ROLE OF ORGANIZATIONAL FACTORS ON EMOTIONAL LABOUR STRATEGIES

This research aimed to investigate the impact of organizational factors on motivation to perform emotional labour and emotion regulation strategies. Based on a sample of 195 employees, results indicated that motivation mediated the effect of organizational justice on emotional labour strategies, but did not mediate the effect of job autonomy.

Introduction

In service industries, employees not only have to deliver high quality services, but must also provide these services in a particular way. In particular, many organizations specify explicit rules to observe as part of their service performance (Hochschild, 1983), such as to “serve customers with a smile” and/or to suppress negative emotions toward the customers as part of the service performance (Hochschild, 1983; Rafaeli & Sutton, 1987). Consequently, employees need to regulate their emotions in order to satisfy organizational demands. Organizational demands to regulate emotions in accordance with these rules are referred to as emotional labour (Brotheridge & Lee, 2002, 2003; Grandey, 2000, 2003; Hochschild, 1983). Mann (1999) found that more than two-thirds of frontline communications implied emotional labour suggesting that these interactions require a strategy to regulate one’s emotions. Two strategies that can be used have been discussed in prior research. These strategies are surface acting and deep acting (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Bono & Vey, 2005; Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Brotheridge & Lee, 2002, 2003; Diefendorff, Croyle, & Gosserand, 2005; Grandey, 2003; Hochschild, 1983; Zapf, 2002). Both have differential and important impacts on job attitudes and wellbeing. More specifically, surface acting leads to negative outcomes such as emotional exhaustion and job dissatisfaction, whereas deep acting is not necessarily related to emotional exhaustion. On the contrary, it can lead to positive outcomes, notably job accomplishment (Bono & Vey, 2005; Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Brotheridge & Lee, 2003; Zapf, 2002). Although prior research has thoroughly investigated emotional labour consequences, much less attention has been accorded to their predictors. It is important to better understand predictors of these strategies in order to enable organizations and individuals to foster the use of more effective emotional regulation strategies.

Recently, a number of researchers have examined situational variables such as job autonomy (Diefendorff, et al., 2005; Goldberg & Grandey, 2007; Grandey, 2003; Grandey, Dickter, & Sin, 2004) as well as individual variables such as personality traits (Diefendorff, et al., 2005), but much must be done in order to understand emotional labour antecedents. The present study focused on a recent research conducted by Gosserand and Diefendorff (2005). These authors proposed an interesting avenue to better
comprehend how emotional labour is performed. They investigated a motivational factor behind emotional regulation strategies that is commitment to display rule. They found that the more committed individuals were to display rules, the stronger the relationship of display rule perceptions was with surface acting and deep acting. This exciting result supports the notion that emotion regulation strategies are motivated acts (Rubin, Tardino, Daus, & Munz, 2005) and that research should take into account motivational forces. Thus, the current study focuses on motivation to regulate one’s emotions as an antecedent of emotional labour strategies. In order to better understand the effect of motivation to regulate emotions on emotional labour strategies, the present study includes organizational factors such as job autonomy and organizational justice. Both variables are likely to affect employees’ motivation. Thus, the second aim of the present study is to extend on previous research by examining the role of organizational factors in the emotional labour process.

**Emotion Regulation at the Workplace or Emotional Labour**

Emotional labour is defined as the requirement to express or suppress emotions as part of one’s job (Hochschild, 1983). In customer service jobs, employees are usually expected to express positive emotions and suppress negatives emotions (Adelmann, 1995; Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; R. I. Sutton & Rafaeli, 1988). Employees may adopt different strategies to regulate their emotions in order to satisfy these demands. Three emotion regulation strategies have been discussed and investigated. Firstly employees may express their naturally felt emotions (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Diefendorff, et al., 2005; Diefendorff & Gosserand, 2003). Since this strategy may not produce the desired emotional display, employees may surface act (faking unfelt emotions and/or suppress felt emotions) or deep act. These emotion regulation strategies differ with regard to the focus of the regulation (Grandey, 2000; Gross, 1998). Specifically, whereas deep acting is an antecedent-focused strategy, surface acting is a response-focused strategy. Deep acting is a strategy that aims to change an employee’s perception of the situation. This can be achieved either through positive refocus (focusing attention on positive things) or through perspective taking (reappraising the situation by taking another’s point of view). Reappraisal (Gross, 1998; Lazarus, 1974) is an antecedent-focused emotion regulation strategy that takes the form of construing a potentially emotional situation in a way that decreases its emotional relevance (Lazarus, 1991). By contrast, surface acting is a form of response-focused emotion regulation where the employee manipulates only the expressive aspect of the emotion (Gross, 1998; Gross & John, 2003; John & Gross, 2004). This can be done by either simply suppressing the negative emotion to appear neutral or by masking the negative emotion with a fake positive emotion expression (Brotheridge & Lee, 2003; Grandey, 2000, 2003).

