

## ORGANIZATIONAL MANAGEMENT OF EMOTIONS AT WORK: MOTIVES AND FORMS

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***Abstract:** Inoculation of the appropriate form of emotional display in employees was, for a long period, a formal control characteristic of organizations. Organizations regulate emotions employees should display and appropriate intensity of those emotions through explicit feeling rules, emotion scripts or through socialization process and organizational rituals. Certain organizational contexts impose specific forms of emotions regulation in employees, either as displaying required emotions or as suppressing undesired ones. The specific forms of organizational management of emotions at work and the motives for which organizations regulate employees' emotions are analyzed. We argue that the regulation of emotion for commercial purposes is pervasive. In the final part of the paper, we will discuss ethical implication of organizational management of emotions at work.*

***Keywords:** emotion management, emotional rules, organizations.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

According to Hochschild, approximately two thirds of nowadays jobs involve emotions as part of employees' work (Hochschild, 1983/2003:7). The author refers not to emotional responses of individuals to particular events, but to emotions that are experiences and displayed as part of job requirements. In this context, we cannot longer speak of rational organization. We must approach the emotional organization.

The emotional organization place employees in the centre of the organization and consider emotion the core of peoples' actions and interaction (Fineman, 2003:2). All organizations are emotional arenas in which emotions shape events, and events shape emotions. The organization in which we work regulates our emotions, especially our displayed emotions. Employees should manage their emotions according to strong social scripts, which specify that displaying the genuine feeling is, sometimes, risky for obtaining profit or for attaining organizational objectives.

In the workplace, we are all, in different ways, managers of emotions (Fineman, 2001: 234); the tension between genuine feeling and displayed emotional expressions is an unchanged characteristic of social organization. Inoculation of the appropriate form of emotional display in employees was, for a long period, a formal control characteristic of organizations (Gibson, 2008:268).

Organizations regulate the emotions employees should display and the appropriate intensity of those emotions. Appropriateness of displayed emotions is regulated through explicit feeling rules (that take the form of organizational scripts) issued by agents endowed with power (such as the teacher, the manager, significant others), or by informal rules transmitted during socialization process or during organizational rituals (Fineman, 2003: 22). A firm control of employees' emotions may lead to unexpected consequences, such as lack of trust, tension, emotional exhaustion and organizations must intervene for reducing them.

## **2. HOW ORGANIZATIONS MANAGE EMOTIONS? – EMOTION RULES AND ORGANIZATIONAL SCRIPTS**

Hochschild first used the term “emotional rule” to describe the norms and standards that rebuild the inner experience in cultural, social or organizational contexts (Hochschild, 1983/2003:7). We know these rules from the manner in which others, or even us, respond to the interferences of displaying emotions.

Formal or informal expectations to display a certain emotion are, generally, a function of the social, occupational or organizational norms (Mann, 2004:349). In some cases, emotional rules are explicitly stipulated in written regulations or codes of conduct for employees (most cited examples are those of Disney’s employees) (Fineman, 2003:32). Examples of explicit prescriptions are: ‘Don’t put your client in an uncomfortable situation!’, ‘Always look the client into the eyes!’, ‘Always smile to the client!’, ‘Say <Thank you> to each client!’, ‘Show patience and fairness in solving clients complaints’. Emotion management is, consequently, an essential part of employees’ work.

Emotional rules offer behaviour standards and are associated with ethic and cultural aspects of emotions. Emotion rules reflect power relations and, therefore, are techniques to discipline individual differences on emotional display and communication (Mann, 2004:351). These rules refer to specific language, define emotional areas, describe the attributes of a valuable person, and describe traps that should be avoided and purposes to reach. The presence of emotional rules in an organization increases the probability that the employee will actively regulate his emotional expressions. In public services jobs, emotional rules mostly assume displaying of positive emotions. Emotional rules in certain organizational contexts, such as the military context, firmly suppress emotions that could threaten the power hierarchy. Those emotions considered to serve military purposes are encouraged (screaming angry in contact with the enemy to encourage your colleague or to cheer them during marches, for example).

In all organizational contexts, there are settings or physical areas governed by other emotional rules than the explicit organizational ones. These are places in which organizational control, either direct or through surveillance, is reduced and the informal norms about the appropriate display of emotion govern. The physical architecture shape, in some point, the emotional architecture of the organization (Fineman, 2001:223) (the cabin crew in a plane, the cafeteria in a school, the parking of an organization are such emotional areas in which employees can express genuine emotions). However, none of these contexts lacks emotions. A much subtle way of controlling emotions in organizations is training program or socialization process. For teachers, lawyers, medical doctors, psychiatrists, managers, social workers, for example, the training process often refer to the idea of being professional when interacting with clients. Specialists in these professions must display seriousness, understanding, self-control, detachment, empathy when interacting with their clients, regardless of what they genuinely feel. They learn, through imitation or reinforcement that displaying such emotions is a professional behaviour.

