

# **An Investigation into the Influence of Emotional Labor on Task Performance: A Case Study of Bank Tellers in Handan City**

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## **Abstract**

This study is dedicated to a deep exploration of the relationship between emotional labor and task performance among frontline employees in commercial banks in Handan City. Through empirical research methods, it comprehensively examines the interactions among emotional labor, emotional regulation self-efficacy, and task performance, aiming to provide theoretical guidance for the management of emotional labor and task performance in grassroots banks. Data were collected via an online survey of bank tellers in Handan City, receiving 462 questionnaires, of which 403 were valid. The data were analyzed using SPSS 21. The study set four objectives: 1) to systematically assess the direct impact of emotional labor on employee task performance; 2) to explore the mediating role of emotional regulation self-efficacy between emotional labor and task performance; 3) to construct and validate a theoretical model of the relationships among emotional labor, emotional regulation self-efficacy, and task performance; 4) to propose specific strategies and recommendations for managing emotional labor.

The findings indicate that emotional labor positively affects task performance and emphasize the significant mediating role of emotional regulation self-efficacy. This offers a new perspective for understanding the complex relationship between emotional labor, emotional regulation self-efficacy, and task performance and provides practical management strategies for enhancing employee performance. The discoveries of this study not only enrich the theoretical foundation in the field of emotional labor but also guide the management practices in grassroots banks. By effectively managing emotional labor, these institutions can improve employee task performance, optimize customer service experience, and enhance the performance of the banking business.

**Keywords:** Emotional Labor, Task Performance, Emotional Regulation, Self-Efficacy

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## **Introduction**

Bank tellers, who directly interact with customers at the counters of bank branches, now find emotional labor an indispensable part of their work environment. Emotional labor involves managing and adjusting one's emotions to meet the demands of a professional role. This process significantly impacts an individual's task performance and the overall performance of the organization (Peifer et al., 2020). Despite the growing interest in emotional labor and its impact on task performance, research on its role and impact mechanisms among bank tellers remains relatively scarce. In particular, the mediating role of emotional regulation self-efficacy between emotional labor and task performance has not been thoroughly explored. Moreover, different types of emotional labor strategies may have varying impacts on work performance, and exploring these differences and their underlying mechanisms is crucial for optimizing employee performance (Downes et al., 2021).

Based on social cognitive theory, this study aims to fill this gap in the literature. Social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986) emphasizes the interaction between cognition, environment, and behavior, particularly highlighting the central role of an individual's self-efficacy in their actions and performance. In the context of emotional labor, this theoretical framework helps us understand how individuals manage and adjust their emotional expressions to meet job demands, and how such adjustments and management, influenced by emotional self-efficacy, affect their job performance (Bandura, 1997).

By applying social cognitive theory to the study of emotional labor, this research explores the complexity and duality of emotional labor and its impact on task performance. Specifically, this study focuses on bank tellers in Handan City, exploring the relationship between emotional labor, emotional regulation self-efficacy, and task performance, and aims to empirically validate the mediating role of emotional regulation self-efficacy.

The goal of this study is to provide a comprehensive understanding of how emotional labor affects the task performance of bank tellers and how emotional regulation self-efficacy plays a mediating role in this process. Moreover, this study aims to offer theoretical guidance and practical strategies for bank management on the management of emotional labor and work performance, to optimize employees' emotional labor, enhance their task performance, and thereby improve customer service experience and the overall performance of the banking business. Through this research, we hope to enrich the theoretical foundation of the field of emotional labor and provide practical strategies for grassroots bank management.

## **Research Objectives**

This study examines bank tellers in Handan City, Hebei Province, China, utilizing the social cognitive theory framework. It incorporates emotional regulation self-efficacy as a mediating variable to explore the management of emotional labor and proposes optimization strategies aimed at enhancing the task performance of bank tellers.

1. The research aims to systematically assess the direct impact of emotional labor on the task performance of bank tellers in Handan City and clarify the role of emotional labor in enhancing task performance.

2. It explores the mediating role of emotional regulation self-efficacy in the relationship between emotional labor and task performance, revealing how emotional regulation self-efficacy modulates the effect of emotional labor on performance.

3. A theoretical model encompassing the relationships among emotional labor, emotional regulation self-efficacy, and task performance is established and validated through empirical research.

4. Based on the findings, the study proposes specific management strategies and recommendations to optimize the management of emotional labor, thereby enhancing employee task performance.