**Emotion Regulation Antecedents**

There are several factors that can influence the type of strategy that employees use to regulate their emotions. Two categories of factors have been examined as antecedents of emotion regulation strategies, that is, dispositional and situational factors. Personality traits such as agreeableness, conscientiousness and self-monitoring all reduced surface acting while employees high on neuroticism need to surface act to comply with display rules (Diefendorff, et al., 2005). As regard to situational variables, it seems that job-based factors, such as positive display rules and duration of interaction, play a stronger role in influencing whether individuals actively try to experience the desired emotion (Brotheridge & Lee, 2002; Diefendorff, et al., 2005).
But over and above these factors regarding emotional regulation, the values and motivations that employees have can also define the choice of strategy. Specifically, emotion regulation strategies can be conceptualized as motivated acts (Rubin, et al., 2005), but few theorists and studies discussed or measured motivation to engage in an emotion regulation activity (the two exceptions are Diefendorff & Gosserand, 2003; Gosserand & Diefendorff, 2005). From this perspective, motivation to regulate one’s emotions becomes an important concept in understanding how emotional labour is performed (Diefendorff & Gosserand, 2003; Gosserand & Diefendorff, 2005). Gosserand and Diefendorff (2005) found that employees showing more commitment to display rules are more likely to regulate their emotions to comply with organizational demands. Hence, this study provides further understanding of the emotional labour process described in conceptual framework (e.g. Grandey, 2000). However, an interesting question is why employees are more committed to regulate their emotions? Do employees perceive emotion regulation as a challenge or do they commit to regulate their affect because they are told to do so?

**Emotional Labours as Motivated Acts**

Such reasons justifying why employees are more committed to regulate affect is addressed by Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2001). SDT distinguishes between different types of motivation along a continuum of self-determination. The most self-determined form of motivation is intrinsic motivation, where activities are performed for the interest or for the pleasure they procure (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000; Gagné & Deci, 2005). SDT further posits different types of extrinsic motivations, which vary in their degree of self-determination. The least self-determined form of extrinsic motivation is external regulation, where behaviour depends directly on the contingency between the behaviour and a desired consequence (approval, rewards). Other types of extrinsic motivations occur when a person internalizes the value of the behaviour (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000; Gagné & Deci, 2005). Internalization is “defined as people taking in values, attitudes, or regulatory structures, such that the external regulation of a behaviour is transformed into an internal regulation and thus no longer requires the presence of an external contingency” (Gagné & Deci, 2005, p.334).

In order to describe the degree at which an external motivation has been internalized, different processes are described: introjection, identification and integration (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000; Gagné & Deci, 2005). Introjected motivation occurs when a person’s behaviour “is taken in by the person but has not been accepted as his or her own” (Gagné & Deci, 2005, p.334). Identification is a form of motivation that occurs when a person identifies themselves with the value of the behaviour and the behaviour corresponds to a self-selected goal. A more complete level of internalization involves the integration of the behaviour with other aspects of oneself. With integrated motivation, a person feels that the behaviour is an integral part of who they are and is thus self-determined. Therefore, the behaviour is more central to the identity and the person is more likely to act in ways that are consistent with one’s self (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000; Gagné & Deci, 2005).

