

**The effects of emotional labour on wellbeing: Contrasts between health
care settings**

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution and, to the best of my knowledge or belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except when due reference is made in text.

Stephen Brown

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to examine the emotional labour requirements of nurses and clerks with different interaction requirements to assess whether the context or the perceived role identity affects the conduct, and/or outcomes of, emotional labour. Emotional labour has become an important focus for researchers since Hochschild's (1983) ground breaking research. Emotional labour has been associated with mainly poor outcomes for employees; however, there is still uncertainty as to the components and consequences of emotional labour. The health industry is one field where emotional interactions between employees and clients are often typified as an important part of the various roles.

Study 1 involved interviews with 21 nurses from three distinct nursing groups (emergency, renal dialysis, and palliative care) as well as emergency clerical workers to explore the dimensions and associations of emotional labour. Study 2 sought to generalise findings from Study 1. Three hundred and twenty five employees from the same groups were surveyed.

The main findings were as follows;

- **Emotional Labour:** The management of natural emotion is a distinct and prominent emotional labour strategy.
- **Outcomes of Emotional Labour:** The management of natural emotion and deep acting are preferable to surface acting due to more favourable well-being associations.
- **Social Support:** Organisational sources of support are crucial for the well-being of employees engaged in emotional labour.
- **Emotional Engagement:** Employees who perceive the emotional engagement in their role as high, may be better prepared for emotional interactions and have better well-being outcomes.

- **Emotional Intelligence and Display Rules:** Employees from all groups used emotional intelligence to guide their emotional interactions with clients.
- **Non-expressive Emotional Management:** In addition to emotional labour, employees from all groups used non-expressive means of emotional management such as the use of information, and space and proximity to control the emotion of themselves and clients.
- **Emotionally Relevant Interactions:** Employees found clients that held some emotional relevance as the most emotionally difficult to deal with.

Together the results show that the management of natural emotion should be included as an emotional labour strategy and, along with deep acting, should be considered preferable to surface acting for the well-being of employees and for organisational outcomes such as turnover intention. Employers can assist employees by preparing employees for interactions and by ensuring adequate support.