One of the most common and simple form of organizational management of emotions is surveillance (Fineman, 2003:34). There are several ways in which employees’ emotions are regulated through surveillance, according to specificity of work. The mysterious client (in tourism agencies, for example), hidden surveillance cameras (in shops), random monitoring of telephones (in call centre), satisfaction questionnaires for the clients are some of the methods organizations may choose to use in order to manage their employees’ display of emotions. Those who do not succeed to express and displays the required emotions risk sanctions.

## **3. WHAT IS BEHIND ORGANIZATIONAL MANAGEMENT OF EMOTION?**

The main reason for organizations to manage their employees’ emotions is the economic one. If employees succeed to create

a positive and comfortable experience for the customer, the latter will probably repeat his visit and will buy again. Consumer behaviour studies show that it is less probably for a customer to return to an organization that did not treat him specially or did not succeed to create the impression of a special attitude towards him (Fineman, 2003:33).

Another motive organizations claim to justify management of employees' emotions refers to reduction of negative consequences of emotional experiences on employees. Several studies on emotional labour suggest that the most important consequences of regulating express emotions in the workplace are associated in employees with burnout and poor job performance (Brotheridge, Grandey, 2002:19). At this level, organizations may intervene in several ways.

Possible intervention strategies to prevent destructive emotions in the workplace are similar to those adopted for the management of stress: primary intervention (reduction of destructive emotions and stress), secondary interventions (management of destructive emotions and stress), and tertiary interventions (counselling programs for employees) (Cooper, Cartwright, 2001:270).

Primary intervention consists of measures for reduction or eliminations of sources of negative emotions, sources related to working environment. By reducing or eliminating these sources, the negative impact of emotions on employees is also reduced. Rebuilding work tasks, changing the design of the work environment, flexible working schedules, participative management, career development programs for employees, social support and feedback, cohesive work teams, sharing rewards are some of the most efficient strategies organizations may adopt in order to reduce the impact of emotional rules on employees. Primary interventions strategies are, often, means for changing the organizational culture.

Secondary interventions aim to promptly identify and manage destructive emotions by increasing employees' level of acknowledgement and improving their abilities to manage emotions.

Acknowledgement activities and abilities training programs destined to improve relaxation techniques, cognitive coping abilities, changing lifestyle or work-style abilities (time management programs, training assertiveness programs for example) have an important role in developing individuals' physical and psychological resources. These programs offer support for coping with work stressors that cannot be changed. The main role of secondary prevention is to reduce the negative effects by reducing consequences rather than sources.

Tertiary interventions focus on treatment, rehabilitation and recovery of employees with major health issues that resulted from experiencing destructive emotions. Usually, interventions at this level imply counselling services for employees with work or personal problem, implementation of complex systems designed to facilitate and monitor the rehabilitation process.

According to Murphy and Cooper, secondary and tertiary interventions are the most implemented ones by organizations, because (Cooper, Cartwright, 2001:272): there are many published empirical studies on the benefits of these types of interventions programs; those implementing secondary and tertiary intervention value more changes in individuals than changes in organizations; organization consider that it is much easier and less conflicting to change individuals than introducing extensive and expensive organizational development programs which results are uncertain. Secondary and primary interventions have an important role in preventing destructive emotions, but do not offer a solution unless associated with intervention on stress sources.

Not always managers and organizations resort to solutions that are extensive and, most probably, expensive. Some managers found a much simpler solutions; they present emotional rules as forms of rewarding the employees. For example, several supermarkets offer primes or bonuses to their employees, if they have had a friendly behaviour towards the consumer (Fineman, 2003:34). Such examples demonstrate that shaping employees' emotions for commercial purposes is omnipresent.

#### 4. ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS OF ORGANIZATIONAL MANAGEMENT OF EMOTIONS

When analysing the ethical implications of emotional control made by organizations, one must take into account several points of view. For some authors, organizational management of employees' emotions is a new form of exploitation and alienation (Guy, Newman, Mastracci, 2008:157). Their arguments is that most employees performing emotion management under the control of the organizations work in jobs which require low skills and they will probably do not change their job. When emotion management is done by direct or indirect surveillance (video cameras, random monitoring of phone calls), one must question the correctness of these practices. What is organization responsibility regarding unintentional consequences of these practices (stress, suspicion, lack of trust)?

Other authors argue that control over emotional display of employee could be justified in contexts in which employee manage their emotions in order to satisfy or to help the client (such as educational or medical context) (Oplatka, 2009:63).

For a long period, emotions at work were considered disruptive, a sign of weakness, a deviation for the sacred rationality of institutions. Despite that, management of emotion at work is a significant aspect in many professions and organizations and, more and more, is considered a core component of professional identity.

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