

The effects of emotional display rules on flight attendants' emotional labor strategy, job burnout and performance

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Abstract This study investigates the effects of emotional display rules of an airline on the emotional labor strategies of flight attendants (i.e., deep acting, surface acting), job burnout, and work performance. Data were obtained from a survey of 230 flight attendants of a global airline company in South Korea. The results show that the emotional labor strategy performed by flight attendants plays an important role in mediating emotional display rules. Emotional display rules did not directly affect job burnout and work performance, but rather influenced the emotional labor strategy used by flight attendants. Among emotional labor strategies, *deep acting* enhanced job performance and reduced burnout, while *surface acting* improved work performance but increased burnout. Such results suggest that airlines can improve their flight attendants' performance and reduce burnout by promoting the use of deep acting. This study provides a practical insight into why airline companies need to pay attention to how employees observe emotional display rules, and should select an appropriate emotional labor strategy to improve in-flight service quality over the long term.

Keywords Emotional display rules · Emotional labor strategy · Job burnout · Work performance · Flight attendants

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1 Introduction

Emotional displays by service employees are important to service firms, because customers are directly affected by their gestures, behavior, and expressions. Positive emotional displays such as friendliness (Harker and Keltner 2001) leave a favorable impression (Clark et al. 1996), leading to customer satisfaction and loyalty (Pugh 2001; Barger and Grandey 2006). Most service-oriented firms require employees to express specific emotions during customer encounters. Such social, occupational, and organizational requirements for service employees are considered rules of emotional display (Ashforth and Humphrey 1993) and they are especially critical for an airline, a representative service firm that needs to create and maintain a high level of in-flight service quality. However, few studies have examined the role played by emotional display rules in the airline industry. Therefore, we have chosen to investigate how emotional display rules work, analyzing the relationships among them, including emotional labor strategy, job burnout, and job performance.

Emotional display rules play a significant role in customer relationship management in the service industry and function as criteria to help control employees' emotional displays in an effort to promote positive displays over negative ones (Brotheridge and Grandey 2002). A number of service firms demand that their employees to greet customers with smiles and a friendly, helpful demeanor in order to establish desirable customer relationships (Hochschild 1983; Wilk and Moynihan 2005). Considering that in-flight service quality is a critical factor to passenger satisfaction in the airline industry, it is expected that appropriate emotional display rules for flight attendants are necessary to improve the performance of airlines. By analyzing the effect of emotional display rules on job burnout and performance, this study sheds light on whether emotional display rules are beneficial for the industry.

There have been inconsistent views regarding the effect of emotional display rules on the performance of service employees. A number of studies reported positive effects of emotional display rules (Brotheridge and Lee 2002; Cote and Morgan 2002; Diefendorff and Gosserand 2003; Goldberg and Grandey 2007; Schaubroeck and Jones 2000). For example, emotional display rules may cause service employees to improve individual attitudes (Cote and Morgan 2002), self-efficacy, and job satisfaction (Brotheridge and Grandey 2002) by mandating expressions. Guided by an organization's emotional display rules, efforts by service employee may increase job contentment by promoting internal and external motivations to express positive emotions (Schaubroeck and Jones 2000; Brotheridge and Lee 2002; Goldberg and Grandey 2007). Other studies have focused on the negative effects of emotional display rules causing stress, health deterioration (Bono and Vey 2004), emotional exhaustion (Goldberg and Grandey 2007), decrease in service quality (Ashforth and Humphrey 1993; Hochschild 1983), and turnover (Cote and Morgan 2002). Investigating the actual effects of emotional display rules in the airline industry may thus contribute to and extend the existing body of knowledge.

Increasingly, the airline industry has been recognized as a competitive market (Forgas-Coll et al. 2013). Emerging low-cost carriers and differentiated services have made the market more competitive (An and Noh 2011). To survive, airlines

must provide differentiated service value to passengers. While it is important to provide a range of schedules and price levels, in-flight service by flight attendants is considered critical and plays a significant role, given that passengers interact primarily with these employees during the flight. Emotional display rules for flight attendants could be a strategic resource to improve in-flight service quality.