In regard to emotional labour, intrinsic motivation is not pertinent since an employee engages in emotional labour to satisfy an organizational demand, which by definition gives an external focus to the motivation to regulate emotions. This organizational demand reflects an organizational value, which is serving the customer with positive emotions and without negative emotions. When the employees own values also focus on serving the customer with positive and without negative emotions, this demand is congruent with the employees self. Hence to the degree that an employee endorses the organizational demand imposed on him or her, their motivation can be self-determined, but remains extrinsic.
This notion of endorsement is not new in the emotional labour literature. Specifically, Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) proposed that an employee who is strongly identified with his/her role is easily convinced of the importance of regulating emotions toward the customers. In that case, expressing the prescribed emotions is congruent with the employee’s values. By contrast, another employee may fake an emotion so as to not be criticized by a superior. Thus, when employees are faking their emotions, they may do so in good faith because they accept the underlying display rule or they may do so in bad faith in cases where the display rule is not accepted (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Hochschild, 1983; Rafaeli & Sutton, 1987; Zapf, 2002). As one can see, these two motivations to regulate emotions can be distinguished with regard to their level of self-determination.

Although SDT distinguishes between different types of motivation, most human behaviour is determined by more than one underlying motive. For example, when serving a customer with a smile, one may do so both because it is congruent with one’s values and because not doing so would result in critiques. Hence, when assessing the different forms of motivation, participants rate the degree to which different reasons to behave in a certain way are true for them. Furthermore, the motivations form a quasi-simplex pattern, that is, each subscale correlates most positively with the subscale closest to it and less positively or negatively with subscales farther from it (Gagné & Deci, 2005). Subscales can then be combined algebraically to form a self-determination index (Grolnick & Ryan, 1987; Ryan & Connell, 1989). This index reflects the relative contributions of employees’ motivations. Thus, an employee who smiles at the customer mainly because of fear of negative consequences and who cares little for the customer will have a score closer to the non-self determined end of the continuum, whereas an employee who smiles because s/he shares the organizations values will have a score closer to the self-determined end of the continuum. Many studies demonstrate that self-determined motivation enhances wellbeing (Blais & Brière, 2002; Blais, Hess, Bourbonnais, Saintonge, & Riddle, 1995; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Gagné, Ryan, & Bargmann, 2003; Grouzet, Vallerand, Thill, & Provencher, 2004; Kim, Deci, & Zuckerman, 2002; Ryan & Connell, 1989; Ryan & Deci, 2001; Vallerand, Fortier, & Guay, 1997).

Indirect evidence supports the usefulness of the SDT framework in explaining motivation to regulate emotions at work. In a qualitative study, Sutton (2004) identified two goals underlying teachers will of regulating their emotions: academic effectiveness and keeping a good relationship with students. Twenty percent of teachers indicate that they regulate their emotions because it is part of them. In SDT terms, these teachers fully endorse emotion regulation. In addition, teachers report that they feel ashamed of showing their anger in front of their students, that they want to serve as a role model for students, or that they do not know why they are regulating their emotions. In SDT terms, these reasons refer to introjected, external and amotivation respectively.

SDT is an interesting framework to clarify the reasons why employees adopt emotion regulation strategies. It was mentioned above that surface acting was perceived as faking in bad faith whereas deep acting was perceived as faking in good faith. Customer service jobs require expressing positive emotions to customers, as well as withholding negative ones (Hochschild, 1983; Rafaeli & Sutton, 1987). In fact, when the organizational demand is to express positive emotions, the negative emotions that are experienced by employees lead to emotional dissonance (a discrepancy between employees’ emotional display and inner feelings) that is found to be stressful and emotionally draining (Abraham, 1998, 1999; Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Ashforth & Tomiuk, 2000; Morris & Feldman, 1996a, 1996b, 1997; Zapf, 2002). Consequently, it seemed relevant to assess how motivation to withhold negative emotions is related to emotion regulation strategies. SDT has been used to better understand why people withhold their negative affects when interacting with others. Results suggest that more self-determined motivation to regulate negative emotions is positively associated with psychological wellbeing (Kim, et al., 2002). Unfortu-
nately, this study did not investigate emotion regulation strategies, but based on Gosserand and Diefen-ndorff (2005) findings that commitment to display rules was associated with higher levels of emotion regulation, we can make the following hypothesis as regard to deep acting and naturally felt emotions.

