively about the manager and the organisation they are working for in general. An example is R7 who said:

“I feel negatively about my colleagues most of the times, led alone management. I personally believe that they sometimes do mistakes that make customers angry. Also, managers are sitting in their offices or they simply do their “management” duties and they wouldn’t care less about us and how we cope. Therefore most of the times I feel of quitting but I need the salary so I stay.”

The above, led to the result of having negative relationships within the working environment. Participants reported arguments between colleagues and between them and the management. Most of the times, the reason is something negative they had to face with the customer. They argue since they either blame the colleagues for doing something wrong and creating this customer negativity or they blame management for not helping them with the day-to-day difficult situations. There is also a tendency to form a negative attitude towards their jobs in general. As it has been reported by the respondents, this may be one of the worst consequences.

The current literature does not mention negative feelings towards either colleagues or managers as a negative consequence occurring from the fact that employees interact with aggressive customers and thus engage in surface acting when they do that. It rather mentions a general increase in job dissatisfaction but does not identify a specific negative perception towards colleagues and managers. As it can be clearly seen through, within this primary data analysis this seems to be a very important finding.

The researcher added additional questions, both during the interviews as well as the focus groups on that aspect. Respondents have been asked why they believe those bad relationships are being created due to the fact that they have to face aggressive customers

and thus hide their true emotions. Most of them replied that this is one reason that they all know is creating it. They said that they simply assume and believe that customers are complaining and act aggressively because they perceive the service they have received was not good enough. This is why they tend to blame each other and the organisation for the situation. This negative atmosphere brings along negative consequences such as bad internal relationships and a bad attitude towards the hotel in general. This has been shown by R29 that said:

“Relationships are negatively affected. I tend to feel negative. I don’t like this but I do. I sometimes see myself trying to keep the tones down but we argue a lot. We may argue because we blame each other or simply because we have so much stress. That’s it really”.

On the same pace, F4R2 said:

“I have changed my attitude towards my colleagues and even managers over the years. Yes, I definitely believe this situation with the customers is affecting our internal relationships. Negatively of course. A lot...”

Sub-theme 2.6: Increase in absenteeism / sick leave

There is a higher tendency of people being absent from their jobs and respondents of the interviews as well as the focus groups reported an increase in absenteeism from work and taking days off for health issues. When being asked about the level they are being affected, participants in their majority reported an increase in the tendency of taking days off work. They seem to take most of their days off as being sick. As it has been found both in the interviews as well as the focus groups, the participants tend to take more days off, especially in the form of a sick leave. This has been reported to be a result of having to act and impose fake feelings towards an aggressive customer. Since this makes them feel stressed and tired, they tend to take days off and report them as being sick. For example F3R10 said:

“I don’t mind saying this in front of the rest, I know they may do the same. I take more sick leave due to this issue. I sometimes lie. I tell them that I am sick even though I just want to stay at home and get away at least for a day.”

This is a result that has been supported both during interviews as well as during focus groups. Respondents said that they may feel unwell sometimes but most of the times they use this as an excuse so that they can get some rest and get away from their very demanding role. For example R13 said:

“I take more days off because I am being affected negatively and I want to get away from this just for a while. I call in sick without being physically sick sometimes. I am mentally sick, though.”

The results of the existing literature have shown that employees tend to be more absent from work as a result of their interactions with aggressive customers and the fact that they need to hide their own feelings when they do that (Grandey *et al.*, 2004; Karatepe, 2009; Liu *et al.*, 2013). The current research findings are in line with the existing literature results on that aspect. The verification that has resulted from the current study though, is the fact that employees are taking more sick days off. This outcome resulted from the primary data analysis but is not specifically indicated in the literature. It is rather being mentioned as a general increase in absenteeism.

The fact that they hide their feelings in order to abide to the organisational rules and treat their aggressive customers in a proper way, causes stress as it has been analysed above. As a result, this stress may lead to burnout as aforementioned that leads to physical symptoms such as severe headaches. As it has been mentioned by the participants of the research, this may naturally lead in taking more time off and reporting this as sick leave at work. On the other hand, though, they said that they sometimes need to take a day off to relax and get away from their very demanding role. For example, F2R5 said:

“I am being affected in such a negative way so that I take days off. Sometimes I overdo it and I call in sick without really being sick. I need it, though, and I know my colleagues do the same sometimes.”

During this discussion, within this focus group, F2R6 agreed with her colleague:

“I totally agree with my colleague. I do the same.”

As a result, they call at work and pretend that they are sick so that they can get away. The majority of the respondents said that they do that at least once every two months, when the researcher asked them to clarify how often they take days off because of this.

For example R12 reported:

“Other than the other things that are affected, I tend to takes more days off as sick leave. Most of the times I do feel sick, I believe it is due to stress but I sometimes take days off without being really sick. I may do that at least once every two months. I once pretended I am at the hospital but I was at home sitting on my couch and trying to relax.”

Sub-theme 2.7: Making more mistakes / decrease in job performance

An additional consequence that respondents mentioned, is the fact that they can realise that when they have to face such situations with customers they tend to make more mistakes.

More specifically, they reported that since they hide their true emotions when they face aggressive customers, they get into a stressful situation that causes a lot of mistakes. An example is R6 who said:

“I tend to make mistakes and my performance is being decreased as well. I mean I am a waiter for more than ten years now and whenever I face such situations I make mistakes. Right before the interview for example, I had to deal with a very aggressive customer. I could have handled him better but I got confused and I said that we cannot give him what he wanted but this is wrong. Because I was stressed I forgot that we can now offer this product on the all-inclusive package. Now that I thinking about it I made him angrier simply because I got confused.”

Even though this has been mentioned a lot during the interviews, it has been especially supported with very strong arguments during the focus groups. Therefore, this result has been more strongly supported during the focus groups, even though it was an important finding of the interviews as well. According to the participants of the focus groups, due to the fact that they have to impose certain feelings to themselves and act unnaturally in front of their angry customers, they tend to make more mistakes and thus become less productive in the long term as well.

An example is F4R4 who said:

“I make more mistakes and obviously it lowers my performance. This is due to the fact that we have to go through this situations of acting in order to satisfy an angry customer and it also happens due to the high stress levels that are being involved in such situations.”

This has been reported by the majority of the focus group participants. Another example is the below statement coming from F3R3:

“I believe we all share the same view. This situation lowers our performance. And it creates a cycle. We tend to make mistakes not only with the customer that is aggressive, but with the ones that follow as well.”

In the existing literature, findings have shown that there is a decrease in the service performance when employees face aggressiveness from customers and thus need to engage in surface acting when they do that (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Boyd, 2002; Johnson & Spector, 2007). In more details, the literature has shown that surface acting while interacting with aggressive customers, decreases customer satisfaction since employees cannot perform on the levels that are expected and they make mistakes due to that (ibid). This literature finding is therefore in line with the primary data findings.

The important thing here is that the respondents said that they do not only make mistakes with the specific customer that is complaining and acting aggressively, but they also do further mistakes with other customers as well. A total of 24 out of the 30 interview

participants said that they tend to make mistakes with other customers that they are serving after a negative interaction. When asked to clarify, they said that they may keep doing mistakes with the next five to ten customers until they manage to start working properly again. This is due to the fact that the stressful situation and the fact that they had to put in so much effort to hide their emotions gets them into the situation where they try to avoid mistakes so hard that they simply do more mistakes. An example is R27 that said:

“I sometimes tend to forget things and I do mistakes when I face such situations. I gave a customer a wrong bill since I had a very aggressive customer to face right before him. So I tend to do mistakes with the next customer, not only the one who is complaining.”

Therefore, they believe that their job performance is decreasing due to this with all the negative consequences that may be brought along with this. F4R3 said that:

“I do a lot of mistakes and my colleagues here at the reception are doing a lot as well.

There is no doubt that our performance is decreasing.”

Sub-theme 2.8: Negative attitudes towards customers

The fact that the respondents need to face aggressive customers and thus they are hiding their true feelings to serve them, seems to be causing negative attitudes towards their customers in general. For example, R11 said:

“In general it changes the way we perceive customers. Yes I admit that I am sometimes negative towards customers in general. This has happened after all those years of facing negativity and not being able to handle it sometimes.”

During the interviews, the respondents discussed the fact that they tend to have a general negative attitude towards their customers, irrespective to whether they are aggressive at the moment or not. There is a tendency that customers are over-reacting in various situations so there is a negative attitude about them. Respondents said that in the hospitality industry in general, there is a perception that most of the times customers are complaining because they want to get something in return or get something for free. This makes employees

create an even more negative attitude towards customers and whenever they treat a complaining customer they tend to believe that they are doing it so that they get something in return.

It should be importantly noted here, that this finding is an innovative aspect of this thesis findings, since it is not included in the existing literature findings. The existing literature findings have not revealed that during those situations employees tend to create negative feelings towards their customers. As it has been shown, though, in the current research's findings this seems to be a very important aspect that seems to be causing a lot of negative emotions to the employees.

This finding is completely in line with the focus groups' results as well. According to the focus groups, negative attitude towards customers is an unfavourable outcome of engaging in surface acting when interacting with aggressive customers. It has been found that since employees feel negatively in general about those situations, they tend to feel negatively about their customers specifically.

A good example here is R13's quote:

"I tend to feel negatively about customers in general. I know and we almost all know in the industry that they may be shouting to get something free in return. This is how it is really. We all know it after all and management knows this as well..."

In addition to that, a quote from F1R1 clearly indicates that:

"I usually feel negatively towards the customers in general, not only the one who is angry. There are some times that I dream of punching them in the face!"

As a result, the participants agree that this negative attitude may cause them to pay little attention to the real problem and it may not allow them to see whether there is a real problem that they need to seriously address or if it is the usual complain that will give them something in return. This attitude is sometimes bringing along other negative

consequences, such as making mistakes and avoiding to get responsibility as a hotel about a mistake when it is really needed. This is also being shown in the quote below from R23:

“I feel negatively most of the times about a lot of the customers. I know that this causes negativity in general and we may not treat customers as we should due to that.”

Other participants also agreed with the fact that negative attitudes towards customers and negative feelings towards them occur because of that. For example F2R4 said:

“I find myself feeling negatively about customers. I even expressed this to my manager once. He said that he used to get this feeling when he was working as a front line employee.”

The discussion above has analysed the primary data findings in terms of the negative consequences that occur when employees hide their true emotions and thus express fake emotions (surface acting) towards their aggressive customers. It has been shown that both the interviews and the focus groups concluded to the same results.

2.2.1 Discussion

The above results as well as how they are being compared with the existing literature will be summarised in this section through the discussion that follows. Both the interviews as well as the focus groups' results agreed completely on the negative consequences as they have been analysed above. The discussion in the literature review chapter (See Chapter 2 - Section 8) revealed the consequences as they have been identified by various scholars that have been researching this area. Those consequences included a variety of issues that seem to be affecting the employees both on a personal as well as on a professional level at their job. The consequences that the current literature includes are: a decreased sense of well-being, emotional dissonance, an increase in psycho-physiological stress, emotional exhaustion, burnout, depersonalisation, an increase in absenteeism, decrease in job satisfaction, work-life conflict and negative effects on service performance. There are

various findings as per the primary research analysis above that support and agree with the current literature findings and there are some variations and additions as well.

To begin with, the similarities lie along the issues of stress, a decreased sense of well-being, burnout, absenteeism and negative effects on service performance. It seems that the current findings of the thesis agree with the fact that when employees engage in surface acting during their interactions with aggressive customers this causes stress and a feeling of not being well that is increasing with the years and leads to burnout. Also, as it has been aforementioned, there is an increase in absenteeism. This research has revealed a more specific effect in terms of absenteeism. This is the fact that employees are taking a lot of days off being reported as sick leaves, without being physically sick. As it has been mentioned in the analysis above, they take day off and report as being sick since they need to get away of their demanding roles. This is an addition to the current literature.

Another important addition to the literature in terms of consequences, is the fact that there is an increased tendency to consume more alcohol and smoke cigarettes as a result of those interactions with customers. This has not yet being reported as a consequence in the current literature. This is something that affects employees' physical health and it is a really important area that requires attention as well.

Further to the consequences, the respondents of this research reported a negative attitude towards their colleagues, managers and customers. An increase in job dissatisfaction has been mentioned in the literature as a rather general term (Mann, 2005). This current study has indicated that there is a more specific negative consequence. This includes not only a general job dissatisfaction but also a negative attitude towards both colleagues and managers. The fact that employees seem to be feeling negatively about their job in general is a serious consequence but the fact that this is causing a negative attitude towards colleagues and managers is an important addition to the current literature. This is because we may assume that this brings along further negative consequences that could cause more

harm both to the organisations and the employees as well. The fact that a negative attitude towards customers has been mentioned, this makes it a very important finding and an addition on the literature as well.

In terms of consequences, the participants also mentioned a new one that is not being included in the current literature at least it is included as a variation. The current literature includes work-life conflict as a consequence. The current study revealed further addition to that, by finding out that there is not only conflict between work and family life, but employees tend to hide their emotions at home as they do at work. As it has been mentioned in the analysis above, the participants of this study mentioned that they hide their anger, frustration or stress from their family members so that they don't affect them negatively as well. Therefore, here we have an important addition, the fact that employees continue surface acting at home with the people that are close to them. This on its own is something that brings along challenges in their lives in general.

To conclude this section, it has been identified that the current study agrees with the literature on various areas and it also adds to the number of consequences when engaging in surface acting during interactions with aggressive customers.

The next section of the analysis chapter, includes an evaluation of the ways to overcome those consequences which is part of the literature gap. Also, following the analysis the findings of how to help employees engage more in deep acting through an increase in emotional intelligence among other ways will be discussed. This analysis will result in the creation of the new framework that will help in closing the current gap in the literature as it was explained in the literature review chapter (See chapter 2 – Section 9 – The literature Gap).

2.3 Theme 3: Buffering out the negative consequences of engaging in surface acting when interacting with aggressive customers

Research on how to help employees buffer out the negative consequences of surface acting when interacting with aggressive customers has been very limited and on parts; thus did not provide enough information on this important area (Bechtoldt *et al.*, 2011; Goussinsky, 2012; Huang & Dai, 2010; Karatepe, 2011; Lu *et al.*, 2013). As it has been described in the literature gap section (See Chapter 2 – Literature Gap), this gap needs to be addressed. This specific research has addressed this gap by searching the ways to buffer out the negative consequences. The following discussion is providing empirical evidence for RQ3 which is related to RO4 and RO5.

Sub-theme 3.1: Increase in job autonomy

This is the first sub-theme that emerged clearly out of the respondents' answers.

The increase in job autonomy is a buffering effect that has been clearly identified during the interviews and further validated through the focus groups.

