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Linking perceived organizational support to emotional labor

Linking POS to emotional labor

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Abstract

Purpose – Based on two studies on different occupational groups, the purpose of this paper is to examine the relationship between perceived organizational support (POS) and different forms of emotional labor. Drawing from social identity theory, the present study extends the social exchange theory to provide an alternate explanation to the above relationships.

Design/methodology/approach – The survey design following questionnaire in English language was physically administered among medical sales employees and subsequently among employees in the hospitality industry.

Findings – The study found that POS is positively related to deep acting and negatively related to surface acting. The study further found that organizational identification mediates the relationship between POS and deep acting where as there was no mediation effect of organizational identification on the relationship between POS and surface acting.

Research limitations/implications – The research relies on a cross-sectional design with a single source of data collected from two sources at different time periods.

Practical implications – With the emergence of service economy there is an increasing emphasis on the performance of emotional labor. The present study suggests that organizations need to focus on organizational practices as employees' perception of organizational support is related to the way they express their emotions during customer interactions. The finding of the study suggests that on what the organizations should do to motivate employees to perform expected emotional labor.

Originality/value – The literature is relatively silent on the relationship between POS and different forms of emotional labor. The present study adds to the existing body of knowledge by explaining POS as an important antecedent of emotional labor. Further, the study contributes by exploring the mediation effect of organizational identification on the relationship between POS and different forms of emotional labor.

Keywords Quantitative, Organizational identification, Perceived organizational support, Emotional labor, Customer contact employees

Paper type Research paper

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Introduction

The interaction of frontline employees with customers is considered as an essential activity in many organizations as it influences customers' satisfaction and their assessment of service quality (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2006; Tsai, 2001; Winsted, 2000). In spite of numerous studies on service relationships, several aspects of service interaction have not been explored adequately (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2006). Emotional labor is one such important aspect of service interaction. Employees' effort to express organizationally expected emotions during interaction with customers is broadly termed as emotional labor. It is considered as an individual's response to emotional job demands that put him/her in emotionally stressful situations (Biron and Veldhoven, 2012). With the emergence of service economy, there is a gradual shift from the performance of physical labor to the performance of emotional labor (Erickson and Ritter, 2001). The manner in which frontline employees perform their emotional labor during service interactions contribute to customers' perception about the organization



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and the quality of its products (Ashforth and Humphrey, 1993; Morris and Feldman, 1996; Zapf, 2002), customers' demand (Pugh, 2001; Tan *et al.*, 2003), customers' revisit (Rafaeli and Sutton, 1987; Tsai, 2001), and customers' willingness to recommend to others (Rafaeli and Sutton, 1987; Tsai, 2001). The performance of emotional labor, at least some form of it, leads to many undesirable outcomes such as increased stress, emotional exhaustion, turnover intention as well as decreased job satisfaction, performance, and well-being of employees (see McCance *et al.*, 2013). In spite of these negative correlates of emotional labor, past research has not adequately examined how to alleviate it (McCance *et al.*, 2013). While research has focussed on individual factors, little work has been done to examine whether situational factors influence employees' performance of emotional labor (Duke *et al.*, 2009). The present research explores the linkage of one such situational factor, i.e. perceived organizational support (POS) with two forms of emotional labor. The research further explains the path in which POS is related to different forms of emotional labor. The present research makes important contributions to literature. First, it addresses the relationship between POS and emotional labor, which has received insufficient attention from the research community. Second, scholars writing within the POS literature draw on social exchange theory. Drawing from social identity theory, the present research provides alternative explanation to the path linking POS and emotional labor. Third, the research supports the validity of organizational support theory in the Asian context, which is different from the western context.