This study is the first to investigate how emotional display rules affect job burnout and job performance of flight attendants. Although studies have discussed the effects of emotional display rules, few have focused on the airline industry. Considering that the airline industry is a representative service industry, this study may provide meaningful insight into other service industries regarding the role of emotional display rules. It uses emotional labor strategy (surface acting and deep acting) to mediate how emotional display rules relate to flight attendants' job burnout and performance. Emotional display rules can prompt some employees to actually experience the emotions shown to customers (via deep acting), while other employees may simply present desirable expressions without internalizing the attendant emotions (surface acting). By indicating which mechanism flight attendants adopt through different emotional labor strategies, this study concretely presents the role of emotional display rules for an airline.

This study is organized as follows: Sect. 2 presents a review of the relevant literature to develop research hypotheses. In Sect. 3, the methodology used in the study is discussed, including the process of data collection and analysis used to test the hypotheses. Section 4 articulates the results of the analysis. Section 5 presents implications of the results. Finally, Sect. 6 provides limitations of the study and direction for future research.

2 Review of relevant literature and hypotheses development

2.1 Literature review

2.1.1 *Emotional display rules and emotional labor strategy*

Emotional display rules are those norms of an organization that regulate when, where, and how service employees express certain emotions to customers (Ekman and Friesen 1975; Goldberg and Grandey 2007). These are social norms guiding which specific expressions apply in a specific context designed to determine the strength and content of employees' emotional displays (Ashforth and Humphrey 1993). Thus, service employees can show desirable emotions by camouflaging or exaggerating their real emotions based on certain rules (Diefendorff et al. 2006). Emotional display rules can be used to influence service employee emotions, helping them to achieve an intended job performance (Ashforth and Humphrey 1993; Diefendorff and Richard 2003; Cropanzano et al. 2004; Matsumoto et al. 2005).

In a service situation, emotional display rules generally require employees to express more positive emotions and restrain any negative feelings (Schaubroeck and Jones 2000; Brotheridge and Grandey 2002; Glomb and Tews 2004). These are especially important in service-oriented businesses like a hotel, restaurant, and airline.

Most airlines have developed their own rules to guide flight attendant behavior, since any failure in emotional expressions may have significant consequences on its business (Hochschild 1983; Wilk and Moynihan 2005). During in-flight service, poor service can generate passenger dissatisfaction and decrease customer loyalty (An and Noh 2009). On the other hand, positive emotional expressions by flight attendants can improve evaluations of in-flight service quality, increasing customer satisfaction and loyalty (Pugh 2001; Barger and Grandey 2006).

However, emotional display rules may cause job stress, triggering discordance between a flight attendant's true emotion and expected behavior (Hochschild 1983; Davidson 1998; Isen 1999). For example, flight attendants may experience anger, humiliation, and embarrassment as a result of unexpected situations, i.e., passengers ignoring safety instructions or sexually inappropriate behavior. Negative feelings may also be a source of job stress and emotional exhaustion. Even so, rules of emotional display have the potential to improve job satisfaction of flight attendants (Diefendorff and Richard 2003) through personal efforts to make a positive impression (Grandey 2003; Schaubroeck and Jones 2000).

For any business where service encounters are important, firms must spend a great deal of effort in recruiting and training their employees to provide a high level of service. In such firms, service employees—the key players who deliver a positive image to customers—are directly related to the business performance (Peters and Waterman 1982). Airlines employ different methods in terms of flight attendants such as education, training, compensation, and employee discipline (Bowen and Schneider 1988; Leidner 1999). They carefully select applicants who can endure long flights and display emotional stamina (Hochschild 1983). However, even for those who have survived stringent recruiting processes, it is not easy to restrain one's actual emotions in dealing with the public. The effort to repress real feelings and express only positive ones—or in this case, only regulated emotions—is called emotional labor (Hochschild 1983).

Flight attendants employ emotional labor strategies such as surface acting and deep acting when they confront a situation that requires emotional labor. Surface acting calls for expressing certain emotions expected of them in the workplace, while deep acting means expressing the actual emotions being mandated by the employer (Hochschild 1983). In general, expressing insincere emotions rather than actual ones may lead to emotional dissonance (Rafaeli and Sutton 1989; Jansz and Timmers 2002; Zapf 2002), but when it does not injure the employees' ego identity and is supported by others, dissonance can be minimized (Van dijk and Kirk-Brown 2006). In the case of deep acting, employees may actually experience emotional harmony (Rafaeli and Sutton 1989, 1991), self-efficacy, and psychological stability, thereby improving job satisfaction and performance (Ashforth and Humphrey 1993).