Respondents both from the interviews as well as the focus groups agreed that a way to handle the negative consequences that occur after engaging in surface acting when interacting with aggressive customers is to be given more job autonomy. When being asked to elaborate on job autonomy and explain it further, they said that by this concept they meant to be given the authority to handle those situations according to their discretion. The respondents reported that they are usually being given strict rules to follow according to each situation facing customer aggressiveness. They have been also given certain scenario to be used with specific details on what to say and what to avoid during those situations. According to the respondents, this leads to an increased use of surface acting and as a result an increase in the negative consequences, which becomes a vicious cycle. According to R24:

“I need some autonomy and authority to do some things. I need to send a report and wait for the manager’s reply etc. But this takes time. And they get angrier. And I get more stressed out and I tend to hide more feelings. This is a vicious cycle really!”

Job autonomy seems to be a very important aspect that can work as a buffering effect of the negative consequences. When conducting the focus groups, this showed to be in complete agreement with the interviews findings. The fact that employees require autonomy and this would lead to positive results has been a very important finding in the focus groups as well.

For example F3R2 said:

“If we had more autonomy it would be easier for us. Less stress and less frustration would be the result.”

This finding is in line with the existing literature review findings. Job autonomy seems to be one way of helping employees deal with the stressors that occur due to the fact that they engage in surface acting when they interact with aggressive customers (Goussinsky, 2011; Grandey *et al.*, 2005).

The need for an increase in job autonomy does not only reflect what they can say but also how to respond. Employees are also requesting autonomy on what they can offer to the customer. For example most of them agreed that the customers feel better and become less aggressive when they know that they will get something in return. This could be a free voucher for the spa, extra drinks or additional days to stay at the hotel for free. This depends on the actual complain and how important they perceive it is according to their personal view. Employees reported that if they have been given the authority to meet the customers’ demands without having to ask for managements’ permission this would make it easier to handle. It has been expressed that having to go through all those bureaucratic delays of making reports to management and waiting for their replies makes customers

even angrier and causes more negative challenges. The below quotes from R26 indicates that:

“Ok listen... If I had the autonomy to say: you can get this for free or I will fix this immediately and give you a spa voucher in the meantime that would be great. This is what they want really. But it is not to my discretion. Bureaucracy wins!”

The same view has been shared by F1R2:

“I know customers get frustrated for simple things sometimes. Things we have no authority to resolve. If we had more authority it would be easier for us to handle.”

On the same pace, F3R5 said:

“Give me some authority and I will make miracles. Let me do something extra. I will feel better and most probably this will help in achieving more positiveness.

This agrees with the current literature as well. The existing literature findings have been showing that having job autonomy on simple tasks would have a positive effect on the way employees perceive the negative consequences that occur when they engage in surface acting, especially during their interactions with aggressive customers (Grandey *et al.*, 2007). Since job autonomy has been a new concept in the area of emotional labour in relation to the interactions with aggressive customers, the current literature is indicating the need for further empirical research on this aspect, among other aspects that could act as buffering effects (*ibid*). The current study has shown that this buffering effect is indeed an important one since it has been a recurring finding arising both from the in-depth semi-structure interviews as well as the focus groups.

As a general result, it has been found that an increase in job autonomy will decrease the need for employees to practice surface acting and will naturally decrease the negative consequences. According to the participants, this will also help most of the customers to calm down and decrease the extent at which they feel angry and disappointed with their service providers.

Sub-theme 3.2: More training and employee development

Employees that have participated in the interviews reported an increased need in receiving more training. The respondents said that it would be highly helpful and motivating if they had received more training on the areas that they believe are needed. The findings have shown that they are being trained a lot on how to clean efficiently, how to serve food and put the right glass on the right place on the table. But what would help them overcome the negative consequences, is specialised training on handling emotions and feelings; both their own and the emotions of their customers. This interviews' result has also been validated when executing the focus groups. The respondents of all the focus groups agreed that they need specialised training on how to handle emotions and how to be able to offer more naturally displayed emotions to their customers. Therefore, the focus groups are in line with the interviews' results in regards to this finding.

An example that clearly indicates that need is the below statement from R1:

“Obviously more training would help. I need to know how to handle not only my emotions but also my clients' ones. I have been trained on how to serve the wine and the salmon but they forgot that we have feelings as well.”

Furthermore, F2R7 said:

“Well we need training. We know what we are supposed to do, but what about our emotions? What do we do with them? I know that professionals can train you on how to feel more positively, understand others better etc. We need that, bring those people to teach us properly.”

This finding agrees with the existing literature findings. Goussinsky (2012) states that organisations should be providing employees with coping skills and tools that will enable them to handle situations that are hard to be handled. Such situations are aggressive behaviours of their customers or demands that cannot be easily satisfied. By having the skills to cope, employees will feel more capable, gain confidence and see customers in a

less threatening way which will be a very helpful tool (Grandey *et al.*, 2004; Goussinsky 2012; Karatepe, 2009).

According to the respondents' opinions, training would not be as effective as it should be if the organisation would not create the right environment for the training to be effective for the employees. This means to have the proper organisational culture that would motivate employees and managers to offer positive feedback to each other and leaders that would be willing to offer support in every aspect. This is an innovative aspect of the current study, even though there is an agreement with the literature in terms of the importance of training, this study's findings go a step beyond. They have shown that training on its own would not be effective at all if the organisational culture is not well aligned with what is expected to be achieved through the training. For example F4R6 clearly stated:

"Even if they train us properly, it takes two to tango. We need the managers, the whole organisational culture to be aligned with that. This is the difficult part that our leaders need to take care of."

As it has been aforementioned, they are being told what to do and they are being given scenarios by management on what to say to an angry customer, but they are not being given the tools to personally handle the challenging situations they are facing with their customers. For example R25 said:

"I need to be trained on those areas and they should tell us how to handle those situations and our feelings. In the last years they are only focussing on the practical aspect of things. But the culture of the organisation needs to be supportive as well. For example I need to feel positively internally to extend what I will learn during the trainings externally."

It has been mentioned by the respondents that if they had received more training on this difficult area they would not only feel more capable but also they would feel motivated in terms that management cares about their needs and their feelings, This would help them

become more able to handle the situations but also more motivated and inspired to keep trying.

In terms of training, when they have been asked to elaborate, most of them said that even though they believe more training would help them, they are not sure in what extent, since they have not really received such training during their careers.

An important thing to mention here, is that the respondents mentioned the fact that the training should be very specific and not generic. The type of training and the fact that should be company specific is another important finding of the research that is not being specifically mentioned in the current literature. Respondents believed that this kind of training should at least be industry specific and even organisation specific. On this page, R30 said:

“If there is a way to overcome those negative consequences and handle those situations more effectively they should tell us. I have been trained before on emotional intelligence and these things but it was very general. We need things that are tailor-made on the industry in Cyprus and even specifically on each hotel. I know since I have been in the industry for long.”

Therefore, out of this findings, it seems that generic training on how to handle emotions would not be as successful as a more tailor-made to the industry or the organisation's needs.

Sub-theme 3.3: Management support

The third area that has been found to be a buffering effect to the negative consequences is support that needs to be received from management. The respondents reported that they would be happier if their managers were handling the angry customers, especially the ones that do not calm down easily. When they have been asked why they were requesting this, they said that in the country where the research is taking place, it is part of the culture to request to see a manager. The argument that management support can be very important in

overcoming the negative consequences has emerged both during the interviews as well as the focus groups. While discussing the various ways that would help them overcome the negative consequences, they strongly believed that this was one of the most important factors.

An example of a respondent supporting this view is R3. This respondent felt that management support is really important and strongly believed that at the moment they do not receive the support they should have. The below quote from R3 indicates that:

“I would like top management to take over the difficult customers. Anyway, most of them want to talk to a manager. Somehow it is within our culture and it makes customers feel better. Only if managers could come out of their offices...”

After sharing this view, the respondent burst into tears and said that this is a very strong indication of how much they all needed more management support.

Usually managers do not like to be involved in those situations with customers, and they only do that when it is an absolute necessity. As a result, this makes customers angrier with all the negative consequences that come along with this. Therefore, the respondents said that a way to resolve this and thus decrease the negative consequences would be an increased involvement on behalf of the managers. For example R5 said:

“I would prefer managers to use their power and their autonomy to provide something to the respondents on the spot. Since I don't have autonomy I need someone, a manager for example, who has autonomy, to be willing to help me. This would be very helpful and it would decrease many negative consequences”.

On the same pace, validated through focus groups, F1R4 said:

“Management support is maybe one of the main ways to eliminate any negativity. Who doesn't need support coming from top down anyway?”

They would like them to handle those situations and thus use their power as managers to resolve problems, talk to angry customers and also use their autonomy to offer customers

something in return so that they make them feel better. This would keep a lot of stress away and help employees feel more relaxed in their roles.

This is another innovative aspect of this current study. Group support that included support from management as well and its advantages have been greatly discussed in the literature (Goussinsky, 2012). It has been proved that this will help employees overcome negative consequences that arise from their engagement in surface acting during their interactions with aggressive customers (ibid). On the other hand, this kind of support from management that has been found in the current study is a new development that adds to the existing literature findings. The respondents of this study did not only mention management support as a general term, like is being mentioned in the literature, but rather focussed on a more specialised support that would lead to actual management intervention when things get really difficult during the interactions with aggressive customers.

An example of a respondent who had a strong feeling on this aspect is F2R3 who said:

“I know it is something that you may have come across a lot of times while talking to employees in the hospitality industry but I feel like I need to shout this answer really loud so that everyone can hear it. We need management to be there for us and support us. Not only on certain occasions, but always. We need them to take over the difficult situations, take some weight off our shoulders...”

This finding clearly indicates the importance of management support and how this would help in decreasing the negative consequences and feelings that emerge from employees' engagement in surface acting when they interact with aggressive customers.

Sub-theme 3.4: Forming support groups within the hotel

This study's findings are suggesting that forming formal support groups within the organisation would act as a buffering effect. When the respondents have been asked to clarify what kind of support groups they were expecting to be formed, they said that they could be on a form of teams from different departments, and each team should include

managers, more experienced and less experienced employees from different departments. The researcher asked for clarifications on how those support groups could work, and the focus groups participants mainly, gave ideas such as to meet every week and discuss the challenges they are facing with customers, arrange events and informal gathering or simply forming those formal groups to be able to support each other on an on-needed basis. A quote coming from R17 indicated that:

“I believe we need to form a kind of formal groups where we will be discussing on a regular basis our problems and issues. This would help. Not my department only, though. Various departments mixing up together”.

The focus groups have validated this finding. For example, F4R9 said:

“We need to support each other as well. Group support is very important and it should be more formalised. For example managers should form groups within the departments or including people from various departments.”

Those suggestions came from the respondents as a method that will help them feel part of a team, not only their department but also with other departments. It seems that feeling part of a team is a very important aspect during facing difficult situations and is really something that will help the employees to overcome the negative consequences of surface acting during the challenging situations with aggressive customers.

This is a finding that is a variation from the existing literature findings. The existing literature supports that group support along with Perceived Organisational Support would be a very beneficial tool (Moon *et al.*, 2013). The current finding through goes a step beyond by adding the need to form formal support groups within the organisation that would include people from different departments. Therefore, this is a new development and an addition to the current literature.

The respondents have been asked whether having members from different departments would be beneficial. They all agreed that it would be beneficial in terms of bonding and

also in terms of being able to resolve and avoid various repetitions of mistakes that make customers angry. They talked about different examples such as the reception department to be able to discuss with housekeeping about the delays of preparing the rooms so that the customers would not be dissatisfied and complain to the reception about it. Different examples were given for different departments. On this aspect, R18 commented:

“Maybe form some kinds of groups to discuss problems? I don’t know how this could be done but it would be helpful to include for example employees from the reception, restaurant, and housekeeping to discuss various problems. This would help in the bonding experience and relieve some stress.”

This has also brought along the next theme of an increase in teambuilding that will be further discussed. During the focus groups, this finding has been enhanced and given a greater emphasis. The comment of F3R8 shows that this would also enhance teamwork which is also very beneficial:

“We need to support each other in some way. I made a suggestions many times to form some teams of support. We need it. To meet and discuss. Every week maybe? Or even go out for a beer. Formally. If we leave it to each one to decide it never happens. This will enhance teamwork as well. And this is highly needed...”

Another example is R8 who said:

“We need to support each other as well. Group support is very important and it should be more formalised. For example managers should form groups within the departments or including people from various departments.”

Further to that, it has been argued that group support would build better relationships within the working environment and enhance teambuilding, thus increase teamwork and cooperation. For example F1R9 following this discussion within the focus group said:

“Yes, I totally agree with that. If we create formal groups of people from various departments... this would be beneficial. We need to communicate our problems, discuss

and find support. We would feel like we are a team that support each other. This would be a relief for all those negative consequences that we have discussed.”

This, according to the findings and as it is being indicated in the quotes included above, would act as a buffering effect of the negative consequences of surface acting during aggressive customers’ interactions.

Sub-theme 3.5: Receiving more positive feedback from management

The issue of positive feedback appears to be very important for the group of participants that have been included in this research. All of them raised the issue of receiving more positive feedback from their managers. According to the participants, this would help them overcome a lot of the negative consequences and help them become more motivated and inspired to work better. The below quote from R9 provides an example of this result:

“I need to hear some positive feedback from my manager. This would be the best way to handle this negativity that is being created.”

In terms of positive feedback, though, the focus groups revealed another important aspect that has not been identified through the interviews. It has been found that positive feedback coming from colleagues is equally important. The participants of the focus groups agreed that positive feedback from management is very important and would work as a buffering effect of the negative consequences. Positive feedback, though, coming from their colleagues would be equally important and would build motivation as well. So in addition to this finding, the focus groups’ results concluded that positive feedback from colleagues is also beneficial. This is therefore an important addition of the focus groups to the interviews’ results.

An example is F2R9 who strongly believed that this is really important. The below quote indicates that:

“But guys... It is not only management. I need to hear a good work from my colleagues as well. Why not? This would be highly beneficial. What if your colleague at the reception told you: Hey, you did a good job today! Would this be helpful? It would be for me...”

It should be noted here that all the four focus groups included such comments and all of the participants agreed.

This finding has not been included in the literature considering the ways to overcome the negative consequences of surface acting when interacting with aggressive customers. This is an innovative finding of the current study.

In general the findings indicate that perceive positive feedback coming both from managers and colleagues would help them offer better service and provide inspiration for them to overcome stress and frustration. The respondents reported that they mostly receive negative feedback when they do a mistake and very limited positive feedback when they perform their job duties well or when they exceed expectations. A good example is F4R7 who expressed a strong opinion on that by saying:

“I need a thank you, congratulations, a pat on the shoulder. From both managers and other colleagues. But especially managers. This would help me personally overcome the negative effects that we have discussed earlier. I hardly get that but I usually get complains on something I did wrong or has been perceived as a mistake by management... Isn't this unfair?”

