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Managing Emotions for Others: Challenges and Coping Strategies Among Online Game Companions

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Abstract: With the development of the digital economy and the platform economy, online gaming companions have gradually emerged as a new service profession; this work relies not only on gaming skills but also requires consistent emotional management. However, existing research has largely focused on average players, e-sports athletes, and gaming addiction, with relatively little attention paid to the emotional labor of gaming companions. This study uses the semi-structured interview method to ask 10 online gaming companion. Then, using the thematic analysis, we investigated the emotional challenge, the corresponding strategy and the influence on the mind of their work. In this study, we found that online game companion mainly felt pressure from communication with client, job requirements and mood management. They deal with pressure by immediately adjusting their mood and cognitive reappraisal. Even if you continue emotional labor for a long time, you will often lose interest in the game or feel a little emotional fatigue compared with the serious mental health problem. This study contributes to the emotional labor research in the online gaming companion industry, and can provide psychological support and work management reference for people working on the platform.

Keywords: Online Game Companion; Emotional Labor; Emotion Regulation; Occupational Stress; Platform Work

1. Introduction

In recent years, e-sports and online multiplayer games have become more and more popular, becoming partners in online games and becoming new working groups in Digital Economy and Gig Economy. Through the online platform, they provide game help, happy time, partner time to chat with and ask them for money. In addition to being good at games, people who work with others need to create a cheerful and gentle atmosphere to satisfy customers' emotions and make games more interesting [1].

This work not only requires game partners to engage in technical work, but also requires emotional labor to adjust and express their feelings according to workplace rules [2]. No matter how many times you lose in the game, how many times you are scolded by customers, how many times you are spoken ill of and asked to do something unreasonable, people who work as companions should patiently do a good job to satisfy customers and ask you to work next time. Therefore, being good at managing mood is a very important part of their work.

At present, the research on video games mainly focuses on gamers, e-sports athletes and game guides. In previous studies, we have investigated the emotional experience, stress coping and mental health in games, but there are few studies on online game company. In particular, the problem of their mood when they meet, and how to deal with the pressure of customers, continue to lose, and bad communication are rare.

In order to make up for this deficiency, this study will investigate the mood problems experienced by online game companies, how they adjust their mood, cope with stress, and the influence of long-term emotional labor on their minds and work. I plan to conduct semi-fixed interviews with experienced game companion to answer the next research question:

1) What emotional challenges do online gaming companions face in their work?

2) How do they cope with these emotional challenges?

3) What psychological effects and career consequences might emotional labor have?

By studying these problems, we will better understand emotional labor in gaming companion industry. In addition, it also provides some tips for psychological support and occupational well-being reference of online game companions and other platform-based service workers.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Emotional Labor in Service and Platform-Based Work

Emotional labor means that people adjust their face and language feelings according to the regulations of the workplace [2]. In many receiving jobs, employees not only have to complete the work, but also show their feelings in line with the company and work rules. Wharton [3] said that Emotional labor is generally carried out in two ways: surface action and deep action. Surface acting is to hide the true feelings and show the feelings needed in work. On the other hand, deep acting is to change your mood in order to meet the requirements of work. In addition to the concept of this word, Gosserand [4] also found that Emotional labor will change with the working environment and the characteristics of talking with people, which is related to job satisfaction and work results. In particular, surface acting is easy to reduce job satisfaction, and deep acting may help employees get used to job requirements. Zhang [5] also said that electronic tags are widely used to receive guests, which will affect work pressure, emotional exhaustion and overall energy. From these results, it can be seen that electronic tag is an important problem, especially in the work that must always talk to customers.

2.2 Occupational Stress

Job stress is widely used in service-related work, which has a negative impact on employees' work experience and mental health. Research shows that emotional labor is a major reason for the pressure of the service industry. Employees should not only complete their work tasks, but also adjust their emotions frequently when talking with customers to meet the requirements of the company and job roles. If you have to adjust your mood frequently, you will become exhausted, your job satisfaction will drop, and your inner pressure will increase [6, 7].

In addition to emotional requirements, people in the service industry are also under pressure from workload and expectation of results. Vashdi et al. [8] said that front-line service personnel always have to strike a balance between service quality and workload. The greater the job requirements, the greater the occupational pressure.

