

Emotional Labour and its association with Burnout in Sri Lankan Prison Officers

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Abstract

Emotional labour is known to associate with employee burnout, which has not been previously studied in Sri Lankan prison officers. This article aimed to describe the emotional labour of Sri Lankan prison officers and its association with their burnout, as part of a wider study carried out on burnout. A cross-sectional study was conducted in 2017 in 32 prison institutions island-wide, among 1803 prison officers including 1683 prison guards and 120 rehabilitation officers. Prison guards were selected using multi-stage stratified sampling, while all the eligible rehabilitation officers were invited. Burnout was assessed using a translated and validated Sinhala version of the Maslach Burnout Inventory – Human Services Survey. A modified version of the Emotional Labour Scale was used in assessing surface acting and deep acting components of emotional labour. Majority of the participants were male (88%) and between 25-44years (64.2%). Burnout was observed in 593 (32.8%) of them. The mean score for hiding emotions with inmates was the highest at 7.88 (SE – 0.092). The lowest mean score of 4.74 (SE – 0.081) was seen for emotional regulation with colleagues. Participants with burnout were having more hiding emotions and faking emotions, while emotional regulation was seen more in those without burnout. In the bivariate analysis, hiding emotions, faking emotions and having emotional regulation with colleagues and superiors, and having emotional regulation with inmates, were found to be significantly associated with burnout (P<0.05). Emotional labour should be taken into consideration when developing interventions to reduce burnout in Sri Lankan prison officers.

Keywords: emotional labour, burnout, Sri Lankan prison officers, surface acting emotional labour, emotional regulation

Introduction

The term emotional labor was coined by Hochschild (1983) to describe ‘the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display’. It mainly involves in service professions such as nurses, police officers and prison officers, who need to have face to face contact with their clients (Puthooppambal *et al.*, 2015). Morris and Feldman (1996) defined emotional labor as the effort, planning and control required for expressing organizationally desired emotions during interpersonal transactions. Burnout is described as a syndrome of emotional exhaustion and cynicism, which occurs mainly among individuals who are engaged in ‘people-work’ (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). It is described under three main dimensions. Emotional exhaustion, the first and main dimension, can be described as overwhelming exhaustion, depletion of energy and fatigue occurring during work. The second domain, depersonalization, incorporates feelings of cynicism, withdrawal, irritability and inappropriate thoughts about the clients. Reduced personal accomplishment, which is considered the third dimension, implies low morale, inefficiency and incapability in the job (Maslach & Leiter, 2016).

Emotional labour can be job- focused or employee-focused. Job-focused emotional labour differs according to the occupation. When considering the individual perspective of processes which are used to manage emotions, employee-focused emotional labour comes into the arena, which explains the processes adopted by employees to manage their emotions in accordance with their work demands. This could be of two types, namely, emotional dissonance explaining the concept of presented expressions differing from the true feelings, and emotional regulation explaining the process of modifying the expressions to suit the work demands (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002). Surface acting and deep acting components emotional labour explained by Hochschild (1983) are explained by these two concepts, where surface acting is related to emotional dissonance, and deep acting is related to emotional regulation.

Many factors related to the personal life and work life of employees have been identified to affect the level of burnout experienced by them. Studies have been carried out among employees of various occupations to identify the different factors associated with burnout, with special emphasis on occupations related to human services, (Borritz, 2006; McDonald, 2012; Waddimba *et al.*, 2015). Emotional Labour is relatively a novel concept which has been found as a predictor for burnout (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Choi & Kim, 2014), where it has been found out to cause an increase in levels of employee burnout (Bayram *et al.*, 2012). The effect of emotional labour on burnout has been studied globally, since it is identified as an entity which affects the burnout of employees both negatively and positively. However, studies on emotional labour are sparse in Sri Lanka, and no studies have been previously conducted on emotional labour of prison officers.

The internal tension and the physiological effort of suppressing one’s true feelings is known to be leading to stress, and therefore, surface acting component of emotional labour has been found to relate to all three dimensions of burnout (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002). It was found to be significantly related to emotional exhaustion, as well as a significant predictor of depersonalization. It also contributed to a diminished sense of personal accomplishment. In contrary to this, deep acting component of emotional labour was found to be contributing to a greater sense of personal efficacy at work (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002). Recent studies talk about hiding emotions and faking emotions, two newer concepts revolving around the concept of surface acting (Lee *et al.*, 2010; Lee & Brotheridge, 2011), which explain the processes of hiding your true emotions, and displaying a different emotion to the true emotion, respectively. In the ‘Deep acting’ component of emotional labour, controlling internal thoughts and feelings is done, to meet the expected display rules. Thus, deep acting does not relate to emotional exhaustion because it minimizes the tension of emotional dissonance. Further, deep acting relates to lower depersonalization and more personal accomplishment (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002).