*Hypothesis 1a: Self-determined motivation will be positively related to a) deep acting and b) naturally felt emotions.*

As for surface acting, we mentioned that this strategy is considered as “faking in bad faith”. In other words, people who surface act are not convinced of the relevance of the display rule and do not endorse it. As a consequence, the following hypothesis is made.

*Hypothesis 1b: Self-determined motivation will be negatively related to surface acting.*

**Organizational Factors Influencing Motivation and Emotional Labour Strategies**

It is important to note that customer service relationships do not occur in a vacuum. Rather they occur in a larger work context, which in itself will have an impact on the employee and the level of endorsement that the employee is likely to show for any organizational rule. Hence, as other emotional labour models have proposed (e.g. Grandey, 2000), we posit that work environment may affect the level and type of emotional labour in which employees engage.

Job autonomy is an important factor that influences employees’ performance and motivation at work (Spector, 1986). Job autonomy refers to the degree of discretion individuals have regarding the procedures they utilize, feel they can control the sequencing of their work activities and the degree to which workers have the ability to modify or choose the criteria used for evaluating performance (Breaugh, 1989). In the SDT literature, autonomy is one of the basic needs all individuals must fulfill (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000; Gagné & Deci, 2005). More specifically, autonomy is one of the crucial factors which influence the development and maintenance of self-determined motivation (Blais & Brière, 2002; Blais, et al., 1995; Deci, et al., 2001). Job autonomy also impacts on emotion regulation (Abraham, 1998, 1999; Grandey, et al., 2004; Grandey, Fisk, & Steiner, 2005; Morris & Feldman, 1996b). For example, an irate customer facing a smiling employee may react negatively to this smile, believing that the employee is laughing at him/her. To avoid such misunderstandings, employees need to have sufficient job autonomy and motivation to be able to depart from organizational rules when these become maladaptive. Hence, the following hypothesis is made.

*Hypothesis 2: Job autonomy is positively related to self-determined motivation.*

Perceptions of autonomy depend themselves on the work climate (Blais & Brière, 2002; Blais, et al., 1995; Deci, et al., 2001) and organizational justice is one important marker of the quality of work climate. Indeed, organizational justice communicates respect to employees which leads to greater identification with a group (Olkkonen & Lipponen, 2006). Moreover, social exchange relationships are based on trusting that a gesture of goodwill will be reciprocated in the future (Blau, 1964). Specifically, organizational justice leads to perceived support from one’s organization (Roch & Shanock, 2006), and this support is positively related to employees’ felt obligation to care about the organization's welfare and to help
the organization reach its objectives (Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel, Lynch, & Rhoades, 2001). Within an emotional labor framework, this means that employees should be more willing to take care of customers. In this sense, Hochschild (1983) argues that employees engage in emotional labour in exchange of a salary. Distributive justice, defined as feeling of fairness surrounding the allocation of organizational resources (Roch & Shanock, 2006), represents an economic exchange relationship and is more related to person-referenced attitudes, especially those associated with outcomes such as pay satisfaction. Procedural justice, characterized by adherence to fair process criteria (Colquitt, 2001), refers to feelings of fairness regarding the procedures used in the organization and is related to good organizational interactions (Roch & Shanock, 2006). Thus, we make the following hypotheses.

**Hypothesis 3:** Procedural and distributive justice are positively related to self-determined motivation.

**Method**

**Participants**

Participants were 195 employees from two call centers: an inbound call center in the banking industry \( (n = 65, 41.3\% \text{ male}) \) and an outbound call center in the telecom industry \( (n = 130, 63.3\% \text{ male}) \). Mean ages were 31.4 years \( (SD = 10.8) \) and 30.3 years \( (SD = 9.0) \) respectively. Mean organizational tenure and mean job tenure were 6.1 years \( (SD = 10.8) \) and 2.0 years \( (SD = 9.0) \). A majority of participants held a college or a university degree (call center 1: Elementary: 1.6%, High School: 19.0%, College: 47.6%, University: 25.4%, other: 6.3%; call center 2: Elementary: 0.0%, High School: 10.9%, College: 37.2%, University: 47.3%, other: 4.7%).