2.1.2 *Job burnout and performance*

Job burnout is a state of emotional and physical exhaustion caused by the stress of the workplace (Schaufeli and Enzmann 1998). Burnout was initially defined as a syndrome that causes emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal accomplishment (Maslach and Jackson 1986). The concept has been expanded to

incorporate a psychological syndrome involving excessive and prolonged stress from interpersonal relationships which may be characterized by exhaustion, cynical behavior, lack of motivation, and inefficacy in the workplace (Maslach et al. 2001). Employees generally experience job burnout when they feel they cannot satisfy organizational expectations which continues over time (Hobfoll and Shirom 2000; Maslach et al. 2001). When employees endure a heavy workload or excessive mental stress, they may seek to reduce their interactions with customers and maintain a psychological distance in order to mitigate physical and mental exhaustion. Such depersonalization can cause employees to have a negative or cynical attitude about their customers, which can lead to a lack of personal accomplishment, where workers negatively evaluate job performance, based on a belief that the discrepancy between their attitude and the organization's expectation is caused by a lack of ability (Maslach et al. 2001).

A flight attendant's job performance is very important to airlines because it relates directly to service quality and organizational performance (Lee et al. 2012; Cheng and Yang 2013). However, evaluating the performance of service workers is complicated, as it may reflect multiple dimensions (Miller 1988). Szilagy and Wallace (1990) suggest that accomplishment (productivity, effectiveness, and efficiency) and workers' response to their jobs (satisfaction, absence rate, and turnover rate) are criteria to evaluate job performance. Martin et al. (1981) proposed that goal achievement, problem solving ability, expertise and knowledge, interaction with colleagues, and the quantitative capability to conduct work are critical factors to job performance. For airlines, subjective, psychological, and behavioral performance measures are used rather than objective, economic, and financial performance measures, since psychological and behavioral perspectives are more important in improving passenger satisfaction of in-flight services. Airlines employ a variety of psychological and behavioral employee performance measures for resolving passenger problems such as the ability to communicate with passengers in their own language, reaction to an emergency, and the ability to interact with colleagues.

2.2 Hypotheses development

Emotional display rules demand that service employees proactively regulate their emotions in the workplace (Diefendorff et al. 2006). Studies have looked at the effect of organizational emotional display rules on the emotional labor strategy of service employees. According to Cote and Morgan (2002), service staff employs surface acting as an emotional labor strategy to control negative emotions, when their actual emotions differ from the desired ones. Efforts taken to maximize positive emotions following emotional display rules tend to promote deep acting as a strategy by raising employees' work ethic. Previous studies have not shown consistent results, however, in terms of how emotional display rules actually function. Some scholars believe that the rules are associated with surface acting (Gosserand and Diefendorff 2005); others hold that emotional display rules lead to deep acting (Grandey 2003), and still others indicate emotional display rules are associated with both (Brotheridge and Grandey 2002).

In general, it is possible that service employees choose deep acting to reconcile their emotions and regulated emotions because they evaluate their emotion expressions based on emotional display rules whenever they perform emotional labors (Diefendorff and Gosserand 2003). But it is not easy for service employees to completely synchronize their emotions to match desired emotional displays, since it is human nature to maintain one's identity and behavior in the face of organizational norms (Smith and Berg 1987; Mumby and Putnam 1992). Deep acting as an emotional labor strategy consumes a great deal of psychological energy (Hochschild 1983; Ashforth and Humphrey 1993). Thus, service employees may prefer surface acting to deep acting when pushed to abide by emotional display rules. For the airlines, emotional display rules may be double-edged sword, where both positive and negative effects may coexist.

For this reason, we chose to investigate how airlines' emotional display rules are associated with the emotional labor strategy of flight attendants. Hypotheses 1 and 2 are proposed below.

H1 Emotional display rules are positively associated with surface acting.

H2 Emotional display rules are positively associated with deep acting.