Studies conducted in different countries have identified the relationship between burnout and emotional labour. A Turkish study conducted among service sector employees (Bayram *et al.*, 2012) to identify the relationship between different components of emotional labour and dimensions of burnout, and a study conducted in Malaysia (Noor & Zainuddin, 2011) among female teachers to examine how emotional labour and work-family conflict contributed to explaining the variance in burnout are some of the examples.

The study on teachers found that surface acting component of emotional labour was significantly positively related to burnout. It was also revealed that deep acting emotional labour was not significantly related to burnout in the logistic regression analysis, despite a significant correlation between the deep acting component and depersonalization in the bivariate analysis. Positive relationships of hiding emotions with emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, and faking emotions with depersonalization were identified in the study among service sector employees.

In the Sri Lankan context, research on emotional labour is not very common. A few studies have been carried out among occupations such as schoolteachers (Dias & Arachchige, 2014) and nurses (Thisera & Silva, 2016) to assess how the different components of emotional labour affected their burnout. Emotional labour of Sri Lankan prison officers has not been studied previously.

Emotional labour scale (Brotheridge & Lee, 2003) is one of the most popular scales in assessing emotional labour. It was developed and validated by Brotheridge and Lee (2003) and had 15 items in its original version, consisting of six subscales, namely, duration, intensity, frequency, variety, surface acting and deep acting. The scale was later revised, replacing the surface acting subscale with two new subscales of hiding emotions and faking emotions, bringing the final scale to consist of 18 questions (Mitchell, 2015). Duration was assessed by the number of minutes spent with a customer, while intensity and variety at work were assessed using one and four items, respectively. Three items each were used in this scale to assess frequency, hiding emotions, faking emotions and deep acting at work. For each question or item, the respondents were expected to mark how frequently they engaged in the particular behaviour with clients, co-workers and supervisors during an average day at work, using a five-point Likert scale.

This article describes the findings of a part of a larger study carried out to assess the burnout and its correlates and outcomes among Sri Lankan prison officers. The article aims to discuss the surface acting and deep acting components of emotional labour in Sri Lankan prison officers and the association they have with burnout. Being the first study in Sri Lanka to be carried out on burnout and emotional labour among prison officers, this article is expected to provide novel data on how emotional labour affects their burnout.

Methods

The study population for this study were correctional officers in the rank of prison guards and rehabilitation officers working in Sri Lankan prisons fulfilling the eligibility criteria. Those who have been working in the Sri Lankan prison setting for more than six months duration were included in the study. If the officers did not have direct and frequent contact with the inmates at least four days a week, were on maternity leave or other long-term leave at the time of data collection, had a diagnosis of a mental disorder at the time of the study or couldn't read and write in Sinhala language, they were excluded from the study. The number of prison officers who couldn't communicate in Sinhala was confirmed to be a minimum number during prior discussions with prison officials, since Sinhala is the most commonly used language in Sri Lanka.

According to the latest updated lists of the number of correctional and rehabilitation officers obtained from the statistics division of the Prison Headquarters at the beginning of the data collection of the study in February 2017, the total number of correctional officers in the category of prison guards was 3831. The number of rehabilitation officers was found to be 128, and all of them had worked in the Department of Prisons for more than six months. Since the number of rehabilitation officers was a minority compared to the number of correctional officers, all the rehabilitation officers working in the Department of Prisons at the time of data collection fulfilling the eligibility criteria were included. Two rehabilitation officers who were engaged in the pretesting procedure of the questionnaires and the six rehabilitation officers who participated in the study which validated the MBI-HSS were excluded. Since emotional labour was studied as a possible correlate of burnout and the wider study included determining the prevalence, other correlates and outcomes of burnout, sample sizes were calculated for each component and the largest sample size was selected for the entire study. Thus, the sample size calculated (Lwanga and Lemeshow, 1991) for the prevalence of burnout, which was 1708 after adding an anticipated non-response rate of ten percent, was used in the entire study as

the required number of correctional officers. Thus, 1708 correctional officers were selected as the sample size in addition to the 120 rehabilitation officers.

