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An emotional labor perspective on the relationship between customer orientation and job satisfaction

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ABSTRACT

How service employees act and speak with customers is an important part of service quality, so customer orientation (CO) and emotional labor have become critical issues in the hospitality industry. Applying the emotional labor concept to Donavan and his associates' 2004 study about the relationship between CO and job satisfaction, this study aimed to demonstrate how the relationship is established in hospitality. Drawing on person–job fit theory from the perspective of emotional labor, this study examined different effects of emotional labor on the relationship. The findings of this study suggested that employee CO is positively related with job satisfaction and deep acting while negatively related with surface acting. This study also found that emotional labor mediates the positive relationship between CO and job satisfaction. This study did not find a moderating effect of job position on the direct relationships among CO, emotional labor, and job satisfaction. Theoretical and practical implications of the study findings are also discussed.

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1. Introduction

Today, the hospitality industry has witnessed an increased emphasis, more than ever before, on delivering superior products and service to customers. Supporting this trend, a study by McKinsey and Company showed that, after a positive experience with service staff, more than 85% of customers purchased more products from the firm, and more than 70% bought less when service turned sour (Beaujean et al., 2006). Indeed, customer needs and expectations continually evolve over time, so delivering consistent high-quality products and service requires attitudes and behaviors among employees that allow them to evaluate the circumstances, identify the needs of customers, and take action to satisfy those needs (Kim and Ok, 2010; Daniel and Darby, 1997; Williams and Attaway, 1996). Given that the quality of the interpersonal interaction between customers and service employees is a critical element in customer satisfaction, loyalty, and ultimately profit and growth, retaining employees with high levels of customer orientation (CO) is important for service firms to succeed in an increasingly competitive business environment (Zeithaml et al., 2013).

CO refers to the predisposition to meet customer needs (Brown et al., 2002). It represents employee beliefs about their ability to satisfy customer wants and needs and the degree to which interacting with and serving customers is inherently pleasurable (Donavan et al., 2004). Because it is increasingly important to success, CO has gained a significant amount of attention from academia. Indeed, organizational behavior literature has shown CO creates several job-related outcomes at the individual employee level, including job satisfaction, organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behavior, and good job performance and work engagement, while reducing role conflict, burnout, and turnover intention (Babakus et al., 2009; Brown et al., 2002; Pettijohn et al., 2002; Zablah et al., 2012). These studies generally suggest that, because of their predisposition to enjoy serving customers, employees with high CO are more likely to like their jobs and their employers, performing well in their roles as well as in extra-role behaviors; they are also less likely to think about quitting their job (Donavan et al., 2004).

However, although the positive effect of CO on important outcomes has been well established in the literature, a review of the literature reveals two research gaps. First, despite the amount of research showing a positive relationship between CO and outcome variables, remarkably little is known about how these relationships are established. Particularly, in Donavan et al.'s (2004) study, the link between CO and job satisfaction was investigated using the theory of person–job fit, but the psychological mechanism through

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which the relationship is established has not been explored. In other words, the study did find that service employees with more CO are more satisfied with their jobs than employees with less CO, it did not fully address the fundamental question of "*why high CO employees are satisfied with their job while low CO employees are not.*" Therefore, illuminating more specifically how CO affects job satisfaction has become a pressing research need. Accordingly, the first objective of this study is to find a mediator that explains how the relationship between CO and job satisfaction is established. By uncovering theoretically possible mediators in the direct relationship found in Donavan et al.'s (2004) study, we can explain the variance in the relationship between CO and job satisfaction more clearly, gaining a richer understanding of the relationship.

A second, more important but related gap lies in overlooking the emotional nature of hospitality service work. Each day, hospitality employees spend hours at work, engaging in face-to-face or voice-to-voice interactions with customers. These constant service interactions require employees to express only organizationally prescribed, positive emotions to customers, putting aside their true emotions and suppressing negative displays. Hospitality employees can either display unfelt, fake, inauthentic emotions (i.e., surface acting) in following the requirements set by their organization or attempt to modify their internal feelings to display genuine emotions (i.e., deep acting) (Hochschild, 1983). In previous research, many scholars have highlighted the importance of this emotional labor among hospitality service employees in developing a better understanding of a wide range of job attitudes and behaviors like burnout, job satisfaction, service performance, turnover intention, and service misbehavior (Karatepe, 2011; Karatepe and Choubtarash, 2014; Karatepe and Aleshinloye, 2009; Lee and Ok, 2012, 2014, 2015). Generally, scholars have concluded that emotional labor has both positive and negative consequences, depending on the type of emotional labor.

