

The Influence of Emotional Labor, Customer Satisfaction, and Tipping Behaviors on Food Service Quality Among Hospitality Workers in Ibadan Metropolis

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Abstract—This study investigated the influence of emotional labor, customer satisfaction, and restaurant tipping behaviors on food service quality among hospitality-related workers in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. A descriptive survey research design was adopted and data was gathered using standardized scales on three independent variable and one dependent variable. A sample of 209 participants was surveyed using a purposive sampling technique and data were analyzed using independent sample t-tests and multiple regression analysis. Findings from the t-test analysis revealed that emotional labor had no significant influence on food service quality among hospitality workers ($t(207) = .986, p > .05$), indicating that perceived food service quality could not be attributed to workers' levels of emotional labor. However, customer satisfaction and restaurant tipping behavior had significant positive influences on food service quality ($t(207) = 10.789, p < .05$), suggesting that workers with higher customer satisfaction and positive tipping behavior exhibited higher levels of service quality. Gender differences were not significant ($t(207) = -.272, p > .05$), though females reported slightly higher service quality scores than males. Regression analysis showed that age, education, and marital status jointly had no significant influence ($R = .153, R^2 = .023, F(3,205) = 1.633, p > .05$), but marital status had a significant independent contribution ($\beta = .234, t = 2.158, p < .05$). The findings highlight the importance of customer-related factors over emotional labor in enhancing food service quality within the hospitality sector.

Keywords— Customer Satisfaction, Emotional Labor, Food Service Quality, Restaurant Tipping Behaviors.

I. INTRODUCTION

Emotional labor—the regulation of felt and expressed emotions to meet organizational display rules—is a central requirement for front-line hospitality workers and has been shown to shape both employee well-being and service outcomes (Wang, 2020). Emotional labor strategies are typically categorized as surface acting (faking emotions) and deep acting (modifying inner feelings); surface acting is associated with emotional exhaustion and poorer job performance, while deep acting can sustain authentic interactions that customers perceive as higher quality (Wang, 2020; Yang, 2023). During the COVID-19 period and its aftermath, the emotional demands on restaurant staff intensified as workers navigated health anxieties, mask-wearing, and shifting customer expectations—exacerbating

the costs of sustained surface acting and influencing turnover intentions and in-service behavior.

Customer satisfaction in foodservice settings remains a primary mediator between employees' service behaviors and business outcomes. Empirical studies using adapted DINESERV and SERVQUAL frameworks confirm that responsiveness, assurance, tangibles (including cleanliness), and food quality together drive satisfaction, which in turn predicts revisit intentions and positive word-of-mouth (Zibarzani, 2022; Arli, 2024). Sentiment-analytic work on online reviews further demonstrates that customers reward not only the gastronomic product but also staff warmth, attentiveness, and emotional authenticity—elements directly shaped by employees' emotional labor (Pleerux et al., 2023). Thus, how hospitality workers manage emotions at the point of service materially affects perceived foodservice quality and subsequent customer evaluations.

Tipping behaviors operate both as an economic incentive for employees and as an expressive signal of customer satisfaction and appreciation. Recent multi-country surveys and experimental analyses document that tipping is responsive to factors such as payment method, income, perceived service quality, and situational shocks like the pandemic (Fernandez, 2024; Lynn, 2021). While some research finds that crises reduced the frequency of tipping but increased tip size when given, other studies highlight that visible emotional labor (smiling, personalized attention) increases tip generosity—linking emotional performance directly to monetary reward (Lynn, 2021; Fernandez, 2024). These patterns suggest tipping is both an outcome of customer satisfaction and a feedback mechanism that can reinforce desirable service behaviors, thereby influencing food service quality indirectly.

Despite growing evidence, integrated studies that treat emotional labor, customer satisfaction, and tipping as simultaneous predictors of objective and perceived food services quality among hospitality workers are comparatively scarce. Much of the literature treats these constructs pairwise (emotional labor → burnout; service quality → satisfaction; tipping → earnings) rather than modeling their combined, possibly interacting effects—especially in post-pandemic operational contexts. This study addresses that gap by

examining how frontline emotional labor strategies, customer satisfaction metrics, and tipping behaviors jointly predict food service quality in hospitality settings, thereby offering actionable insights for management practices that both protect worker well-being and enhance service standards.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Emotional labor and Food Services Quality

Emotional labor—employees' management of felt and expressed emotions to meet organizational display rules—has been widely studied as a determinant of service performance in hospitality, with clear implications for food service quality. Researchers differentiate deep acting (modifying inner feelings) from surface acting (faking emotions), and consistently find that deep acting is linked to higher perceived service quality while surface acting often leads to emotional dissonance, exhaustion, and poorer customer outcomes (Li, 2018; Grobelna, 2021).