## **Literature Review**

### **Concept Definition**

#### **Emotional Labor**

In this study, emotional labor is defined as activities regulated by organizational emotional display rules, requiring emotional expression and regulatory control according to work contexts to accomplish job tasks or enhance work outcomes (Hochschild, 1979). In terms of the dimensions of emotional labor, this study adopts Grandey's classification of emotional labor into surface and deep-acting strategies (Grandey, 2000). Surface acting involves employees adjusting their outward expressions, such as facial expressions and tone, to align with the emotional rules set by the organization, without changing their actual feelings. Deep acting, on the other hand, refers to employees making an effort to adjust their inner thoughts and feelings, driven internally to display the attitudes and emotions required by the organization, thereby fulfilling the organizational emotional rules and promoting the completion of work objectives.

#### **Task Performance**

Prior to Borman and Motowidlo (1993) differentiating job performance into task performance and contextual performance, most research focused on the in-depth exploration of the connotation of task performance. In this study, task performance is refined as the efficiency and effectiveness with which an employee completes their job responsibilities within their designated role. This includes not only the execution of daily tasks but also the ability to solve complex problems. Such performance evaluation is directly connected to the employee's core responsibilities and can be accurately assessed through a series of quantitative indicators.

#### **Emotional Regulation Self-Efficacy**

Emotional regulation self-efficacy is a type of general self-efficacy, which Bandura elaborated on as an individual's subjective judgment, belief, or perception of their capability to accomplish a task or activity before engaging in it (Bandura, 1977). Caprara and Bandura (2003) introduced the theory of self-efficacy into the domain of self-regulation of emotions, defining it as emotional regulation self-efficacy (also referred to as "emotional self-efficacy"). Self-efficacy and emotion regulation are core components of the self-regulation system, with an interrelated relationship. This denotes that self-efficacy can be applied to regulate one's emotions, thereby influencing an individual's behavior and psychological state. This is the essence of emotional regulation self-efficacy. In explaining this concept, emphasis is placed on an individual's ability to effectively identify various emotions within themselves, and then on the confidence level in regulating and managing those emotions.

**Theoretical Foundation**

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), proposed by Albert Bandura, highlights the interplay among individual cognition, environmental factors, and behavior, particularly emphasizing the central role of self-efficacy in this process (Bandura, 1986). According to this theory, an individual's behavior, such as emotional labor, is influenced not only by external environmental factors but also by internal cognitive factors, such as emotional regulation self-efficacy, emotional regulation self-efficacy, the belief in one's ability to manage and adjust emotions to cope with specific situations, serves as a key mediating variable linking emotional labor and task performance. Within this framework, emotional labor requires individuals to adjust their emotional expressions to meet job demands, and a high level of emotional regulation self-efficacy can enhance individuals' confidence and ability to meet these demands, thereby directly affecting their task performance. Thus, Social Cognitive Theory provides a theoretical foundation for understanding the relationship between emotional labor, emotional regulation self-efficacy, and task performance, revealing the potential pathway to optimize emotional labor strategies and enhance task performance through improving emotional regulation self-efficacy.

**Emotional Labor and Task Performance**

In the contemporary workplace environment, the emotional labor process by which employees manage and adjust their emotions at work plays a significant role in their task performance. According to Social Cognitive Theory, the impact of emotional labor on task performance depends on how employees appraise and cope with situations related to emotional expression. Employees' emotional appraisals and coping strategies not only influence their emotional expressions but also indirectly affect the outcomes of their work tasks. Positive emotional appraisals and effective emotional coping strategies, such as emotion regulation and expression skills, can effectively help employees manage emotions, mitigate the negative effects of emotional labor, increase job satisfaction, and thereby enhance task performance. Conversely, negative emotional appraisals and inappropriate coping strategies can lead to excessive emotional expenditure, reduce work efficiency, and negatively impact task performance. Numerous studies have validated the close connection between emotional labor and task performance. Hwang and Park (2022) discovered that emotional labor has a dual role in task performance: deep acting enhances performance through sincere emotion management, while surface acting may cause emotional exhaustion due to a lack of authenticity, negatively affecting performance.

In summary, the role that emotional labor plays in the workplace is multifaceted and complex, with its impact on task performance varying according to different labor strategies. Deep acting generally helps to improve performance, while surface acting may have detrimental effects.

Based on the literature review and theoretical analysis above, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

H1a: Deep acting in emotional labor has a positive impact on task performance.

H1b: Surface acting in emotional labor has a negative impact on task performance.

**Emotional Labor and Emotional Regulation Self-Efficacy**

In the study of the impact of emotional labor on job performance, emotional regulation self-efficacy is considered a mediating variable, warranting hypotheses about the role of emotional self-efficacy in both pre-and post-model relationships. Emotional self-efficacy, a form of self-efficacy, represents an individual (employee) psychological resource, as detailed by Kuo et al. (2021).