Empirical research and some theories do support the substantial influence of emotional labor on job attitudes and behaviors, but CO and job satisfaction and their connection with emotional labor have not been researched sufficiently. As a result, our understanding of how employee reactive behaviors to the emotional demands of their jobs are related with CO and job satisfaction in the hospitality context is still somewhat limited. Given that today's companies are heavily focused on the philosophy like the "customer is king" or "friendly service with a smile", their prime concern is on managing their employee displays of emotion in service encounters (Froehle and Roth, 2004), so this research gap in the hospitality literature is particularly surprising. Therefore, another important objective of this study is to empirically investigate the mediated relationship between CO and job satisfaction from the perspective of emotional labor. We argue that more specific types of emotional labor, surface acting and deep acting, may provide insight into the research question: "why and/or how do hospitality employees with high CO show high levels of satisfaction with their service job while those with low CO show low levels of satisfaction?" Donavan et al. (2004) already explicated the relationship between CO and job satisfaction, so our goal is to apply the different dimensions of emotional labor to that relationship, examining the separate, distinct mediating effects of emotional labor and thus expanding the body of knowledge on the relationship for the hospitality industry.

This study used the findings of Donavan et al. (2004) as a foundation and drew upon person–job (P–J) fit theory (Kristof, 1996) to address the research question. We developed a research model of the links between CO, the two dimensions of emotional labor, and job satisfaction, and empirically tested the following hypotheses: (1) CO is positively related with job satisfaction, (2) CO is positively related with deep acting and negatively with surface acting, (3) deep acting is positively related with job satisfaction whereas surface acting is negatively related with job satisfaction, (4) deep

acting mediates the positive relationship between CO and job satisfaction whereas surface acting mediates the negative relationship between CO and job satisfaction. Furthermore, this study additionally examined a moderating effect of job position by testing an additional hypothesis: (5) the model differs for line employees and managers. According to Hackman and Oldham's (1980) job characteristics theory, work characteristics like task identity, skill variety, task significance, autonomy, and job feedback positively affect job satisfaction. This theory suggests that certain job attributes or conditions may lead employees to have different subjective perceptions of the meaningfulness of their work, sense of responsibility, therefore causing employees to have different work-related attitudes and behaviors like job satisfaction and job engagement (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007). Therefore, given that the most salient difference between managers and line employees lies in the different characteristics of their job (Jones and James, 1979; Hackman and Oldham, 1980), we additionally hypothesize that the relationships proposed in this study can differ for managers and line employees.

2. Literature review

2.1. Customer orientation of service employees

Since 1982 when Saxe and Weitz first defined CO as satisfying customer needs at the level of the salesperson–customer interaction to seek and build long-term customer relationships (Kim and Ok, 2010), research has conceptualized CO at either organizational or individual level. In research conducted at the organizational level, CO refers to a service organization's market orientation, defined as "the set of beliefs that puts the customer's interest first, while not excluding those of other stakeholders such as owners, managers, and employees, in order to develop a long-term profitable enterprise" (Deshpandé et al., 1993, p. 27). Therefore, CO at the organizational level, represents the norms of organizational service-oriented actions with actual and potential customers like designing service systems and structure, developing and implementing organizational service standards, procedures, and policies, providing service training, and evaluating practices for ideal service delivery (Jaworski and Kohli, 1996; Kennedy et al., 2003; Saura et al., 2005).

On the other hand, CO at the individual level refers to the individual service employee striving to satisfy customers' needs and desires through quality service (Donavan et al., 2004; Hogan et al., 1984; Kelley, 1992). It represents an individual predisposition or inclination to provide courteous and helpful service in customer service interactions and affective commitment that are geared toward continuously enhancing service quality for customer (Cha, 2005; Cran, 1994; Donavan et al., 2004; Kelley, 1992; Stock and Hoyer, 2005; Susskind et al., 2003); the individual level also involves the importance that customer-contact service employees place on their customers' needs and expectations on service offerings and a disposition to experience enjoyment in investing time and effort to satisfy customers (Kelley, 1992). Using a hierarchical personality model, Brown et al. (2002) and Donavan et al. (2004) also treat CO as a surface-level personality trait that can be influenced within context-specific situations by deeper, more basic personality traits like agreeability and emotional stability; so they defined CO as an enduring natural predisposition to provide superior service through a genuine desire to satisfy customer needs and enjoy doing so. In the hospitality industry, Susskind et al. (2000, 2007) employed the dimensions of attitudinal CO and investigated hotel employees' dispositional attitudes for customer satisfaction.