**Procedure**

Participants in both organizations completed the survey on their own time. In order to preserve anonymity and confidentiality, participants completed the questionnaire, inserted it in an envelope and dropped the envelope into a sealed box.

**Measures\(^1\)**

**Emotion Regulation.** The Emotion regulation questionnaire (John & Gross, 2004) was used to assess emotion suppression and reappraisal. This measure has good psychometric properties and reflects the concepts of emotion suppression (surface acting) and reappraisal (deep acting). Examples of items are “When I am feeling negative emotions, I make sure not to express them” (emotion suppression) and

\(^1\) All scales use a 7-point scale (1- totally disagree, 7- totally agree)
“When I want to feel less negative emotions, I change the way I’m thinking about the situation” (reappraisal). Naturally felt emotions were measured using items from Diefendorff and al. (2005). An example of item is “The emotions I show customers come naturally”. The scales were translated into French using parallel back translation. Alpha coefficients were acceptable (see Table 1).

**Motivation to Withhold Negative Emotions.** Subscales were created to measure integrated, identified, introjected and external regulation as well as amotivation to withhold negative emotions. Examples of items are: “I am proud to meet my goals despite my concerns” (integrated), “It is important to me not to hurt the clients” (identified), “Expressing negative emotions would hurt the clients, and I would blame myself for doing it” (introjected), “Managers expect that I show self-control when I interact with the clients” (external), and “I am frequently overwhelmed with bad feelings” (amotivation). The subscales presented adequate internal consistencies (integrated regulation: $\alpha = .69$; identified regulation: $\alpha = .61$; introjected regulation: $\alpha = .75$; external regulation: $\alpha = .69$; amotivation: $\alpha = .72$). We calculated a Self determination index that reflects each employee’s position on the motivation continuum by assigning the weights +2, +1, -.5, -.5 and -2 to the integrated, identified, introjected, external motivations and amotivation subscales respectively. All analyses were based on this index rather than on specific subscales.

**Antecedent Variables.** The items used in the present study to measure distributive and procedural justice were developed in a sales force context (Brashear, Brooks, & Boles, 2004). Job autonomy was measured using the Work Autonomy Scales (Breaugh, 1985, 1989). Breaugh (1985; 1989) distinguished between autonomy as regards to work methods, scheduling and job performance criteria. Although he confirmed a three dimensions model in his studies, results from the present study supported a one-dimensional model ($\chi^2 (27) = 48.7, p = .006$; CFI = .97, Cmin/dl = 1.80; RMSEA = .064).

**Results**

Descriptive statistics, zero-order correlations, and reliability indices are reported in Table 1. All correlations were in the expected direction, except that job autonomy was not significantly correlated with self-determined motivation to withhold negative emotions.

**Table 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>$\bar{X}$</th>
<th>$\sigma$</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Autonomy</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Dist.justice</td>
<td>4.83</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>.41**</td>
<td>(.91)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Proc. justice</td>
<td>5.67</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>.27**</td>
<td>.38**</td>
<td>(.76)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Motivation</td>
<td>7.81</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.32**</td>
<td>.34**</td>
<td>(na)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Nat. felt emotions</td>
<td>5.14</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>.31**</td>
<td>.15*</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.21**</td>
<td>(.66)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Suppression</td>
<td>5.11</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>(.77)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Reappraisal</td>
<td>5.60</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>.26**</td>
<td>.19**</td>
<td>.31**</td>
<td>.35**</td>
<td>.30**</td>
<td>.28**</td>
<td>(.74)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Hypotheses were tested together in a path model. Tests of model fit were undertaken through the use of the maximum-likelihood estimation procedures of AMOS (Byrne, 2001). Several measures of goodness of fit were used. Specifically, we report the chi-square statistic, the comparative fit index (CFI), the minimum discrepancy divided by the degrees of freedom (Cmin/dl), and the root-mean-square error of approximation. The results indicated that the theoretical model has a poor fit (see Table 2). Adjustments were made in the model and in the measurement model. Links were added from emotion suppression to reappraisal. This result is consistent with previous research (Grandey, 2003). It is likely that when employees surface act, they realize that their inner feelings do not match the display rules and try to reappraise the situation in order to align those feelings with organizational demands. Two links were added from job autonomy to reappraisal and naturally felt emotions. This suggests that there is another psychological process that link job autonomy and these emotional labour strategies.