Theory and hypotheses

Emotional labor

The purpose of emotional labor is to influence customers' perceptions during service interactions (Ashforth and Humphrey, 1993; Hochschild, 2003). Although many definitions have been presented in the literature, emotional labor can generally be understood as "the act of displaying appropriate emotion regardless of whether the emotion is discrepant with internal feelings" (Glomb and Tews, 2004, p. 2). Employees perform their emotional labor either by surface acting or by deep acting (Ashforth and Humphrey, 1993; Hochschild, 2003). In surface acting employees modify the outward expression of their emotions, which has a parallel in Gross's (1998) concept of response-focussed emotion regulation (Grandey, 2000). In response-focussed regulations, the effort is not expended to change the internal feelings; rather to mask the felt emotions (Mesmer-Magnus *et al.*, 2012). Surface acting is thought of as a physical attempt to conceal the felt emotions (Zapf, 2002) and is termed as "faking in bad faith" (Rafaeli and Sutton, 1987). Deep acting, in which employees consciously change their internal feelings in order to express the expected emotions, is associated with antecedent-focussed emotion regulation (Grandey, 2000; Gross, 1998). In antecedent-focussed regulation, the felt emotions are consistent to the organizationally expected emotions. Whereas energy may be required initially to adjust the felt emotions, no further energy is expended once the emotions are in line (Mesmer-Magnus *et al.*, 2012). Deep acting is called as "faking in good faith" as the intention is to help the customers (Rafaeli and Sutton, 1987). In almost all the theoretical models of emotional labor, deep acting is regarded as the good-faith attempt to enhance customers' experiences whereas surface acting is viewed as the bad-faith approach with an aim to meet job requirements (Chi *et al.*, 2011; Rafaeli and Sutton, 1987, p. 32). Thus, in surface acting employees' express the emotions irrespective of their internal feelings to comply with the expected emotions, whereas in deep acting they go beyond mere compliance and attempt to make those expressions genuine.

Research findings suggest that surface acting is positively related to emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and work-family conflict (Hulsheger *et al.*, 2010; Yanchus *et al.*, 2010). Further, surface acting is negatively related to a feeling of personal accomplishment (Naring *et al.*, 2006), job satisfaction (Ashforth and Humphrey, 1993), and quality of work life (Cheung and Tang, 2009). On the other hand, deep acting is related negatively with burnout (Grandey, 2003) as well as positively with quality of work life (Cheung and Tang, 2009), employees' well-being (Johnson and Specter, 2007), and work-family enrichment (Yanchus *et al.*, 2010). By themselves, these human concerns provide ample reason to study different forms of emotional labor. Apart from the human concerns, a growing body of literature has begun to demonstrate that surface acting is negatively related to employees' emotional performance, their affective response to work (Yanchus *et al.*, 2010), and positively related to work withdrawal, and turnover intentions. Deep acting was found to be positively related to emotional performance, and negatively related to work withdrawal and turnover intention (Chi *et al.*, 2011; Mesmer-Magnus *et al.*, 2012; Scott and Barnes, 2011). Given the consequences of emotional labor on both the individuals and the organization, there is a need to explore the antecedents of different forms of emotional labor. In fact, Mesmer-Magnus *et al.* (2012) suggested that future research should explore what determines individuals' choice of different forms of emotional labor. Though the literature has explored personality factors as the antecedents of emotional labor, surprisingly little research has investigated the role of situational factors as potential antecedents of emotional labor. The rationale for focussing on POS is twofold. First, POS refers to the organization's contribution to a positive reciprocity dynamic with its employees (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002). This positive reciprocity dynamics seems to explain the employee-customer relationships (Eisenberger and Stinglhamber, 2011, p. 131), as employees tend to perform better to reciprocate favorable organizational support. Second, though studies have explored the consequences of POS, Piercy *et al.* (2006) called for future studies to examine its other consequences. Since emotional labor is an important concern for many organizations and the research linking POS to both forms of emotional labor is scarce, I tried to fill this gap in literature.