The depletion of psychological resources can further exert a negative impact. The more frequently employees engage in surface acting, the more it depletes bank tellers' confidence in identifying and regulating their own emotions. Therefore, surface acting can have a negative impact on the emotional self-efficacy of bank tellers. Conversely, if employees adjust their inner experiences and cognitions to align their genuine internal feelings with external emotional expressions, they can gain a greater sense of accomplishment at work, thereby enhancing their psychological resources. Hence, the more bank tellers engage in deep acting, the increase in psychological resources can help them more effectively identify and regulate their emotions, resulting in stronger emotional regulation self-efficacy. Deep acting can have a positive impact on the emotional self-efficacy of bank tellers.

Based on the literature review and theoretical analysis above, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

H2a: Deep acting has a positive impact on emotional self-efficacy.

H2b: Surface acting has a negative impact on emotional self-efficacy.

### **Emotional Regulation Self-Efficacy and Task Performance**

Within the framework of Social Cognitive Theory, self-efficacy is defined as an individual's confidence and belief in their capability to successfully accomplish tasks or work within a specific domain. This confidence not only influences an individual's motivational behavior but also significantly impacts their performance level. Individuals with high self-efficacy tend to set challenging goals for themselves, strive to overcome obstacles, and demonstrate enduring perseverance in the pursuit of success. They exhibit greater confidence when faced with work challenges and can effectively utilize their knowledge and skills to solve problems. This positive mindset and belief contribute to the enhancement of task performance, as individuals with high self-efficacy are more likely to fully leverage their potential and achieve better work outcomes. Peifer et al. (2020) found that self-efficacy has a significant positive impact on task performance, particularly noting that enhancing self-efficacy through positive feedback can improve both the quantity and quality of task performance. Downes et al. (2021) not only confirmed the positive correlation between self-efficacy and individual task performance and also used Social Cognitive Theory to explain this influence, demonstrating the relationship through a validated measurement model.

Based on the literature review and theoretical analysis above, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H3: Emotional self-efficacy has a positive impact on job performance.

### **The Mediating Role of Emotional Regulation Self-Efficacy**

Within the framework of Social Cognitive Theory, emotional self-efficacy plays a critical mediating role in the dynamic relationship between emotional labor and task performance. Emotional labor, defined as the process by which individuals manage and adjust their emotional expressions to meet the demands of their work roles, partially depends on their confidence in their ability to regulate emotions and emotional self-efficacy. The strength of this belief affects the quality and efficiency of emotional labor, which in turn impacts task performance. Thus, by enhancing emotional self-efficacy, emotional labor can be more effectively transformed into improved task performance, revealing an important psychological mechanism in the process of converting emotional management into work outcomes. This understanding offers a new perspective on deepening the comprehension of emotional labor and its impact on job performance,

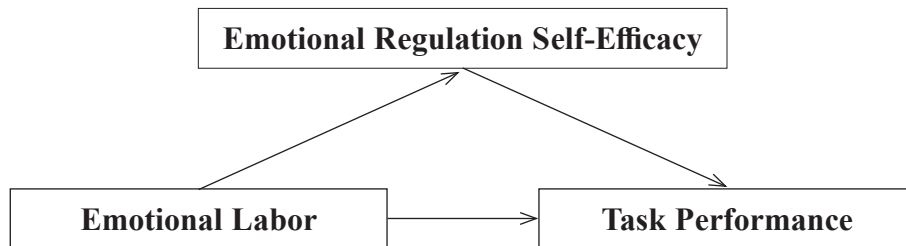


highlighting the importance of cultivating and enhancing emotional self-efficacy in workplace emotional management strategies.

Based on the literature review and theoretical analysis above, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

H4a: Emotional self-efficacy mediates the relationship between deep acting and individual job performance.

H4b: Emotional self-efficacy mediates the relationship between surface acting in emotional labor and individual job task performance.



**Figure 1** Theoretical Model Diagram

## Methodology

This study selected bank tellers in Handan City, Hebei Province, China, as its subjects, with data collected primarily through online surveys in January 2024. A total of 462 questionnaires were received, of which 403 were deemed valid, resulting in a validity rate of 87.23%.

The independent variable in this research is emotional labor, the dependent variable is task performance, and the mediating variable is emotional self-efficacy. To ensure the reliability and validity of the measurement, the study revised scales based on those published in authoritative journals and frequently used in research, which have been validated for reliability and validity. To better adapt to the research context, the original scales were retranslated and adjusted as necessary. During the translation process, attention was paid to ensuring the accuracy of the translated content, and back-translation was employed to ensure consistency with the original text.