2.2. Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction is defined as a pleasurable or positive emotional state aroused by an individual's own evaluation of the job, work situation, or his/her own work experience (Locke, 1976; Mottaz, 1988). Accordingly, many scholars have conceptualized and operationalized job satisfaction as an affective state. Job satisfaction is also viewed by many researchers as an individual's general cognitive attitude toward his/her job or specific attributes of the job. For example, Motowidlo (1996) and Stamps (1997) conceptualized job satisfaction as judgment of the favorability of the work environment. Similarly, Brief (1998) also defined job satisfaction as "an internal state which is expressed through affective and/or cognitive evaluations of a job experience with some degree of approval or disapproval" (p. 86). Supporting the cognitive approach, Weiss (2002) also defined job satisfaction as a positive or negative assessment of one's job or work situation.

In addition to this definition of job satisfaction as an affective reaction or a cognitive attitude toward a job, job satisfaction is conceptualized differently by the target that one evaluates (Spector, 1997). For example, in a global perspective, job satisfaction is viewed as the attitude toward the job as a whole. Furthermore, job satisfaction is also viewed as a constellation of individual attitudinal reaction to various dimensions of the job: the work itself, the organizational policies, structure, and processes, and the relations with colleagues and supervisors (Lee, 2000). Combining these conceptualizations collectively together, this study defines job satisfaction as the individual-level, subjective attitude resulting from a comparison by the employee of actual outcomes to desired outcomes from all characteristics of the job and of the work environment itself.

2.3. Person–environment fit theory: Person–job fit in organizations

This study used the P–J fit framework of the person–environment (P–E) fit theory to reason out the hypothesized relationships between CO and job satisfaction. P–E fit in the workplace refers to the compatibility, match, or congruence between employees and work (Cable and Parsons, 2001; Kristof, 1996). It is the degree to which characteristics of an individual correspond to aspects of the work environment (Kristof, 1996). Based on two basic assumptions that human behavior is a function of the person and the environment and that the person and the environment must be compatible, the P–E fit theory suggests that the person and the situation or environment combine to influence behavior (Kristof, 1996). In other words, employees whose characteristics resemble aspects of work environment are more likely to view their work favorably (Kristof, 1996). In support of this argument, previous research has found different types of P–E fit have a distinct effect on work-related outcomes.

Work environment can be conceptualized in a variety of ways, including the match between employee and job, group, organization, or vocation; thus, P–E fit has sub-categories of P–J fit, person–group fit, person–organization fit, and person–vocation fit (Kristof, 1996). P–J fit refers to the compatibility between employee characteristics and job (Kristof-Brown and Guay, 2011). It is the compatibility between employee abilities and the demands of a job or between employee needs/desires and what a job provides (Edwards, 1991). An employee with the abilities or personality necessary to perform requisite job tasks effectively or a job that meets that employee's needs indicates a good fit between employee and job (Kristof-Brown et al., 2002).

P–J fit is commonly explained in two ways: need–supplies (N–S) fit and demands–abilities (D–A) fit (Cable and DeRue, 2002). In the N–S fit approach, P–J fit refers to the extent to which the job fulfills what an individual wants to do. This approach assumes that people choose their job expecting that their needs or desires (e.g., psychological needs, goals, values, and interests) will be satisfied by performing the job (e.g., pay, employee empowerment, work autonomy, and supervisor support) (Edwards, 1991). Therefore, whether the job is a good match or mismatch can be determined by comparing the psychological needs of the employee and the environmental rewards. If the job supplies the proper level of compensation, it is a good match for the employee (Kristof, 1996).

In the D–A fit approach, on the other hand, P–J fit is defined as the congruence between abilities and job demands (Edwards, 1991). The assumption underlying the D–A fit approach is that a job requires an acceptable level of knowledge from the employee, as well as the skills, abilities, time, effort, commitment, and experience to carry out the job. Therefore, a high degree of fit between employee and job is determined by whether the employee has the personality, knowledge, skills, and abilities (e.g., aptitude, experience, and education) to carry out job tasks and requirements (Bolino and Feldman, 2000; Kristof, 1996; Kristof-Brown, 2000; Nadler and Tushman, 1980; Nikolaou and Robertson, 2001). Workers believe they match up with their jobs if their personalities and abilities fulfill job requirements. Conversely, employees without the necessary skills and abilities to perform a job may feel inadequate and overwhelmed. Such an employee may perceive a mismatch with the job (Bliese and Jex, 2002).