When being asked whether they have anything formal in place such as “employee of the month” or similar techniques, only a few said that they had this in place in the hotel they are working for. They were all from the same hotel. The rest did not have anything in place.

When participants have been asked about what kind of feedback they were expecting to receive and when, the answers varied from when doing something right, going the extra mile, staying for longer hours and when exceeding management expectations. They

clarified that they are not expecting monetary rewards but simple words or a formal announcement would help them overcome any negativity. R24 expressed herself as below:

“We need managers to say thank you, I am glad you did that, etc. Just some positive words or even a formal announcement in an everyday meeting. Not only after a huge success. For the smaller things as well.”

Feedback during everyday activities seemed to be very popular among the participants and they said it would be even more helpful and important than the “employee of the month” for example.

Positive feedback has been indicated as a very important factor in terms of overcoming the negative consequences. The findings of this research clearly show that there is a strong association between overcoming the negative effects that are being created when people hide their frustration to serve an angry customer and positive feedback. Another example is F3R4 who said:

“I believe if we were receiving more positive feedback things would be much better. I, personally, want to hear something positive not only from my managers but from my colleagues as well. Why not? Something like: “Hey, you did a good job with that customer! I saw your struggle!” Yes, this would help a lot in overcoming all the negative consequences.”

The effect of colleagues’ positive feedback and the fact that it could work as a buffering effect should be researched further by future researchers. One can argue that this can be part of the peer or group support that has been supported by both the interviews and the focus groups, but still this is a new finding that requires further research.

Sub-theme 3.6: An increase in teamwork and cooperation

More teamwork and cooperation both within and between departments has been found through this primary research findings to be a way to help employees overcome the negative consequences. This has been an addition to theme 5 as it has been discussed

above. The participants of the interviews as well as the focus groups said that forming support groups within the hotels will eventually increase teamwork and cooperation. Therefore, an increase in teamwork and cooperation which was an important finding during the interviews has been validated during the focus groups as well.

Comments such as the one of R10 indicate that:

“We need to be a team and not individuals. This would help a lot”

It is very important here, to note that in all the responses the words, team and support are repeating themselves. For example R25 said:

“I need to feel part of a team. Managers need to find a way to bring us closer to each other. To help us find ways to enhance teamwork and support each other. Yes, we should be more as a team.”

This example shows that within a simple quote, the word team appeared three times. This has been written by the researcher to show evidence on how important it seems to be for the respondents.

This finding is new and an addition to the literature, since it was not included in the current literature findings.

The respondents said that there will be two positive results out of this. At first, it has been indicated that finding ways to increase teamwork and cooperation will minimise the problems being created out of the lack of teamwork that increase customer dissatisfaction and therefore make customers angry and thus creates their aggressive behaviour towards the service providers. Therefore, they agreed that this will practically resolve part of this challenging situation. Furthermore, it has been argued that an increase in teamwork and cooperation will minimise a number of negative consequences such as stress and the negative feelings towards other colleagues. As a result, this will bring along many positive outcomes that will be helpful both as a short run effect but also in the long run.

When being asked how they believe teambuilding could be enhanced and developed, they said that there are many ways to do that. At first, they discussed about management and their importance in bonding the teams. They suggested that management could enhance teamwork by involving employees in more activities as a team and not as individuals and also motivate them to ask for help from their colleagues and even other departments. For example R30 said:

“We need to be involved in certain activities as a team and not as individuals. Yes, this would help me personally overcome the negative things we have discussed together. For example if I have a difficult case to handle, to be able to ask for assistance from a colleague without feeling that it may be forbidden by management. Because they clearly tell us that we should get permission before even asking other departments to do something...”

In addition, all of the participants agreed that they themselves could increase teamwork by working more on their internal communication and make it more effective.

A good example is F4R10 who said:

“If there is more teamwork in the hotel, obviously we will have less stress and frustration even if we have to face an aggressive customer. The sense of belonging to a group of people that support each other is very important. I am afraid I have to say that this is not the case right now and we are suffering.”

Another issue that has been raised in regards to enhance teamwork is a decrease in bureaucracy. A number of respondents coming from different hotels said that they have to fill in a lot of reports daily, involving time consuming information that they do not really understand or have never being explained about their purpose. This makes them feel less as a team. As a result, they also have less time to bond with each other and form proper relationships as well. An example is R29 who said:

“We need teambuilding. They arranged a teambuilding training once. That was it. We had a great time but then we went back to those bureaucratic procedures that keep us back from performing as a team. Building strong team relationships would definitely help.”

An important addition from the focus groups that is helping in identifying the importance of teamwork in overcoming the negative consequences, is the fact that participants have demonstrated the importance of departments to work more closely with each other.

For example F3R1 said:

“We all tend to do our own thing and we are working as individuals, not as team. Maybe as a department we are working well together but this is not enough. We need to enhance communication and cooperation with all the departments.”

According to the findings, this would help in overcoming the various challenges that employees are facing and this could act as a way to be proactive and solve some problems before they end up harming the customers. This would act as an advantage for two aspects. The first aspect would be the fact that people would feel part of a larger entity and not only their department which according to the participants it would act as a buffering effect. On the other hand, as it has been aforementioned, it may act a way to resolve various issues before they reach the customer, so this would practically involve less angry customers to deal with. This idea has been supported by a number of participants in the focus groups.

For example F1R9 said:

“If we cooperated more between departments, we would be able to resolve some issues and this would lead to less angry customers.”

F1R2, following this discussion within the focus group, added to that view by saying:

“For example if I knew there is a problem with the housekeeping and they cannot clean the rooms on time, I would try to be proactive and do something to help. Obviously we are all

dealing with our own problems, in our own departments and we don't care about the rest.

This is wrong and this is a mentality that is passing on to us from the management."

Here, the role of management in helping employees enhance their teamwork within and between the departments is really important and needs to be considered.

Sub-theme 3.7: Family and friends to keep a distance from work issues / Show patience and understanding

Even though it would be expected to see family involvement as an important buffering effect, the findings of the interviews and the focus groups show a different approach to this aspect. Interviews respondents said that they would prefer that their families and friends keep a distance from their work issues. As it has been aforementioned, there is a tendency to hide negative emotions from their loved ones so that they don't create negativity at home. The respondents said that despite that fact, they would like their family not to be involved in work issues and just show understanding when they come back from work and they are feeling sad about various situations. For example R4 said:

"I prefer that they simply show understanding and let me forget about the negative situations. I want to try and have fun at home, or with friends. So they should avoid asking me questions. This would be highly beneficial for me."

The focus groups' results agree with the findings of the interviews and also add to them.

Family should play the role of support and understanding; nevertheless, they would not want their family to be part of their everyday challenges at work. As a result, they would want their family to show patience and understanding and not to force them to either discuss their work related problems or get involved in any way. According to the focus groups' results, the role of both family and friends should be supportive but not invading in any way to work-related issues. For example F4R1 said:

“Obviously family and friends are important but I want them to allow me to keep a distance between work and personal life. I want them to be supportive, understand when I am not in the mood and not forcing me in any way.”

All of the respondents that reported this said that they would prefer that their families and friends motivate them to do other activities together rather than sitting down and discussing the problems they are facing at work. Therefore, they said that simply being patient and showing understanding would be enough rather than forcing them to discuss their work related issues. This, according to the participants, would create even more stress since their families and friends are not part of it and they really don't know what they are going through so they prefer not to be involved in such discussions with them. For example R18 said:

“I just need understanding and patience. I need them to help me forget about work not reminding it to me. I don't like work problems to interfere to my family life. Therefore they simply need to show understanding if I am not feeling well.”

On the same pace, F2R4 said:

“I don't want the problems at work to be discussed at home. I don't think this is of any help. I just need my family to understand, show patience when I am angry. If I want to talk to them at some point, I will. I just don't need them to ask me questions or get me into discussion. This will at least reduce stress at home.”

This finding is partly in line with the literature. It has been reported in the literature that at some point, the role of a person at work interferes with the role of the same person at home and as a result this would increase burnout in the long run since it creates stress (Wallace, 1999; Wang & Groth, 2014). This finding agrees with the current study's findings, since it has been discussed above that employees tend to hide their feelings at home when they do that at work. As a result, this seems to create stress. In the aspect of family support, it has been shown that the role of family is positively related to the way employees feel about the

stressors at work and how they handle them (Wang & Groth, 2014). This aspect of work-family interference though is very new in this area and requires further empirical attention according to the current literature (ibid). As a result, the current study sheds a light on this area by identifying the fact that employees would prefer their family to take a supportive but not invasive role. That means, to show understanding but not being involved with any work matters.

Most of the respondents said that even though talking about a problem may help at some point, they would prefer that this is not being done by either their families or their friends. Therefore, the fact that employees want families and people close to them to understand but also keep a distance and not forcing them to share their job challenges is an argument that is also being supported by both qualitative methods being used in this current study.

Sub-theme 3.8: Work on relaxation techniques such as yoga, meditation etc.

When the participants have been asked about how they could help themselves overcome the negative consequences, they stressed out the importance of finding and implementing various relaxation techniques. A total of 10 respondents during the interviews said that they do yoga and 8 of them also do meditation. Those respondents agreed, though, that this is a very short term solution. A lot of relaxation techniques that have been mentioned by the respondents have been reported as short term solutions to help them relax.

For example R5 said:

“I do yoga and meditation and it helps me a bit to relax. It is really something that does not last long, it acts as a short-term effect. I don’t think it is something that it is helping me when I go through hard times at work but I just mention it since it is something I do...”

When asking them to elaborate on the things that they could personally do to help themselves they did not report any long term solutions, other than the short term techniques to help them relax.

This has been supported in the interviews as a way to release stress even for a short period of time and help employees feel better in terms of the negativity that is being created when engaging in surface acting during their interactions with aggressive customers. This has been argued to be a buffering effect even though not as a long term one in the interviews. In terms of the focus groups, though, this specific finding has not been supported at all. There was no reference in terms of those techniques and how they could help employees overcome the negative consequences even for a short period of time. Due to the fact that this is not supported at all in the focus groups, it will not be included in the final framework but it will remain as an element that could be researched by future scholars that will be dealing with this area that the current study has been dealing with. This finding is something that requires further investigation in terms of those techniques and how they could be used since it is a new concept that was not part of the current literature review either.

2.3.1 Discussion

There is a gap in the literature, as it has been aforementioned, in regards to the way that employees can cope and overcome the negative consequences of engaging in surface acting when interacting with aggressive customers (Goussinsky, 2015). As it has been discussed by a number of authors, even though we know that service employees face a lot of aggressiveness from customers, there is limited research, which is mainly on parts. Therefore, we have little evidence showing how employees can handle those situations and thus create a better working environment (Bechtoldt *et al.*, 2011; Goussinsky, 2015; Huang & Dai, 2010; Karatepe, 2011; Karatepe, 2015; Lu *et al.*, 2013; Wang & Groth, 2014). In addition, the area of deep acting and how to help employees engage more in deep acting when they interact with aggressive customers has been under-researched and there is no clear evidence on how to do that (Huang & Dai 2010; Hur *et al.*, 2015; Karatepe 2010;

Karatepe & Nkendon, 2014; Taegoo *et al.*, 2012). The next section analyses the results of this research on how to help employees do that.

This current section has been focussing on analysing the results of the interviews on how to buffer out the negative consequences. This analysis is giving an answer to the first part of the literature gap as it has been mentioned above. Now, the researcher is summarising the results that have been analysed above in comparison to the current literature.

The current literature findings, have been mentioning a number of ways to buffer out the negative consequences. Scholars describing those findings have been indicating that the results needed further research due to the under-researched nature of this area. The current results, indicated that behavioural disengagement and venting negative emotions could be two ways to help employees overcome the negative consequences (Carver & Connor-Smith, 2010; Grandey *et al.*, 2004; Reynolds & Harris, 2006; Skinner *et al.*, 2003). These have been mentioned as two ways that could help employees but scholars identified that those findings are not consistent with organisational rules and further research is needed to check whether those factors would be included as buffering affects or not. This research does not agree with those two findings. The participants of the interviews did not mention either of those two ways as factors that could enable them to handle the negative consequences. This result, agrees in some way with the literature, because for both factors that have been mentioned above, the researchers were not sure about their effectiveness. They believed that those findings needed to be analysed in further researches, using different techniques (such as a more qualitative approach) and allowing participants to open up themselves without using pre-determined factors (Grandey *et al.*, 2010).

Therefore, this current research has followed the suggestion of those scholars and those results were not part of the research findings.

Furthermore, in the literature, there have been some more ways mentioned as buffering effects for those negative consequences. Of course, since this has been a new area with

limited research, further research has been asked by the current scholars to identify the effectiveness of those findings. The first aspect is that of job autonomy. It has been indicated in the literature that job autonomy seems to be a way that could help employees overcome the negative consequences that occur when engaging in surface acting during their interactions with aggressive customers (Wang & Groth, 2014). This current research agrees with the existing literature finding regarding job autonomy. As it has been analysed above, job autonomy has been considered as very important in terms of helping the respondents of this research to overcome the negative consequences. Therefore, this finding agrees with the literature.

The role of organisational, group and family support have been mentioned as buffering effects in the current literature (Appelbaum & Roy-Girard, 2007; Moon *et al.*, 2013). The current study agrees with some of those aspects with the current literature in regards to those findings. There are also some additions out of this study for the literature on those areas. As it can be seen above, the findings show that employees could overcome the negative consequences by being offered the opportunity to become part of formal groups within the organisation / hotel they are working. This goes a step further to the current literature findings that discuss about group support. The current study actually recommends a practical way of how to achieve this support.

Further, the support from management takes a different form as per this study's findings. Employees seem to be in need for managers to actually handle the difficult situations they are facing with customers. Thus, this will take away the challenge of dealing with them and employees will get the support they actually need from management. This finding may be due to the culture of the country, Cyprus, where this study is taking place. According to the findings, the employees support that customers usually request to be handled by managers and avoiding to do that results in angrier customers and further negative consequences. Therefore, this is another addition to the current literature.

The aspect of family support agrees with the literature. As it has been stated in the literature, the role of family is very important as to how employees perceive problems at work (Wang & Groth, 2014). This study, agrees with that finding. It goes further by adding that it would be more helpful if family keeps a distance from work-related issues and the family members as well as friends simply need to show support and understanding. As a result, in terms of family support, this study has shed a light to the kind of support that employees would need from their families. It has been argued that they would like their family to be supportive but also keep a distance from the work issues so that they eliminate the time that is being spent on those work issues at home.

Stress appraisal has been another factor been identified in the current literature as a buffering effect (Grandey *et al.*, 2007). As it has been discussed in the literature review, though, minimising stress appraisal (i.e. how threatening the situation is for someone) is not an easy thing and it requires people to work on the things that cause stress, the so-called stressors (Grandey *et al.*, 2004). The current research has found out that all of the factors that have been mentioned as buffering effects would decrease stress appraisal and stress in general. So we can conclude that this agrees with the current literature.