POS

Employees' perception of the extent to which the organization values their contribution and cares about their well-being is called POS (Eisenberger *et al.*, 1986, p. 501). Scholars writing within the literature of POS draw on social exchange theory (Aselage and Eisenberger, 2003; Blau, 1964) to propose that employees reciprocate what they receive from organizations. According to Blau (1964), the basis of any exchange relationship can be described in terms of either social or economic principles. Exchanges that are social in nature are based on the trust that gestures of goodwill will be reciprocated in some future occasion. The specific benefits exchanged may be valued primarily because they are symbols of a high-quality relationship; it is the exchange of mutual support that is of concern to the parties involved in the exchange (Blau, 1964). Based on the norms of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960), Coyle-Shapiro and Conway (2005) argued that organizational treatment creates a sense of felt obligation which motivates employees to put effort toward helping the organization achieve its goal. In this regard, POS is considered as a motivation construct (Liao *et al.*, 2009). Motivated employees become physically involved in tasks, and emphatically connect to people as required by their job in ways that display what they feel (Kahn, 1990). According to social exchange theory, employees tend to reciprocate beneficial treatment that they receive with positive work-related behaviors. For example, research findings suggest that

positive, beneficial actions directed at employees by the organization contribute to the establishment of high-quality exchange relationships (Konovsky and Pugh, 1994), which create obligations for employees to reciprocate in a positive and beneficial way to the organization (Eisenberger *et al.*, 1986). In the context of Southwest Airlines, employees with high levels of POS reciprocated with excellent treatment to the customers (Eisenberger and Stinglhamber, 2011, p. 46). Researchers have argued that when employees perceive a high level of organizational support, they may use behaviors valued by the organizations to reciprocate the benevolent treatment from the organization (Lambert, 2000). In customer facing occupations, prone to high levels of emotional labor, these organizationally valued behaviors may be manifested through the internalization of expected emotions as employees have a good faith intention to help the organization:

H1. POS is positively related to deep acting.

To argue the linkage between POS and surface acting, the present paper draws from three theoretical perspectives namely social exchange theory, motivation theory and conservation of resource (COR) theory. According to social exchange theory, POS generates a feeling of obligation where employees care about their organization's welfare (Eisenberger *et al.*, 2001). Thus, employees with high levels of POS are more likely to engage in positive work-related behaviors to help the organization achieve its goal (Rhoades *et al.*, 2001). In contrast, employees with low levels of POS feel less obligated to repay their organizations (Eisenberger *et al.*, 2001). These employees are less likely to make meaningful contribution to their organization and unlikely to devote greater amount of emotional resources in response to an organization's requirements (Rhoades *et al.*, 2001). In these situations, employees may not express the emotions that are expected by the organization; rather they will be more interested in saving the situation. Further, POS is considered as a motivation construct that is related to employee job performance (Liao *et al.*, 2009); hence, employees with low levels of POS are less likely to be motivated. Less motivated employees are less likely to be engaged in their job, put less effort toward experiencing the expected emotions. Thus in roles that demand emotional labor, employees will manipulate their expressions to save the job and not to help the organization.

The COR theory focusses on resources to understand the reaction of an individual to an environment in which there is a threat of resource loss, an actual resource loss, or lack of expected resource gain (Hobfoll, 2001). According to COR theory, employees try to minimize further resource loss; and in the absence of replenishment of resources, employees engage in withdrawal behavior in order to minimize resource loss. As surface acting requires resources, in the absence of replenishment of resources, employees will try to minimize the resource loss by withdrawing themselves from the organizational activities. Withdrawal behavior is characterized by removal of personal, internal energies from different forms of labor (Kahn, 1990), including emotional labor. Surface acting is characterized as compliance to display rules to keep the job and not to help the customer or the organization (Rafaeli and Sutton, 1987). Since POS is a type of resource, I argue that when POS is low, employees will perform their emotional labor by surface acting as their focus is faking in bad faith and not to help the organization:

H2. POS is negatively related to surface acting.