The original model suffered from problems in the measurement model. Two items measuring reappraisal were dropped since their measurement error correlated with other items. An item from the suppression scale was also dropped as it was weakly related to its latent variable. Analysis of this item indicates that it was not relevant in a customer service context. This item concerned suppressing positive emotions. Finally, two items from autonomy scale were allowed to correlate as they share similar phrasing (Byrne, 2001). The final model shown in Figure 1 had adequate fit (see Table 2). The values for the square multiple correlations were as follows: motivation (.16), reappraisal (.36), suppression (.00), naturally felt emotions (.18).

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>( \chi^2 )</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>( \Delta \chi^2 )</th>
<th>CFI</th>
<th>Cmin/df</th>
<th>RMSEA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hypothesized model</td>
<td>666.8</td>
<td>369</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>.065</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>….suppression ( \rightarrow ) reappraisal</td>
<td>654.0</td>
<td>368</td>
<td>12.8*</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>.063</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>….autonomy ( \rightarrow ) Naturally felt emotions</td>
<td>643.9</td>
<td>367</td>
<td>10.1*</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>1.76</td>
<td>.062</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>….autonomy ( \rightarrow ) reappraisal</td>
<td>634.9</td>
<td>366</td>
<td>9.0*</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>1.74</td>
<td>.062</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>….item reappraisal 6 removed</td>
<td>544.1</td>
<td>339</td>
<td>90.8*</td>
<td>.90</td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td>.056</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>….item reappraisal 2 removed</td>
<td>469.1</td>
<td>313</td>
<td>75.0*</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>.051</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>….item suppression 4 removed</td>
<td>418.4</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>50.7*</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>.048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>….correlating two items in the autonomy scale</td>
<td>405.3</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>13.1*</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>.046</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* \( p < .001 \)

As indicated in Figure 1, most of the paths were significant at \( p < .05 \). As predicted, more self-determined motivation to withhold negative emotions (MWNE) explained higher levels of both reappaisal and naturally felt emotions. Thus, results supported Hypothesis 1a. Hypothesis 1b was not supported as both zero-order correlation (\( p = .59 \)) and regression path between motivation and emotion suppression were not significant (\( p = .53 \)). Hypothesis 2 was not supported, as job autonomy was not significantly related to the employees’ MWNE (\( p = .12 \) and \( p = .49 \) for zero-order correlation and regression coefficient respectively. This result is surprising as SDT and work motivation in general literature consistently found a significant and positive relation between autonomy and motivation (Gagné & Deci, 2005; Spector, 1986). However, results supported Hypotheses 4; both organizational justice dimensions were positively and significantly related with MWNE.
Discussion

Based on Self-Determination Theory (SDT), the current study examined the relationship between self-determined motivation to withhold negative emotions and emotional labour strategies. The major research questions driving our exploration were as follows: What is the relationship between employees’ motivation to withhold their negative emotions and their tendency to use certain emotional labour strategies? What are the impacts of organizational factors on employees’ motivation and emotional labour strategies?

Addressing the first question, it was found that employees’ self-determined motivation to withhold negative emotions was positively related to reappraisal (deep acting) and to naturally felt emotions (absence of emotional dissonance) (Hypothesis 1a). That is, when employees endorsed the organizational demands to regulate negative affect, they adopted a more authentic stance towards their customers and regulated their affect by reappraising the situation. This supports the notion that employees who are more identified with their role are less likely to experience emotional dissonance (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993;
Brotheridge & Lee, 2002; Gosserand & Diefendorff, 2005; Morris & Feldman, 1996b). Deep acting and lower levels of emotional dissonance are associated with positive outcomes both for the employees and the organization (Abraham, 1998, 1999; Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Brotheridge & Lee, 2002, 2003; Grandey, 2003; Morris & Feldman, 1996b, 1997; Pugh, 2001; Rafaeli & Sutton, 1987; Zapf, 2002). Hence, the present study suggests that self-determined motivation to withhold negative emotions is a relevant concept to better understand how emotional labour is performed and the outcomes associated to emotion regulation strategies.