In the work related to online games, the stress in the workplace also has its unique characteristics. With the gradual specialization of the game industry, the boundaries between work and entertainment are gradually blurred, and industry professionals often need to change roles between rest activities and professional work [9]. At the same time, the expectation of good grades, bad communication in the network environment and irregular working hours are also considered to be the causes of great stress, which may increase the risk of mental health problems such as anxiety and depression [10].

2.3 Emotion Regulation and Coping Strategies

Emotional regulation and coping strategies are very important for people who work in service-oriented occupations. Especially in the scene where the pressure lasts for a long time and people often meet. Studies have shown that people will employ various emotional regulation strategies to cope with negative emotions and stress at work, such as cognitive reappraisal, psychological detachment, and attention management, which are helpful to reduce emotional exhaustion and maintain work performance [11, 12]. In addition, interpersonal self-regulation and active coping behaviors help people to relieve work pressure, improve their adaptability and work well in complex workplaces [13]. Related research also found that Eustress (positive stress) can inspire people to take more active and better response actions, and reduce the adverse effects of emotional labor to some extent [14]. Therefore, emotional regulation and coping strategies play a very important role in not only managing work stress, but also protecting mental health, improving resilience and reducing occupational burnout.

3. Methodology

In this study, 8 to 10 online gaming companion are gathered into the participants of research by purposeful sample extraction. Participants are between 18 and 30 years old and come from different platform and club of Gaming Company. All participants agreed to join the study voluntarily and were informed of the purpose and confidentiality rules of the study before the interview began.

The data of this study was collected by semi-structured interviews. The interview questions are mainly about the mood problems, the sources of stress, the coping methods, and the influence on the mind when commercial

companies work for a long time. Any interview is about 20 to 30 minutes long. With the consent of the interviewee, the interview was recorded and then written into a written document. In order to protect the privacy of participants, all data are treated anonymously.

This study used the thematic analysis to organize and analyze the interview data. First of all, I read the written records of interviews many times, and made open coding in order to find out the important contents related to the research questions. Then, similar ideas are summarized into themes, which have been compared and revised to confirm whether themes correctly expresses the interviewee's experience. Finally, find the headlines related to emotional challenges, occupational stress, emotional regulation and psychological impacts, and explore the emotional experiences and coping strategies of online gaming companions in their work.

4. Result

In the interview that decided the form of half the questions, the study collected data about the work and emotional experience of 10 online comic companies. There were 5 men and 5 women. Everyone has worked as a gaming companion, giving me a lot of direct experience information. In order to protect the privacy of participants and abide by the research rules, this paper does not use real names, nicknames or temporary names. All the interviews were published anonymously, and the analysis only focused on common topics and typical experiences.

4.1 Emotional Challenges Experienced by Online Game Companions

As can be seen from the results of interview. Online gaming companions are faced with a hard mood, which mainly comes from the interaction with the client, their own mood management and the results of the game. Most interviewees believe that game companions should not only provide technical support, but also provide emotional value to clients all the time. So they should keep a positive attitude and satisfy what the client wants. Some interviewees said. He said that if the client is difficult to talk, keeps complaining and doesn't know anything about the game, he will feel helpless, lost and uneasy. However, gaming companions are generally regarded as a part of service industry, so they don't directly have unpleasant emotions, but choose to maintain a good relationship with the client.

In addition to the pressure from the client, the results of the game and the results of the game are also great pressure. People interviewed often worry that if they don't play well, keep losing, and can't meet customers' expectations, it will have a bad influence on the game experience. As a result, some people feel guilty and worry about complaints and bad comments. It is worth noting that people interviewed rarely have strong doubts about themselves, and they tend to think that stress is a natural part of this job.

When it comes to gender differences, female respondents tend to emphasize the importance of emotional value and customer relationship, while male respondents are more focused on showing their game skills and leading customers to victory. Despite this, regardless of gender, respondents generally agree that the work of game partners includes both technical work and emotional work, and always managing the client experience becomes part of their work.

4.2 Emotion Regulation and Coping Strategies

When people feel bored at work, the interviewees usually use a fixed method to calm down. The most important thing is to control your emotions immediately. It is difficult to give up work in the process of game reception, so most respondents said they would not choose to rest or leave. On the contrary, just calm down and don't let the bad mood affect the customer experience. For example, when accepting an order, an interviewee said "I can only calm down" and "let myself calm down". Because there is no time to use other coping methods.