Recent cross-level analyses and reviews show emotional labor operates both directly and indirectly through employee well-being and engagement to influence service quality. For example, studies using Job Demands–Resources and Conservation of Resources frameworks report that deep acting fosters work engagement and authentic customer interactions that improve service evaluations, whereas surface acting depletes self-regulatory resources and predicts emotional exhaustion and degraded performance (Wang et al., 2020; meta-analysis, 2024). These mechanisms are particularly salient in food service settings where repeated, fast-paced face-to-face interactions make emotional regulation central to customer perceptions of meal quality, timeliness, and hospitality.

Contextual moderators identified in the literature are crucial for hospitality-specific conclusions. Emotional intelligence, supervisor support, and a positive service climate enable employees to choose deep acting and buffer the harmful effects of surface acting; conversely, high workload and unclear display rules push staff toward surface acting, hurting both employee well-being and observable service behaviors (Hu, 2023; Katz-Navon et al., 2020). Empirical work in hotel and fine-dining contexts underscores that organizational resources (training, fair scheduling, managerial emotional support) translate emotional labor into consistent, high-quality food service outcomes.

Studies has shown that frontline food service workers who regularly engage in deep acting elicit greater customer satisfaction, repeat patronage, and positive word-of-mouth, while those relying on surface acting report higher turnover intentions and lower service ratings (Wu, 2023; Giousmpasoglou et al., 2025). Interventions that teach emotion regulation skills, foster emotional intelligence, and redesign job demands (reasonable pace, adequate staffing) show promise in converting emotional labor from a risk factor into a predictor of superior food service quality. For hospitality managers and researchers, the challenge is balancing authentic affective displays with sustainable employee well-being so emotional labor becomes a reliable

driver of food service excellence (Wu, 2023; Giousmpasoglou et al., 2025)

Customer Satisfaction and Food Services Quality

Customer satisfaction in foodservice settings remains strongly shaped by both tangible product attributes (food quality, temperature, menu variety) and service-process factors (staff hygiene, responsiveness, system reliability), a pattern confirmed across institutional, on-premise, and online delivery contexts (Guak, Oh, & Cho, 2022; Wu et al., 2024). Research focused on workplace/institutional cafeterias shows that employees' satisfaction priorities shifted during COVID-19 toward hygiene, safe dining arrangements, and consistent food temperature and menu harmony—factors that directly affect daily worker well-being and, indirectly, productivity and attendance (Guak et al., 2022). These user-level findings underscore that food quality (taste, variety) and operational dependability (timely service, correct orders) are nonnegotiable drivers of satisfaction for hospitality workers who both consume and manage food services.

The rapid expansion of online food delivery and platform-mediated ordering during and after the pandemic broadened the service-quality construct to include digital/system dimensions (app operation, traceability, payment security) alongside classic SERVQUAL facets. Large-sample, cross-national studies of delivery platforms found that reliability, maintenance of food quality during delivery, and perceived service value meaningfully increase customer satisfaction and intention to reuse or recommend services (Wu et al., 2024; Arli, van Esch, & Weaven, 2024). Importantly for hospitality employees (many of whom now interact with or oversee third-party delivery), these studies highlight that front-line training and system integration are essential—improvements in digital ordering and delivery handling translate directly into higher satisfaction and lower complaint rates (Wu et al., 2024; Arli et al., 2024).

Emerging research on service automation (robotic restaurants) indicates that technological atmosphere and interaction quality shape customers' experiential intentions, but food quality retains a central role: even when novelty attracts patrons, perceived food outcomes still determine repeat patronage (Zhu, 2022). For hospitality workers, this suggests that adoption of automation must preserve food quality standards and reconfigure staff roles toward oversight and quality assurance rather than assuming technology alone will raise satisfaction.