Emotional display rules can be either explicit and implicit, and generated in several different ways (Rafaeli and Sutton 1989). For airlines, detailed emotional display rules are articulated in their codes of conduct, used to train flight attendants to express desirable emotions to passengers (Goldberg and Grandey 2007). Implied emotional display rules are not articulated, but conducted through social/organizational agreement. For service employees, emotional display rules are an on-site duty used to accomplish such high-level objectives as improving customer satisfaction and loyalty (Diefendorff and Gosserand 2003; Gosserand and Diefendorff 2005). They require flight attendants to emulate positive emotions in order to promote positive relations with coworkers and customers (Meijman and Mulder 1998; Grandey 2003). These efforts can improve job satisfaction by raising job awareness and motivation (Schaubroeck and Jones 2000; Brotheridge and Lee 2002; Goldberg and Grandey 2007). Therefore, emotional display rules have the potential to increase flight attendants' job satisfaction and reduce turnover (Cote and Morgan 2002; Diefendorff and Richard 2003), leading to Hypothesis 3.

H3 Emotional display rules are positively associated with job performance.

However, emotional display rules can also have negative effects when employees experience dissonance (Morris and Feldman 1996; Lewig and Dollard 2003; Zapf and Holz 2006). This happens when there is conflict between a flight attendant's actual emotion and emotions expected by an organization. In this situation, flight attendants' efforts to reconcile these conflicting emotions can exhaust their limited emotional and physical resources, causing job stress. Also, emotional dissonance can result in cynical attitudes toward customers due to emotional and physical exhaustion (Hochschild 1983; Rafaeli and Sutton 1989; Zapf 2002). During in-flight service, flight attendants may encounter unexpected situations where they must control their emotions. Typical examples are passenger rudeness, conflict with colleagues, and sexual harassment (Cortina et al. 2001). While flight attendants must abide by emotional display rules in

order to treat their customers well, passengers have no such responsibility. Thus, their work environment demands that flight attendants control their emotions and present the emotions expected by the airline, which may cause burnout, leading to Hypothesis 4.

H4 Emotional display rules are positively associated with job burnout.

Emotional labor strategy, classified into surface acting and deep acting, is a type of complementary behavior employed when service employees cannot express their actual feelings in the workplace (Ashforth and Humphrey 1993; Diefendorff and Gosserand 2003; Diefendorff et al. 2006). Emotional labor strategy has the potential to improve organizational performance by inducing service employees to suppress undesirable emotions and only show positive ones (Diefendorff and Gosserand 2003; Grandey 2003), but can be a source of negative effects on employees through emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and physical disease (Morris and Feldman 1996; Bono and Vey 2004). Surface acting occurs when a worker simulates emotions expected of them in the workplace (Hochschild 1983). As a result, the dissonance between a person's own values and the organizational expectation can cause internal conflict, and if it continues for a long time, employees may experience internal tension and emotional exhaustion. Hypotheses 5 and 6 are suggested as follows.

H5 Surface acting is positively associated with job burnout.

H6 Surface acting is negatively associated with job performance.

In deep acting, workers express and experience the actual emotions expected of them during the commodification of their duties (Hochschild 1983). Here, service employees feel a sense of accomplishment from customers' positive feedback (Tolich 1993). Deep acting can also trigger an emotional contagion effect in which their positive emotions are transferred to customers (Brotheridge and Grandey 2002). Thus, customers may potentially accept these behaviors as genuine and reflect their own positive reactions. Thus, we would expect that deep acting is positively related to flight attendant job performance, and negatively related to job burnout. Hypotheses 7 and 8 are proposed below.

H7 Deep acting is negatively associated with job burnout.

H8 Deep acting is positively associated with job performance.

The research model with developed hypotheses is shown in Fig. 1.

3 Methodology

3.1 Data collection

To investigate how emotional display rules, emotional labor strategy, job burnout, and job performance relate to one another, we surveyed flight attendants working at the biggest airline in South Korea. The survey was conducted from December, 2012 to April, 2013. The survey questionnaire included the following key variables:

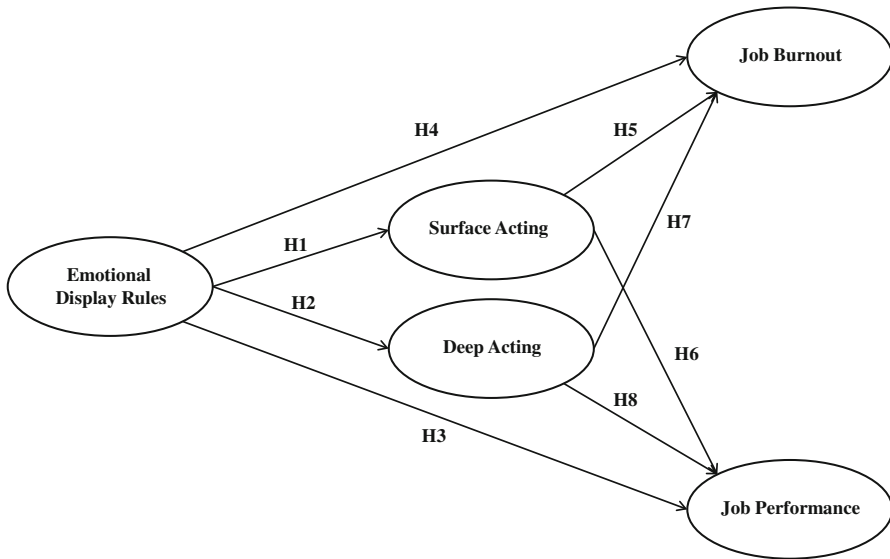


Fig. 1 .

emotional display rules, emotional labor strategy, job burnout, and job performance. To measure emotional display rules, this study employed four items based on the questionnaire used by Heuven et al. (2006) to survey flight attendants using the Frankfurt Emotion Work Scales (FEWS) (Zapf et al. 1999). To measure emotional labor strategy, questions about surface acting and deep acting were employed (Diefendorff et al. 2006): seven items asked about surface acting and four items investigated deep acting. For job burnout, five items from the MBI-GS criterion were employed (Schaufeli and Enzmann 1998). For job performance, five items from a questionnaire by Goodman and Svyantek (1999) were employed. A double translation protocol was used to prepare the questionnaire: the original form was prepared in English by the researchers. Then, two bilingual faculty in aeronautics management field translated it into Korean. The Korean version of the questionnaire was translated back into English by yet another Bilingual faculty. The two English versions of the questionnaire had no significant differences. A pilot test involved 30 flight attendants; based on the results, several items on the final questionnaire were revised. A total of 250 questionnaires were distributed to flight attendants, of which 230 were used after discarding incomplete or uncollected questionnaires. The demographic characteristics of the sample are presented in Table 1.

3.2 Reliability and validity analysis

Results of the exploratory factor analysis present validity of study variables, shown in Table 2. Based on a reliability analysis we conducted, the seventh item on the surface acting variable and the fifth item on the job burnout variable were eliminated. Afterward, the eigenvalue of each variable was larger than 1.0 and overall factor

Table 1 Sample characteristics

Characteristics	Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender		
Male	26	11.3
Female	204	88.7
Marital status		
Married	151	65.7
Unmarried	79	34.3
Employment status		
Intern	65	28.3
Regular staff	165	71.7
Age		
20–29	108	47.0
30–39	90	39.1
40–49	28	12.2
50–59	4	1.7
Position		
Stewardess	144	62.6
Assistant purser	55	23.9
Purser	22	9.6
Senior purser	4	1.7
Chief purser	5	2.2
Work experience (years)		
Under 2	66	28.7
2–4	55	23.9
5–9	41	17.8
10–14	35	15.2
Over 15	33	14.4

loadings were larger than 0.5, explaining 66 % of the total variance. Thus, construct validity was retained. A confirmatory factor analysis was conducted and as a result, the first item of the deep acting variable was eliminated because the value of SMC was less than 0.40. Table 3 shows the measurement items of each variable. The results of the confirmatory factor analysis are shown in Table 4. The values for GFI and AGFI are slightly less than 0.9, but the value of CFI is much greater than 0.9. Thus, we can conclude that the goodness-of-fit for the research model was acceptable. We then conducted structural equation modeling to test the research hypotheses.

