

THE EFFECT OF CUSTOMER'S BEHAVIORS ON EMPLOYEE'S EMOTIONAL REGULATION AND JOB SATISFACTION

Mai Viet Anh*

College of Economics and Business Administration - TNU

SUMMARY

In service process, customer's attitudes and behaviors influence employee's emotion. Customers with injustice behaviors or impolite treatments to employees may make employees angry. Employees may not control their emotions and they may behave in unsuitable way with customers. That may affect service quality that service firms provide to customers. This paper studies the effect of customer's attitudes and behaviors on employee emotion regulation and job satisfaction in service firms.

Keywords: *customer injustice behavior, anger felt, emotion suppression, cognitive reappraisal, emotion regulation, job satisfaction*

INTRODUCTION

In service process, customer and employee have to interact with each other. Therefore, customers' attitudes and behaviors affect employees' emotions and then affect service quality. Customers with unsuitable attitudes or behaviors may make employees angry and employees may lose their control and do not follow organizational rules. Most of previous studies focused on identify the effect of employees' attitudes affect customers' emotions. Some research has clarified the employees' emotion regulation in service process. However, there is no study that study the effect of customers' behaviors on employees' emotion regulation and job satisfaction. When understanding this effect, service firms may implement some solutions to improve the interaction between customers and employees in service process, improve service quality, increase customer satisfaction.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES

Customer Injustice Behaviors

Customers' injustice refers to unfairness or insensitivity displayed when customers treat unfairly with employees. Affective event theory posits that specific event at work generate specific emotions, which in turn

translate to spontaneous, affectively driven behaviors such as organizational citizenship behavior and work withdrawal. One class of affective events includes situations where individuals feel they are treated unfairly. According to affective event theory, customers' injustice creates negative emotions in employees. When employees are treated rudely or impolitely by customers, it is easy for them to experience negative emotions.

Anger Felt

Anger Felt refers to emotional state that employees really dissatisfy with something or with other people's behaviors. The feelings of employees may show the level of emotions such as happy, dissatisfaction, angry, mad, and crazy. When employees being treated unfairly by customers, it is easy for them to get negative emotions.

Employee Emotion Regulation

There are some definitions and points of view about emotion regulation. According to Gross (1998) [5], emotion regulation refers to the processes by which individuals influence which emotions they have, when they have them, and how they experience and express these emotions. Emotion regulatory processes may be automatic or controlled, conscious or unconscious, and may have their effects at one or more points in the emotion generative process [5]. The emotional changes that are

* Tel: 0988 771109. Email: Vietanh@tueba.edu.vn

produced by emotion regulation may or may not bring people closer to the emotional state that they desired [8].

Emotion regulation refers to the processes by which people manage their emotions to response to the stimuli and seek to redirect the spontaneous flow of their emotions. Emotion regulatory processes consist of two sub-processes. One of them is the process that happens before people exposing to the stimuli and the other happens after that. Gross (1998) also divided the emotion regulatory process in two ones: antecedent-focused emotion regulation, which occurs before the emotion is generated, and response-focused emotion regulation which occurs after emotion is generated. He also distinguished five sets of emotion regulatory processes: situation selection, situation modification, attention deployment, cognitive change, and response modulation [7]

Cognitive Reappraisal

The reappraisal strategy refers to the interpretation of stimulus from a neutral and detached perspective which decreases the emotional relevance of the stimulus [5]. Reappraisal intends to eliminate the emotional responses at early stage of the emotion generative process [5], [6]. Reappraisal which is a type of cognitive change means the ways that individuals analyze an emotion and elicit situation in order to change its impact on emotional experience [6]. It refers to regulating emotional experience by changing the content of thoughts or re-evaluating the emotions. Using the reappraisal strategy, employees can reduce their emotional reactions toward a stimulus that tends to evoke emotional reactions. For example, employees may think customer injustice behavior as accidental events and do not pay so much attention.

Emotion Suppression

Emotion suppression refers to the inhibition of ongoing emotional response tendencies

during the emotion generative process, which can be applied to inner experiences as well as overt behaviors such as facial expressions [5]. Suppression refers to restraining of emotional expression by controlling emotional behavior in order to regulate emotional expression [6]. In other words, emotional suppression is a conscious inhibition of emotional expressive behavior while emotionally aroused. For example, an employee may show his neutral face instead of angry expression even though he is very angry.

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is measure of the employee's evaluation of the job and has often been used as proxy for employee well-being at work. Some researchers propose that being required to be friendly to customers may make a monotonous job more fun, or may follow self-expression that is enjoyable to employees. Others have suggested that emotional labor stifles personal expression and as such is unpleasant. Some studies supported that the experience of emotional dissonance was negatively related to job satisfaction. Rutter and Fielding (1988) [11] supported that suppressing true emotions was a source of stress for prison officers, and that such suppression related to lowered job satisfaction.

From above discussion, some following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Customer injustice behavior will lead to anger feeling in employees

H2: Anger feeling will cause employees to engage in cognitive reappraisal strategy to regulate their emotions.

H3: Anger feeling will cause employees to engage in emotion suppression strategy to regulate their emotions.