This island-wide study was carried out in 32 selected prison institutions in Sri Lanka covering all the types of prisons across the country. This included closed prisons, where convicted prisoners were held normally under maximum security conditions and the inmates on death sentence and serving prison sentences more than six months of duration, as well as recidivists were held. All three such prisons were purposively selected for the study considering the importance of information to be obtained from prison officers working in these prisons. Remand prisons were also included, which were closed prisons reserved for remand prisoners, and out of the nineteen remand prisons situated throughout the country at the time, nine were randomly selected. Out of the two open prison camps without perimeter walls, where selected prisoners are held under minimum security conditions, one was selected randomly. There were nine functioning work camps in Sri Lanka which also had no perimeter walls, and short-term or medium-term offenders were held in them under minimum security conditions, and five of them were randomly selected. There were two correctional centers plus a training school for youth offenders, who are between the age of 16 and 22 years. One correctional centre was randomly selected, and the training school was purposively included. The drug rehabilitation centre was also purposively selected which housed and rehabilitated inmates with drug related offences. In addition to the above, eleven were selected randomly out of the 22 functioning lock-ups around the country where prisoners were held for short periods of time.

In selecting the correctional officers for the study, multi-stage stratified sampling method was used. The total sample was stratified by the different categories of prisons in Sri Lanka. This resulted in six strata, namely, closed prisons, remand prisons, work camps, open prison camps, facilities for youth offenders and drug abuser inmates, and lock-ups. The sample of correctional officers for each stratum was decided proportionate to the total number of correctional officers from the selected prisons in those strata. It was divided among the selected prisons of each prison category probability proportionate to the sample size of the number of correctional officers in each of those prisons. The individuals to be selected for the study from each prison were selected randomly using random number generators, from numbered lists of the correctional officers in each of the selected prisons.

The instrument used for collecting data on burnout was the self-administered, Sinhala translated and validated modified version of the Maslach Burnout Inventory – Human Services Survey (MBI-HSS). The validated instrument contained 18 items to assess burnout (Wijegoonewardene et al., 2019).

In order to assess the emotional labour of the study participants, a modified version of the Emotional Labour Scale (Brotheridge and Lee, 2003) was used as a self-administered instrument in Sinhala language. Judgmental validity, in terms of face validity, content validity and consensual validity, of the questionnaire was assessed by a group of experts in the fields of psychiatry, psychology, public health along with a higher official working in the prison. Only the items assessing surface acting and deep acting components of emotional labour were included in the study. The surface acting component was measured by hiding emotions and faking emotions subcomponents. Following judgmental validation, this modified scale was incorporated into the questionnaire assessing all the correlates and outcomes of burnout (not mentioned here). The questionnaire was pre-tested among correctional and rehabilitation officers prior to administration. The final emotional labour tool administered consisted of nine items, with three items each assessing the three entities of hiding emotions, faking emotions and deep acting emotional labour. Each item assessed the perceptions of the prison officers with regard to their relationship with the inmates, colleagues and superiors.

Hiding emotions was assessed using the questions based on hiding their true feelings about a situation, resist expressing their true feelings and concealing what they are feeling. To assess faking emotions, questions were asked on whether they showed emotions that they don't feel, pretend to have emotions that they don't really have and show emotions that are expected rather than what they feel. The deep acting component of emotional labour was assessed using the questions on making an effort to actually feel the emotions that they need to display to others, really trying to feel the emotions they have to show as part of their job and trying to actually experience the emotions that they must show. Each item was scored on

a five-point Likert scale of frequency: *1-never, 2-rarely, 3-sometimes, 4-often and 5-always*, for the three groups of individuals they worked with, separately. The total score for each component of emotional labour assessed (i.e. hiding emotions, faking emotions and deep acting) was calculated for each relationship group, by summing the scores of the three items included in that component. Higher scores meant a higher presence of the assessed component for the particular relationship group.

The principal investigator (NW) and two trained data assistants were involved in the data collection. Each prison was visited on a pre-specified date/s approved by the Prison Headquarters to collect data from the correctional officers. Each prison institution was officially informed about the study by the relevant authorities as prior administrative clearance was taken from them by the principal investigator for data collection from prison officers. A coordinating officer helped the data collection team in recruiting the selected correctional officers for the study in most of the prisons. Explanations were provided about the objectives of the study, and what was expected of them. Confidentiality was assured. An information sheet was provided to each of them, and adequate time was given to read and understand it. Written consent was obtained if the individual consented to participating, and the participants were provided with the questionnaires. Instructions for completing the questionnaire were clearly mentioned. To complement this, the principal investigator or the study assistants explained the instructions to them prior to administering the questionnaire. The participants were encouraged to ask any questions during the completion of the questionnaire. The principal investigator and the trained study assistants were available to answer them in a uniform manner. The participants were given adequate time to complete the questionnaire. It was ensured that the filled questionnaires were collected during that particular day before the research team left the prison, and all the questionnaires were ensured of their completeness at collection by the study assistants, and then by the principal investigator.