Contrary to hypothesis 1b, self-determined motivation to withhold negative emotions was not significantly related to emotion suppression. We based our prediction on qualitative findings that employees regulated their negative emotions to avoid feeling ashamed of not doing so. Such a reason to act is considered by SDT a controlled form of motivation (Gagné & Deci, 2005) and the regulation strategy underlying such motive taps into the response-focused emotion regulation strategies (Grandey, 2000; Gross, 1998; R. E. Sutton, 2004). Hence, employees less self-determined to withhold negative emotions were thought to use more surface acting to comply with organizational demands as they do not share organizational values as regard to customer service relationships. A possible explanation to the non-significant path between motivation and emotion suppression (surface acting) is that self-determined employees might use surface acting in specific occasions with customers. Surface acting might occur especially when surface acting presents less a threat to one’s self-identity. Moreover, self-determined employees may use surface acting in response to a highly stressful appraisal of a situation. In those situations, faking or suppressing emotions is more likely to occur (Grandey, et al., 2004) and may not depend on how employees are generally motivated. Future research should investigate potential moderators such as stress appraisal.

A surprising result was the absence of the impact of job autonomy on self-determined motivation (Hypothesis 2). SDT maintains that self-determined motivation is enhanced when a person has autonomy (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000; Gagné & Deci, 2005). However, in the present study, job autonomy was not very high – which is a call center reality as call centers generally offer a controlling environment (Bain, Watson, Mulvey, Taylor, & Gall, 2002). In fact, this variable had the lowest mean in the present study (see Table 1). It is possible that job autonomy has to reach a higher level before it can impact positively on motivation. Another explanation for this non-finding is related to how we defined job autonomy (i.e. discretion individuals have regarding the procedures they use, feel they can control the sequencing of their work activities and the degree to which workers have the ability to modify or choose the criteria used for evaluating performance). This definition is close to technical aspects of the call center tasks which might limit the potential association to motivation to regulate emotions, which is concern about the relational aspect of employees’ job.

Despite this non-significant path between autonomy and motivation, results suggested two additional links from job autonomy to improve the initial model. Job autonomy affected directly reappraisal and naturally felt emotions. A possible explanation for these links is the fact that employees may automatically appraise the situations in a way that inner feelings are already aligned with display rules when they do not need to focus on technical task (methods, sequence and performance criteria). Consequently, employees who felt more autonomy in their job were more likely to adopt an adaptive emotion regulation strategy. Specifically, job autonomy allows employees greater freedom to act in a way that is more genuine. In fact, when they feel autonomous in their job, employees are more likely to pay attention to customers’ problems and concerns, and consequently, are more likely to feel adequate emotions in their interactions. These results can therefore explain why previous research has found that job autonomy seems to reduce emotional dissonance (Abraham, 1998; Bono & Vey, 2005; Morris & Feldman, 1997). Thus,
employees who have the freedom to show an authentic demeanour when facing an angry customer, even if this implies showing a mild irritation towards the customer, may improve the relationship quality with customers because they signal authenticity and an interest in the relationship.

Moreover, job autonomy was positively related to organizational justice dimensions (see Figure 1), which in turn were related, as predicted (Hypothesis 3), to self-determined motivation to withhold negative emotions, thus generalizing the notion that a positive work climate facilitates self-determined motivation at work (Blais & Brière, 2002; Blais et al., 1995; Deci, Connell, & Ryan, 1989; Deci et al., 2001). Moreover, these results are consistent with the notion that organizational justice transmits to employees information relevant to shape their social identity (Olkkonen & Lipponen, 2006). In the context of emotional labour, this means that when employees perceived that their organization and their supervisor showed respect and gave them support, employees endorsed the emotional demands more and tended to reciprocate these gestures by trying to establish positive interactions with customers. Hence, these employees tended to adopt an emotion regulation style based on authenticity and the use of reappraisal as the main strategy to regulate emotions, which represented a more adapted way to cope with emotional tasks (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Brotheridge & Lee, 2002, 2003; Grandey, 2003). These results also support Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) theoretical model of emotional labour, which posits that individuals who strongly identify with their organizational roles, that is “individuals who regard their roles as central, salient, and valued component of who they are, are apt to feel most authentic when they are conforming to role expectations”.