The emotional labor scale was adapted and translated based on the studies by Gandey (2003) and Diefendorff et al. (2005), as well as Wu (2003) analysis of emotional labor within the Chinese cultural context. The task performance scale was based on the preliminary research by Han et al. (2006), taking into account the scale development in task performance and contextual performance by Williams and Anderson (1991), Borman and Motowidlo (1993), and Befort and Hatstrup (2003). The emotional self-efficacy scale referred to the design by Giunta et al. (2008).

In this study, SPSS 21 was used for a comprehensive analysis of the reliability and validity of the designed questionnaire. Subsequent analyses, including correlation analysis and regression analysis, were conducted to examine the variables and their effect, leading to the research conclusions.

## Research Results

### Overview of the Sample Population

In the sample, females outnumber males, comprising 68.37% of the participants. Regarding age distribution, individuals aged 36-45 years constitute the largest group, accounting for 33.25% of the total study sample. In terms of marital status, the majority of the sample is married, representing 65.27%. As for educational attainment, a significant portion, 76.27%, holds a bachelor's degree. Regarding tenure, those with 6-10 years of experience make up the largest segment, at 33.25%. These detailed demographic data provide a comprehensive understanding of the sample characteristics, offering a solid foundation for an in-depth exploration of the relationship between emotional labor and task performance.

### Reliability and Validity Analysis

Reliability analysis was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, with results indicating that all dimensions exceeded the standard threshold of 0.7. This demonstrates the high internal consistency of the questionnaire, ensuring the stability and reliability of the measurement tool when applied across different times and locations. Concurrently, validity testing further confirmed the construct validity of the questionnaire, guaranteeing its capability to accurately measure the concepts intended for exploration. Through comprehensive analysis of reliability and validity, the measurement tools utilized in this study have been validated, ensuring the reliability and effectiveness of the research findings.

### Correlation Analysis

This study employed Pearson correlation coefficient analysis to examine the relationships among variables, providing preliminary insights. Significant correlations were found between the independent variable of emotional labor (encompassing both surface and deep acting), the mediating variable of emotional self-efficacy, and the dependent variable of task performance. Specifically, surface acting showed a significant negative correlation with both deep acting, emotional self-efficacy, and task performance; deep acting was significantly positively correlated with emotional self-efficacy and task performance; emotional self-efficacy was also significantly positively correlated with task performance. The evident association between deep acting and task performance, as well as emotional self-efficacy, alongside the clear relationship between emotional self-efficacy and task performance, lays the groundwork for further examination of the mediating role of emotional self-efficacy within the dynamics of emotional labor and task performance. The results of the task performance correlation analysis, which revealed significant relationships between task performance and emotional self-efficacy, surface acting, and deep acting, provide a basis for conducting regression analysis to explore the effects among the variables.

### Main Effect and Mediation Effect Testing

The mediation analysis results for emotional self-efficacy reveal that in Model 1, the standardized regression coefficient for the independent variable of surface acting is -0.303, achieving significance, which indicates that surface acting has a significant negative impact on the dependent variable of task performance.

The standardized regression coefficient for the independent variable of deep acting is 0.288, reaching a significant level, suggesting that deep acting has a significant positive effect on task performance.

In Model 2, the standardized regression coefficient for the independent variable of surface acting is -0.239, reaching significance, indicating that surface acting has a significant negative impact on the mediating variable of emotional self-efficacy. The standardized regression coefficient for the independent variable of deep acting is 0.303, achieving significance, indicating that deep acting has a significant positive effect on emotional self-efficacy.

In Model 3, the mediating variable of emotional self-efficacy exhibits a standardized regression coefficient of 0.298, reaching significance, which proves that emotional self-efficacy has a noticeable positive impact on task performance.

Since both surface and deep acting have significant impacts on emotional self-efficacy, it can be concluded that emotional self-efficacy plays a significant mediating role in the relationship between surface acting, deep acting, and task performance, acting as a partial mediator in both cases.