Researchers have criticized social exchange perspectives for relying on the assumption of rational self-interest (Meglino and Korsgaard, 2004) and argued that employees' perception of organizational support not only create a felt obligation to aid the organization, but also serves as an important socio-emotional function (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002; Vandenberghe *et al.*, 2007). Fuller *et al.* (2006) argued that these socio-emotional factors may explain the linkage between POS and the outcome variables.

To the extent employees' socio-emotional needs are fulfilled, they develop a sense of unity with the organization, involving the incorporation of organizational membership into their social identity (Fuller *et al.*, 2006; Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002, p. 701). POS leads to the feeling of being a valued member in the organization, which strengthens the link between individual's self and the organization, i.e. it fosters organizational identification among the employees (Sluss *et al.*, 2008). Organizational identification is grounded in social identity theory (Ashforth and Mael, 1989). One of the assumptions in social identity theory is that people consider the characteristics that apply to the group or the organization to be relevant to themselves (Ellemers *et al.*, 2004). When employees identify themselves with the organization, they treat organizational attributes as their own (Mael and Ashforth, 1995) and behave in a manner consistent with organizational interests (Van Knippenberg and Sleebos, 2006). When employees believe that expression of organizationally expected emotions are a reflection of their self, their felt emotions become consistent with the emotions expected by their organizations. Thus, the perception of organizational support strengthens the link between the individual and the organization; consequently employees feel authentic in expressing organizationally expected emotions (Rafaeli and Sutton, 1987). Studies have supported the positive relationship between POS and organizational identification (Gibney *et al.*, 2011; Mishra *et al.*, 2012; Sluss *et al.*, 2008). Based on the above discussion, it may be argued that:

H3. POS is positively related to deep acting indirectly through organizational identification.

When employees interpret organizational practices as a message of exclusion, it dampens their identification with the organization (Veenstra *et al.*, 2004). Similar to organizational identification, disidentification describes the role that the organization plays in an employee's self-concept. Disidentification differs from identification in that the employee's perceived sense of self is "based on a cognitive separation between a person's identity and his or her perception of an organization" (Bhattacharya and Elsbach, 2002, p. 28). Furthermore, disidentification and identification are not opposite ends of the same continuum; because an employee does not identify with the organization does not mean that he or she will cognitively separate and stand in direct opposition to the organization. In other words, an employee could take a disinterested stance toward the organization in which he or she does not identify nor disidentify with the organization (Bhattacharya and Elsbach, 2002). When employees' identification with their organization is weak, they may lack a sense of purpose (Schaubroeck and Jones, 2000), which may lead to feelings of detachment from the organization (Elsbach and Bhattacharya, 2001). As detachment occurs, employees become uninvolved in tasks and emotionally became less empathetic toward others (Kahn, 1990, p. 702). Hence, poor perception of organizational support reduces employees' identification with the organization. Once employees do not identify themselves with the organization, they believe that acting should not be part of their job; which might

lead to “faking in bad faith” (Zerbe, 2002, p. 191). In fact, employees will perform surface acting, as their purpose becomes saving the situation; and not to understand the customers:

H4. POS is negatively related to surface acting indirectly through organizational identification.

Methods

Context

Two field studies were conducted in the present research work. The first study was conducted among the medical sales employees (MSEs) in Ahmedabad, a large city in Western India. The role of MSEs is to share the latest information about the drugs manufactured by their company with the doctors, in an effort to influence their prescriptions to the patients. The efforts of MSEs often create differences in the prescription pattern of doctors (ICRA, 2004). In the face of stiff competition, MSEs are expected to persuade the doctors to prescribe the drugs made by their organizations. Data were collected from the MSEs by physically administering the questionnaire in English language. The researcher visited the hospitals many times to meet the MSEs. The response rate was almost 100 percent. Data were collected from 484 MSEs in 47 hospitals in Ahmedabad. These respondents represent 86 different pharmaceutical organizations (15 multinational and 71 domestic organizations) covering different therapeutic segments. In total, 468 usable questionnaires were returned completely. About 48 percent respondents were married. In total, 5 percent of the respondents were female MSEs.