The Prison Headquarters was very supportive towards the study, and their correspondence to the prison institutions beforehand to provide the fullest support for this study, as well as the support provided by the selected prisons and the participants for the study, led to a highly satisfactory response rate.

The principal investigator and the study assistants visited an in-service training held for all the rehabilitation officers in Colombo, to collect data from them, after taking prior permission for a session. All the rehabilitation officers were invited to participate in the study excluding the rehabilitation officers who were involved in the pretesting procedures and those who participated in the validation study. Similar procedures were followed in informing about the study and taking informed consent. All the eligible rehabilitation officers consented to participate for the study.

Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 23.0 version was used in data entry and analysis. Based on the cut-off value obtained from the study which validated the MBI-HSS for the Sri Lankan prison officers (Wijegoonewardene *et al.*, 2019), the prevalence of burnout was calculated with the 95% confidence interval. Mean and median values were calculated for each component of the Emotional Labour assessed for each relationship group. In assessing the difference in the scores for burnout and non-burnout participants, the non-parametric Mann-Whitney-U test was used in carrying out the bivariate analysis. This was due to the fact that the scores obtained for all the components of emotional labour with inmates, colleagues and superiors showed non-normal distributions, based on the standardized skewness values calculated for each component. Multivariate analysis was later carried out by entering the all the significant correlates identified in the bivariate analysis in the study on burnout (not discussed here) into a Logistic Regression model. This included all the significant personal and work-related correlates identified (not discussed here) as well as the significant components of emotional labour, and odds ratios (OR) were calculated with confidence intervals (CI) to evaluate the association between these correlates and burnout.

Ethics approval for the study was obtained from the Ethical Review Committee, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka.

Results

Response Rates:

The number of correctional officers who participated for the study was 1683, bringing their response rate to 98.53%. Table 1 shows the total number of correctional officers who were available in the selected

prisons in each of the strata (types of prisons), the number needed from each stratum and the final numbers of officers who participated. There were no non-responders among the rehabilitation officers, and 120 rehabilitation officers participated in the study. Thirty-two of them worked in closed prisons and 59 were from remand prisons, while sixteen and five were working attached to work camps and open prison camps, respectively. Eight rehabilitation officers who participated in the study were from correctional centres for youth offenders and drug rehabilitation centres. There were no rehabilitation officers attached to lock-ups.

Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Participants

Almost two thirds (64.2%) of the participants were between 25-44 years of age. Most of the participants were male (88.0%), which represented the sex distribution of correctional and rehabilitation officers working in the Department of Prisons, where a male predominance was observed. Around four fifths of the participants were married or cohabiting. With regard to the level of education of the participants, 87% had completed their secondary education, indicating that they had sat for their Advanced Level examination which is the final examination faced in secondary education in Sri Lanka. Around ten per cent were diploma or degree holders. Excluding the unmarried officers, 87.3% of the participants were having children. Almost half (49%) of the participants had experience of more than ten years in the service. Table 2 depicts the distribution of basic sociodemographic characteristics of the study participants.

Burnout and Emotional Labour of the Study Participants

Burnout of the study participants was measured using the validated and modified version of the Maslach Burnout Inventory - Human Services Survey (MBI-HSS) containing eighteen items (Wijegoonewardene *et al.*, 2019). The validation of the MBI-HSS for Sri Lankan prison officers gave a cut-off value of 36.5 for identifying burnout in them. Using this cut-off value, the apparent prevalence of burnout was calculated. It was observed that 593 (32.8%) prison officers suffered from burnout according to their responses provided for the MBI-HSS.

The emotional labour experienced with inmates, colleagues and superiors, by the study participants during their job was assessed using the modified Emotional Labour Scale. The processes of hiding emotions and faking emotions which come under the surface acting component of emotional labour, and the deep acting component which indicates emotional regulation, were assessed separately for these three relationship groups. The range of scores for each component, mean scores obtained with the standard errors (SE), and the median scores are presented in Table 3. The obtained scores for each component ranged between 3 and 15. The lowest mean score was seen for deep acting with colleagues, which was 4.74 (SE – 0.081). The mean score for hiding emotions with inmates was the highest out of all, which was 7.88 (SE – 0.092).