**Table 1** Mediation Analysis of the Impact of Emotional Labor on Task Performance

Variables		Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
		Y1: Task Performance		Y2: Emotional Self-Efficacy		Y3: Task Performance	
		Beta	T	Beta	T	Beta	T
Control Variables	Gender	-0.07	-1.132	0.103	1.583	-0.1	-1.705
	Age	-0.013	-0.103	0.175	1.293	-0.065	-0.535
	Marital Status	0.115	1.735	-0.005	-0.071	0.117	1.847
	Education	0.007	0.122	0.062	0.96	-0.011	-0.19
	Tenure	0.256	2.033	-0.128	-0.956	0.294	2.448
Independent Variables	Surface acting	-0.303***	-4.513	-0.239***	-3.352	-0.232***	-3.539
	Deep acting	0.288***	4.648	0.303***	4.623	0.197**	3.193
Mediating Variable	Emotional regulation self-efficacy	-	-	-	-	0.298***	4.782
F		12.716***		8.034***		15.155***	
R <sup>2</sup>		0.3		0.213		0.369	
Change in R <sup>2</sup>		0.276		0.186		0.345	

The hypothesis testing results of this study reveal that the two dimensions of emotional labor (deep acting and surface acting) among bank tellers indirectly influence task performance through emotional self-efficacy. Thus, the quantitative data analysis of this research leads to the following conclusions:

1. By examining bank employees' emotional labor from both deep and surface-acting perspectives, this study has demonstrated the significant impact of emotional labor on emotional self-efficacy and job performance. This addresses the existing research gap in the study of emotional labor within the bank teller domain.



2. Within the framework of Social Cognitive Theory, this study discussed the impact of bank tellers' emotional labor (deep and surface acting) on task performance. The empirical analysis confirmed that the theoretical hypotheses have been explicitly validated in the actual work context of bank tellers. This application of empirical analysis to theoretical hypotheses in the real-world setting of bank tellers provides a clear test and extends our understanding of how emotional labor influences performance in the banking sector.

## **Discussion**

Based on Social Cognitive Theory and a mediation model of emotional regulation self-efficacy, this study constructs a theoretical model of the impact of bank employees' emotional labor on task performance, using quantitative data for hypothesis testing.

### **Dual Impact of Emotional Labor**

This study, focusing on bank tellers in Handan City, treats emotional labor as a type of job demand, specifically examining the impact of bank tellers' deep and surface acting on emotional regulation self-efficacy. The analysis of survey data concludes that deep acting has a significant positive impact on emotional regulation self-efficacy and job performance, while surface acting has a significant negative impact on both. These findings provide empirical support for the relationship between the two dimensions of emotional labor and emotional regulation self-efficacy and between these dimensions and job performance. The results of the questionnaire survey align with the current situation of emotional labor among grassroots bank employees and its impact on emotional regulation self-efficacy and job performance.

### **The Role of the Mediating Variable: Emotional Regulation Self-Efficacy**

The study examines the emotional labor performance of bank employees, testing the mediating role of emotional regulation self-efficacy between deep acting, surface acting, and job performance. Empirical analysis of survey data reveals a positive predictive relationship between emotional regulation self-efficacy and job performance. The results indicate that the mediating variable, emotional regulation self-efficacy, plays a partial mediating role between both dimensions of bank employees' emotional labor and job performance. Considering the characteristics of bank employees, deep and surface acting are significant manifestations of emotional labor, not only affecting work and impacting job performance but also indirectly influencing individual job performance through emotional regulation self-efficacy. The role of emotional regulation self-efficacy in the transmission between emotional labor and job performance also deserves managers' attention.

## **Conclusion**

This study delves into the emotional labor of bank tellers in Handan city and its impact on task performance, with a particular focus on the role of emotional regulation self-efficacy in this process.

1. The research confirms that emotional labor significantly affects the task performance of bank employees. Deep acting positively impacts task performance by enhancing emotional regulation self-efficacy, whereas surface acting may have a potential negative effect.

2. The study reveals that emotional regulation self-efficacy plays an important mediating role between emotional labor and task performance. This outcome underscores the significance of emotional self-efficacy as a crucial link between emotional labor and task performance.

3. Through empirical analysis of the relationships among emotional labor, emotional regulation self-efficacy, and task performance, this study successfully constructs and validates a theoretical model, deepening our understanding of the interactions among these variables.

4. Based on the findings, the paper proposes strategies and recommendations for managing emotional labor. It suggests that banks should train, support, and motivate employees to engage in deep acting, thereby enhancing their emotional regulation self-efficacy and task performance.

In summary, this study not only expands the theoretical foundation of the impact of emotional labor on task performance but also provides practical guidance for managing emotional labor in banks and other service industries. Future research should further investigate the effects of different types of emotional labor strategies in various work environments and how to effectively implement these management strategies to enhance employee performance and customer satisfaction. While this study has made certain advancements, due to its cross-sectional research design and region-specific sample, the generalizability and applicability of its conclusions still need to be further validated in future studies.

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