H4: Employees who engage more in cognitive reappraisal strategy will less satisfy with the job

H5: Employees who engage more on suppression strategy will less satisfy with the job

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Scenario Design and Procedures

A common service scenario will be designed that would provoke emotional responses in employees. Scenario-based designs are often used in service situation studies because they allow expensive or difficult manipulations to be more easily operationalized [1]. From a more pragmatic perspective, the use of scenarios also avoids the expense and ethical considerations associated with observing or enacting actual service failures [2]. Scenarios also avoid the response bias due to memory lapses and rationalization likely to be presented in surveys that rely on recall [9]. In this experimental designed study, participants will be asked to read a scenario about a situation in a restaurant in which an employee was treated unfair by customers. A scenario capable of, and credible in, eliciting a high-arousal negative emotion, anger, in employees will be required.

Participants will be surveyed in groups of around 30-50 people. They will be asked to engage in a role-playing exercise that they imagine they experience the situations in which they are treated with injustice behaviors. The sample size will be determined based on the number of items used in model and the significance of statistic coefficients. In this study, sample size will be chosen with 270 respondents.

Measurement

Four items (7-point scale) used for measure employees' emotions (anger) after being treated unfairly will be adapted from Bougie et al. (2003) [3] and Weiss (1999) [13]. Angry feelings will be assessed with four items (7-point scale): angry, enraged, frustrated, and irritated. Scores on these four items will be summed to form an anger experience composite, which is the score used in analyses. Two items adapted from Rupp et al. (2008) [10] and two others from Colquitt

(2001) [4] will be used to measure employee perception of customers' interactional injustice (7-point scale). Five items for measuring cognitive reappraisal and three items for measuring emotion suppression (7-point scale) will be adapted from Gross and John (2003) [6] and Gabbott (2010) [2]. In order to measure job satisfaction, this study will use the same tool that Schwepker (2001)[12] used in his study.

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Convergent Validity

Convergent validity of measures can be evaluated in terms of significance of factor loadings of scale items. Results showed that, t-values of all estimated standardized loadings were significant at $p < .01$ level $\chi^2 = 311.27$, $GFI = .91$, $CFI = .95$, $RMSEA = .053$.

Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity is the extent to which the measure is unique and not simply a reflection of other variables. The results provided the evidence of discriminant validity using average variance extracted (AVE). The AVE exceeded the square correlation between all pairs of constructs. The results showed that all constructs are discriminant.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis 1 proposes that customer injustice behavior will lead to anger feeling in employees. The results show this hypothesis was supported ($\beta = 0.22$; $p < 0.01$).

Hypothesis 2 proposes that employee anger feeling will cause employees to engage in cognitive reappraisal strategy to regulate their emotions. The results show this hypothesis was supported ($\beta = 0.27$; $p < 0.01$). Hypothesis 3 implies that anger feeling will cause employees to engage in emotion suppression strategy to regulate their emotions. The results show this hypothesis was supported ($\beta = 0.33$; $p < 0.01$). The data analysis also supported hypothesis 4 ($\beta = 0.19$; $p < 0.01$), and hypothesis 5 ($\beta = 0.25$; $p < 0.01$).

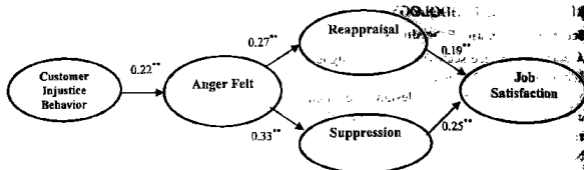


Figure 1: Research Model

DISCUSSION

The findings show that customer behaviors affect employee emotion regulation. When customers behave in injustice manner, employees may suffer from negative emotional feelings. Because of organizational rules, employees cannot show their impolite attitudes or emotions with customers, so they control their emotions. However, emotional regulation will make employees feel dissatisfied with jobs.

Service firms should pay attention to training programs for employees, especially for frontline-employees. Training programs not only focus on professional skills, but also focus on skills of emotional regulation and attitude expression. In some cases, improving the skills of emotional regulation help employees show suitable emotions and attitudes when contacting with customers. Service firms also offer some entertainment programs for employees to help them clear away their negative feelings in service process.

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TÓM TẮT

ẢNH HƯỞNG CỦA HÀNH VI KHÁCH HÀNG ĐẾN VIỆC KIỂM SOÁT CẢM XÚC VÀ SỰ HÀI LÒNG TRONG CÔNG VIỆC CỦA NHÂN VIÊN

Mai Việt Anh*

Trường Đại học Kinh tế & Quản trị kinh doanh – ĐH Thái Nguyên

Trong quá trình dịch vụ, thái độ và hành vi của khách hàng ảnh hưởng tới cảm xúc của nhân viên. Khách hàng với hành vi cư xử bất hợp lý hoặc bất lịch sự có thể thể làm cho nhân viên nổi giận. Nhân viên có thể không kiểm soát cảm xúc của mình và cư xử theo cách không phù hợp với khách hàng. Điều này có thể ảnh hưởng tới dịch vụ mà hãng cung cấp cho khách hàng. Bài viết này nghiên cứu ảnh hưởng của hành vi khách hàng đến việc kiểm soát cảm xúc và sự hài lòng trong công việc của nhân viên.

Keywords: hành vi cư xử bất hợp lý, cảm xúc bức mình, che giấu cảm xúc, thay đổi nhận thức, kiểm soát cảm xúc, hài lòng với công việc

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* Tel: 0988 771109. Email: Vietanh@tueba.edu.vn