4 Results

Table 5 presents the results of goodness-of-fit test for the final research model. Although some values were slightly less than the criteria, the goodness-of-fit was acceptable as the values for CFI and χ^2/df satisfied the criteria (Kline 1998). The results of the path analysis are presented in Fig. 2 and Table 6. Emotional display rules

Table 2 Results of exploratory factor analysis

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5
Surface acting 1	.850	.175	-.050	.082	.037
Surface acting 2	.803	.102	.018	.125	.125
Surface acting 3	.784	.126	-.054	.055	-.050
Surface acting 4	.752	-.003	.075	.072	.222
Surface acting 5	.748	.0925	.127	.122	-.074
Surface acting 6	.730	-.017	.089	.034	.134
Surface acting 7	.449	-.136	.289	.061	.399
Job burnout 1	.059	.890	-.053	-.005	-.025
Job burnout 2	-.004	.866	.004	-.032	-.085
Job burnout 3	.108	.802	-.119	-.119	.009
Job burnout 4	.082	.779	-.045	-.132	-.026
Job burnout 5	.106	.716	.047	-.012	-.111
Emotional display rules 1	.107	-.073	.888	.056	.095
Emotional display rules 2	.028	-.029	.830	.001	.125
Emotional display rules 3	.146	.024	.826	.144	.154
Emotional display rules 4	-.056	-.061	.814	.159	.102
Job performance 1	.094	-.015	.060	.835	.124
Job performance 2	.136	-.103	.034	.827	.158
Job performance 3	.118	-.057	.163	.811	.128
Job performance 4	.090	-.112	.093	.777	.246
Deep acting 1	.058	-.032	.037	.102	.789
Deep acting 2	-.064	-.103	.048	.221	.784
Deep acting 3	.145	-.035	.252	.100	.769
Deep acting 4	.317	-.045	.171	.115	.502
Eigen value	4.089	3.442	3.099	2.856	2.477
Variance ratio	17.038	31.378	44.289	56.190	66.512

did not significantly affect surface acting with the value of the path coefficient at 0.149 ($p = 0.059$), while emotional display rules positively influenced deep acting, with the value of the path coefficient 0.344 ($p = 0.000$). These results show that an airline's emotional display rules tend to lead flight attendants to portray deep acting as opposed to surface acting. These results are also consistent with the result of Grandey's (2003) study, which indicated that emotional display rules increase deep acting.

Emotional display rules did not significantly affect job burnout (coefficient = -0.113 , $p = 0.264$) and job performance (coefficient = 0.110 , $p = 0.125$), which implies that emotional display rules are mediated by an emotional labor strategy instead of directly affecting job burnout and performance. To confirm the mediating effect of emotional labor strategy, Sobel test was conducted (Preacher and Hayes 2004). It presented the existence of the mediating effect of emotional labor strategy. Surface acting affected not only job burnout (coefficient = 0.269 , $p = 0.003$) but also job performance (coefficient = 0.167 , $p = 0.008$). As expected, surface acting tend to

Table 3 Items of each variable

Variable	Item
Surface acting 1	I put on an act in order to deal with passengers in an appropriate way
Surface acting 2	I put on a “show” or “performance” when acting with passengers
Surface acting 3	I just pretend to have the emotions I need to display for my job
Surface acting 4	I put on a “mask” in order to display the emotions I need for the job.
Surface acting 5	I show feelings to passengers that are different from what I feel inside
Surface acting 6	I fake the emotions I show when dealing with passengers
Surface acting 7	I fake a good mood when interacting with passengers
Job burnout 1	I have become less interested in my work since I started this job
Job burnout 2	I have become less enthusiastic about my work
Job burnout 3	I doubt the significance of my work
Job burnout 4	I become more cynical about whether my work contributes anything
Job burnout 5	I feel burned out from my work
Emotional display rules 1	The airline company expects me to only show positive emotions to passengers
Emotional display rules 2	The airline company expects me to never show negative emotions to passengers
Emotional display rules 3	The airline company expects me to imagine myself in the situation of passengers
Emotional display rules 4	The airline company expects me to be sincere and authentic in the contact with passengers
Job performance 1	I achieve the objects of my job
Job performance 2	I fulfill all the requirements of my job
Job performance 3	I am competent in all areas of my job, I handle tasks with proficiency
Job performance 4	I perform well in my overall job by carrying out tasks as expected
Deep acting 1	I just want to do my job and not to be bothered
Deep acting 2	I make an effort to actually feel the emotions that I need to display toward others
Deep acting 3	I work hard to feel the emotions that I need to show to passengers
Deep acting 4	I work at developing the feelings inside of me that I need to show to passengers

increase job burnout by exhausting employees' emotional resources. Contrary to expectations, surface acting also improved job performance by enhancing social interactions with passengers. While deep acting negatively affected job burnout (coefficient = -0.218 , $p = 0.042$), it positively influenced job performance (coefficient = 0.317 , $p = 0.000$). As expected, deep acting seemed to negate job burnout and improve performance. These results show that deep acting may offer flight attendants a sense of achievement by matching their actual emotions to those expected by the airline, thus improving their job performance.