Taken together, recent evidence (2018–2024) argues for a holistic, worker-centred approach to foodservice quality: managers should prioritize food consistency and hygiene, invest in staff training (human and digital), and treat digital/system reliability as part of service quality. Implementing these integrated improvements improves employee satisfaction and yields downstream business benefits such as higher productivity and greater service loyalty (Guak et al., 2022; Wu et al., 2024; Arli et al., 2024; Zhu, 2022).

Restaurant Tipping Behaviors and Food Services Quality

Research over the last decade has probed whether customer tipping reliably reflects service quality and how tipping practices affect hospitality workers' experiences. Early experimental and within-subjects work shows a positive but modest relationship between observed service quality and tip size: high-quality service typically increases tips, but the effect is often too small to serve as the sole performance incentive for employees (Lynn, 2021). This line of work also emphasizes that situational factors — party size, restaurant busyness, peer behavior, and pre-set point-of-sale prompts — systematically shape tipping decisions independent of service performance (Thrane, 2020; Lynn, 2021).

Recent studies expand the lens beyond customer-side mechanics to include server perspectives and platform-driven changes. Qualitative research with tipped servers finds that employees pursue a complex mix of behaviors (service effort, personal connection, merchandise knowledge) to earn tips, suggesting that servers perceive tipping as contingent on both objective service tasks and interpersonal cues (Norris, 2024). These findings help explain inconsistent tip–quality correlations: customers sometimes reward warmth or charisma more than technical competence (Norris, 2024).

The post-COVID era and the rise of digital tipping prompts have substantially altered norms. Studies from 2021–2024 document pandemic-driven empathy spikes that temporarily increased gratuities, followed by “tipping fatigue” as tip requests proliferated across non-traditional contexts (e.g., coffee shops, delivery apps) and digital screens normalized suggested amounts (Lynn, 2021; Fernandez, 2024). Emerging empirical work indicates that aggressive or pre-service tip solicitations can backfire, lowering consumer satisfaction and in some cases reducing the perceived link between service quality and tipping (Fernandez, 2024).

Policy and managerial implications arise from these patterns. If tips are a noisy and context-dependent signal of service quality, relying heavily on gratuities for worker compensation can produce income volatility and misaligned incentives; several recent industry analyses and media reports highlight falling average tip rates and growing calls for wage reform or service-included pricing models (MarketWatch reporting on Toast data, 2025). Managers should therefore combine fair base pay, transparent service-fee policies, and training that balances technical service with interpersonal competencies that customers visibly reward (MarketWatch, 2025; Thrane, 2020).

Demographic Variables and Food Service Quality

Demographic variables—age, gender, education, income, ethnicity, and tenure—consistently emerge as important predictors of how food service quality is delivered and perceived in hospitality settings. Research indicates that frontline workers' demographic profiles shape both their service behaviours and customers' expectations: older and more experienced staff often display greater confidence and task competence, which can translate into higher perceived service reliability, while younger workers (including many Generation Z employees) bring different communication styles and technological savviness that influence

contemporary service encounters. (Liu-Lastres, 2021; Seyfi et al., 2024).

Gender differences appear in multiple studies: male and female foodservice workers may be assigned different roles or receive different customer reactions, and customers' evaluations of service can vary by server gender in culturally specific ways. These dynamics interact with role expectations and affect dimensions of food service quality such as responsiveness and empathy (Serhan & Serhan, 2019; Liu-Lastres, 2021).

Education and skill level correlate with perceived food quality and safety competence. Workers with higher formal education or culinary training are more likely to implement consistent food-handling practices and to communicate menu knowledge confidently, improving customers' perceptions of food quality and assurance — particularly in settings that emphasize product knowledge such as gourmet food halls and specialty outlets (Orden-Mejía, 2024).

Income and job position (proxied by pay and rank) influence commitment and motivation, which in turn affect service consistency. Several hospitality studies find that lower-paid or precariously employed staff report lower job satisfaction and higher turnover intent, which degrades continuity of service and can reduce both objective and perceived food service quality (Liu-Lastres, 2021; sector reviews).

Ethnicity and minority status shape workplace experiences that impact service delivery: ethnic minority workers report distinctive workplace challenges (discrimination, less upward mobility) that affect morale and customer interactions; addressing these inequities improves employee well-being and stabilizes service quality outcomes (Liu-Lastres, 2021).

