

# EMOTIONAL LABOR AND EMS IN THE WORKPLACE

A Qualitative Study Investigating EMS Professionals and Emotional Labor in the Workplace

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## **Abstract**

This study seeks to further understand how Emergency Medical Service (EMS) professionals employ emotional labor techniques in the workplace. Emotional labor is the idea of managing emotions in an organizational setting and depends on managing the client's emotions. Emotional labor has been studied commonly in the retail and customer service industry and has begun to make its way into the healthcare industry.

The study has been done with qualitative methods, based on interview responses and observed behavior. The results show that EMS professionals deal with the effects of emotional labor every day, both on and off the clock. From remaining professional during high-stress calls to interacting with their families after shifts that last up to 72 hours, EMS professionals feel required to gatekeep their emotions to protect the emotions of those around them. This emotional management leads to many different coping mechanisms, some harmful, and strained personal relationships.

From the analysis of data, eight major themes were evident (coping methods, using humor, professionalism, desire to help, polarizing coworker relationships, balancing work and home, physical and emotional elements influencing each other, and the added stress of pediatric calls). The results of this study can be used to further understand how EMS professionals respond to emotional labor on and off the job. The findings could be used to develop training materials that would be able to teach new employees what emotional labor is, what emotional labor is like at that service, and how to manage it to do their job effectively as well as process emotional labor once they leave work.