

### บทคัดย่อ

งานศึกษาวิจัยชิ้นนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาการสื่อสารทางอารมณ์ในธุรกิจการให้บริการในประเทศไทย วิจัยครั้งนี้เป็นการศึกษาเชิงคุณภาพที่ใช้ระเบียบวิธีวิจัยแบบสัมภาษณ์เจาะลึกและการจดบันทึกภาคสนามจากพนักงาน นวดของไม้หอมสปา ผลการวิจัยพบว่าปัจจัยที่มีผลต่อความพึงพอใจในการทำงานคือการตอบสนองทางอารมณ์จาก เพื่อนร่วมงานและลูกค้าที่น่าสนใจคือผลการวิจัยพบว่าปฏิริยาตอบสนองของลูกค้าและความกังวลในการทำงาน ก่อให้เกิดความเครียดในที่ทำงาน

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### Abstract

This study investigates emotional communication in the service industries in Thailand. Field notes and in-depth interview methods were used for qualitative research to collect data from therapists of Maihom Spa. The findings show that the factors relating to the job satisfaction of spa employees are the emotional reactions from colleagues and customers. Findings also show that customer interactions and job uncertainties result in workplace stress.

**Keywords:** emotional expression, stress, communication of emotion, body language, emotional intelligence



### Introduction

Emotion is part of communication (Grandey, Rafaeli, Ravid, Wirtz, & Steiner, 2010; Krunl & Geddes, 2000). As emotion is central to communication, it is important to understand how emotional intelligence both creates and contributes to the well-being of society and organizations (Akintaya, 2009; Diefendorff & Gosser, 2003; Maiese, 2006) Emotion in organizational life is an important force in

communication theories and practice. Interestingly, many scholars have found that the intractability of a conflict can increase negative communication that affects work performance, work product, and the demeanor of employees (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Diefendorff & Gosser, 2003; Maiese, 2006; Sanford, 2007). Consequently, many types of work in today's organizations depend on emotional skills to develop conflict intervention strategies, such as empathy, reading other people's emotions, control of

anger, self-awareness, a desire for affiliation, and emotional management (Akintaya, 2009; Maiese, 2006). Organizations are arenas in which language plays a significant role in the construction and experience of emotions. The communication of emotion (smiling, nodding, expressing interest or concern) in work situations serves a “signal function” to express employees’ thoughts and emotions. Gates (2003) suggests that employees’ emotional displays can be characterized as positive, negative, or neutral. Furthermore, Maiese (2006) posits that, once we have granted that emotions are a central driving force behind intractable conflict, we need to cope with that situation through emotional reappraisal. As a result, investigating the influence of emotion in workplace relationships provides the potential to expose some of the complexities in the concept of “emotional intelligence” (Akintaya, 2009). Here, I sketch the significance of understanding emotional expression in service industries to highlight important issues that influence the work environment.

## Objective

One such service business in Thailand is that of the spa industry. Therapists sometimes feel anger and anguish when customers request inappropriate service. As a result, spa employees exhibit stress and burnout. Therefore, the study of “Emotional Communication in the Service Industries” seeks to understand everyday actions (talk, body language, and emotional intelligence), routine, and the atmosphere of the work place. The following research questions are examined:

1. What factors affect the job satisfaction of spa employees?

2. What kind of stress comes with being a therapist in their workplace?

3. Are spa therapists aware of their stress signals?

## Idea theory

### In the spa, all the staff smile?

Massage has many benefits. Massage is a great stress reducer for customers. On the other hand, the therapists can experience their own stress as a product of the demands made by customers. The stresses (emotional labor) that therapists experience while performing their massage tasks are significant. Many scholars have found that emotional labor relies on multiple strategies for coping with conflict, and stressful and emotional dilemmas in the workplace (Diefendorff & Gosser, 2003; Krunl & Geddes, 2000; Shuler & Sypher, 2000). Diefendorff and Gosser (2003) describe employees talking directly and indirectly about how they manage the feelings of anger, disappointment, frustration, and anxiety that accompany work-related stress. Approaches to managing stress include altering their appraisal of the situation, changing their physiological state, and expressive gesturing or using language to express their emotions. Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) link these strategies to the four feeling elements of appraisal, physiology, expression, and label identities. Interestingly, Akintaya (2009) identifies this emotional process as emotional intelligence, for instance, in the ability to sustain motivation, to control disappointment, to tame anxiety, and guide what are appropriate emotional displays. This means that, although a spa provides relaxation through soft touch, soft language (soft tone/voice), soft manner,

soft light, soft music, soft product, this site also provides a stressful environment for employees. Nevertheless, even when therapists experience frustration or distressing thought, they will force themselves to smile.