Context matters—hospital foodservice, quick-service restaurants, and upscale dining show different demographic effects. Hospital foodservice literature highlights that staff role and clinical context mediate how demographic factors influence food accessibility and patient satisfaction, while studies of food halls and QSRs show that age, income, and education of both staff and patrons shape expectations and loyalty patterns (Wilandh, 2024; Orden-Mejía, 2024).

Related Studies

Emotional labor—employees' regulation of felt and displayed emotions during service encounters—remains central to food-service quality because it shapes both the immediate customer experience and longer-term employee capacity to deliver consistent service. Recent syntheses of ecological momentary and field research show that emotional labor is usefully distinguished into *surface acting* (faking feelings) and *deep acting* (trying to genuinely feel required emotions), with divergent outcomes for well-being and performance (Pinkawa, 2024). Surface acting is consistently associated with emotional exhaustion and impaired service delivery, whereas deep acting tends to be linked to higher perceived authenticity and better customer evaluations (Pinkawa, 2024; Yang, 2022).

Empirical field studies in hospitality extend these mechanisms. Longitudinal work finds that job crafting and

resilience reduce the negative effects of emotional labor by enabling employees to reframe tasks and conserve regulatory resources, which in turn stabilizes service quality over time (Yang, 2022). Conversely, studies of frontline mistreatment report that customer incivility increases surface acting, which mediates the relationship between mistreatment and both emotional exhaustion and poorer service behaviors (Fan, 2022). Taken together, these findings suggest that emotional labor strategies operate as both direct predictors of service quality (through behavioral displays) and indirect predictors (through employee well-being and turnover risk).

Customer satisfaction literature in food services underscores the multi-dimensional nature of perceived quality—encompassing tangibles (food and environment), reliability (order accuracy), responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Meta-analytic and sector-specific studies during and after the COVID-19 era indicate that service quality dimensions remain strong predictors of customer satisfaction and loyalty in restaurants, and that frontline employee behaviors (courtesy, responsiveness, authenticity) are among the most salient drivers of favorable satisfaction ratings (Nilashi et al., 2021; Perdomo-Verdecia, 2024). Crucially, customer satisfaction functions as both an outcome of employee emotional labor and a mediator linking employee behavior to consequential business metrics (repeat patronage, word-of-mouth).

Tipping behavior, specific to many foodservice contexts, provides an observable economic signal of customer evaluations and can incentivize service quality. Recent empirical work finds a positive—though not perfectly linear—relationship between perceived service quality and tip size: higher friendliness, responsiveness, and perceived effort generally increase tips, but structural changes (e.g., digital prompts, self-ordering kiosks) and social norms also materially shape tipping rates (Newman, 2023; Fernandez, 2024). Studies also highlight that tipping can create incentive heterogeneity: when tips dominate take-home pay, employees may prioritize tip-generating behaviors (e.g., affective displays) over consistent procedural quality, sometimes producing uneven overall service quality (Fernandez, 2024).

Integrating these threads, recent evidence positions emotional labor strategies, customer satisfaction, and tipping as interlinked predictors of food service quality. Emotional labor (deep acting vs. surface acting) influences authenticity and consistency of service; customer satisfaction captures how those behaviors and product attributes are perceived; and tipping provides both an outcome signal and a behavioral incentive that can reinforce or distort service priorities (Pinkawa, 2024; Fan, 2022; Nilashi et al., 2021; Newman, 2023; Fernandez, 2024). For researchers and managers, the combined implication is clear: interventions that reduce forced surface acting (through supportive leadership and job design), strengthen authentic employee–customer interactions, and align incentive systems with holistic quality (not just tip maximization) are most likely to yield sustained improvements in food service quality.