Another participant explained that even if the mood was annoying not long ago, once the order was received, it would immediately calm down and let the guests see a good attitude. In addition to ways to suppress feelings on the spot, some people change their minds and eliminate stress. For example, I think that the guest's dissatisfaction is part of my job, and criticism is my chance to get better. In addition, some people were interviewed. After work, they listened to music, watched short video, went for a walk and chatted with friends to cheer themselves up. In this way, we can start the next job in a better mood.

In particular, most interviewees say that they

don't carry their dislike feelings from the previous client to the next client, but they share the relationship between their work mood and the client well. This practice of giving up the mentality not only reflects the service-oriented work of Gaming Company, but also shows that in the online gaming companion industry, stabilizing and managing the mentality has become an important job skill.

4.3 Psychological Consequences and Occupational Well-Being

The results of this interview show that working in gaming companion work for a long time generally does not cause major mental health problems, but it affects the work experience and daily life of several interviewees to some extent. The most common symptom is the decrease of interest in gaming. Several people interviewed said that gaming gradually changed from entertainment to work. It is said that I almost don't want to play games when I haven't received the order from the guests, and I feel that gaming has lost its original fun. At the same time, although not many, some people interviewed said that due to irregular working hours, staying up late for a long time, I have to go at any time, which will destroy the rhythm of sleeping time and reduce the activities in the real society.

However, most interviewees don't want to resign because of this. On the contrary, they feel that gaming companion has free working hours and can get a considerable sum of money. This job can cherish my interest and money at the same time, so I want to continue to do this job. Next, we can see that emotional labor and work stress may slightly affect the mental well-being of Gaming Company, but this influence is not a heavy mental health problem, but gaming fatigue. Generally speaking, online learning companies insist on learning every day, which can cooperate well with their work and establish a good balance between stress and rewards through ongoing emotional regulation.

5. Discussion

The results of this study will provide more support for the application of emotional labor theory to the work of online gaming companions. Like Ehrlich [2] and Wharton [3], game companions should not only work in the game, but also adjust their emotions all the time to give guests a good experience. Even in case of customer complaints, repeated failures and adverse reactions, the interviewees usually conceal their true feelings and stick to a good service attitude. This is almost the same as the description of the theory of "surface acting" and "deep acting" in emotional labor. At the same time, this research is also an idea of studying platform work-that is, platform workers should not only do work tasks, but also meet various requirements such as maintaining customer relations and coping with work pressure [9], which shows that the work of "online gaming companions" has two characteristics: technical labor and remote label.

In addition, in this study, most of the respondents responded to work stress through immediate emotional control, cognitive adjustment and emotional recovery after work. This is consistent with the results of Ferro et al. [11] and Uhreck et al. [12, 13]. They report that emotional regulation strategy can improve adaptability to work. However, compared with the study [10] in which e-sports athletes generally have a higher risk of anxiety and depression, the participants in this study mainly show a decline in interest in games, slight emotional fatigue or changes in living habits, and serious mental health conditions. This difference may be related to the nature of the work of gaming companion, or it may be related to the respondents' frequent mastery of emotional regulation skill. This means that effective emotional management can reduce the negative impact of emotional labor and work pressure to a certain extent.

6. Conclusion

A semi-structured interview was conducted with 10 online map companies. This study investigated the emotional topics in their work, the practices of emotional regulation and the influence of emotional labor on the mind. The research results show that online gaming companion should not only support the game skill, but also adjust its emotion all the time to meet the needs of customer and get a good service experience. This job is a special occupation of technical work and emotional labor.

In the research, most dennis gabor companies have mastered some good learning methods. Faced with work pressure, they will immediately suppress their study and adjust their way of thinking. After work, they will study for a long

time and engage in Gaming Company. Sometimes they will lose interest in the game, the pace of sleep will be disrupted, and the speed and time will become fragmented. Sometimes they will feel a little emotional exhaustion, but the people interviewed will be.

This study extends the use of emotional labor to a new job-online gaming companions. In addition, in order to help people who work on platforms, a guide will be published to help them improve the mechanisms of psychological support and emotional management. The number of sample in this study is very small, and the objects are limited to people in gaming companion, so the future research will expand the scope of sample, including platforms, game genres, full-time and part-time.

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