#### **Body language: First signs of stress.**

When we meet others for the first time, we need to quickly assess whether they are positive or negative toward us. We do this by scanning the other person's body language to see if they are happy or unhappy. Importantly, emotions are understood as an individual's positive or negative experience and are constructed through the interplay of both psychological-physiological conditions and social-cultural patterns (Jin, Pang, Cameron, 2010). Therefore, display rules for emotional expression help guide employee behavior and interpersonal performance (Dehler & Welsh, 1994).

This research supports Gates' view that the organization is constructed through interaction, as demonstrated in the interaction between the therapists and customers, as well as among coworkers. If we want to create efficient personal and professional relationships we need to express the right emotions at the right time, in the right way, through acquired emotional skills. This research, investigates how therapists feel and attempt to regulate reactions by how they define situations that they find stressful, by altering their physical condition, and by monitoring how they express and conduct themselves.

#### **Methodology**

The study of emotional communication in service industries is directed at understanding everyday actions (daily routines), organizing

structures, and context. There are a number of ways in which organizational discourse can be seen as creating and recreating emotional constructs in the workplace. In order to understand emotion within the service industries, data was gathered using field observations, interviews, and document collection. Five indicators were specifically noted: dress, talk, body language (gesture), routine, and the atmosphere of the place.

Field notes were used as the primary data source derived from 35 hours of observation. Digitally recorded interviews were conducted with five therapists of Maihom Spa, located in Future Park Mall, Natural Metro Shopping Park, Phahonyothin Road in Pathum Thani, a suburb of Bangkok, Thailand. The goal of the in-depth interview work is to understand the "meaning" of stress from the spa therapists' standpoint. Subsequent interviews focused on what therapists understand about the stress of working. Negative cases were specifically identified to investigate how therapists cope with conflict, stress, and emotional dilemmas in the workplace.

#### **Findings and Interpretation**

##### **The "business" of the spa**

The following research questions deal with the spa industry (service industry):

Question: How about your job? What is your role at work? Are you happy with your career to date? What do you like about your present job? What do you dislike about your present job?

Answer : I take pride in being a therapist. I am glad to provide some sort of professional tranquility at any time.

Question: Can you please clarify what the spa means? Please describe the spa's services. Why should I get a massage?

Answer: Massage has many benefits. Massage is a great stress reducer. Guests are welcome to try a whole body massage. Body manipulations under the hands of a skilled, caring massage therapist, will make you feel relaxed. Furthermore, the massage room environment will be soothing with soft lighting and low-volume music. For your enjoyment, let your body and mind relax, breathe deeply and let all your senses indulge in the healing touch. Anyway, your satisfaction is our goal.

In the interview, the therapist discussed interacting with me as an important source of her job satisfaction. However, this therapist also identified to me, "In the spa, all the staff smile" ".....service with a smile, expectations for customers" "In the spa, all the staff smile". An assumption is that customers expect therapists to be friendly, caring, and perhaps even enthusiastic, this included smiling at customers. And she said, "I also sense the times that they are friendly, social and outgoing to me". In other words, this explains the role of therapists in relation to customers' satisfaction and customers tend to share fairly clear expectations about what constitutes "good" service. Personally, I thought she was a great therapist professional, and she treats client well.

In this kind of work, emotional reactions must be skillfully framed and strategically expressed. Consequently, when working with customers, therapists took extra care to diagnose the situation and the customer. Not surprisingly, in everyday situations that they have been involved with, good or bad, the therapists have always remained calm, cool, and

collected. Thus, spa organizations have arenas of emotion which are both genuine and managed, not only externally with customers, but also internally with colleagues. I sense that therapists really want to convey emotions that are "appropriate" to meet the expectations of customers in a service encounter. Hence, therapists become reluctant to express their thoughts and emotions to anyone, or even to think certain thoughts and feel certain emotions.

### **Recognizing Stress**

The stresses that therapists experience while performing their massaging tasks are significant. The increasing of stresses experienced by therapists impacted job satisfaction, work productivity, physical health, and mental wellness. When they deal with frustrating or distressing thoughts, therapists will force themselves to smile to counteract the negative emotional state. Emotional expression may also serve a 'signal function' in that they may convey dissent or dysfunction. Therefore, I noted how therapists feel and attempt to regulate reactions by how they define situations that they find stressful, by altering their physical condition, and by monitoring how they express and conduct themselves.