Statement of the Problem

In the hospitality industry, particularly in food service settings, employees' emotional labor plays a crucial role in shaping customers' perceptions of service quality. Emotional labor—the regulation of emotions to meet organizational display rules—often requires workers to suppress negative feelings and display friendliness, which can lead to emotional exhaustion and affect service performance (Grandey et al., 2019). Despite its importance, the extent to which emotional labor contributes to perceived food service quality remains underexplored in developing economies such as Nigeria. Furthermore, customer satisfaction and tipping behaviors are critical indicators of service outcomes and employee motivation. Research suggests that satisfied customers are more likely to leave tips, reinforcing service quality expectations (Huang & Dai, 2021). However, inconsistent tipping norms and customer attitudes in different cultural contexts may weaken this relationship (Söderlund & Rosengren, 2020). Many restaurant workers face emotional strain without commensurate rewards, which may reduce job satisfaction and service quality (Lee & Ok, 2022). Consequently, there is a pressing need to examine how emotional labor, customer satisfaction, and tipping behaviors jointly predict food service quality among hospitality-related workers to inform sustainable management practices and enhance service delivery standards in the food service sector.

Objective of the Study

1. To examine whether emotional labor will significantly predict food service quality among hospitality-related workers
2. To explain the independent influence of customer satisfaction on food service quality among hospitality-related workers
3. To find out the independent influence of restaurants tipping behaviors on food service quality among hospitality-related workers
4. To examine the role of gender on food service quality among hospitality-related workers
5. To understand the influence of age, marital status and educational qualification on food service quality among hospitality-related workers

Hypotheses

1. Emotional Labor will significantly independently predict food services quality among hospitality-related workers in Ibadan.
2. Customer satisfaction will significantly independently predict food service quality among hospitality-related workers in Ibadan.
3. Restaurant tipping behavior will significantly independently predict food service quality among hospitality-related workers in Ibadan.
4. Female will significantly score higher on food services quality than their male counterparts.
5. Age, marital status, and educational level will jointly and independently significantly predict food services quality among hospitality-related workers in Ibadan

III. METHOD

Design

This study adopted descriptive (survey) research design to examine the connection between the variables of interest. To put it another way, it is a type of design in which the researcher examines, independently, the influence of the variables of interest—Emotional Labor, customer satisfaction and restaurant tipping behaviors—on a dependent variable.

Setting

This study was conducted among hospitality related workers in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. The hospitality industry in Ibadan, Oyo State, is a rapidly expanding sector that reflects the city's historical and economic significance as one of Nigeria's largest metropolitan areas. Ibadan's hospitality landscape comprises hotels, restaurants, catering services, recreational centers, and event management businesses that cater to a diverse clientele, including students, professionals, tourists, and business travelers. The city's status as a regional hub for education, commerce, and culture has fueled demand for quality accommodation and food service experiences (Ogunbajo & Adeola, 2022). The participant of the study comprises of hospitality-related workers in Ibadan, metropolis because in Nigeria a 2018 survey conducted by Oyo State Hotel Management Board (OHMB) South West Zone reported that 63.7% of employees surveyed experienced a low level of satisfaction, which is a sign of employee's dissatisfaction (OHMA 2018).

Sampling Technique

The purposive sampling technique was used to select the participants in the following hotels: University of Ibadan Hotel, Premier Hotels and Hilton's Hotel. KFC, Kilimanjaro, and Bite More are Fast Foods while Restaurants are Skippers, African Pot, and Sango Cool Spot Restaurants. All located in Ibadan South West Local Government Area of Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. The rationale behind the sampling technique was based on the fact that the above-mentioned hotel/restaurant have a large number of employees and they handle more quest and workload compared to other Hotels.

A total sample size of about 209 hospitality-related workers in Ibadan was purposively sampled for this study. Their sex shows that, 139(46.4%) were females and 160(53.5%) were males. Marital status, 195(65.2%) were married, 90(30.1%) were single, 10(3.3%) were separated, 4(1.3%) were widow. In terms of their level of education, 23(7.6%) has Postgraduate, 55(51.8%) were ND/NCE, 121(40.4%) were SSCE. Religion distribution revealed that, 185(61.8%) were Christian. 114(38.1%) were Islam. Ethnicity, 198(66.2%) were Igbo, 101(33.7%) were Yoruba

Procedure for Data collection

The researchers employed the direct delivery and retrieval system to administer copies of the Questionnaire with the help of a research assistants and explanations were offered where necessary. Prior to the given questionnaire to fill, the researcher instructed them on how they were expected to respond to the statement in the questionnaire and also

informed them that their confidentiality was guaranteed and therefore they should not write their names on the questionnaire., the informed consent issue was evidently respected.