5 Discussion

The airline industry is a representative service industry in which service employees play a significant role in improving customer satisfaction and loyalty. Thus, for an

Table 4 Results of confirmatory factor analysis

Factor	Item	Parameter estimates	Standardized estimates	Standard error	CR	SMC	Reliability
Emotional display rules	1	1.000	0.759	–		0.576	0.881
	2	1.068	0.802	0.087	12.315***	0.643	
	3	1.131	0.900	0.083	13.648***	0.809	
	4	0.958	0.771	0.081	11.795***	0.595	
Surface acting	1	1.000	0.638	–		0.408	0.882
	2	0.965	0.702	0.107	9.010***	0.493	
	3	1.179	0.810	0.117	10.044***	0.657	
	4	1.433	0.864	0.137	10.480***	0.746	
	5	1.123	0.713	0.123	9.121***	0.509	
	6	1.284	0.747	0.136	9.459***	0.559	
Deep acting	2	1.000	0.725	–		0.526	0.757
	3	1.107	0.718	0.128	8.617***	0.515	
	4	1.057	0.740	0.121	8.707***	0.547	
Job burnout	1	1.000	0.711	–		0.652	0.860
	2	1.043	0.751	0.097	10.772***	0.621	
	3	1.338	0.921	0.105	12.694***	0.624	
	4	1.155	0.827	0.098	11.817***	0.531	
Job performance	1	1.000	0.808	–		0.652	0.860
	2	0.978	0.788	0.080	12.283***	0.621	
	3	1.086	0.790	0.088	12.311***	0.624	
	4	0.919	0.729	0.082	11.256***	0.531	

$\chi^2 = 328.571$, $df = 179$, $CMIN/df = 1.836$, $GFI = 0.882$, $AGFI = 0.848$, $NFI = 0.876$, $CFI = 0.939$, $RMR = 0.036$, $RMSEA = 0.060$

*** $p < 0.01$

Table 5 Results of goodness-of-fit test of the final research model

χ^2	df	χ^2/df	GFI	AGFI	NFI	CFI	RMR	RMSEA
274.081	144	1.903	0.891	0.857	0.883	0.940	0.040	0.063

airline, it is important for flight attendants to display desirable behaviors during in-flight services by following the rules of emotional display. Few studies have investigated the effects of emotional display rules in the airline industry. This study is the first to study the relationship between emotional display rules, emotional labor strategy, job burnout, and job performance based on a survey of flight attendants. We present several findings which can contribute to improving in-flight service.

First, emotional labor strategy plays an important role in emotional display rules, job burnout, and job performance. As indicated in Sect. 4, these rules had no direct impact on job burnout and performance. Instead, this was mediated by the emotional labor strategy used by flight attendants. In particular, emotional display rules tended

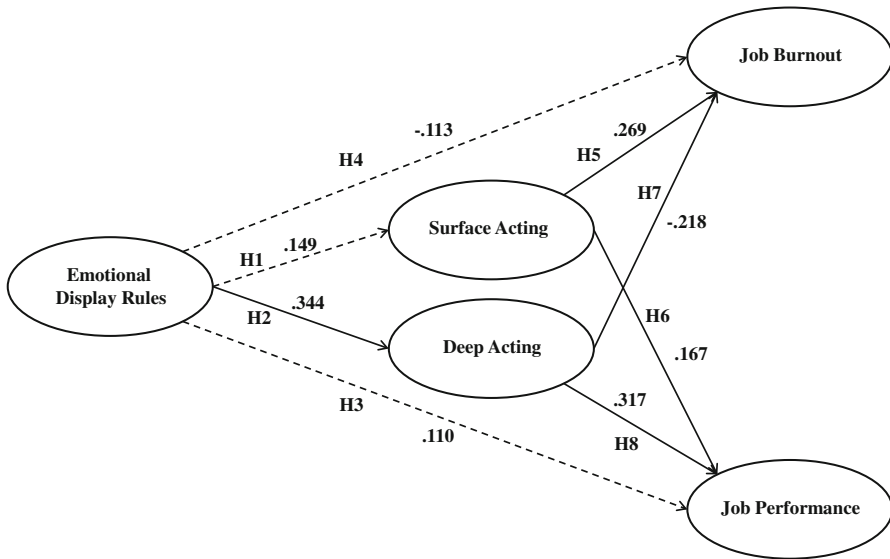


Fig. 2 .