Research questions about the constructs of stress:

Question: What kind of stress comes with being a therapist? Would you give me an example?

Answer: For me, the therapist working stresses are the stresses involved in the uncertainty of working and the stresses associated with customers who appear to be misplaced. For example, several therapists felt pressured as there was a constant need to work efficiently to complete the spa treatment in

time. The interactive effects among the work context, the work content, and the individual's emotional state frequently operationalized as satisfaction, intrinsic motivation, stress, and mood. I found myself in anger, disappointment, frustration, and anxiety when my work load is demanding. I recognized some of the warning signs that pop up when stress is coming. Sometimes I can't find the words to say what I am feeling. In contrast, happiness expression is most acceptable with customers and colleagues.

Although clearly stressful and particularly demanding, the therapist identified herself as feeling successful in coping with the stress of working and interacting with customers; and my observation bore out this self-assessment.

#### **Body language: First sign of stress**

Many types of work in today's organizations depend crucially on emotional skills such as empathy, sensitivity to the feelings of others, anger and emotional management, self-awareness and so forth. Therapists' self-awareness in times of stress should serve as a third ear to listen to their bodies' cries for help. Their body speaks volumes when they push it too hard. Through labels of body language and by scanning the other person's body, we can see if they happy or unhappy. This work requires an excellent ability to read body language, posture, social, expression and person, including what others may be thinking or feeling, and how feelings are managed and expressed.

Research questions considering therapist's body language are as following:

Question: Have you ever been so worried about something that you ended up with a terrible

headache? What signal alerts you before you get angry or frustrated at your work?

Answer: For me, I recognize my first sign of stress when I feel tired during the day. They tell me through emotional and physiological reactions when it is time to slow down and take a break.

Question: When you are stressful, how do you feel physically?

Answer: When I feel this way, the indigestion and fatigue that follow are my body's way of taking some time off to rest.

Considering discourses with therapists, I believe that the therapist reduces anxiety by lowering the body's production of stress hormones. In addition, her body language will tell her how much stress she is under.

#### **Emotional Intelligence**

Therapists attempted to hide their disappointment with customers who indicated they did not perform to the expected standard. They also claimed that they tried to mask negative emotions that they might experience by expressing other emotions, particularly enthusiasm and humor. The following questions will help us understand the emotional intelligence of therapists:

Question: What do you do when you are faced with situations that elicit negative emotions from you?

Answer: When I am in a stressful or emotional situation, I focus on taking slow deep breaths, inhaling through my nose until I can feel my stomach swell outward, and then exhaling gently and completely through my mouth.

Question: What are your coping strategies to manage the feeling of anger, disappointment, frustration, and anxiety?

Answer: I assume that females are socialized to suppress rather than express anger. Me too. I try to find the best way to communication with others, even when there is an atmosphere of stress. This way, whenever I feel anger, disappointment, frustration, and anxiety, I take a drink (of water). No one expects me to talk when I am drinking. So I have the time I need to calm down (and count if necessary) and organize my thoughts.

The therapist in this study relied on a multitude of strategies for coping. For dealing with emotional expression, she learns how to manage her emotions. In particular, she manages the feelings of anger, disappointment, frustration, and anxiety that accompany working stress by altering the appraisal of the situation, changing her physiological state, expressive gesturing, and using language and labels to communicate values and emotions.

## Conclusion

Emotions are understood as an individual's positive or negative experience and are constructed through the interplay of both psychological-physiological conditions and social-cultural patterns.

Such display rules for emotional expressions help guide employee behavior and interpersonal performance. Emotional expression may also function to define and influence the 'moral order,' that is, the accepted norms for acceptable behavior. The therapists took extra care to diagnose the situation and the customer. In short, therapists manage their emotions, their emotions don't manage them. Interestingly, therapists' capacity to feel good or bad is the method they use to draw and extend boundaries around themselves and form particular resistances. Therapists explicitly mentioned the usefulness of taking a moment to collect oneself, rather than responding immediately to stressful stimuli. Therefore, our self-awareness in times of stress should serve as a third ear to listen to our body's cries for help. Our body speaks volumes when pushed too hard. Take the time to recognize these signals and recharge our emotional battery before our stress causes permanent damage to our system. My hope is that the reader will extract what is applicable to his or her situation and identify how these findings can be incorporated into his or her work to help cope with the stresses that arise from working.

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