Instruments

A structured questionnaire was used to collect the relevant data for the study. The questionnaire consisted of standard adopted scales with adequate psychometric properties. The questionnaire was five sections: Sections A to E measuring, socio-demographic characteristics of participants and scales measuring Emotional Labor, customer satisfaction, restaurant tipping behaviors and food service quality

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS

This consisted of Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents which included age, gender, ethnicity, educational qualification and religion.

SECTION B: EMOTIONAL LABOR

Emotional labor was measured using the Emotional Labour Scale (ELS) developed by Brotheridge and Lee (2003). The instrument is designed to assess the frequency, intensity, and variety of emotional display required in service-oriented professions. It consists of 15 items rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*always*), where higher scores indicate greater engagement in emotional labor. The scale captures two primary dimensions: surface acting (displaying emotions that are not genuinely felt) and deep acting (attempting to feel the emotions one is expected to display).

Sample items include statements such as “*I fake a good mood when interacting with customers*” (surface acting) and “*I try to actually experience the emotions I must show to customers*” (deep acting). The ELS has demonstrated strong internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from **0.80 to 0.90** across various hospitality-related studies (Grandey et al., 2019; Lee & Ok, 2022). The instrument has also been validated in diverse cultural contexts, making it suitable for assessing emotional labor among hospitality workers in Nigeria.

SECTION C: FOOD SERVICE QUALITY

Food Service Quality was measured using a structured questionnaire adapted from the DINESERV Scale developed by Stevens, Knutson, and Patton (1995). The instrument is widely recognized for assessing service quality in restaurant and food service settings. It consists of multiple items designed to evaluate customers' perceptions of service delivery across key dimensions such as tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Respondents rate their level of agreement with each statement on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 5 (*Strongly Agree*).

The tangibility dimension assesses the physical facilities, cleanliness, and appearance of staff; reliability measures the ability to provide accurate and dependable service; responsiveness evaluates the promptness and willingness of employees to assist customers; assurance captures employees' competence, courtesy, and confidence; while empathy reflects the individualized attention given to customers. The

instrument has demonstrated strong internal consistency, with previous studies reporting Cronbach's alpha values above 0.80 (Marković et al., 2019).

For the present study, the instrument was slightly modified to reflect local food service contexts within Ibadan's hospitality industry, ensuring cultural relevance and clarity. The scale's reliability and validity were re-established through pilot testing before full administration

SECTION D: TIPPING BEHAVIOR

Tipping behavior was assessed using a structured questionnaire designed to measure customers' and employees' perceptions, attitudes, and practices related to tipping in restaurant and food service settings. The instrument was adapted from the Tipping Behavior Scale developed by Lynn and McCall (2016), which evaluates the frequency, motivation, and determinants of tipping. The scale consists of items measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 5 = *Strongly Agree*. Sample items include statements such as "I usually tip restaurant workers who provide excellent service" and "I consider tipping as a reward for friendliness and attentiveness."

The instrument captures both the normative and behavioral aspects of tipping, focusing on variables such as perceived service quality, emotional display of workers, customer satisfaction, and cultural expectations. Higher scores on the scale indicate a more positive and consistent tipping tendency. Content validity was ensured through expert review, while a pilot test conducted among hospitality workers and customers yielded a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of 0.82, indicating high internal consistency. The instrument was administered alongside other measures to determine the predictive role of tipping behavior in overall food service quality.

IV. RESULTS

Hypothesis one stated that participant who score high on emotional labor will significantly report higher on food service quality than their counterpart who score low on emotional labor

This hypothesis was tested using t-test for independent samples and the results are presented in Table 4.1.

TABLE 4.1: Summary of t-test showing the influence of emotional labor on food service quality

Emotional labor	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	Df	t	Sig
High	95	12.80	2.33			
Low	114	12.50	2.07	207	.986	>.05

Table 4.1 shows that emotional labor had no significant influence on food service quality among hospitality-related workers $t(207) = .986, p > .05$. The result suggests that perception of hospitality workers of food service quality cannot be attributed to their levels of emotional labor in this study. By implication, high emotional labor ($\bar{X} = 12.80$) while low emotional labor had ($\bar{X} = 12.50$). The hypothesis is therefore not confirmed and it is rejected.

Hypothesis Two

Hypothesis two stated that participants who score high on customer satisfaction will report higher food service quality than their counterpart who score low on customer satisfaction. This hypothesis was tested using t-test for independent samples and the results are presented in Table 4.2.