Table 6 Results of path analysis

H	Path	Direction	Coefficient	t (CR)	p value	Result
1	Emotional display rules → surface acting	+	.149	1.888	.059	Not supported
2	Emotional display rules → deep acting	+	.344	4.190	.000	Supported
3	Emotional display rules → job performance	+	.110	1.534	.125	Not supported
4	Emotional display rules → job burnout	+	-.113	-1.117	.264	Not supported
5	Surface acting → job burnout	+	.269	2.937	.003	Supported
6	Surface acting → job performance	-	.167	2.634	.008	Not supported
7	Deep acting → job burnout	-	-.218	-2.033	.042	Supported
8	Deep acting → job performance	+	.317	3.985	.000	Supported

to promote deep acting on the part of flight attendants. Thus, an airline should pay attention to the role played by emotional labor strategy as a mediator between emotional display rules and organizational performance. It should also focus on how flight attendants choose between surface and deep acting when an airline is designing emotional display rules. The company could build a supportive service system to induce flight attendants to employ the strategy of deep acting, which reduces job burnout and improves job performance.

Another finding was that the surface acting strategy may trigger job burnout. This result is consistent with studies that indicated surface acting leads to emotional

exhaustion, cynical behaviors, and emotional dissonance (Ashforth and Humphrey 1993; Grandey 2003; Brotheridge and Grandey 2002; Brotheridge and Lee 2002). However, we also found that surface acting positively affected job performance, which differed from expectations. In general, it would seem that prolonged emotional dissonance exhausts service employees' inner resources, causing negative effects for the organization (Goldberg and Grandey 2007). This would imply that flight attendants proactively control their emotions to improve job performance even when they experience emotional dissonance. Compared to other service firms, airlines offer very strict training programs for their flight attendants. This may be why surface acting would improve job performance, but possibly only in the short term.

Third, deep acting improves job performance, while reducing job burnout. Previous studies indicated that deep acting was positively associated with job performance because it gave service employees a sense of accomplishment via positive feedback from customers (Ashforth and Humphrey 1993; Tolich 1993; Brotheridge and Lee 2002). Our results were consistent with previous studies, i.e., that deep acting positively affects the job performance of flight attendants. Deep acting is an emotional labor strategy that consumes a great deal of mental energy and effort, which could potentially cause emotional exhaustion (Hochschild 1983). However, it also has the potential to reduce job burnout by synchronizing flight attendants' actual emotions with those mandated by the company. Our results indicated that deep acting plays a positive role in mitigating job burnout of flight attendants during in-flight service.

Overall, the emotional display rules of an airline may play a significant role in improving organizational performance by promoting a deep acting strategy by flight attendants. Airlines may want to standardize the emotional displays of flight attendants to present a positive image to customers. Because such rules can also have negative effects, they should be carefully designed to minimize negative effects and instead focus on the relationship between the emotional labor strategy used by flight attendants and the emotional display rules set forth by an organization. In particular, emotional display rules should lead flight attendants to employ deep acting where desirable emotions are actually experienced by employees. An airline company should develop a system to resolve problems, when flight attendants instead choose to use surface acting as an emotional labor strategy. Although surface acting of flight attendants improves job performance in the short term, it can potentially deteriorate the organization's overall performance by triggering emotional dissonance and exhaustion in flight attendants.

6 Limitations and future research

This study has several limitations. It employed a static analysis to investigate the effect of emotional display rules, as flight attendants may frequently change emotional labor strategies to mediate emotional display rules. A longitudinal study would provide time-based information to reflect the change in emotional labor strategy by flight attendants. This study also only surveyed flight attendants from only one global airline, albeit the largest in South Korea, with a market share of almost 65 %. External validity would be increased by surveying other airlines and their flight attendants. It would also

be interesting to employ various contingencies to investigate the effects of emotional display rules that might provide diverse insights into how flight attendants react to such rules in terms of organizational culture, job position, emotional intelligence, job characteristics, and different regions of the world.

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