Training, has been mentioned in the literature as a way to decrease the negative consequences as well as an aspect that could increase the employees' engagement in deep acting when interacting with aggressive customers (Goussinsky, 2015; Wang & Groth, 2014). This current research agrees with the literature. It adds to that finding by suggesting a more focussed, industry and even organisation specific training. Generic training focussing on handling emotions or teaching various techniques does not seem to be helpful. More focussed training, attempting to work on the individual needs and taking into consideration the nature of the organisation and the organisational issues would be more beneficial and successful, according to the findings of the current research.

This study offers more additions to the literature. The aspect of receiving more positive feedback from management is a new addition that has not been discussed in the current literature. In addition to that, the area of increasing teamwork and cooperation among employees as well as among departments has been identified as a very important factor in the current study's findings. Therefore, among the other additions or alterations from the literature findings, those two new concepts of positive feedback from management and an increase in teamwork and cooperation are two aspects that require attention and should be further analysed by the future researchers.

2.4 Theme 4: Increased engagement in deep acting during interactions with aggressive customers

As it has been shown in the literature review, there is a positive relationship between service performance and employees' engagement in deep acting during their interactions with clients (Lin, 2009). This relationship is even more positive when the interactions are with aggressive customers (*ibid*). This is being shown in the literature, during studies that involved customers. The findings of those studies have shown that customers would be happier and their anger would ease if they felt that the service providers impose real emotions and they are not faking when they interact with them (Grandey, 2003; Goussinsky, 2015; Higgs, 2004; Karatepe & Nkendon, 2014; Lee, 2016; Lin, 2009; Pugh, 2001; Taegoo *et al.*, 2012).

Latest research on this area assumes that engaging more in deep acting when interacting with aggressive customers would lead into better results and a decrease in the physiological and the psychological negative consequences of engaging in surface acting (Goussinsky, 2015; Huang & Dai 2010; Hur *et al.*, 2015; Karatepe, 2010; Karatepe & Nkendon, 2014; Taegoo *et al.*, 2012). As the above authors state, though, this have not been empirically tested in terms of how it can be achieved during the challenging situations

of aggressiveness on behalf of customers. There has been an attempt in this current study to close this gap. This section provides an analysis of the results in terms of this aspect and it is answering RQ4a which is related to RO5. The analysis provided below includes an analysis of both the interviews as well as the focus groups, showing how the focus groups' results support or differ from the interviews, leading to the final conclusions.

Sub-theme 4.1: Attempting positive thinking / attitude towards customers

Employees would be more able to engage in deep acting if they attempted a more positive thinking. The findings have shown that if employees attempted to have a more positive thinking and attitude towards their customers they would be in a better position of offering more genuine and real emotions to them. Positive thinking and in general positive attitude, would be beneficial both in providing a better service but also to the employees in general. Respondents mentioned that they could benefit a lot from being more positive towards their customers and their job in general and this would help them offer more genuine emotions to their customers.

The important thing here, as it has been analysed above, is the fact that the employees that respondent to the interviews and the focus groups said that they feel negatively about their customers. This has been reported as a negative consequence of employees engaging into surface acting when they are dealing with aggressive customer. Therefore, when researching the ways that the employees would use to offer more genuine emotions, the first thing that they replied was the fact that they needed to feel more positively and create a more positive attitude towards their jobs.

The findings have shown that the employees need to be able to understand their customers' feelings more. This will eventually help them display more natural emotions towards them when they are angry because they will be in a better position to understand the reasons why they are angry. In addition to that, during the focus groups, it has been found that creating better customer relationships will enhance the display of more natural emotions towards

them since they will feel closer to them. Of course, this will be achieved, according to the respondents, only when they manage to have the rest in place. That is, if they have a positive environment where they have autonomy and are working as a team, if they have support and proper leadership approach from their managers and proper training, this will naturally build better internal relationships which will be reflecting externally, to the customers.

So respondents reported that the ways to increase the positive feeling and attitude towards customers and their jobs in general could be created by increasing teamwork, receiving more help and positive feedback from customers, increasing their levels of autonomy and get more motivation and inspiration from their jobs in general. On this aspect, R9 importantly noted that:

“I would be able to offer more genuine emotions if I felt positive myself both towards customers and my job in general. Give me more teamwork, some positive feedback and let me receive some help from my managers. I would then be more able but also more willing to offer both real and genuine emotions to my customers.”

Therefore, out of those findings, it can be concluded that by working on achieving the ways to buffer out the negative consequences of surface acting would lead to more positive feelings and attitudes which would therefore lead to an increased engagement in deep acting when interacting with aggressive customers. For example R12 said:

“I need to feel more positively towards my customers. This is the way to achieve those genuine emotions towards my angry customers that you are talking about. But I have to receive positive vibes to give them back. It is a two-way process. At least from my managers. Customers will be aggressive, we can't change them. But we can change the way we work as a team, the management approach. The things we have been talking before actually. That's it.”

The focus groups' results are in line with the interviews' results on this aspect which therefore validate the specific finding.

On the same note, F1R6 said:

"I know that what would help is to feel more positively about the customers. It takes a lot of effort. If my manager shows more understanding, if I manage to feel better at work and more motivated... Maybe this would help me feel more positively about my customers."

Within the same focus group, F1R3 added:

"Not only that. If we manage to build stronger relationships and feel more positively for our customers that would be ideal. Especially with our loyal customers. Obviously I agree that internal relationships need to be in a good shape so that we can work on creating stronger relationships with our customers and therefore understand their needs more. This is a cycle really."

As a result, attempting to achieve more positive thinking towards the customers would be beneficial in employees to engage more in deep acting. As it has been found this will be achieved by mainly receiving more autonomy, teamwork and management support. A last quote by R28 is reaching the above conclusion as well:

"Well of course I can offer more genuine emotions. One way is if I manage to feel more positively about my customers. Give me all the positive things that I have talked about before and I will try my best. Give me a positive team, cooperative managers that are willing to congratulate you from time to time and then I will achieve the impossible!"

Sub-theme 4.2: Positive internal organisational culture as a means to achieving deep acting / understanding customers' feelings better

The aspect of a more positive internal culture has been identified as a very important finding in terms of helping employees engaging in deep acting when they interact with aggressive customers. As a positive organisational culture the findings have mentioned a positive working environment of mutual understanding between employees and

management. A place where they would be able to feel safe and secure and be motivated to work harder and better. It has been identified that a positive organisational culture would benefit both employees and customers. For example R7 strongly believed that a positive organisational culture could act as a way to help employees offer more genuinely displayed emotions to their aggressive customers. The respondent said:

“You are asking me what would help me offer more genuine emotions. That means not acting as I do all the time. Well, the internal culture should have been more positive. The things that we discussed about before that is. Managers that are helpful, give us more positive feedback, an increase in teamwork. All these would help me do what you are saying. Being more positive. Simple to me, difficult for the managers to get it maybe...”

Respondents' opinions say that they would be more able to work on their emotions so that they can offer more real and genuine emotions towards their customers, even the aggressive ones, if they operated in a more positive culture. The focus groups completely agree with the interview on the aspect of organisational culture. The organisational culture seems to be a highly important factor that could help employees engage more in deep acting and display more natural emotions to their aggressive customers. The way that this works, is lying along the fact that if employees feel happy within their working environment they will be able to pass on this happiness more naturally, without simply acting to their customers when they are dissatisfied and unhappy.

On the other, hand, if they feel unhappy in their own working environment, they will not be able to act naturally in front of their aggressive customers. Therefore, they have to hide their emotions twice as much, since they have both negative emotions in regards to the internal culture and negative emotions in regards to the aggressiveness coming along from customers. As a result, they tend to become actors and thus engage in surface acting. On the other hand, if they feel more positively internally, have better communication and teamwork this will act as a factor of increasing the natural, positive emotions towards their

customers, especially the ones that act aggressively and are dissatisfied. This is being shown in a quote from F2R7

“If we have been working in a more positive environment, of mutual understanding, cooperation and teamwork, this would enable us to reflect more natural, positive emotions in front of an aggressive customer. Since for most of us this is not the case, we tend to hide our negative feelings. Not only the ones that we have towards the aggressive customer, but the ones towards the hotel we are working for as well.”

On the same pace, F3R10 said:

“If they manage to create a more positive culture the natural emotions will be displayed much more easily. No matter how much the customer is shouting to us. Since we will be happy... Internally... This is the key to success”.

When being asked to identify the ways that would create a more positive organisational culture, it has been found that receiving management support and positive feedback, increasing teamwork and cooperation and being offered more autonomy would be the way to achieve that. This is being shown in the below quote coming from R2:

“I need a more positive working environment, a culture of mutual understanding. This would help me develop a better attitude towards my customers even if they are aggressive. I would try to understand their feelings as well. If they give me positive feedback all the time, then yes. I will be able to feel more positively and thus being able to offer more genuine emotions to my customers. Indeed. Even the angry ones. I am pretty sure about what I am saying right now”

In general, some of the ways to overcome the negative consequences of surface acting during interactions with aggressive customers that have been analysed above seem to be the way to create a more positive organisational culture. This would lead to an increase use of more genuine emotions towards customers and thus engage employees in deep acting according to this study's findings. Further, this would enable employees to understand the

feelings of their customers, since within a positive culture, employees would feel that their feelings are being valued more. As a result, they would be more able and even willing to work harder towards trying to understand their customers' feelings as well. A very experienced employee in the industry, R30, said:

"I have many years of experience. We are usually working in negative environments. People shout, become aggressive, managers see and judge my mistakes only. If that was more positive, if we were working in a more positive environment, then yes, this would enable me to offer more genuine emotions. Now we are all faking. Ask anybody you want. We are dissatisfied both with remunerations and attitudes in this industry, in this country. Therefore we cannot do anything else than acting out towards customers. If all we get into a more positive mode then things will be different..."

Therefore, organisational culture seems to be a very important aspect that would eventually lead to engagement in deep acting according to the interviews as well as the focus groups' respondents. As it has been mentioned above, the ways to provide a more positive culture internally, are actually being mentioned as buffering effects of the negative consequences of surface acting. This shows how important those ways are, not only in decreasing the negative consequences, but also in increasing the use of deep acting which will be highly beneficial for employees, the organisation as a whole and customers in general.

Sub-theme 4.3: Managers to act more as leaders as a means to an increased engagement in deep acting / create a better understanding towards customers

The importance of managers and their attitudes have been found to be able to affect the negative consequences of surface acting, as this has been analysed in the previous section. Further to that, it has been identified to be a way to help employees engage more in deep acting, trying to understand the reasons why their customers behave negatively and this would lead to positive results.

The findings in terms of management abilities, lie along the ability of a manager to be a leader. A manager who possesses leadership skills such as the ability to listen to others, understand them and help them develop, according to the respondents, would lead the way towards a better understanding of the customers' needs and offering real and genuine emotions to them. Therefore, managers acting as leaders would be beneficial for the creation of a working environment where employees are not only able but also willing to offer more genuine emotions to their customers. This would result in an increase in engaging in deep acting, especially when interacting with aggressive customers. The words of R17 about that are very important:

"I could offer more genuine emotions if I had a leader in front of me who has managed to do the same. You know the people who have the power need to help us in any way possible. To simply lead the way towards those natural emotions. This would be helpful..."

Leaders have been defined by the participants of the research as the ones that can show the way to engage more in deep acting, as it can be also seen on the above quote. If the employees could see that their managers have the ability to do that, then they would lead the way towards a working environment where they all do that and they all perform in that way. It should be importantly noted, that the focus groups have validated this interviews' finding. According to the focus groups' participants, they have not tried to identify ways that would enable them to offer more genuine emotions, since their managers simply guided them to simple acting in front of customers, especially aggressive ones, without considering the negative consequences for the employees. An example is F4R9 that seemed to be strongly affected by management said:

"You know what? My manager gave me all those different scenarios to use at various occasions with customers. How can I offer more genuine emotions? They do the same... They follow scenarios, they become actors. They teach us the way to go. So they need to change their attitudes first."

Therefore, the findings of this study suggest that the managers / leaders of each organisation should learn about deep acting, practice it both internally and externally to help their employees to engage themselves into this when they interact with their aggressive customers.

The employees feel that if their managers acted more as leaders that not only lead them to the right way but also understand them as well, this would help them understand their customers more and thus work on their own emotions. This would help them deal with their customers more effectively and then offer more naturally displayed emotions, thus engage in deep acting.

This seems to be one of the most important factors that has been found to be affecting the ways employees will engage in emotional labour during their interactions with aggressive customers. The level of management support has been found not only to be affecting the negative consequences of surface acting positively, but also to be able to increase employees' engagement in deep acting.

For example, F3R3 said that:

“The leaders show the way. If they show real emotions and we truly believe that they understand our challenges, we will do the same for our customers. Either way, we follow their examples”.

In terms of this discussion, within this focus group, the rest of the participants agreed and they elaborated on that by saying that if their managers pass them on negative feelings, they will have to fake even more in front of the customer. If not, they will not fake at all and they will be more able to transfer more positive and more naturally displayed emotions to their customers. On the same pace, R8 said:

“We need to follow an example maybe. The example of our managers and how they behave. My manager seems to be acting in front of the customers, especially when they act aggressively. There are times when the customer leaves and my manager talks very

negatively to me about that customer and his/her attitude. There are also various occasions that they talk down to us. I tend to follow their examples really. They are the leaders right?"

As a result, the issue of managers and their leadership approach seems to be of a huge importance in the area of achieving more deep acting. The fact that managers should act as leaders, support and lead the way towards displaying more natural emotions has been found to be a very important factor both in the interviews as well as the focus groups.

Sub-theme 4.4: Training on how to achieve deep acting

Training has been analysed above as a means to enable employees to overcome various negative consequences occurring out of continuous surface acting during interactions with aggressive customers. Whilst training is always helpful, as it has been found from the respondents' responses, specialised training on how to achieve deep acting would be most appropriate in that case. The respondents mentioned that they would be more than happy and even feel relieved if they knew that there are techniques that could be learned to help them understand customers better and be able to offer more naturally displayed emotions (deep acting) during their interactions with them.

Training, though, on its own does not seem to be the way to work through this challenge of engaging in deep acting. The above mentioned components such as a more positive organisational culture and managers that are acting as leaders should be in place so that any training provided is successful. For example R7 strongly believed that training is important, having in mind that some conditions are in place as well. The respondent said:

"I said it before, training that is concerned with feelings would be helpful. But believe me, if you bring the most professional person in the world to teach me the most advanced techniques, it won't work if you don't have a positive working environment and leaders! Leaders that care and show the way. Provide that and then they can train us! Not the other way around."

The findings of the focus groups are in line with the interviews on this aspect. As it will be shown below, they also add important components to this finding.