The second study was conducted among the frontline hotel employees in Indore, a large city in Central India and Ahmedabad. Hotel employees are expected to be convivial in their interactions with customers or clients since being nice to customers is considered a value-added part of the service that employees provide (Schneider and Bowen, 1995). Data were collected by physically administering the questionnaires in English language to 228 frontline hotel employees. In total, 211 usable questionnaires were returned completely. Out of 211 respondents, 166 were male members and 45 were female members.

Measures

Pilot studies. Existing scales were used to measure the variables under study. The initial version of the questionnaire was pretested by a small, convenient sample of 94 MSEs in study 1. Based on the pretest results, some of the items were dropped and a few minor changes were made to the original instrument, for the final data collection. Another pilot study was conducted among 54 employees in hospitality industry. These pilot studies were used to conduct preliminary factor analyses on the complete versions of the questionnaires to be used in these studies with an objective to come up with shorter versions of the instruments (based on the items presenting the highest factor loadings). The results from both the pilot studies were used to build shorter versions of the questionnaires that were strictly parallel for both the studies.

Control variables. Age, gender, and tenure in the organization were measured and included in subsequent analyses to control for their potentially spurious effects (Cheung and Tang, 2009; Naring *et al.*, 2006). In study 1, 40 percent of the respondents were in the age group of 25 years and below, 36 percent were in 25 to 30 years of age range. The minimum age was 20 years and the maximum age was 44 years. In study 2, two participants were above 44 years of age, and about 23 percent were below 25 years

of age, and about 54 percent were in the age range of 25 to 30 years. Men were coded as 0 and women were coded as 1. Tenure in the present organization was measured by asking the respondents "How long have you worked for this organization".

POS. In the survey questionnaire, POS was measured in both the studies by using ten items from the 16 item short version scale of Eisenberger *et al.* (1986). A sample item is "My Company really cares about my well-being".

Organizational identification. For measuring organizational identification, five items of the eight-item scale developed by Mael and Ashforth (1992) were used in both the studies. A sample item is "When someone criticizes my organization, it feels like a personal insult".

Deep acting. To measure deep acting four items from the eight-item scale developed by Chu and Murrmann (2006) were used in both the studies. A sample item is "I try to change my actual feelings to match those that I must express to doctors".

Surface acting. In study 1, surface acting was measured by using five items from the six-item scale developed by Diefendorff *et al.* (2005). A sample item is "I show feelings to doctors that are different from what I feel inside". In study 2, hospitality emotional labor scale (HELs) developed by Chu and Murrmann (2006) was used to measure surface acting. We used the HELs in study 2 as it is the most appropriate scale used for measuring emotional labor among employees in hospitality sector. However, the items in both the scales are very similar to each other.

All the variables were measured on a five-point scale in study 1 and on a seven-point scale in study 2. Given the central role of emotional labor for hospitality employees, we decided to allow respondents of study 2 more answering latitude by modifying the five-point answer scale to a seven-point answer scale, which has been previously shown to work well with hospitality employees. The initial five-point answer scale was kept for study one to ensure that the full range of answer categories were used by MSEs. Results from our pilot studies supported the adequacy of this decision.

The scores on these scales range from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Consistent with Grandey's (2003) approach, before measuring the responses on different forms of emotional labor, the stimuli statement: "In order to do your job effectively, how much do you do the following behaviors?" was used. All the above scales indicated an acceptable internal consistency. The Cronbach α values of the measures are given in Table I.

Although studies have demonstrated that shared method variance is a non-issue in cases where multiple predictors are used (Siemsen *et al.*, 2010), several procedural and statistical remedies were considered to both limit and assess the possibility of common method bias in both the studies. Multiple-item constructs in the survey questionnaire were used as response biases have been shown to be more problematic at the item level than at the construct level (Harrison *et al.*, 1996). Some of the procedural remedies included in the study are protecting respondent anonymity, stating in the instructions that there were no correct or incorrect answers, and reducing item ambiguity by doing pilot studies to take care of ambiguous items (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003).