2.4. Relationship between customer orientation and job satisfaction

Research has shown that a better fit between employee and job is related to employee attitudes and behaviors (Edwards and Shipp, 2007). The basic premise of such conclusion is that employees who meet job demands feel a strong professional match with their job; this congruence leads to positive job performance, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; Siguaw et al., 1994). In addition to this D–A approach, the N–S approach also suggests that jobs that provide employees with what they consider important values are satisfying, whereas jobs that are incongruent with their values are not (Lopez and Babin, 2009).

Based on this P–J fit mechanism, Donavan et al. (2004) argued for a positive relationship between service employee CO and job satisfaction; service workers who have more CO will be more satisfied with their jobs. In jobs where the primary task is serving customer needs, employees who are customer-oriented show a better fit than employees with lower CO because customer-oriented employees with higher CO are predisposed to enjoy serving customers and fulfilling customer needs and naturally fit into the service job. This congruence allows them to derive meaningfulness from their work, which may lead to job satisfaction. As in Donavan et al.'s (2004) findings, other research suggests that P–J fit explains more variance in the number of attitudes specific to a job than other types of fit because the P–J fit involves the compatibility with a specific job (Hollenbeck, 1989; Kristof, 1996; Saks and Ashforth, 1997). For example, Farrell and Oczkowski (2009) argued that CO among restaurant employees increases their job satisfaction because they can help others through their jobs, thus fulfilling their own professional needs.

Building a similar argument, Pettijohn et al. (2002) and Harris et al. (2005) also suggested that individuals who are highly service-oriented feel satisfaction when they can make customers happy using their service abilities and performance. Likewise, Franke and Park (2006) argued that sales representatives who are highly customer-oriented experience less role stress and more job satisfaction than those with low CO. Taken together, we argue that individuals with a positive CO were more likely to perceive their jobs as interesting, significant, and meaningful than individuals

with negative CO and, therefore, show higher levels of job satisfaction. We expect hotel employee CO will lead to job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 1. Customer orientation is positively related to job satisfaction.

2.5. Emotional labor

Emotional labor involves managing emotions and emotional expressions to comply with organizational display rules (Hochschild, 1983). Display rules refer to organizational standards that indicate which emotional expressions are appropriate for the situation (Ekman, 1973). In hospitality organizations, display rules prescribe the implicit or explicit standard of displaying proper emotions and require employees to display a certain blend of positive emotions such as warmth, politeness, or friendliness in service interactions with customers. It requires suppressing negative emotions such as indifference, anger, or frustration in service encounter (Morris and Feldman, 1996). Thus, hospitality employees display fake or inauthentic emotions by enhancing or suppressing genuine emotions in their attempts to display the emotions an organization desires during interpersonal transactions (Ashforth and Humphrey, 1993). Examples of emotional labor in hospitality services include smiling at customers anywhere on the premises, listening to hostile complaints politely, and showing sympathy to customers in difficult situations.

Research has identified two ways of emotional labor: surface acting and deep acting (Hochschild, 1983). Surface acting refers to modifying observable outward expressions, artificially presenting unfelt emotions and/or masking felt emotions. Employees who use surface acting merely manage observable expressions, hiding genuine feelings and displaying an outward appearance incongruent with genuine feelings (Brotheridge and Lee, 2002). For instance, hotel guest service agents might use surface acting to uphold a positive front in the face of disrespect and undeserved unpleasantness from rude customers regardless of their true feelings. Research has found that surface acting generally engenders emotional dissonance, an internal state of uncomfortable tension resulting from experiencing a psychological discrepancy between genuine inner feeling and feigned emotion displayed (Grandey, 2000).

Deep acting refers to an active effort to modify inner feelings to bring them in line with a more acceptable emotion (Ashforth and Humphrey, 1993). Unlike surface acting, deep acting occurs when employees engage in effortful regulation and modification of their inward feelings and thoughts to align with the emotions an organization wants (Hochschild, 1983). Therefore, employees who engage in deep acting consciously strive to sincerely understand their customers, empathize, and feel as customers feel, as if those feelings were their own (England and Farkas, 1986). Transforming one's emotional state may involve focusing on the positive aspects of the situation, thinking about events that conjure up an expected emotion, and cognitively reappraising the situation more positively; all of these show the emotional labor of deep acting (Grandey, 2000).