On the same pace, therefore, F2R6 said:

“A last and an important think as I said before is training. But I need to have proper conditions in place and then training will be more successful. A happy team, working harmoniously and a manager to help and support, Then we need professionals to teach us the ways to offer more natural emotions.”

Participants mentioned that even though there were some attempts from the management team to provide training, they believe that the fact the organisational culture is not as positive as it should be and the managers are not leading them with their practices to the right direction failed any training attempts. For example R28 mentioned:

“Ok and training as well. To learn the techniques that will enable me to offer more natural and genuine emotions. They have offered various types of trainings at the hotels I have been working for before. But I said it a lot of times during this interview. If the rest are not in place then you do nothing with training. I will still act in front of the customer, get stressed after that and all the negativity will be created again. So train me at the right time with the right conditions being in place.”

As a result, out of the current study, there is an important finding in terms of training. It is not successful, no matter how professionally designed it is, if the factors that have been mentioned above are not in place in the organisation. The interesting things in this finding, is that this research is not taking place in one hotel setting only, but is using participants from different five star hotels. Therefore, this finding can be considered as an important one to be considered for further research as well, since taking information from various hotel settings means that this is not the case of a simple organisational culture but is a rather more general aspect to consider.

Offering specialised training to the employees seems to be another important factor that would enhance their engagement in deep acting, avoid surface acting and thus create more positive results. There is an important aspect that has been added through the focus groups. This addition relates to training that should be an on-going process and not a simple event. Therefore, training has to occur regularly so that employees will be getting updated information. As a result, they will receive the new trends on this area in terms of how to display more natural emotions and how to handle their dissatisfied or aggressive customers more effectively.

In terms of training, employees seem to be attending various training sessions on customer service without any success since they are not tailor-made to their needs and to the industry standards. They would like to undertake trainings, specifically on handling emotions, overcoming negativity on behalf of customers, how to enable themselves to understand customers and their feelings more and how to display more natural emotions to their customers while they are aggressive. The majority of the participants in all the focus groups agreed that this would be very helpful and beneficial. According to them, so far they have not received such types of trainings and people are overall hesitant to talk about emotions in their working environment.

An example is F4R2 that said:

“I believe we need to be trained on how to display more natural emotions and what ways to use to help us understand our customers’ feelings more.”

On the other hand, F3R9 said:

“We don’t know how to do certain things since people are hesitant to talk about emotions and how to handle them. If there are ways to help us offer more natural emotions we need to get to know them. They need to bring professionals, from abroad even, to train us.”

Even though training seemed to be a very important aspect in the focus groups as well, it has been noted that it will not be successful if the employees are not performing in a

positive environment with leaders that support and guide them. An example is F3R5 that mentioned the below:

“I agree with my colleagues about specialised training, but we should have it under certain conditions. If the culture is not positive and if we don’t get the right leadership approach then... sorry... training will be a waste of time.”

2.4.1 Theme 5: Positive consequences of engaging in deep acting during interactions with aggressive customers.

This section analyses the positive outcomes related to an increased use of the deep acting technique during employees’ interactions with aggressive customers. It is answering the last Research Question of this thesis, RQ4b which is related to RO5. It should be importantly noted here, that in regards to the positive consequences, the focus groups’ results have validated all of the interviews’ results as they are being presented below. Each positive consequence includes quotes coming both from the interviews’ participants as well as the focus groups ones. The only consequence that does not seem to be affected is the cigarette and alcohol consumption. It has been clearly indicated both during the interviews as well as during the focus groups that this negative consequence will not be positively affected through deep acting. This is also being further discussed in this section. The findings have shown that when managing to engage in deep acting, the negative consequences that have been reported when engaging in surface acting will be decreased. The great majority of the respondents agreed that if they managed to engage in deep acting and offer more natural and genuine emotions to their aggressive customers this would help them feel more relaxed and relieved when performing their job duties and therefore the negative consequences will be decreased.

The findings reported a number of negative consequences occurring when employees engage in surface acting during their interactions with aggressive customers. After discussing the ways to help them increase the use of deep acting during such interactions,

the respondents have been asked to report the positive effects that may occur, according to their opinion.

Through the findings, it had been indicated that if the employees were able to offer more naturally displayed emotions to their angry customers, this would lead to a decrease in stress, a more positive approach and emotion towards their customers and colleagues as well as management, less surface acting and hiding of feelings at home, a decrease in absenteeism and an increase in their job performance, also leading to a more positive attitude towards customers.

The focus groups have agreed with the interview results. More specifically, the focus groups agreed that if employees manage to engage more in deep acting, the negative consequences of engaging in surface acting will be eliminated.

Below is a further analysis of this finding including the findings for each of the consequences that will be eliminated separately.

Sub-theme 5.1: A decrease in stress

The findings have shown that if employees manage to offer more genuine emotions to their aggressive customers (thus engage in deep acting), there will be less stress and they will feel more relaxed and happy while performing their job duties. As it has been indicated the employees will feel less stress when interacting with an aggressive customer since they will not hide their true emotions and simply act. Instead, they will be able to smile more naturally, be more sympathetic and react in a more natural way.

A quote from R15 below is an example of those findings:

"I would have been under less stress and frustration if I could offer more natural emotions. Stress is not only occurring because I am facing an angry person. It also occurs because I will need to act in front of this angry customer since I have negative feelings on my own during that time."

On the same pace, F4R5 said:

“If I manage to impose more natural emotions I will be under less stress that’s for sure. If I could just stop acting and actually feel positively and act more positive this would definitely lead to less stress.”

As a result, this study has found that if employees manage to engage more in deep acting when they interact with aggressive customers, they will manage to decrease their stress levels that have occurred so far as an outcome of their engagement in surface acting.

Sub-theme 5.2: A decrease in burnout

Along with stress, respondents reported burnout as a negative consequence that occurs from excessive stress over the years. As it has been shown above, in this study, burnout has been reported by people that have more than ten years of experience in this area. This study therefore concluded that burnout occurs due to excessive engagement in surface acting when interacting with aggressive customers over the years. At this point of the study, it has been revealed that deep acting may also lead to less burnout.

For example R30 who has reported burnout as a negative consequences of engaging in surface acting when interacting with aggressive customers had a very strong opinion on that aspect:

“I said that I have been facing burnout a lot and one of the main reasons, is the fact that I do hide my own emotions in front of an aggressive customer. Now, if I manage to act more naturally and stop acting, which I really hate, I strongly believe that this will decrease the symptoms of burnout that I am facing at the moment.”

This is a finding that shows that deep acting will have positive consequences on burnout which is an extreme form of excessive stress. F3R7 who has been a waiter for 20 years in the hospitality industry said:

“I will definitely face less stress and as a result less burnout. I don’t see any other way at the moment and I am really happy that we are discussing the aspect of showing more natural emotions to our customers. We need to start implementing it at any expense. Both

hotel owners, managers and their employees need to really work hard on that aspect. Yes, I really support the fact that this will lead to less stress on our behalf and as a result less burnout.”

Sub-theme 5.3: A decrease in surface acting at home / Less work-family conflicts

Along with the above findings in terms of the positive effects of deep acting during interactions with aggressive customers, is the fact that there will be less surface acting at home and thus less work-family conflicts. The respondents of both the personal interviews as well as the focus groups reported that at the moment they mostly practice surface acting at home, not only at work. As a result, engaging in more natural emotions when they interact with aggressive customers, will lead to less acting at home as well and as a result this will decrease the work-family conflicts. A strong supporter of this view is F3R8 who said:

“I will have less stress at home as well and this will reduce the times I show a different face and act in front of my spouse. It will give me less problems at home!”

The above quote clearly indicates that there will be a reduction of stress and therefore less surface acting at home. On the other hand, R22 took this further by saying that:

“I have conflicts in relation to my job at home. I feel negatively at work due to the fact that I tend to act in front of angry customers. If I manage to change that and actually be able to impose more natural feelings, then this will eventually show a positive result in my personal life as well. I really and strongly believe that this will decrease the work-life conflict that I face at the moment at a great extent.”

Sub-theme 5.4: A decrease in the negative perception about colleagues / managers

As it has been discussed above, during analysing the findings of the negative consequences of surface acting during interactions with aggressive customers, a negative perception about colleagues and managers was found to be one of the negative aspects. This study has revealed that if employees manage to engage more in deep acting rather than surface acting

during their interactions with aggressive customers, they will face less negative perceptions towards their colleagues and managers. One reason is that overall they will have more positive attitudes at work in general. This is being shown in the quote below coming from R16 who clearly said:

“Oh and my relationship with my colleagues and my managers would be better. I tend to feel negatively about them because I sometimes blame them for the situation that made the customer angry and upset. If I manage to impose more natural feelings towards my angry customers then I will be in a better position to understand and empathise. This will create a more positive feeling towards my colleagues as well as managers.”

On the same way, F1R8 also supports this view, as it is being shown in the quote below:

“I believe all the negative things we mentioned before will be eliminated. There will be less stress and of course positive outcomes in our job in terms of how we perceive our colleagues as well as managers. After all, positive attitudes bring along more positive attitudes!”

F1R4 within the same focus group during this discussion said:

“I agree and I believe there will be more positive feelings and attitudes towards our colleagues.”

Sub-theme 5.5: A decrease in absenteeism / sick-leave

An increase in absenteeism was a negative consequence that has been revealed during this study in terms of engaging in surface acting when interacting with aggressive customers. It has been found that this negative consequence will be positively affected.

F2R9 supports that:

“Besides the obvious thing that I would be under less stress if I was able to impose more natural emotions towards my angry customers, I would be less absent from work for no

real reason as well like I do right now. This will be simply because less stress will give me less reasons to be absent...”

The findings seem to relate the decrease in stress with the decrease in absenteeism. It shows that a decrease in stress will further positively affect the days that people are absent from their jobs, especially the days that they call in sick for no real and valid reason, simply because they feel tired.

Responding on the same way, R19 said:

“I would be less stressed and this means less absences! I feel that I will be happier and therefore there will be no need to call in sick for no real reason. I definitely do that now and this will be eliminated!”

Sub-theme 5.6: A positive impact on job performance

A decrease in job performance has been another negative consequence of surface acting when interacting with angry customers. Engagement in deep acting has shown to be a factor that would decrease this negative consequence according to the participants of this research.

R6, who has mentioned a decrease in job performance as a negative consequence, clearly said:

“It would be like heaven to me! If I was able to impose more natural emotions towards my customers and stop acting, this would lead to less mistakes and there will be a positive impact on my performance at work. I believe this is the same for most of my colleagues as well with whom I have discussions about those issues.”

The same attitude and opinion is being shared by F4R4 who said:

“I said before that there is a decrease in my performance at work because of the fact that I am hiding my true emotions and simply act in front of an aggressive customer. This would be positively affected if I was able to receive the support I need so that I could offer more natural emotions to my customers.”

It has been therefore clearly indicated that there will be a positive impact in job performance if employees receive the support they need so that they can impose more natural emotions towards their customers that have an aggressive behaviour.

Sub-theme 5.7: Positive attitudes towards customers

A more positive attitude towards customers has been found to be a positive consequences if employees engaging in deep acting rather than surface acting when they interact with aggressive customers. For example R11, has been mentioning negative attitudes towards customers as one of the negative consequences if engaging in surface acting during such interactions. On that aspect, the respondent mentioned the following statement that is being presented in the quote below:

“I believe that this will lead to more positive attitudes towards customers as well. I have mentioned before that the fact that we tend to hide our emotions and act in front of aggressive customers generally changes the way we perceive customers. Yes, I believe this will be positively affected if we manage to impose more real emotions and stop acting. But we need the support that is necessary for us to do that.”

The above quote clearly shows that if organisations put in practice the aspects that have been discussed above, this will lead to more deep acting and a decrease in the negative consequences of surface acting. One of those consequences that will be positively affected has been proved to be the negative perceptions towards customers.

Following the quote of R11 above, is another quote coming from F1R1 who also reported a more positive attitude towards customers due to an increase in deep acting:

“This means less stress and it will really change my attitudes towards customers. I will feel more positively and this will mainly be due to the fact that I will be more relaxed and less stressed. This will therefore have an impact in regards to how I feel about my customers right now... But I need the proper support and training in order to achieve that.”

The above quote links the decrease in stress due to more deep acting with the positive attitudes towards customers. On the other hand, it is one of the quotes that have been shown so far, that stresses out the importance of support in order to achieve deep acting and thus lead to those positive results.

The only consequence that was not mentioned at all is the increased consumption of alcohol and cigarette smoking. No participant has mentioned that this consequence will be decreased when we increase deep acting during such challenging interactions with aggressive customers.

During the focus groups the researcher specifically asked about this consequence. The respondents said that this factor would not be eliminated so easily. For example F4R4 said:

“I believe that I have started smoking more due to many factors. As I have said, one of those factors was the fact that I had to face aggressive customers. I don’t believe this can change so easily if I manage to engage myself in emotions that are more natural. I believe it takes more than that. There are a lot of things in our job that need improvement and they definitely cause us stress and this obviously increases the smoking habit!”

There have been some discussion on why this would be the case and most of the answers supported that this is a habit that provides both physical and psychological addiction so it would really take more than just changing the perception by which they are dealing with the customers’ feelings.

2.4.2 Discussion

It has been identified that there is a positive relationship between deep acting and the performance of employees during service recovery performance (Lin, 2009). When talking about service recovery we mean the recovery of dissatisfaction on behalf of customers. This includes aggressiveness on behalf of customers. It has been demonstrated in the literature, that there is an increased need to use more deep acting during the interactions

with aggressive customers, since this will lead to positive results both for customers and employees respectively (Goussinsky, 2015). Research involving customers concluded that customers can realise whether the emotions being expressed to them are real or fake. As a result, they would be more satisfied and feeling less negativity towards the service providers if they received a real smile and a real positive attitude rather than a negative one (Grandey, 2003; Higgs, 2004; Lin, 2009; Pugh, 2001; Taegoo *et al.*, 2012). There would be positive results for employees as well, if they engage in deep acting, according to the literature, such as decreased stress and emotional exhaustion, eliminate the possibility of burnout, less employee dissatisfaction and absences as well as less feelings of depersonalisation and conflicts between their role as an employee and a family member (Boshoff & Allen, 2000; Taegoo *et al.*, 2012;).

There is a gap in the literature, though, as of how employees would be able to engage more in deep acting when they interact with aggressive customers specifically (Goussinsky, 2015; Huang & Dai 2010; Hur *et al.*, 2015; Karatepe, 2010; Karatepe & Nkendon, 2014; Taegoo *et al.*, 2012). The widely used method of trained imagination that can be used to increase the use of deep acting could be a way, but there is a need for empirical research to analyse this phenomenon and provide results (Karatepe, 2009; Karatepe, 2010; Taegoo *et al.*, 2012). Further, it seems that there is no research that has worked exclusively on how to engage in deep acting specifically when interacting with aggressive customers, which seems to be a more complex situation that requires attention (Karatepe, 2010). This current study has worked on this gap and the analysis of the results have been provided above.

