

A FOCUS ON EMOTIONAL LABOUR IN ARMED FORCES

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ABSTRACT

The concept of Emotional Labour in Armed Forces is at nascent stage and it is widely taken for granted (in India) that soldiers are meant to fight the enemy and nothing can deter them, overlooking the human aspect of a soldier, who also experiences normal emotions such as, anger, anxiety, fear and sadness and is under tremendous pressure to lead from the front in the name of his unit / Country (combined feeling of deep acting and surface acting), also to lead his men and not to let other soldiers get effected by the emotions of fearful odds which lies ahead of them and to complete the mission successfully at any cost.

Managing individual emotions is part of being successful at work, whether as academician, fire fighters, stewardesses, Pilots, Doctors or Soldiers. Emotions such as excitement, sadness, anger, shame or fear, whether controlled or uncontrolled, displayed, suppressed, or utilised are experienced and learned from every day of our life. We use and manage emotions in everyday life and at work, and how we do so is largely influenced by who we are, ie our class, gender, ethnicity, society, peer group etc, and what we are doing ie family work, occupational work etc.

Hochschild's pivotal work *The Managed Heart - Commercialization of Human Feelings* (1983) has been crucial to, research on work and emotions. In her book Hochschild, tried to make sense of how the growing service industry shifts the exploitive mechanisms of capitalism to the realm of women's work. Hochschild's identification of 'emotion labour' as typically provided by middle class women, she identified emotional alienation as the central danger of the then rapidly-growing service industry.

Managerial expectations for certain types of emotional expression can compel service providers to express emotions that they do not truly feel. Hochschild (1983, p. 7) has called this "emotional labour," which she defines as "inducing or suppressing feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others."

The feeling rules, as identified by Hoshschild, of many professions are primarily driven by rationales which are non-profit and non-commercial in nature, such as help (social work), health (doctors, nurses), or national security (soldiers). Emotional management is not the sole preserve of women and the service industry, as Hochschild originally had assumed, but is also undertaken by male employees in male-dominated occupations and professions, such as, firefighters, rescue workers and soldiers.

Key Terms

Emotional Labour – Emotional Labour can be defined as "the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display; emotional labor is sold for a wage and therefore has exchange value" (Hochschild, 1983). It refers to the process by which workers are expected to manage their feelings in accordance with organizationally defined rules and guidelines.

Surface Acting– Surface acting is a process of creation of expected emotions that are not felt by an individual (Grandey 2000: 95; Chu, and Murrmann 2006: 1182) therefore it means to manage visible aspects of emotions which break out on the surface whereas inner feelings do not alter (Lee, and Ok 2014: 177)

Deep Acting – Deep acting requires expected expressive behaviour and simultaneously regulation of inner feelings by invoking memories and thoughts that induce desired emotions (Lee, and Ok 2014: 179; Zapf 2002: 244).

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 EMOTIONS AND ARMED FORCES

Field Marshal SHFJ Manekshaw, MC, in his famous quote said “If a man says he is not afraid of dying, he is either lying or a Gorkha”. It is natural even for a trained and battle-hardened soldier to experience emotions such as fear, hunger or anger. It is widely recognized that ‘organizations have feelings’ (Albrow, 1994, 1997); that they are sites of ‘love, hatred and passion’ (Fineman, 1993) and Armed Forces is no different from other organizations. Indian Armed forces are expected to support operations in intense Counter Insurgency environment and at times internationally as part of United Nation Mission. To perform their assigned duties, optimal preparation to participate in today’s complex Counter Insurgency environment and in a wide range of operations in J&K and NE keeping the present situation in mind, is crucial. Soldiering includes a range of activities which very often involve emotions. The tasks involve countering and neutralising aggression from the enemy, creating confidence in local people and

negotiating the religious sentiments and political situations in the states where the armed forces is operating. In extreme situations military personnel can face risk to life and limb and be called upon to use violence. The exposure to threats is extremely stressful for the individuals (Van den Berg and Soeters, 2009). Furthermore, the activities occur in special circumstances and conditions which are highly demanding, both physically and psychologically.

In armed forces emotional culture that gives limited space for emotional expression as it is necessary to remain firm and cold in acute situations. Military Leaders must be able to minimise emotional displays in order to contribute to operational efficiency. The military has a long history of being part of the labour market. Being a soldier includes a range of activities which often involve emotions. The tasks involve countering and neutralising aggression from the enemy, creating confidence in local people and negotiating actors, etc. In extreme situations military personnel can face risk to life and limb and be called upon to use violence. The exposure to threats is extremely stressful for the individuals (Van den Berg and Soeters, 2009). Furthermore, the activities occur i

The Indian Armed forces in the recent past have increasingly taken part in operations to ensure National Security and National unity, to defend the nation from external aggression and internal threats, and to maintain peace and security within its borders. It conducts humanitarian rescue operations during natural calamities and other disturbances, peace keeping and peace enforcement operations as part of UN peace keeping Force. As a result soldiers spend long periods away from their home, which may create conflicts related to the soldiers' family members. Most of them have almost no room for privacy while on deployment in operational areas. Thus, the profession of arms is often characterized by tough physical, psychological and emotional conditions. These conditions and emotional experiences are often shared within a group as part of a unit or a sub-unit, which becomes important for the participants (Shils and Janowitz, 1948). These conditions place considerable demands on motivation and socialisation in military organisations and have an impact on the social identity of soldiers (Franke, 2000; Haslam and Platow, 2001; Nørgaard and Holting, 2006).