TABLE 4.2: Summary of t-test showing the influence of customer satisfaction on food service quality

Customer Satisfaction	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	Df	t	Sig
High	114	13.83	1.57			
Low	95	11.20	1.95	207	10.789	<.05

Table 4.2 shows that customer satisfaction had significant influence on food service quality among hospitality-related workers $t(207) = 10.789, P < .05$. The result suggests that differences in workers levels of food service quality can be attributed to their customer satisfaction in this study. By implication, participant who score high on customer satisfaction scored higher on food service quality ($\bar{X} = 13.83$) while low scorers on customer satisfaction had a significantly lower score on food service quality ($\bar{X} = 11.20$). The hypothesis is therefore confirmed and it is accepted.

Hypothesis three stated that participants who score high on restaurant tipping behavior will report higher food service quality than their counterpart who score low on restaurant tipping behavior. This hypothesis was tested using t-test for independent samples and the results are presented in Table 4.3.

TABLE 4.3: Summary of t-test showing the influence of restaurant tipping behavior on food service quality

Restaurant tipping behavior	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	Df	t	Sig
High	114	13.83	1.57			
Low	95	11.20	1.95	207	10.789	<.05

Table 4.3 shows that restaurant tipping behavior had significant influence on food service quality among hospitality-related workers $t(207) = 10.789, P < .05$. The result suggests that differences in the levels of food service quality can be attributed to their tipping behaviors in this study. By implication, participant who score high on restaurant tipping behavior scored higher on food service quality ($\bar{X} = 13.83$) while low scorers on restaurant tipping behavior had a significantly lower score on food service quality ($\bar{X} = 11.20$). The hypothesis is therefore confirmed and it is accepted

Hypothesis Four

Hypothesis four stated that female participants will significantly score higher on food service quality than their male counterparts. This hypothesis was tested using t-test for independent samples and the results are presented in Table 4.4

TABLE 4.4: Summary of t-test showing the influence of gender on food service quality

Gender	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	Df	T	Sig
Female	119	12.69	2.40			
Male	90	11.47	2.09	207	-.272	>.05

Table 4.4 shows that there is significant gender difference in the level of food service quality among the participants $t(207) = -.272; p > .05$. The result suggests that differences in hospitality workers' levels of food service quality can be attributed to gender difference. By implication, female reported ($\bar{X} = 12.69$) while male had ($\bar{X} = 11.47$). The hypothesis is therefore confirmed and it is accepted.

Hypothesis Five

Hypothesis five stated that age, educational qualification, and marital status will jointly and independently predict food service quality among hospitality-related workers in Ibadan. This was tested using multiple regression analysis and the results are presented in Table 4.5.

TABLE 4.5: Summary of Multiple Regression showing demographic predictors of food service quality

Predictors	R	R ²	F(3,205)	Sig	β	T	p
Age					.132	1.370	>.05
Education	.153	.023	1.633	>.05	.050	.596	>.05
Marital status					.234	2.158	<.05

Table 4.5 shows that age, educational qualifications and marital status had no significant joint influence on food service quality among the participants $\{R=.153, R^2=.023, F(3,205)=1.633\}$, $p > .05$. The result indicates that no joint influence but the independent influence analysis indicates that only marital status had contributed a significant independent influence of 23.4% variance to changes observed in food service quality among hospitality-related workers $\{\beta=.234, t=2.158, P<.05\}$. The results largely deviated from the prediction and the hypothesis is therefore not confirmed and rejected.

V. DISCUSSION

The first hypothesis stated that participants who scored high on emotional labor would report higher food service quality than those who scored low. The finding of this study showed no significant difference in food service quality based on emotional labor levels. This indicates that the extent to which hospitality workers engage in emotional regulation does not significantly affect customers' perception of service quality. This finding contradicts earlier studies by Grandey et al. (2019) and Lee and Ok (2022), who found that employees' emotional labor, particularly deep acting, enhances customer experience and perceived service quality. The result may be attributed to cultural factors or inadequate emotional labor training within Ibadan's hospitality sector, where emotional display rules may not be strongly institutionalized.