Overall, the current results of the interviews agree with the literature that most of the negative consequences of engaging in surface acting when interacting with aggressive customers will be eliminated if employees manage to engage in deep acting during such interactions. The positive results that will be emerging out of the increased use of deep acting (see section 2.4.1) would be a decrease in stress, a more positive approach and

emotion towards their customers and colleagues as well as management, less surface acting and hiding of feelings at home, less absenteeism, an increase in their job performance and a positive attitude towards the customers in general. As a result, the interview findings agree with the literature in regards to the positive results of engaging in deep acting during the interactions with aggressive customers.

The findings of this study regarding the factors that could help the employees engage more in deep acting during those challenging interactions, act as an attempt to give an answer to the gap being mentioned above, as to how deep acting could be achieved. The factors of positive organisational culture and managers acting as leaders are two new and innovative findings of this current research that add to the existing literature. Participants in this current study have concluded that the need for a positive organisational culture and a different approach from their leaders is even more important than training. Of course, the current study agrees with the literature that there is a need for specialised training on how to engage in deep acting, but there is even a bigger need to work on the culture and leadership. This is a new addition to the literature regarding engaging in deep acting during interactions with aggressive customers.

3. Conclusion

This chapter explored how employees can overcome the negative consequences of surface acting and further engage in deep acting when interacting with aggressive customers in the hospitality industry in Cyprus. 30 in depth semi-structured interviews and 4 focus groups have been conducted for the purpose of this thesis, using the methodological triangulation method. The conducted interviews as well as the focus groups, as a data collection method, proved to be useful for the in-depth exploration and understanding of emotional labour during the interactions with aggressive customers in the hospitality industry of Cyprus. The researcher presented a representative number of interviews respondents' and focus groups

participants' quotes that assisted in the exploration of managing the negative consequences of surface acting and achieving deep acting when interacting with aggressive customers. The next chapter presents the thesis' contributions, providing the concluding remarks. The researcher injects new ideas into the conceptual framework, which aims to provide a basis for overcoming the challenges of surface acting and achieving deep acting.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

1. Introduction

The previous chapter provided an in-depth analysis of the results derived from the primary research. This chapter will provide the general conclusions on the findings. In more details, it will provide the general conclusions for each Research Question separately and discuss the implications of the findings. Furthermore, the final framework as it has been designed after the analysis of the primary data results will be presented and discussed. In addition, the limitations of this study and the Contributions as well as avenues for further research are being discussed and final conclusions are being drawn.

2. Summary of the main findings

This section provides the summary of the main findings of the research. The purpose of the current study was to investigate the ways to overcome the negative consequences occurring to employees when they are engaging in surface acting during their interactions with aggressive customers. Furthermore, the research is developing this area in analysing ways that could enhance the use of deep acting during such interactions so that employees would naturally decrease the negative consequences. The literature review has shown that at the moment the employees are engaging in surface acting during those interactions and as a result this research has focussed in identifying whether this is the case in the hospitality industry in Cyprus, where the current study has taken place. The researcher analysed the results of the interviews and the focus groups in an attempt to provide an answer to the Research Questions. Below, is the summary of the findings for each Research Objective.

2.1 Employees engagement in emotional labour during their interactions with aggressive customers – RO2

The first objective of this thesis has been looking at examining the existing literature on emotional labour, particularly in relation to interacting with aggressive customers. This has been done through the literature review. In respect to the second objective, which this section is discussing, it has been aiming to identify and discuss how employees engage in emotional labour during their interactions with aggressive customers. The Research Question that has emerged from the literature review and has been aiming to answer the second objective is the below:

RQ1: How do employees engage in emotional labour while interacting with aggressive customers?

Both the semi-structured interviews and the focus groups revealed that employees are engaging in surface acting when they are interacting with aggressive customers. The employees are hiding their emotions in order to deal with this type of customers. During surface acting, they may smile or even put on a very sympathetic smile in front of the customer but on the other hand they may feel frustration, sadness or a general feeling of dissatisfaction. Thus, they are hiding those negative feelings so that they can show authenticity to the customers as they are mainly being imposed by the organisational rules. As it has been revealed through this research, the employees of the hospitality industry are not using naturally displayed emotions (deep acting) during their interactions with aggressive customers. Thus, they are not working on their inner feeling to display the right emotions but rather produce fake emotions to be able to do that.

This result has been analysed thoroughly in the previous chapter. The results of the interviews as well as the ones of the focus groups have been discussed and evaluated. Furthermore, it has been shown that this result agrees with the existing literature.

As a result, in terms of this research question, the current study has shown that employees are engaging in surface acting during those challenging interactions with the customers and not in deep acting. This creates a number of negative consequences that impact both the employees and the organisations in general and it is easy to spot by many customers. Those negative emotions are being discussed as part of the second research question below.

2.2 The negative consequences occurring when engaging in surface acting during the interactions with aggressive customers – RO3

The third objective of this thesis is dealing with the negative consequences that occur when employees engage in emotional labour through surface acting during their interactions with aggressive customers. Regarding this objective, the researcher has analysed the current literature and then through the primary data collection, the results have been presented. This section summarises the results in regards to this objective. The research question that has been answering this Objective is RQ2 that is being shown below:

RQ2: What are the consequences of employees' engagement in surface acting when interacting with aggressive customers?

This Research Question is related to the negative consequences that emerge out of the fact that employees are engaging in surface acting during their interactions with aggressive customers, as it has been discussed above. There have been various studies in the literature, discussing the negative consequences of employees when they face such situations. This current study, has focussed in a very important industry in Cyprus, the hospitality industry. There have been some variations in the findings of this study in relation to the literature. Due to the fact that this industry is under-studied on this area, this research is really important in identifying the negative consequences in the hospitality industry's employees. According to the findings of the interviews and after they have been validated by the focus groups, a number of negative consequences have been revealed. The figure below (see figure 5.1), which is part of the final framework, shows the negative consequences

occurring as a result of engaging in surface acting during interactions with aggressive customers.

Surface acting negative consequences
• Stress and reduced well-being • Symptoms of burnout • Increase in smoking and consumption of alcohol • Hiding emotions and acting at home / Negative consequences in family life • Negative perception of colleagues / managers / the job in general • Increase in absenteeism / sick leave • Making more mistakes / decrease in job performance • Negative attitudes towards customers

Figure 5.1: Negative consequences of engaging in surface acting when interacting with aggressive customers

The figure above shows the negative consequences as they have been revealed in the current study. It has been shown that stress and the reduced sense of well-being have been one of the most usual consequences as they appeared in the analysis. Further, burnout has been a consequence that appears in employees that are working for more than ten years in the hospitality industry. The rest of the negative consequences have been mentioned by employees in all age groups and gender, so there are no variations in terms of that aspect.

2.3 Buffering out the negative consequences of surface acting when interacting with aggressive customers – RO4 & RO5

The fourth objective of this thesis is looking for ways to overcome the negative consequences of surface acting when employees interact with aggressive customers. As it has been identified in the literature review, research on this area is mainly on parts and does not create a clear picture. Researchers have not been focussing on overcoming the negative consequences, but rather were focussing individually on one or two aspects that could be improved. This objective has been focussing only on surface acting and how people could overcome the negative consequences that occur due to the fact that they engage in surface acting when they interact with aggressive customers. As a result, this has led to the next objective that will be summarised below, in terms of how this could help

employees engage more in deep acting during interactions and the possible positive effects that would occur due to that. This objective has been answered through RQ3 that is being presented below:

RQ3: How can employees overcome the negative consequences of engaging in surface acting when interacting with aggressive customers?

The results of the semi-structured interviews and the focus groups have been used to answer this third research question. This research question attempts to give an answer to a part of the literature gap. It addresses the issue of how to help employees overcome the negative consequences of engaging in surface acting when they interact with aggressive customers. As it has been discussed in the literature review chapter (See chapter 2 – Section 9), there have been some attempts to reveal ways to overcome various negative consequences but they have always been in part and thus did not provide a coherent picture (Karatepe, 2011; Lu *et al.*, 2013; Wang & Groth, 2014; Bechtoldt *et al.*, 2011; Huang & Dai, 2010; Goussinsky, 2012). Further, those attempts did not focus on emotional labour and aggressive customers specifically, but they were rather more general on how to overcome the negative consequences occurring because of customer aggressiveness. This current study focussed specifically on the fact that employees engage in surface acting during such interactions, and thus is providing an answer on how to resolve the specific negative consequences that occur because of that.

The results of this research, have been an attempt to provide an answer to this research question. It has been identified that a number of consequences could act as buffering effects for this area. The buffering effects are being presented in the figure below (see figure 5.2) which is also part of the final framework as it will be presented in Section 3 of the current chapter.

Managing the surface acting negative consequences

- Increase in job autonomy
- Training and employee development
- Management support
- Forming support groups within the hotel
- Receiving more positive feedback from management
- An increase in teamwork and cooperation
- Family and friends to keep a distance from work issues / Show patience and understanding

Figure 5.2: Managing the surface acting negative consequences during interactions with aggressive customers

2.4 Ways of engaging in deep acting when interacting with aggressive customers and the possible positive effects that would occur due to that – RO5

The final objective of this thesis (RO5) has been aiming to develop a theoretical framework that would consist of the ways to overcome the negative consequences of surface acting as they had been mentioned above and identify how to increase the use of deep acting during the interactions with aggressive customers. Further to that, the aim of this objective is to include how the negative consequences would be positively affected through the use of deep acting. This final objective has been answered through the RQ4a and RQ4b as they are being presented below:

RQ4:

- a) How can employees engage more in deep acting when interacting with aggressive customers?
- b) How is this going to affect the negative consequences of surface acting in a positive way?

This research's aim was to answer this research question and create a framework that would involve both the ways to overcome the negative consequences of surface acting during aggressive customers' interactions as well as how employees could engage more in deep acting during those interactions. The final answer explores if and how employees would be positively affected when using deep acting during those interactions. Further, the

final framework includes how those negative consequences of engaging in surface acting can be positively affected with the use of deep acting.

According to the findings, as they are being presented in chapter 4, there is a number of ways that could enhance the use of deep acting during employees' interactions with aggressive customers. The figure below (see figure 5.3), which is part of the final framework presents those ways:

Use of deep acting
• Attempting positive thinking / attitude towards customers • Positive internal organisational culture as a means to achieving deep acting / understanding customers' feelings better • Managers to act more as leaders as a means to an increased engagement in deep acting / create a better understanding towards customers • Training on how to achieve deep acting

Figure 5.3: Engaging in deep acting during interactions with aggressive customers

As it has been discussed in Chapter 4, during the analysis of those findings, the respondents of both the interviews and the focus groups have identified those aspects as a way to enhance their engagement in deep acting when they are interacting with aggressive customers. Thus, it has been revealed that in order for those ways to work, there are certain criteria. The ways to buffer out the negative consequences, such as more job autonomy, management support, the formation of support groups together with an increase in teamwork and receiving positive feedback need to be in place in the work environment so that the above factors work towards an increase in the use of deep acting during the challenging interactions with aggressive customers. It has been clearly identified that if those factors are not in place in the work environment then employees cannot work towards a more positive attitude and therefore would not be able to interact by using deep acting. Therefore, the answer to Research Question 4 is being shown in summary in the above figure (see figure 5.3). But as it has been explained above, there is a relationship between the ways to buffer out the negative consequences and the ones that would help

employees use more deep acting. The ways to decrease the negative consequences need to be in place before there is an attempt to increase the use of deep acting.

As per the second part of Research Question 4, in terms of how the use of deep acting would positively affect the negative consequences of using surface acting, it has been revealed that a number of negative consequences would be positively affected. The results of the interviews and the focus groups agreed that if employees manage to engage more in deep acting, the negative consequences of engaging in surface acting will be eliminated. Thus, there will be a decrease in stress. Furthermore, the increased use of deep acting has been associated with less burnout, a decrease in work-life conflict and more positive attitudes towards their colleagues, managers, customers and their job in general. In addition, a decrease in absenteeism and a positive impact in job performance have been mentioned as well. The positive outcomes are being summarised in the following figure (see figure 5.4) below:

Positive outcomes of engaging in deep acting during interactions with aggressive customers
• Decrease in stress • Decrease in burnout • Decrease in surface acting at home / Less work-life conflict • A decrease in the negative perception about colleagues / managers • A decrease in absenteeism / sick leave • A positive impact in job performance • Positive attitudes towards customers

Figure 5.4: Positive outcomes of engaging in deep acting during interactions with aggressive customers

3. Final Framework

After an analysis of the findings, the final answers to the research objectives and the research questions that have been derived through the objectives have been provided above. The framework being presented below, is the final framework that has been created through the findings of the current study.