Association between Burnout and Emotional Labour

The association between burnout and hiding emotions, faking emotions and deep acting components of emotional labour were determined as the next step. The scores obtained for all the components of emotional labour with inmates, colleagues and superiors showed non-normal distributions, based on the standardized skewness values calculated for each component. Thus, non-parametric tests were used for assessing the difference in the scores for burnout and non-burnout participants. Mann-Whitney U test was used in the analyzing the associations. Since the prison guards who are involved in correctional duties, and rehabilitation officers who are involved in duties related to rehabilitation and social reintegration, are the two categories of staff working routinely in close contact with the prison inmates in providing correctional and rehabilitation services to them, the two categories were taken together in assessing the associations. The associations obtained in the bivariate analysis are depicted in Table 4.

For all categories whom the participants were associating with, namely, inmates, colleagues and superiors, those who had burnout showed higher mean scores for hiding emotions and faking emotions than those who didn't. In contrast, for the deep acting component, with all three relationship groups, those who had burnout obtained lower mean scores than those who didn't. This implied that those with burnout were having more hiding emotions and faking emotions, while deep acting was more in those without burnout. Except for scores on 'hiding emotions with inmates' and 'faking emotions with inmates', all other seven

components assessing different aspects of emotional labour were found to be significantly associated with burnout ($P < 0.05$) (see Table 4).

As a further step in the main study assessing all the personal and work-related associates of burnout, multivariate analysis was carried out using a Logistic Regression model. The seven significant correlates related to emotional labour were entered into this model along with all the significant correlates. Two items with relation to emotional labour were significant predictors of burnout as a result. Those who were faking emotions with colleagues were found to be at a 1.09 times higher risk of burnout (95% CI: 1.02 – 1.17), compared to those who were not, at $P < 0.05$ level. Those who were having emotional regulation with superiors, which is indicated in deep acting, were found to be at a significantly lower risk for burnout, compared to those who were not (OR – 0.89, 95% CI: 0.84 – 0.94), at $P < 0.001$ level. The values related to the two items of emotional labour are depicted in Table 5.

Discussion

Emotional labor requires a person to induce or suppress their feelings to sustain the outward facial appearance that produces the proper state of mind in others (Hochschild, 1983). Workplaces specify certain emotional display rules which act as standards for the appropriate expression of emotions of the employees (Leung, 2008). These include positive emotions which need to be expressed and the negative emotions which need to be suppressed. Emotional labor involves adhering to this display of emotions regardless of one's real feelings (Leung, 2008).

The current research aimed to assess the surface acting and deep acting components of emotional labour in prison officers working in Sri Lanka, and to assess their association with burnout. Burnout of Sri Lankan prison officers has not been studied earlier, and nor has their emotional labour. Thus, it was expected that this study would reveal an untouched yet highly critical aspect with regard to the mental health of this important occupational group.

The response rate of correctional officers was highly satisfactory at 98.53%, and the rehabilitation officers showed a 100% response rate. This was due to the committed coordination of the higher authorities at the Department of prisons, and the enthusiastic attitude of the participants towards the study, because this sort of a research on burnout was conducted for the first time among them. The extensive explanations by the principal investigator and the study assistants about the study, its implications and about preserving of confidentiality of the provided information also contributed to this high response rate.

Burnout was assessed using the MBI-HSS, and it revealed that almost one third of the participants were suffering from burnout. It is a known fact that the prison officers in Sri Lanka work in a setting where they are overburdened with work due to unfilled cadres. This prevalence value is higher than what was observed in previous studies carried out among prison officers in other countries including in Brazil and Ireland (Mulligan, 2014; Campos et al., 2016). It could be due to the comparatively lower sample sizes and lower response rates in those studies. The value obtained is also higher than which were identified in studies carried out on burnout in Sri Lanka among other occupations including midwives, nurses and teachers (De Silva, 2007; Samaranayake, 2010; Pathiraja, 2011). This could be attributed to the fact that the risks for the job as well as for the life of the employees was higher for prison staff compared to the other occupations.

The different dimensions of emotional labour, as well as the effect of emotional labour on burnout have been studied globally, as it is an entity which affects the burnout of employees both negatively and positively. However, studies on emotional labour being sparse in Sri Lanka, no studies have been previously conducted on emotional labour of prison officers. A few studies have been carried out on employees of other occupations (Thisera & Silva, 2016; Dias & Arachchige, 2014). Thus, the current research is the first study in Sri Lanka to assess emotional labour of prison staff, and its correlation with their burnout. Identifying the extent of different dimensions of emotional labour, and its effect on burnout will enlighten the relevant authorities and educators in the Department of Prisons to address that aspect in their trainings for the officers. It would also enable to plan feasible programmes suitable for the prison setting, to facilitate changing their behaviour, during continuous or refresher trainings.