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1.2 SOCIAL IDENTITY OF A SOLDIER

Indian Army is organised on lines of classification, because social, cultural and linguistic homogeneity has been observed to be a force multiplier as a battle winning factor. Social categorisation is about how people bring together and systemise social objects or events in groups in order to simplify their perception of the social environment. “Social categorization is a process of bringing together social objects or events in groups which are equivalent with regard to an individual’s actions, intentions, attitudes and systems of beliefs” [Tajfel, (1981), p.255]. In most of the parts of rural India even today it is a matter of pride and legacy for families and their native villages, to join the Armed Forces. This association of Armed forces with pride of a particular community or region, acts as a Firewall against the emotional conditions of a Soldier, when faced with fearful odds.

1.3 EMOTIONS AND EMOTIONAL LABOUR THEORY

Aristotle’s definition of emotion “as that which leads one’s condition to become so transformed that his judgment is affected, and which is accompanied by pleasure and pain” Aristotle, in Solomon, (2003, p.6). One important aspect for the emotions is people’s working places. According to emotional labour theory (Hochschild, 2003b) service labour involve expectations concerning the appropriate emotional reactions of the employees involved in service transactions. The expectations give rise to feeling rules that specify the intensity, duration and object of emotions attached (cf., Ashforth and Humphrey, 1995). Accordingly, for example, flight attendants are expected to feel cheerful and friendly, nurses empathetic and supportive, etc. Emotional regulation, a concept within the theory, is about “the process by which individuals influence which emotions they have, when they have them, and how they experience and express these emotions” [Gross, (1998), p.275]. Thus, “emotions depend on the

implications others are perceived to have for one's personal survival and welfare, needs, goals and plans" [Stryker, (2004), p.3]. As individual's work and identity are relational (cf., Ashforth and Humphrey, 1995), emotional labour theory can be seen from and enriched by the identity concept within social identity theory. The workplace is regarded as an arena for emotions, emotional regulation, socialisation and identity seeking.

2. ARMED FORCES AND EMOTIONAL LABOUR A POTENT BLEND OF CHIVALRY AND ATTACHED EMOTIONS

The fields of war and violence are arenas of emotions. Fear, anger, anxiety, hopelessness and regret but also hope, joy, happiness etc. The tasks of countering and neutralising aggression from the enemy, creating confidence among the different actors involved, demand certain forms of behaviour and emotional reactions (Alvinius et al., forthcoming; Janowitz, 1966; Morris and Feldman, 1997; Weibull, 2010). Whereas military work has always included high levels of uncertainty and 'frictions', today's armed forces also meet a variety of demands and diffuse threats due to terrorism, and volatile situation at our International borders etc. In general, the work of soldiers is often characterised by structure, discipline and routine within training and training camps (Janowitz, 1966; Segal, 1986). Some soldiers find this well-structured, ordered life convenient. Whereas at home there are many obligations attached to everyday life, which a soldier is not able to meet. The armed Forces is also characterised by tough physical and psychological working and living conditions. Since it involves probable situations of combat, violence, and life threatening, it is often accompanied by emotions and emotional regulation.

In the Training Academies or Centers, during the drill part of training, soldiers learn how to repeat a certain behaviour and reaction, and sometimes to be able to act without thinking or feeling too much. The soldiers learn how to turn off the feelings when dangerous situations occur, that is, when they need to act despite possible danger and in highly stressful situations. Military work can be interpreted as an emotional labour profession with all emotions involved and regulations demanded. Often, criticism is also directed towards the legitimacy of the armed forces, their existence and their activities, partly because of the possible use of violent force. Armed forces 'work' is akin to emotional labour profession, which involves significant elements of emotional regulation, as soldiers have to deal with their fear, anxiety, boredom, etc., in the process of both countering aggression and other stressful situations

2. INAAM, NAMAK AUR NISHAN, ETHOS SOLDIERS UPHOLD

“It is one thing to be frightened, it is quite another to show fear. If you once show fear in front of your men, you will never be able to command”, Field Marshal SHFJ Manekshaw. Military work involves managing emotions so that they correspond with organisational rules and goals, even if they are discrepant with internal feelings. Accordingly, soldier’s work is about regulation of their feelings relevant for the provisions of their unit. The Indian Army’s Ethos of Naam, Namak aur Nishan (Naam – Name/Reputation of your country, reputation of your Regiment or Unit, Namak – Fidelity to the salt you have partaken and Nishaan – Ensign, Flag or standard. This can be the Indian flag and the Colors of the regiment, soldiers would make ultimate sacrifice to protect it from falling into enemy hands) ensures soldiers regulate or mask their emotions when faced with fearful odds for the success of the operation / battle. They need to show military discipline and a favourable picture of the National Armed Forces (cf., Chen, 2009; Grandey, 2000; Weibull, 2010). Military profession can be seen as an emotional labour which includes emotional regulation. Many soldiers seem to like and identify with the blend of ‘profane and sacred’ activities, and the emotional regulations involved (cf., Bolton and Boyd, 2003).

3. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

The military profession entails various dilemmas such as, for instance, having to deal with risk to one’s own life and limb while having to reassure relatives and family members, while further yet having to defend the country. The act of defence towards the public underpins and anchors their social identity as soldiers and members of a group of soldiers. Similar to the occupational experience of workers in service-oriented jobs, soldiering has profound effects on their health and well-being, such as burnout, inauthenticity, and job dissatisfaction. Although in Armed forces a soldier’s training and his attributes, can influence the emotional experience on the job, emotional labor is also likely to threaten the well-being of Soldiers through significantly high demands to express organizationally desired emotions and low control over what emotions can be felt and displayed.

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