
Development Process of an Act-Based Psychological Innovation for Enhancing Emotional Labor Management Among Hotel Frontline Employees: A Mixed-Methods Study

Minnicha Yarosake¹, Assoc Prof Juthamas Haenjohn², Asst Prof Warakorn Supwirapakorn³

Doctoral Candidate, Brain, Mind and Learning Program, Faculty of Education, Burapha University, Thailand¹

Associate Professor, Brain, Mind and Learning Program, Faculty of Education, Burapha University, Thailand²

Assistant Professor, Brain, Mind and Learning Program, Faculty of Education, Burapha University, Thailand³

ABSTRACT

This mixed-methods study investigated the development process of a psychological innovation (defined as an evidence-based intervention distinguished by empirical grounding in context-specific qualitative data, theoretically driven assimilative integration, systematic framework design, and rigorous effectiveness verification) based on Acceptance and Commitment Therapy for enhancing emotional labor management (ACT-EL) among hotel frontline employees. An exploratory sequential design was employed in two phases. Phase 1 involved in-depth interviews with 24 frontline employees from 4-5 star hotels across three organizational levels (managers, supervisors, and operational staff) in Thailand's Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC) to explore emotional labor challenges and needs. Content analysis revealed seven key findings encompassing four problem areas (work experience and service value awareness; organizational expectations and systemic problem perception; diverse guest challenges and mindfulness in uncontrollable situations; and internal personal factors and emotional self-regulation) and three need areas (team support dynamics; organizational policies; and self-development opportunities). These findings were integrated with ACT theory and compassion-based approaches through assimilative integration to develop the 8-session ACT-EL program following the MINNICHIA framework. Phase 2 tested program effectiveness with 60 operational-level frontline employees assigned through matched-pair randomization into experimental ($n = 30$) and control ($n = 30$) groups. Psychological flexibility was measured using the Thai version of the Acceptance and Action Questionnaire-II (AAQ-II), and self-compassion using the Thai version of the Self-Compassion Scale (SCS). Results revealed that the experimental group showed significantly higher psychological flexibility after the intervention compared to pre-test scores ($t = -4.038$, $p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 0.750$). MANCOVA, controlling for pre-test baseline differences, confirmed significant overall between-group differences across all dependent variables (Wilks' Lambda = .241, $F = 33.48$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .759$). These findings demonstrate that developing psychological innovations grounded in context-specific qualitative findings can produce effective programs for cultivating internal psychological resources among frontline employees in the Thai cultural context.

Keywords: acceptance and commitment therapy, emotional labor, frontline employees, psychological flexibility, self-compassion