Working in prisons is emotionally demanding, and various emotions are generated by prison work (Crawley, 2004). Similar to the emotion work required of service personnel, correctional officers are also expected to express pleasant and warm emotions including emotions that suggest they really cared for the inmates, thereby suppressing irritation in their facial and bodily expressions and language (Tracy, 2005). Accordingly, emotional labour has been assessed among employees of many occupational categories. The current study assessed the emotional labour of the prison officers by identifying the mean values for each item separately for the three categories of individuals they encounter during work, namely, inmates, colleagues and superiors. The surface acting component was assessed through the two entities, hiding emotions and faking emotions, while the deep acting component was also separately assessed. It was revealed that the highest mean score was seen with hiding emotions with inmates. However, this entity was not found to have a significant association with burnout. Despite that, in the bivariate analysis, all the entities of emotional labour assessed showed a trend in consistence with previous literature and studies on emotional labour and burnout, and seven out of the nine entities examined had significant associations. Those who had burnout showed higher mean scores for hiding emotions and faking emotions than those who didn't, which implied that there was a positive relationship between burnout and surface acting component of emotional labour. This was common for all three categories of individuals the prison officers associated with. Literature on emotional labour of teachers (Noor & Zainuddin, 2011; Choi & Kim, 2014; Kim, 2016) has identified that surface acting component of emotional labour was found to be significantly positively related to burnout, and Sri Lankan prison officers showed a similar association. A Sri Lankan study among schoolteachers (Dias & Arachchige, 2014), too has revealed similar results, where surface acting was a significant predictor of emotional exhaustion ($P < 0.05$), which is the main subdomain of burnout. The Sri Lankan study among nurses also showed that there was a positive impact of surface acting on emotional exhaustion (Thisera & Silva, 2016). A study conducted among social service experts and shop workers in Turkey (Bayram et al., 2012) revealed positive relationships of hiding emotions with emotional exhaustion and depersonalization and faking emotions with depersonalization. These findings complement the association between surface acting components of emotional labour and burnout observed in the current study. However, since the current study did not assess the relationship between emotional labour and each sub-domain of burnout, these correlations cannot be directly compared. As for the deep acting component, those who had burnout obtained lower mean scores than those who didn't, and this was true for all the three categories. This result went in line with the previous literature where deep acting was associated with lower depersonalization and more personal accomplishment (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002), meaning absence or less burnout. A Sri Lankan study has also shown the significantly negative impact of deep acting on emotional exhaustion (Thisera & Silva, 2016). A South Korean research involving employees of service organizations of hotels and department stores also showed that deep acting was associated with a reduction of burnout (Choi & Kim, 2014). Some studies have revealed that deep acting was not significantly related to burnout in the logistic regression analysis, including a study from Sri Lanka conducted among teachers in a government school in the Western province (Dias & Arachchige, 2014). In the current study, the logistic regression analysis showed a significant relationship between burnout and emotional regulation with superiors. In the current study, the bivariate analysis revealed significant relationships between seven entities of emotional labour out of the nine entities examined, where hiding and faking emotions with inmates were found to be non-significant. This could be due to the fact that both officers with burnout and without might be frequently practicing hiding and faking emotions with inmates.

Only faking emotions with colleagues and emotional regulation (deep acting) with superiors were found to be predictors of burnout ($P < 0.05$) in the multivariate analysis. This showed that, more than with the inmates, burnout of prison officers was getting affected by emotional labour with colleagues and superiors. Showing their colleagues a different emotion to what they were really feeling was causing slightly higher burnout in the officers (OR – 1.09, 95% CI: 1.02 – 1.17). This finding justifies the need to improve interactions between co-workers at the work setting. On the other hand, it was found that, deep acting or regulating the emotions with superiors so that the expected emotions are actually felt, was protective of burnout in the prison officers in the current study (OR – 0.9, 95% CI: 0.84 – 0.94).

Study limitations and directions for future research

This study was conducted among correctional officers in the rank of prison guards, and prison rehabilitation officers working in the prison institutions in Sri Lanka. Even though the study finding could be generalized to the prison guards and rehabilitation officers throughout the country, the findings cannot be generalized to the prison officers in the higher ranks, as they are not in contact with the inmates directly. The study adopted a cross-sectional study design, and therefore, despite the association between burnout and emotional labour was assessed as identified in literature, the temporal relationship between the two entities cannot be confidently commented on. The study assessed the emotional labour of both correctional and rehabilitation officers together. Further, the associations were determined for only burnout, and not for each subdomain of burnout. Further analysis in these aspects could reveal important comparative information on the potential associations. Future research should aim at assessing the aspects of emotional labour not assessed in the current study, with special emphasis on intensity, frequency and variety mentioned in the Emotional Labour Scale, and how they impact burnout.