Results

Table I presents the means, standard deviations, and zero-order correlations among the variables. The correlation between all variables are moderate in size ($0.20 < r < 0.58$) and therefore do not suggest any problem of multicollinearity. We conducted multicollinearity diagnosis for the sample. The respective VIF – coefficients are well below commonly agreed threshold ($VIF < 4$). The correlations indicate that POS is positively correlated with, deep acting, and negatively correlated with surface acting.

Table I.
Mean, SD, and zero-order
correlation among
variables

Sl. No.	Variables	Mean ^a	SD ^a	Mean ^b	SD ^b	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	Age	2.89	0.92	2.07	0.83		-0.14*	0.38***	0.03	-0.01	0.09	0.03
2	Gender	0.05	0.22	0.21	0.41	-0.06		-0.10	-0.00	0.11	-0.08	-0.03
3	Tenure in the organization	26.56	34.69	20.39	28.29	0.51***	-0.07		0.02	0.02	-0.10	0.05
4	Perceived organizational support	3.85	0.71	5.12	1.28	0.08	0.12*	-0.03	(0.90 ^b /0.92 ^b)	0.47***	-0.34***	0.44***
5	Organizational identification	4.17	0.67	4.89	1.28	0.14**	-0.13**	0.06	0.58***	(0.75 ^b /0.79 ^b)	-0.28***	0.33***
6	Surface acting	3.27	0.81	3.59	1.28	-0.05	-0.02	-0.01	-0.20***	-0.17***	(0.76 ^b /0.73 ^b)	-0.25***
7	Deep acting	4.13	0.57	5.26	1.04	-0.04	0.10*	-0.09	0.38***	0.32***	0.08	(0.70 ^b /0.73 ^b)

Notes: *n* = 468 (study 1), 211 (study 2). ^aStudy 1, ^bStudy 2. Organization tenure is the number of months worked in the organization. Numbers in the bracket represents the Cronbach α values of the respective measures. The lower-diagonal presents the results of study 1 and the upper-diagonal presents the results of study 2. *, **, ***Correlation is significant at the 0.05, 0.01 and 0.001 level, respectively

The hypothesized relationships among the variables were tested using regression analysis. Table II presents the result of regression analysis, where the two forms of emotional labor were regressed on POS. *H1* and *H2* expected that POS would be positively related with deep acting and negatively with surface acting, respectively. The data supported *H1* (study 1: $\beta = 0.37$, $p < 0.001$; study 2: $\beta = 0.44$, $p < 0.001$) and *H2* (study 1: $\beta = -0.20$, $p < 0.001$; study 2: $\beta = -0.34$, $p < 0.001$) in both the studies.

Since the present research argues that POS is related to two forms of emotional labor through organizational identification, additional analyses were conducted to check the mediation effect. MacKinnon *et al.* (2004) demonstrated that the bootstrap method is the best approach to test for the significance of indirect (mediated) effects as it does not rely on the erroneous assumption of the normality of the distribution of indirect effects based on product of coefficients. Since advances in bootstrapping methods now allow for unbiased estimates of standard errors for indirect effects (Shrout and Bolger, 2002), all indirect effects were evaluated with 1,000 bootstrapped samples of the data. These bootstrapped distributions of indirect effects were used to derive means and 95 percent confidence intervals around the product coefficients of the paths (Shrout and Bolger, 2002). In this method, mediation is supported when the 95 percent confidence interval surrounding the average indirect effect does not include zero.