In order to get a model with a better fit, modification indices suggested a positive link from emotion suppression to reappraisal. This path suggests a dynamic use of emotion regulation strategies and replicated previous findings (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Brotheridge & Lee, 2002; Goldberg & Grandey, 2007; Grandey, 2003). More specifically, employees who use emotion suppression (or who are faking a positive emotion) while interacting with customers feel a discrepancy between their inner feelings and their emotional expression. Following Gross (1998) model of emotion regulation, employees’ emotional responses may serve as emotional cues about the situation and lead employees to adopt another strategy to regulate their affect to comply with display rules. Future research should consider the fact that employees can use several strategies to regulate their emotions (R. E. Sutton, 2004). Hence, employees might combine two or more strategies to regulate their affect. Following this line of reasoning, an interesting question concerns the individual and organizational outcomes of the different combinations of emotional labour strategies.

Limitations

The present research improves our understanding of the emotional labour process by identifying motivation to regulate emotions as a pivot between organizational context factors and employees’ emotional labour strategies. Important antecedents in this context are the organizational justice dimensions, which affect employees’ motivation. In turn, motivation impacts emotion regulation strategies. Moreover, job autonomy affects employees’ regulation strategies, which have important consequences for employees and organization (Abraham, 1998, 1999; Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Brotheridge & Lee, 2002, 2003; Grandey, 2003; Morris & Feldman, 1996b, 1997; Pugh, 2001; Rafaeli & Sutton, 1987; Zapf, 2002). However, several limitations must be addressed by future research. First, like any study using self-report, common method variance might have an influence on the results of the SEM by leading to an overestimation of the link between variables. Second, although our hypotheses are well grounded in theory and validated links between factors, causality cannot be addressed in a correlational study. Even though self-
determined motivation to regulate affect precedes logically the regulation strategies, the successes and failures associated with the regulation might in turn influence this motivation.

Further, the present research was based on the situation in call centers. It is possible that relationships between variables change when other contexts are considered. For example, in contexts that are less controlling, the role of job autonomy may be found to be more important. Also, in some professions, both negative and positive affect has to be employed flexibly thus that in some situations positive affect has to be suppressed and negative affect shown (Sutton, 1991). In such contexts the role of motivation may be more complex than in the present study.

Practical Implications

The present findings suggest that when employees endorse the need to regulate their emotions, they adopt adaptive emotion regulation strategies. Thus, organizations have an interest to select employees with a self-determined motivational profile and with an emotion regulation style that is consistent with job requirements. However, motivation also depends on the work environment (Blais & Brière, 2002; Blais, et al., 1995; Deci, et al., 1989; Deci, et al., 2001; Gagné & Deci, 2005). Specifically, self-determined motivation can only be sustained in an environment that provides autonomy support, competence feedback and appropriate levels of relatedness. Thus, it does not suffice to hire new employees who show self-determined motivations but these employees have to be able to work in a context that allows them to retain this type of motivation.

However, self-determined motivation can also be acquired by employees who are provided with an autonomy supportive environment (Deci, et al., 1989; Deci, et al., 2001). In addition, fostering emotional competence through training and/or coaching might also help employees to better understand the customers’ perspective as well as to better understand organizational values, and to thus enhance interaction quality with their customers.

Conclusion

The present research aimed to extend our comprehension of the emotional labour process. The findings underline the importance of the work context for the development of self-determined motivation (i.e., endorsement of emotion regulation demands), which in turn influences the choice of emotion regulation strategies. Motivation to regulate emotions was found to be the pivotal variable that connects the organizational context with employee emotional labour strategies. Managers should attend closely to managerial practices that promote equity among employees and support them in their tasks. This is important in contexts where the standardization of service is a norm because one means to standardize is to remove all discretion from employees (Bain, et al., 2002). The present research emphasized the importance of leaving some discretion to employees, allowing them to adopt an adaptive and more authentic emotion regulation strategy – which may occasionally require non-scripted interventions on the part of the employee. Only then can employees regulate their emotions in ways that maximize their authenticity and the consequent positive impacts on wellbeing and job satisfaction.
References