Implications for Practice

Prison guards involved in correctional duties and rehabilitation officers involved in duties related to rehabilitation and social reintegration, are the categories of staff that are expected to work routinely in close contact with the prison inmates in the Department of Prisons in Sri Lanka. Prison guard is the job category having the most contact with the inmates out of the occupation categories of correctional officers working in the prison setting. This was the first study to be carried out on burnout in Sri Lankan prison officers to assess the prevalence, personal and work-related correlates and other relevant aspects (all these components are not discussed in this article), and emotional labour was assessed as one of the correlates of burnout, as identified in the literature. Studies have been conducted throughout the world on burnout of correctional officers and prison officers, which have revealed quite high levels of burnout among them. The current study revealed that the prevalence of burnout in Sri Lankan prison officers was at a higher level than that was found in some of the previous studies carried out in other countries (Mulligan, 2014; Campos et al., 2016). The study also showed that there was an association between burnout and emotional labour, where hiding and faking emotions during their relationships at the work setting led to higher burnout in them, while regulating their emotions lessened the risk of burnout. The findings of this study would enable the responsible authorities and policymakers to plan necessary interventions at an individual level, as well as make necessary and feasible changes in the organizational structure, to reduce burnout as well as components of emotional labour which increase the risk of burnout. Making improvements in the basic and in-service curriculum with the incorporation of topics on stress management and managing emotional labour is one such intervention, which would be beneficial for the prison employees to face the job stress in a more efficient manner. Refresher trainings on the job, as well as improving their relationships with the colleagues and superiors through social interactions and appraisal systems could also be considered. The Ministry of Health could also support these efforts through the provision of technical support to improve occupational health and mental health of the prison employees within the existing structure. Improving the mental health of prison employees would benefit the functioning of the prison system as well as the prison inmates in the long run, including a successful rehabilitation and social reintegration process.

Conclusions

This study aimed to assess the emotional labour of Sri Lankan prison officers and the association between burnout and emotional labour in them, which has not been studied previously. The findings revealed that a considerable proportion Sri Lankan prison officers working with prison inmates were suffering from burnout, and that emotional labour was associated with the burnout they were suffering. Interventions and policy decisions, including provision of suitable trainings and improvement of social interactions at the workplace need to be implemented to reduce the burnout and surface acting component of emotional labour in them, for the betterment of their mental health and the prison system in the country, as well.

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Conflicts of interest:

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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	Number available	Number of participants needed	Number of respondents
Closed Prisons	909	645	630
Remand Prisons	900	638	634
Work Camps	196	139	138
Open prison Camps	76	54	54
Facilities for Youth Offenders and drug abuser inmates	96	68	67
Lock-ups	231	164	160
Total	2408	1708	1683

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Table 1: Total Number of Correctional Officers Available in Each Type of Prison, the Number Needed from Each Stratum and the Number of Officers who Participated.

Socio-demographic characteristic	Correctional officers Number (%)	Rehabilitation officers Number (%)	Total study participants Number (%)
Age in completed years	(n=1683)	(n=120)	(n=1803)
18-24	97 (5.8)	3 (2.5)	100 (7.5)
25-34	583 (34.6)	22 (18.3)	605 (33.6)
35-44	495 (29.4)	56 (46.7)	551 (30.6)
45-54	362 (21.5)	30 (25.0)	392 (21.7)
55 and above	146 (8.7)	9 (7.5)	155 (8.6)
Sex	(n=1683)	(n=120)	(n=1803)
Male	1488 (88.4)	98 (81.7)	1586 (88.0)
Female	195 (11.6)	22 (18.3)	217 (12.0)
Highest Educational Qualification	(n=1683)	(n=120)	(n=1803)
Ordinary Levels or below	46 (2.7)	0 (0.0)	46 (2.6)
Passed Ordinary Levels	182 (10.8)	6 (5.8)	189 (10.4)
Studied for Advanced Levels	474 (28.2)	12 (10.0)	486 (27.0)
Passed Advanced Levels	839 (49.9)	58 (48.4)	897 (49.8)
Diploma Holder	89 (5.3)	27 (22.5)	116 (6.4)
Degree Holder	53 (3.1)	16 (13.3)	69 (3.8)
Marital Status	(n=1683)	(n=120)	(n=1803)
Unmarried	315 (18.7)	12 (10.0)	327 (18.1)
Currently Married	1346 (80.0)	106 (88.4)	1452 (80.6)
Cohabiting	2 (0.1)	0 (0.0)	2 (0.1)
Separated or Divorced	13 (0.8)	1 (0.8)	14 (0.8)
Widow/Widower	7 (0.4)	1 (0.8)	8 (0.4)
Presence of Children	(n=1368)*	(n=108)*	(n=1476)*
Yes	1199 (87.6)	90 (83.3)	1289 (87.3)
No	169 (12.4)	18 (16.7)	187 (12.7)
Years of Work Experience	(n=1683)	(n=120)	(n=1803)
<1 year	52 (3.1)	16 (13.3)	68 (3.8)
1 to 5 years	383 (22.8)	4 (3.3)	387 (21.5)
>5 to 10 years	432 (25.7)	34 (28.3)	466 (25.7)
>10 to 20 years	453 (26.8)	44 (36.7)	497 (27.6)
>20 to 30 years	225 (13.4)	14 (11.7)	239 (13.3)
>30 years	138 (8.2)	8 (6.7)	146 (8.1)