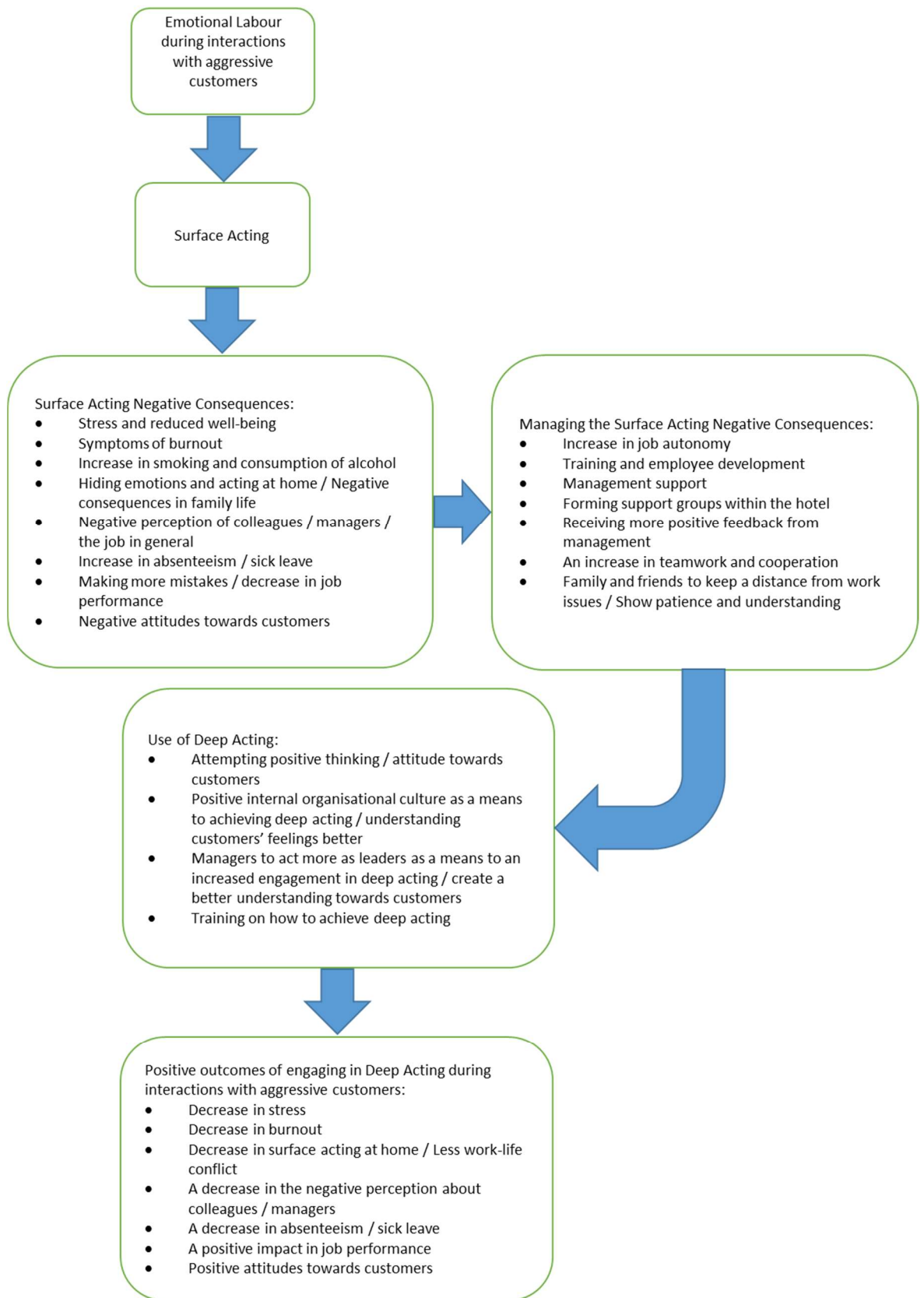


Figure 5.5: Final conceptual framework

Based on the empirically validated conceptual framework, when employees interact with aggressive customers, in the hospitality industry they engage in surface acting rather than deep acting. As it is being shown in the framework above, this causes a number of negative consequences. Those negative consequences harm the employees, the organisation as a whole as well as customers. This framework has tested the number of consequences that occur due to the interactions through surface acting, and the results have been presented above. The realisation of the negative consequences and thus the negative emotions that occur due to the nature of those interactions is important in helping the research to identify the ways to eliminate those consequences and create a positive outcome among the employees of the hospitality industry.

Furthermore, the framework presents the ways to eliminate those negative consequences. A number of ways that could help in buffering out the negative consequences have been identified through this empirical research and are being presented on the above framework. Further to that, the research has been aiming to empirically test and evaluate the ways that could enhance the use of deep acting during the interactions with aggressive customers. As it is being presented in the framework, there are a number of ways that, together with the factors that could act as buffering effects of the negative consequences, would help employees engage more in deep acting during those interactions with aggressive customers.

The final part of the framework presents the positive outcomes that would take place when employees manage to engage in deep acting rather than surface acting when they interact with aggressive customers.

This framework can be utilised in a number of ways. At first, as it has been aforementioned, the framework shows how employees engage in emotional labour when they interact with aggressive customers. This is being done through surface acting. In order for the employees to be able to use the more effective technique of deep acting, this

framework should be considered by organisations. The ways to eliminate the negative consequences of surface acting during those interactions could be put into practice by organisations to achieve elimination of the negative consequences. This would further help their employees move towards the approach of deep acting, which is the desired approach. As a result, this framework cannot only be used to achieve a decrease in the negative consequences, but if being used in its full extend, it could lead to positive results through the utilisation of deep acting when employees interact with aggressive customers.

If being adopted and put in practice, this framework will help employees and organisations in general in a number of ways. At first, the framework presented above shows the ways that employees could use to overcome the negative consequences of engaging in surface acting when they interact with aggressive customers. Further, it presents how they could engage more in deep acting during those interactions. This will help the employees increase their job satisfaction as well as their job performance. On the one hand, if employees manage to minimise the stress and frustration being created when they engage in surface acting during interacting with aggressive customers, this will help them feel more satisfied at their jobs. As a result, there is a positive outcome both on employees as well as organisations, since on that case, satisfied employees can only benefit an organisation.

On the other hand, the organisations will benefit in terms of satisfaction they are offering to their customers. It has been greatly discussed, within this thesis, that customers feel less satisfied when employees use surface acting during their interactions with them. As it has been aforementioned during the literature review analysis, customers can understand when emotions coming from employees are not genuine and they feel negatively. As a result, practicing the above framework will enhance customer satisfaction and thus this is an advantage for the organisations adopting this framework.

More analytically, the contributions of the current framework as well as of the specific research in general are highlighted and discussed in the section below.

4. Contributions to Theory

4.1 Conceptual framework

This current chapter has presented the empirically tested conceptual framework that has worked towards giving answers to the current literature gaps on the phenomenon under investigation. This research and the current framework adds to the existing literature in a number of ways. At first, it provides knowledge in an area that is under-researched, the area of engaging employees more in deep acting, on the specific occasion of interaction with aggressive customers. As it has been shown so far, and as it has been empirically tested in this current study, the way employees engage in emotional labour when they interact with such customers is through surface acting. Moreover, this creates a number of negative consequences. This current framework, has managed to reveal ways that could both decrease the negative consequences and as a result help employees overcome the negative consequences being created. Furthermore, the current framework is adding knowledge that has not been existed before, in terms of how to engage employees in deep acting during their interactions with aggressive customers. As a result of this, those ways can be added in the current literature and help in advancing knowledge on this challenging situation.

Even though the current literature has been dealing with the area of overcoming the negative consequences of engaging with aggressive customers as well as how to overcome the negative consequences of surface acting, this is the only study according to the researcher's knowledge that has investigated exclusively the area of overcoming the negative consequences of surface acting and moved a step further in adding the aspect of deep acting and how to achieve that during those interactions with aggressive customers.

4.2 Hospitality industry

It has been discussed in a number of occasions in the literature review, that the hospitality industry has been under-investigated in this area. As it has been identified, this specific industry is unique due to its special characteristics in terms of working conditions as well as customer demands that keep increasing (Karatepe, 2011). As a result, this industry needed investigation on this area of emotional labour due to its uniqueness. Even though research on this area has been on parts so far and did not provide a coherent picture, the hospitality industry needed special attention. As a result, this current study contributed to the limited knowledge not only in this area, but also in the hospitality industry.

A special contribution for the specific industry, is the fact that this current study is using only five star hotels. It has been discussed in the recent literature, that research provides different results if it includes three star, four star or five star hotels (Karatepe, 2011; Lu *et al.*, 2013). The findings so far, indicated that it is highly important to use five star hotels, due to the high demands and expectations of the customers in those kind of hotels (*ibid*). As a result, taking the importance of using five star hotels into consideration, the current research has used five star hotels exclusively. As a result, the findings have revealed important information for this industry due to the fact that the most demanding part of the industry, the five star hotels have been used. A lot of the information provided and the knowledge acquired can be used by future researchers to make comparisons between different hotel set ups.

4.3 Emotional labour

The current study contributed in the theory of emotional labour in a number of ways. At first, theory so far found that employees engage in surface acting when they interact with aggressive customers. This study, added to the knowledge of how to overcome the negative consequences deriving out of this situation, and also moved a step further. It added to this area by revealing ways that would enhance the use of deep acting during such

interactions. As a result, this is an important addition to the theory of emotional labour that can be used by further researchers to identify more ways or evaluate the current ones and work towards efficient and effective ways to help employees engage more in deep acting when they interact with aggressive customers.

It is well known, through existing literature that there are many advantages when employees use deep acting instead of surface acting during any kind of interaction they have with customers in the services industries. Deep acting becomes even more important when employees need to deal with aggressive customers. This study, focussed on this area and revealed the kind of support and help that employees need so that they can engage more in deep acting during those interactions. Thus, as it has been discussed above, the framework developed can be further tested by future researchers to identify new avenues or to compare and contrast various hotel settings such as three star or four star hotels.

4.4 Handling aggressive customers

The theory of handling aggressive customers has received more attention lately. So far researchers were dealing with handling aggressive colleagues and supervisors and less on handling such customers' behaviours. The current study, has added to the existing knowledge on how to handle aggressive customers by dealing with the aspect of emotions which is really important. Theory has been revealing ways to handle customers that are angry and upset but was not effectively dealing with employees' emotions and how those affect the whole interaction. This has been tested in this study that involved the aspect of emotional labour which is really important during those interactions. The framework being presented above, identified ways that could be put into practice by organisations to help their employees offer more real and genuine emotions to their aggressive customers. This brings those interactions to a different level, both in terms on how they are being handled as well as on how people that are involved in them feel and behave

4.5 Contributions in marketing theory

The current thesis and the framework that has been designed as an outcome of the primary data analysis is also contributing in the area of marketing. More specifically, it contributes to the ways hotels could enhance their customer service experience. As it has been discussed in the literature review, customers are able to understand whether employees display naturally displayed emotions or fake ones during their service experience (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Boyd, 2002; Johnson & Spector, 2007). Customers tend to feel more positively towards the organisations whose employees seem to be performing in a more natural way and thus impose emotions that are being felt rather than being faked (ibid). As a result, this current framework is contributing to this area. It is an addition to the current theory in terms of how to enhance customer experience. It could be used as a preliminary framework to test the relationship between engaging in deep acting and eliminating customer dissatisfaction. According to the current theory that has been mentioned above, customers would feel more positively if they were facing employees that are actually engaging in deep acting when they interact with them. This should be considered when using this framework to further research the area of customer satisfaction.

5. Contributions to Practice

This PhD thesis has not only contributed in theory, but has also practical applications and contributions. It has contributed to practice in the hospitality industry in a number of ways that are going to be analysed below in the following sub sections.

5.1 The hospitality industry employees

This study has been dealing exclusively with employees of the hospitality industry. It is an attempt to help those employees work more closely on their emotions when they are handling challenging situations in their everyday life. Dealing with aggressive customers is a really challenging situation that employees have been so far, mainly handling by hiding their emotions (surface acting) so that they could impose the right emotions according to

the organisational rules. This study helps employees reveal ways that could aid them to engage more in deep acting during those interactions. It works in two ways. It is a study that is going to help employees practically, since if the organisations apply those findings, they would be in a position to engage in deep acting during their interactions with aggressive customers. On the other hand, it is a study that has searched employees' opinions in depth, through the semi-structured interviews and the focus groups. As a result, those findings really reflect employees' opinions and ideas and therefore if they are being practiced they will help employees achieve more.

5.2 The management of the hospitality industry

Not only employees, but managers in the hospitality industry face difficult situations when they have to deal with employees who are stressed-out, facing burnout and other negative consequences. There are managers that are struggling to find solutions to their employees' problems and identify those things that would help them become more motivated and achieve more. The same managers also face the difficult situations if having to handle dissatisfied customers that are not happy with the service they are receiving. This study contributes to the managers' knowledge on what they can do to help their employees engage more in deep acting; and especially in overcoming the negative consequences of surface acting during interactions with aggressive customers. Employees usually would not talk to managers about their dissatisfaction but this is visible in every way. They may not talk about stress and frustration or any other issues but those are being shown or revealed through various ways. Through this study, managers in the hospitality industry get an insight on what their employees need in order to impose the organisational rules that they are imposing to them more effectively and more naturally. This is a practical contribution and if put into practice it is likely to achieve positive results.

5.3 The hospitality industry in general

This study contributes to the hospitality industry in general. As it has been analysed in the first chapter (Introduction), the hospitality industry is one of the most important industries in Cyprus. It is the industry that the country is still depending on as a major source of income. Since the industry is offering services, the employees working in the hotels are the one of the most important component that would lead to satisfaction or dissatisfaction of customers. If employees offer a good service and they satisfy or exceed their customers' expectations this would lead to better results for the hotel. Feelings are very important in this equation of customer satisfaction. If customers are unhappy, they need to see people that care, are happy to serve them and are imposing positive feelings and attitudes. Implementing surface acting is not helping this. As it has been explained in the literature review, customers can sense and they know when the feelings they receive are not real. This makes them even more unhappy and dissatisfied and it sometimes adds to their already aggressive behaviour and makes it worst. If employees manage to impose true emotions and real feelings while serving those customers, the specific hotel and thus the industry as a whole is achieving a lot. As a result, this study is contributing to the success of the industry by helping one of its most important ingredients in success, its employees, to be able to handle their customers more effectively in terms of imposing the right feelings in the most natural, human and acceptable way.

5.4 The hospitality employees' training and development

The researcher of this thesis is a trainer and has implemented a large number of training programmes in the hospitality industry. Usually, when managers in a hotel ask for a training, they aim to teach their employees how to react in various occasions or how to offer better customer service. Further they aim to teach them how to achieve up-selling or cross-selling of their products, which are hotel facilities, an upgrade of the room or a more expensive wine during dining at the hotel restaurant. In the Cyprus hospitality industry,

which is the country that the researcher is mainly performing trainings at, managers are mainly dealing with the practical aspect of trainings and less with emotions of their employees. It has been shown in the results of the research that employees are in huge need of training that includes aspects of emotional intelligence such as understanding other people's emotions and dealing with them effectively. In addition employees need to learn ways that would help them achieve deep acting, such as the well-known trained imagination. This would help them achieve the desired deep acting, in combination with the other aspects that have been discussed in the previous chapter.

Therefore, this research contributes to this aspect as well in a practical way. It helps managers in the hospitality industry to design a proper training analysis that would reflect the actual needs of the employees. The training provided should not only reflect the beliefs and ideas of the management team in a hotel but identify the actual needs of the employees and be designed in such a way. Studying the results of this current research, managers will be able to distinguish between what is more and what is less important in terms of training their employees and as a result they will receive training that will help them not only do their job better but also handle their own emotions and the emotions of others more effectively.

Adding to that, the training that is usually provided in the hotels leads to surface acting due to its nature. As discussed, managers are eager to teach their employees how to handle various situations, how to smile and pretend that they are happy service providers. They usually omit emotions, though, and how to be able to show genuine emotions, which is something that would lead to deep acting with all the positive results that have been discussed and presented in the final framework above. Therefore, this leads to this practical contribution of the current study in the aspect of training and development of hospitality industry employees.

6. Limitations of the thesis

As it has been described above, this current study has contributed both in theory and in practice in a number of ways. This section of the last chapter of the thesis investigates and discusses the limitations that have occurred. After this, a discussion on the avenues for further research will follow, taking into consideration both the findings as well as the limitations of this study.