With regard to the mediation hypothesis (see Table III), there was a significant indirect effect of POS on deep acting via organizational identification (study 1: indirect

Predictor	Deep acting				Surface acting			
	Study 1		Study 2		Study 1		Study 2	
	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE
<i>Control variable</i>								
Age	-0.03	0.03	-0.01	0.09	-0.03	0.05	0.15*	0.11
Gender	0.05	0.11	-0.03	0.16	0.00	0.17	-0.07	0.21
Tenure	-0.06	0.00	0.05	0.00	0.00	0.00	-0.16*	0.00
Perceived organizational support	0.37***	0.04	0.44***	0.05	-0.20***	0.05	-0.34***	0.07
Model <i>F</i>	21.01***		12.26***		4.83***		9.04***	
Total R^2	0.15		0.19		0.04		0.15	
R^2 change	0.14***		0.19***		0.04***		0.11***	

Notes: $n = 468$ (study 1), 211 (study 2); standardized β values are for the full model. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table II.
Regression results for the mediating effect of organizational identification on the relationship between perceived organizational support and deep acting

Independent variable	Mediator variable	Dependent variable	Indirect effect			95% CI bootstrap results (lower and upper)
			Standardized results	Bootstrap results	SE of mean	
<i>Study 1</i>						
POS	OID	DA	$(0.55) \times (0.12) = 0.07$	0.07	0.03	0.01, 0.13
POS	OID	SA	$(0.55) \times (-0.09) = -0.05$	-0.05	0.04	-0.12, 0.02
<i>Study 2</i>						
POS	OID	DA	$(0.47) \times (0.13) = 0.06$	0.06	0.03	0.01, 0.13
POS	OID	SA	$(0.47) \times (-0.15) = -0.07$	-0.07	0.04	-0.14, 0.00

Notes: SA, surface acting; DA, deep acting; OID, organizational identification; POS, perceived organizational support; CI, confidence interval. The values are based on unstandardized path coefficients

Table III.
Mediation analysis of organizational identification on the relationship between POS and surface acting/deep acting

effect = 0.07, boot SE = 0.03, $p < 0.005$; study 2: indirect effect = 0.06, boot SE = 0.03, $p < 0.05$). Based on 1000 bootstrapping samples, it was found that 95 percent bootstrapping confidence intervals for the indirect effect in study 1 (0.01, 0.13) as well as in study 2 (0.01, 0.13) did not include zero, thus supporting the existence of an indirect effect. This indicates the mediation effect of organizational identification on the relationship between POS and deep acting. Thus, $H3$ was supported. The same method was followed to check the indirect effect of POS on surface acting. The indirect effect of POS on surface acting through organizational identification in both the studies (study 1: indirect effect = -0.05 , boot SE = 0.04, $p = \text{ns}$; study 2: indirect effect = -0.07 , boot SE = 0.04, $p = \text{ns}$) was found to be not significant. Based on 1000 bootstrapping samples, we found 95 percent confidence intervals for the indirect effect in both the studies. The results indicated that the intervals in study 1 ($-0.12, 0.02$), and study 2 ($-0.14, 0.00$), included zero, thus not supporting the existence of an indirect effect. Thus, $H4$ was not supported.

Discussion

The objective of the present research was to explore the linkages between POS and the two forms of emotional labor. The research found evidence that POS is related to deep acting not only through felt obligation, but also through employees' identification with their organization; and hence there is a need to look at the consequences of POS from organizational identification perspective. Further, the findings indicate that POS is related to surface acting not because of identification with the organization; rather due to felt obligation to the organization.

Implications for theory

The present work investigates an important, yet mostly untested issue relating to emotion work in an Asian cultural context, especially in India. India is categorized as a collectivistic society on individualism-collectivism (I/C) dimension (Hofstede, 1980), unlike the western countries in which research on emotion work has been carried out in the past. Post liberalization, Indian economy has witnessed an increasing dominance of service industry compared to other industries. Consequently, studies have endorsed the importance of emotion management in the Indian context (D'Cruz and Noronha, 2008). However, research on this important issue is scant in India. Since frontline employees' represent the organization before the customers, organizations need to make managerial attempts to mobilize their employees to deliver quality service including the expression of organizationally expected emotions. Job autonomy, commitment to the display rules, and perceived external prestige of the organization are found to influence employees' performance of emotional labor (Kim, 2008; Mishra *et al.*, 2012). However, the literature is silent on the effect of POS on different forms of emotional labor. The present research adds to the existing body of knowledge by explaining POS as an important antecedent of different forms of emotional labor. The findings of the research seem to refute the commonly held assumption that the two forms of emotional labor (surface acting, and deep acting) fall in a continuum. In fact, the present research validates the suggestions of Glomb and Tews (2004), that the two forms of emotional labor may be independent of each other. Notably, scant research has explored the organizational identification perspective underlying organizational support theory, which is an important theoretical and practical oversight (see Zagenczyk *et al.*, 2011). Further, citing other literature, Zagenczyk *et al.* (2011) argue that exploring and testing the social identity based view is critical to the