Table 2: Basic Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Study Participants

Entity	Range of scores	Mean score	Standard Error	Median score
Hiding emotions with inmates	3-15	7.88	0.092	7.0
Faking emotions with inmates	3-15	5.45	0.070	4.0
Deep acting with inmates	3-15	5.86	0.085	7.0
Hiding emotions with colleagues	3-15	4.96	0.059	6.0
Faking emotions with colleagues	3-15	5.82	0.056	4.0
Deep acting with colleagues	3-15	4.74	0.081	7.0
Hiding emotions with superiors	3-15	6.99	0.067	5.0
Faking emotions with superiors	3-15	7.12	0.056	4.0
Deep acting with superiors	3-15	6.77	0.083	6.0

Table 3: *Distribution of the study participants by the emotional labour they experience with different categories of people during work*

ate	Correl ut	Burno er	Numb	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Signifi cance
on ‘Hiding Emotions with Inmates’	Score t	Burnou	593	916.24	543329	Mann Whitney U=350322.000 Z = - 0.819 P = 0.413
	Burnout	No	1210	895.02	108297	
on ‘Faking Emotions with Inmates’	Score t	Burnou	593	933.74	553706	Mann Whitney U=339 944.500 Z = - 1.873 P= 0.061
	Burnout	No	1210	886.45	107259	
on ‘Deep Acting with Inmates’	Score t	Burnou	593	841.88	499234	Mann Whitney U=323113.000 Z = - 3.476 P<0.001
	Burnout	No	1210	931.46	112707	
on ‘Hiding Emotions with Colleagues’	Score t	Burnou	593	979.97	581124	Mann Whitney U=312 526.500 Z = - 4.516 P <0.001
	Burnout	No	1210	863.79	104518	
on ‘Faking Emotions with Colleagues’	Score t	Burnou	593	968.61	574383	Mann Whitney U=319 267.500 Z = - 3.957 P <0.001
	Burnout	No	1210	869.36	105192	
on ‘Deep Acting with Colleagues’	Score t	Burnou	593	849.52	503764	Mann Whitney U=327 643.500 Z = - 3.025 P = 0.002
	Burnout	No	1210	927.72	112254	
on ‘Hiding Emotions with Superiors’	Score t	Burnou	593	972.47	576673	Mann Whitney U=316 978.000 Z = -
	Burnout	No	1210	867.47	104963	

						4.107	
							P
						<0.001	
Score on 'Faking Emotions with Superiors'	t	Burnou	593	936.12	555119		Mann
		No	1210	885.28	107118		Whitney U=338
	Burnout					.50	
						6.50	531.500
						2.067	P =
						0.039	
Score on 'Deep Acting with Superiors'	t	Burnou	593	830.82	492673		Mann
		No	1210	936.89	113363		Whitney U=316552.500
	Burnout					.50	
						2.50	4.132
							P
						<0.001	

Table 4: Association between burnout and emotional labour of the study participants (n=1803)

Correlate	B	S	V	S	95% C.I.
	.E.	ald	f	xp(B)	for Exp(B)
	OR)				
				ower	I U
				pper	
Faking Emotions with Colleagues	0.089	.035	.406	.011	.093 .020
Deep Acting with Superiors	-0.116	.027	8.367	0.001	<.890 .844

Table 5: Significant predictors of burnout related to emotional labour, as identified in the multivariate analysis

Note. OR- Odds Ratio, df- degrees of freedom, sig.- significance