A limitation that had been addressed in a few ways by the researcher, is the method that has been used. The researcher has followed the qualitative approach and has taken information using in-depth investigation through semi-structured interviews and focus groups. First, the qualitative approach that has been used in the current study includes a small number of informants that can sometimes provoke criticism. However, as it is being further analysed below, this has been addressed by using the methodological triangulation. Furthermore, a qualitative researcher may be criticized for bias in regards to interpreting the data collected. This has been also addressed by providing a rich description of the findings and including a large number of actual quotes both from the interviews as well as the focus groups. The advantages and limitations for both the quantitative and the qualitative approach have been discussed in detail in the methodology chapter (See chapter 3). The researcher has made the decision to use a qualitative approach based on various criteria, such as the topic that is under investigation, the literature gap as well as other criteria that have been described in the methodology chapter. The researcher has made efforts to arrive to the best possible results, by using the triangulation method. Therefore, a combination of two qualitative methods have managed to reach better and stronger results. The same research has taken place in two phases, in order to eliminate this limitation to a large extent. At first, the interviews were semi-structured, so that the researcher was able to use various probes to enhance the discussion and ask further questions to clarify the concepts being discussed. This would not be the case if the quantitative approach has been

used. Furthermore, the results were tested under the focus groups as well, in the second phase of the research. Due to this, the researcher was able to validate the results, through the focus groups. The focus groups' results supported the interviews' results and at various occasions added to them. Therefore, the fact that the researcher did not use the quantitative approach could be considered as a limitation so the above mentioned actions have been taken so that this limitation would be addressed. Further to that, by using the triangulation method has helped the researcher to reduce any biases that may occur when using a single qualitative method.

The sample used for the research could also be a limitation. As it has been indicated and analysed in the methodology chapter, the sample included employees that have been working on a full time position in the hospitality industry for more than 5 years. This sample has been chosen after a careful consideration of the literature and its limitations and gaps. Further, this sample has been chosen in order to provide the best possible answers to the research questions, since full time employees within the industry have been able to experience different things and evaluate the difficulties they are being facing when they serve aggressive customers or when they face other challenging situations. Despite that, in Cyprus, the industry is working a lot with part time or as they are being called seasonal employees. Those employees may work for the period that is being considered as the high season period in the Cyprus hospitality industry, which is the summer period. This current study included only employees that are being registered as full time staff in the hotels and therefore the part timers or the seasonal employees were not included. Omitting those people may be considered as a limitation. To address that, the researcher has chosen people that are highly experienced in the hospitality industry and have been working for a number of years in five star hotels, which is where the research has been based on. Even though the part time employees may be working in the hospitality industry for a few months per year, they would not be able to offer the insight that the full time employees would. The reason

why they were not chosen, is because they have a limited experience, usually three months per year and then they are working somewhere else or remain unemployed for the rest of the year. As a result, they do not have the experience that the full time employees have and therefore would not be able to discuss about the challenging area of emotions and how they are being handled. Furthermore, the researcher was looking for employees that have experience for more than 5 years. When considering the part time employees, it is difficult to find people that have such an experience since, as it has been aforementioned, they are only working for a few months that are considered to be high season months in Cyprus. In addition to that, all of the respondents were Cypriots, which means they share the same culture, values and norms that are imposed by the society. In Cyprus, there is a tendency to hire people from foreign countries to work as seasonal employees, who usually need to earn an extra income, they are younger in age and they therefore may return to their home country when the summer period ends. As a result, those people would not be able to offer to this current study as well, due to this reason.

7. Suggestions for further research

This section of the final chapter includes suggestions and further avenues for future researchers on this topic. This study has been focussing on a very specific topic within the area of emotional labour. It has been dealing with the ways of overcoming the negative consequences of surface acting when interacting with aggressive customers. Further, it addresses how those ways would impact employees' engagement in deep acting when interacting with those customers and if and how this would positively affect them. The interesting results have been presented in a framework which can be utilised in a number of ways by future researchers.

At first, the contacted literature review revealed the avenues for this current study. The area of overcoming the negative consequences of surface acting during the interactions with aggressive customers is still in its early stages. Further, limited attention had been

given in the literature in terms of engaging employees in deep acting when they interact with aggressive customers. According to the primary research findings of the current study, this would lead to a number of positive consequences both for the employees and the organisations as well. A suggestion at this point, is for future researchers to explore deep acting further, and more specifically in terms of recruiting people that can actually implement deep acting more easily, such as different personality types or people that have high emotional intelligence. As it has been identified in the literature, positive and negative affectivity affect the way people accept and react on emotional labour and its consequences. It also affects the reactions of people towards aggressiveness on behalf of their customers (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Brotheridge & Lee, 2003). As a result of this, the suggestion for future researchers is to identify whether the presented final framework would work better on people with high or low affectivity or with people that are high in emotional intelligence. The specific study did not take into consideration people's personalities when conducting the primary research. It focussed mainly on what can be done to engage people more in deep acting in general when they interact with aggressive customers and help them overcome any negative consequences that occur from surface acting. Therefore, future researchers should move a step forward and identify how various personalities could more easily accept the various ways and engage in deep acting than others.

Recruitment of employees in the hospitality industry is of high importance. Recruiting the people that would be more able to work under certain conditions could be a way to increase both engagement in deep acting as well as decrease various negative effects that are occurring from the challenging situations that people are facing. This could be linked to the point above, regarding personalities and how this would affect the ways people engage in emotional labour when they interact with aggressive customers as well as how they will be affected. Therefore, future researchers could use the information revealed in the current

thesis to work on the recruitment techniques available in the literature and how they could be utilised in an effective way to recruit people in the hospitality industry. This can be linked to people's personalities and the findings of the current research, on how people could engage more in deep acting when they interact with aggressive customers.

In addition to the above points, this current study did not take into consideration the different sub-types of deep acting as they are being described in the literature, but rather focussed on the general meaning of it. According to Kruml & Geddes (2000) there are two ways of deep acting, passive and active. In passive deep acting the employee actually feels the emotion they are displaying. On the other hand, during active deep acting, the employee needs to change his/her own feeling and perception in order for them to display the work related expected emotion. Future researcher could separate those two types in their research, and identify ways at which employees could engage in either one or the other.

Finally, even though a number of limitations do exist, the current study has revealed important information in the area of emotional labour in combination to aggressive customers' interactions. Future researchers could utilise the current framework and the information provided in other industries as well. They could check whether this applies to other industries or compare the various industries and identify and evaluate the differences. Furthermore, researchers within the hospitality industry could utilise the current framework to test whether this applies to other hotel settings as well. As it has been clearly stated, this study has used only five star hotels, since this existed as a gap in the current literature as well. Despite that, future scholars could work on different hotel settings such as three star or four star hotels, or make comparisons between the various hotel settings. It would be interesting to see whether the same applies to different hotel environments, at which customers have different expectations.

8. Concluding thoughts

In conclusion, this thesis has provided an insight on emotional labour during employees' interactions with aggressive customers. A very important area, taking into consideration that it affects the employees, the customers and the organisations as a whole in the hospitality industry in a great extent. Further, the fact that this study takes place in the hospitality industry in Cyprus, makes it even more significant since this industry is a very important part of Cyprus economy.

The researcher aimed to provide useful information regarding how employees could be helped to overcome the negative consequences of engaging in surface acting during their interactions with aggressive customers. Further, another important element of this thesis is to reveal information of how employees could engage more in deep acting and the advantages of this on themselves, the organisation and the customers. The final framework is significant and adding both to the literature on this area but it also can be practically applied in the industry. Hopefully the scholars will utilise this information for further research. Further, this study could be also utilised by practitioners within the hospitality industry for their strategic decisions in terms of training and developing their employees, as well in terms of forming the proper organisational culture that would lead to the positive aspect of treating customers by utilising the deep acting method to its fullest extent.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Interviewees' characteristics: Overview of participants' characteristics for In-depth semi-structured interviews

Respondent	Sex	Organisation (All hotels are five star ones)	Position	Years of experience
Respondent 1 (R1)	F	Hotel A	Waiter	15
Respondent 2 (R2)	F	Hotel A	Waiter	16
Respondent 3 (R3)	F	Hotel A	Receptionist	9
Respondent 4 (R4)	M	Hotel A	Receptionist	6
Respondent 5 (R5)	F	Hotel A	Barwoman	9
Respondent 6 (R6)	M	Hotel B	Waiter	20
Respondent 7 (R7)	M	Hotel B	Waiter	21
Respondent 8 (R8)	M	Hotel B	Barman	8
Respondent 9 (R9)	M	Hotel B	Barman	6
Respondent 10 (R10)	F	Hotel B	Receptionist	8
Respondent 11 (R11)	F	Hotel C	Clients Relations	8
Respondent 12 (R12)	F	Hotel C	Receptionist	6
Respondent 13 (R13)	M	Hotel C	Waiter	8
Respondent 14 (R14)	M	Hotel C	Waiter	18
Respondent 15 (R15)	M	Hotel C	Waiter	17
Respondent 16 (R16)	M	Hotel D	Receptionist	8
Respondent 17 (R17)	F	Hotel D	Clients Relations	9
Respondent 18 (R18)	F	Hotel D	Waiter	13
Respondent 19 (R19)	M	Hotel D	Barman	8

Respondent 20 (R20)	M	Hotel D	Waiter	6
Respondent 21 (R21)	M	Hotel E	Waiter	8
Respondent 22 (R22)	F	Hotel E	Wedding Coordinator	15
Respondent 23 (R23)	F	Hotel E	Clients Relations	8
Respondent 24 (R24)	M	Hotel E	Waiter	19
Respondent 26 (R25)	F	Hotel E	Receptionist	8
Respondent 26 (R26)	F	Hotel F	Receptionist	6
Respondent 27 (R27)	M	Hotel F	Waiter	8
Respondent 28 (R28)	F	Hotel F	Barwoman	8
Respondent 29 (R29)	F	Hotel F	Clients Relations	10
Respondent 30 (R30)	M	Hotel F	Waiter	22

APPENDIX B

Focus Group 1: Respondents' characteristics

Respondent	Sex	Organisation (All hotels are five star ones)	Position	Years of experience
Respondent 1 (F1R1)	F	Hotel A	Waiter	20
Respondent 2 (F1R2)	F	Hotel A	Waiter	25
Respondent 3 (F1R3)	M	Hotel B	Head waiter	26
Respondent 4 (F1R4)	M	Hotel B	Head Receptionist	9
Respondent 5 (F1R5)	F	Hotel C	Barwoman	7
Respondent 6 (F1R6)	M	Hotel C	Waiter	19
Respondent 7 (F1R7)	M	Hotel D	Receptionist	7
Respondent 8 (F1R8)	F	Hotel D	Barwoman	6
Respondent 9 (F1R9)	F	Hotel E	Clients Relations	7
Respondent 10 (F1R10)	M	Hotel E	Receptionist	13

APPENDIX C

Focus Group 2: Respondents' characteristics

Respondent	Sex	Organisation (All hotels are five star ones)	Position	Years of experience
Respondent 1 (F2R1)	M	Hotel A	Waiter	25
Respondent 2 (F2R2)	M	Hotel A	Waiter	8
Respondent 3 (F2R3)	F	Hotel A	Clients Relations	9
Respondent 4 (F2R4)	M	Hotel C	Receptionist	8
Respondent 5 (F2R5)	F	Hotel C	Barwoman	22
Respondent 6 (F2R6)	F	Hotel D	Waiter	7
Respondent 7 (F2R7)	F	Hotel D	Waiter	18
Respondent 8 (F2R8)	M	Hotel D	Barman	8
Respondent 9 (F2R9)	M	Hotel E	Barman	12
Respondent 10 (F2R10)	F	Hotel F	Receptionist	19

APPENDIX D

Focus Group 3: Respondents' characteristics

Respondent	Sex	Organisation (All hotels are five star ones)	Position	Years of experience
Respondent 1 (F3R1)	F	Hotel D	Receptionist	12
Respondent 2 (F3R2)	M	Hotel D	Waiter	9
Respondent 3 (F3R3)	F	Hotel D	Receptionist	19
Respondent 4 (F3R4)	F	Hotel E	Barwoman	8
Respondent 5 (F3R5)	F	Hotel E	Barwoman	25
Respondent 6 (F3R6)	M	Hotel E	Receptionist	8
Respondent 7 (F3R7)	M	Hotel F	Waiter	20
Respondent 8 (F3R8)	M	Hotel F	Barman	18
Respondent 9 (F3R9)	M	Hotel F	Barman	7
Respondent 10 (F3R10)	F	Hotel F	Receptionist	8

APPENDIX E

Focus Group 4: Respondents' characteristics

Respondent	Sex	Organisation (All hotels are five star ones)	Position	Years of experience
Respondent 1 (F4R1)	F	Hotel B	Clients Relations	6
Respondent 2 (F4R2)	M	Hotel B	Waiter	13
Respondent 3 (F4R3)	M	Hotel C	Head Receptionist	18
Respondent 4 (F4R4)	F	Hotel C	Receptionist	6
Respondent 5 (F4R5)	M	Hotel C	Waiter	8
Respondent 6 (F4R6)	F	Hotel E	Waiter	20
Respondent 7 (F4R7)	M	Hotel E	Waiter	24
Respondent 8 (F4R8)	F	Hotel E	Barwoman	7
Respondent 9 (F4R9)	M	Hotel F	Barman	9
Respondent 10 (F4R10)	F	Hotel F	Receptionist	16

APPENDIX F

Letter of Consent

5 July 2015

To Whom It May Concern,

PARTICIPATION IN A PHD RESEARCH

This is to introduce myself and the purpose of my research. I am an individual researcher from the University of Gloucestershire. This research will be conducted through the use of semi-structured individual interviews and focus groups. You are taking part in the individual interviews.

This research is dealing with the area of emotional labour. More specifically, it is researching how employees are affected when they engage in a form of emotional labour being called surface acting when they interact with aggressive customers. It is further looking for the ways that could enhance the use of the other form of emotional labour, deep acting, which enables employees to use real emotions rather than fake ones.

This research is of a high importance for the hospitality industry since it is the first research of this kind that is taking place in Cyprus and more specifically in the hospitality industry of the country. Furthermore, the research is addressing various gaps on the literature and your contribution to it is vital.

Importantly, I need to inform you that the whole research project abides by the rules and guidelines outlined in the University of Gloucestershire's (2008) Ethics Handbook. I have enclosed a copy of the Ethics Handbook for your information. For this reason, the results of my research will be reported with full anonymity, and all the documents will be destroyed after the analysis of the data, in order to preserve confidentiality. In addition, during the interview process, in order to be able to analyse the data that will be gathered

through the interviews that I will perform, a tape recorder will be used. Nevertheless, you will be free to ask me to switch the tape-recorder off whenever you feel that you want to provide information off the record. Also, you are free not to allow me to use the tape recorder. In that case, I will need more time with you during the interview so that I will be able to write notes while you will be answering my questions. Once I will have finished the analysis of the data, the recorded data will be destroyed.

On behalf of me and my supervisors, Dr Demetris Vrontis and Dr Panicos Constanti, I wish to express you our gratitude for your assistance. Should you wish receiving the final results of my PhD thesis, please let me know.

Thank you very much for your contribution

Sincerely,

Aspasia Simillidou PhD candidate

School of Business and Management

University of Gloucestershire