theorization of organizational support theory and social exchange theory. Considering the importance of emotional labor, employees are needed to use emotional labor strategies to follow the organization's display rules (as part of their job). However, some may want to do so not only as an obligation to the organization but also as a result of their identification with the organization. Apart from the theoretical contributions, this research has contributions to practice.

Implications for managerial practices

The expansion of service economy and increased competition among service providers has increased the importance of management of emotions in the workplace (Pugliesi, 1999). Increasingly emotional labor has been argued as the central part of everyday work life for many employees (Bolton, 2005; Morris and Feldman, 1996), including frontline employees. Frontline employees often operate in a relatively autonomous environment without close monitoring of their day-to-day activities and they enjoy a considerable degree of discretion in terms of what they focus on and how they expend energy (see Fu *et al.*, 2010). It is recognized that employees who interact with customers are the most visible representatives of the organization. As emotional expression is one of the most powerful forms of social influence, the challenge before the organizations is how to influence employees' emotional expression during customer interaction. In fact, researchers have argued that customers' satisfaction depends at least partly on the perceived genuineness of emotional expression of frontline employees (Ashforth *et al.*, 2008, p. 335).

Both the studies provide evidence that to be more effective in influencing employees to express expected emotions, organizations need to focus on the mechanisms to strengthen employees' organizational identification. The present research found that the perception of organizational support motivates frontline employees to express organizationally expected emotions. There is research evidence that employees' perception of procedural justice, promotions, and developmental experiences, along with a set of HR practices, including pay satisfaction, career development opportunities, work-family support, and leader-member exchange, contributes to their evaluation of POS (Allen *et al.*, 2003). Organizations need to improve their organizational practices, so that employees can perceive the practices as supportive and hence, express the emotions expected by the organizations during interactions with customers. Organizations are increasingly recognizing the value of internal marketing in their practices (Sartain, 2005). Thus treating frontline employees as the first customers should result in better emotional expressions during interactions with customers.

Limitations

There are several limitations of this research that need to be mentioned. First, the data were collected among MSEs in pharmaceutical industry and customer facing employees in hospitality industry. Caution should be taken as to the generalizability of the findings to other types of employees and organizations. Both the studies were conducted in India and the findings of these studies may not be generalizable to other countries. A second limitation is that this research was cross-sectional in design. Because the data were collected at the same time, the present research cannot provide much certainty about the causal connections among variables (Spector, 1994, p. 389). Thus, an inverse relationship could also be argued, by which emotional labor would lead to organizational identification. Further, the data on all the variables were measured by survey instruments. While employees' perception of organizational support was

found to be related to emotional labor, this assessment may have been inflated due to the perceptive nature of the variables. Multi-source methodologies are encouraged for future studies, when feasible. The instruments used to capture the variables were taken from valid scales in a piecemeal manner and one of the instruments was not identical in both the studies, thus providing no direct test of replication. However, despite the use of non-identical scales the similarities of results attest to the generalizability of the findings.

Conclusion

The present research is one of the first studies that explore the path linking POS and different forms of emotional labor. Going beyond social exchange theory, the present research explains the above linkages based on social identity theory. By highlighting the importance of POS and organizational identification, the present research argues that organizations need to focus on their important resource, i.e. employees.

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