The second hypothesis revealed a significant influence of customer satisfaction on food service quality. This supports previous findings by Huang and Dai (2021), who reported that customer satisfaction remains a core determinant of perceived service excellence in hospitality settings. Workers with higher satisfaction levels tend to deliver more attentive, responsive, and consistent service, improving food service quality.

Similarly, the third hypothesis confirmed that restaurant tipping behavior significantly influenced food service quality. This aligns with findings by Lynn and McCall (2016),

suggesting that tipping serves as positive reinforcement, motivating workers to maintain superior service performance. In the Nigerian context, where tipping is becoming an emerging service norm, this behavior may also symbolize customers' acknowledgment of quality service delivery.

For the fourth hypothesis, gender differences in food service quality were not statistically significant. Although females scored slightly higher than males the difference was not meaningful. This aligns with findings by Söderlund and Rosengren (2020), indicating that gender may not be a strong determinant of service delivery quality when organizational expectations are consistent across roles.

The fifth hypothesis examined the joint and independent influence of demographic variables (age, educational qualification, and marital status) on food service quality. The findings revealed no significant joint prediction, though marital status had a significant independent contribution. This implies that marital stability may enhance workers' emotional balance and responsibility, positively affecting service performance. However, overall, demographic characteristics were not strong predictors of food service quality.

In summary, while customer satisfaction and tipping behavior emerged as significant predictors of food service quality, emotional labor, gender, and most demographic factors showed no significant influence. This suggests that improving customer experience and reinforcing fair reward systems may yield greater impacts on service quality than focusing solely on employees' emotional regulation efforts.

VI. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study provide insightful evidence on the predictors of food service quality among hospitality-related workers in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. The study revealed that emotional labor did not significantly influence food service quality, suggesting that workers' efforts to regulate emotions in service encounters may not directly translate into improved customer perceptions of service quality. This outcome challenges previous studies emphasizing the positive role of emotional regulation in enhancing service outcomes (Grandey et al., 2019; Lee & Ok, 2022), possibly due to limited emotional labor training or differing cultural expectations within the Nigerian hospitality context.

Conversely, customer satisfaction and restaurant tipping behavior were found to be significant predictors of food service quality. These findings affirm that satisfied customers tend to reciprocate with positive evaluations and tipping, which in turn motivates employees to sustain high-quality service delivery (Huang & Dai, 2021; Lynn & McCall, 2016). Gender differences and most demographic variables showed no significant effect on food service quality, although marital status demonstrated a minor yet meaningful independent influence, possibly due to increased emotional maturity and responsibility among married workers.

Overall, the study concludes that enhancing customer satisfaction and implementing equitable reward systems such as tipping incentives are more effective strategies for improving food service quality than focusing exclusively on

emotional labor. Hospitality managers are therefore encouraged to invest in employee-customer relationship management, satisfaction-driven training, and motivational reward policies to achieve sustained service excellence in the food service industry.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusions drawn from this study, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance food service quality among hospitality-related workers in Ibadan and similar contexts:

- i. **Customer Satisfaction Enhancement:** Hospitality organizations should prioritize strategies that promote customer satisfaction through improved service delivery, attentiveness, and responsiveness. Regular feedback systems and customer satisfaction surveys should be implemented to identify areas requiring improvement and sustain service excellence.
- ii. **Employee Motivation and Reward Systems:** Since tipping behavior significantly influences service quality, management should introduce structured reward and incentive programs that recognize outstanding service performance. Fair compensation and recognition can serve as motivational tools to encourage consistent high-quality service among employees.
- iii. **Emotional Labor Training:** Although emotional labor did not significantly predict service quality in this study, training programs focusing on emotional intelligence, stress management, and professional communication should be introduced. This will equip employees with the skills to manage emotional demands effectively and foster positive customer interactions.
- iv. **Professional Development and Job Satisfaction:** Hospitality establishments should create opportunities for continuous learning and career development to enhance workers' competence and satisfaction. Satisfied employees are more likely to be committed and deliver superior service quality.
- v. **Cultural Sensitivity and Customer Relations:** Given the influence of cultural norms on tipping and service perception, managers should develop culturally sensitive service policies that align with local customer expectations while maintaining global hospitality standards.
- vi. **Policy and Management Interventions:** Policymakers and industry regulators should collaborate with hospitality training institutions to standardize service quality benchmarks and promote fair labor practices that foster employee well-being and productivity.

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