2.6. Relationship between customer orientation and emotional labor

CO can be an important in predicting different ways employees respond behaviorally to organizational display rules. As the predisposition to provide superior service through responsiveness, courtesy, and a genuine desire to satisfy customer needs (Brown et al., 2002), CO may represent a personal resource that service employees can use to help with the demands of emotional work (Cran, 1994; Hogan et al., 1984). Therefore, applying the P–J fit assumption, we can infer that CO is positively associated with deep

acting and negatively with surface acting. Employees with high CO may have enough personal resources to respond to the demands of emotional labor and thus see that they better fit their service job (Pierce and Gardner, 2004; Xanthopoulou et al., 2007). Accordingly, they are more likely to show attitudes and behavior in their job that require effort and are less likely act superficially during service interactions (Babakus et al., 2009; Smith et al., 2012). On the other hand, employees with low CO may have fewer cognitive and emotional resources for meeting the demands of emotional labor and so face greater challenges. They are less motivated to perform service, and as a result become defensive and avoid demanding customer interactions; when they serve customers, they might respond sufficiently to display rules via surface acting without engaging in the more effortful deep acting (Hobfoll, 2001; Pettijohn et al., 2007).

Consistent with this line of reasoning, previous research suggests that CO, as an interpersonal resource, reduces the negative effects of work-related demands and therefore enables employees to engage more in deep acting behavior and less in surface acting. For example, Brotherigde and Grandey (2002) suggested that emotional expressivity, conscientiousness, and agreeableness were positively related to deep acting. Because such characteristics are most closely associated with CO (Brown et al., 2002), people with high CO should be more likely to engage in deep acting than in surface acting. Grandey (2003) also suggested that CO makes employees more capable of deep acting because, as an antidote to the detrimental effects of job demands, CO can help employees deliver superior customer service with authentic and pleasant expressions. In the hospitality context, Smith et al. (2012), in a study of restaurant employees, revealed that employees with high levels of CO are more committed to customer service and work to foster meaningful interpersonal relationships through warmth, empathy, and consideration. Rupp et al., (2008) also argued that customer-oriented employees need less surface acting because they can assume the perspective of the customer (i.e., deep acting); they also experience less emotional dissonance between inner and displayed emotions. Further, Allen et al. (2010) found that those with low CO respond using surface acting because they consider the display rules only a guide; mindlessly following a service script is a simple, responsive work behavior that requires little expenditure of effort. This study thus proposes following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 2a. CO is positively associated with deep acting.

Hypothesis 2b. CO is negatively associated with surface acting.

2.7. Relationship between emotional labor and job satisfaction

Research suggests emotional labor has both positive and negative consequences, depending on what form of emotional labor employees choose to use. Generally, previous research indicates that deep acting leads to positive consequences like increased service performance and job satisfaction whereas surface acting leads to negative consequences like burnout and deviant service behaviors. For example, Totterdell and Holman's (2003) study showed that deep acting increases service performance more than surface acting. Also, Lee and Ok (2012) found that employees who engage in deep acting are more likely to be satisfied with their jobs than employees who use surface acting. In contrast, according to Brotheridge and Lee (2002), Grandey (2003), Kim (2008), Lee and Ok (2014, 2015), Morris and Feldman (1996), and Zapf et al. (1999), surface acting causes tension and stress, poor quality service, burnout, job dissatisfaction, and service misbehavior. Grandey (2000) suggested that surface acting is an uncomfortable experience where employees involuntarily manage their emotions and artificially maintain a positive emotional display; this constraint may lead them to feel distress on the job and ultimately create dissatisfaction with their job. Bono and Vey's (2005) meta-analysis

also supports the negative association between surface acting and job satisfaction.

These studies commonly point to experiencing emotional dissonance as a major reason for the different consequences of emotional labor. Based on Hobfoll's (1989) conservation of resources theory, research reveals that emotional dissonance from acting inauthentically over time causes emotional exhaustion and a loss in psychological and physical resources available for undertaking jobs; this depletion of cognitive, emotional, and physical resources may cause employee burnout and ultimately dissatisfaction with the job (Hobfoll and Freedy, 1993). That is, surface-acting makes employees feel repeated emotional dissonance in customer service interactions, so they feel intense psychological strain and emotional distress, losing the ability to control their emotions. Since such employees feel drains of psychological energy, they may not be able to restore their emotional resources. In order to avoid further depletion of their psychological resources, employees become unwilling to interact with customers and treat customers callously with a dehumanizing view of others. They also feel a reduced sense of personal accomplishment from unsuccessful job performance and lowered productivity, a major source of job dissatisfaction (Herzberg et al., 1959). On the other hand, when employees attempt to understand the customer's perspective via deep acting, they do not experience emotional dissonance; instead, they experience emotional consonance as they evoke an authentic emotional display that matches the required emotions. Guests respond well to positive and sincere emotional expressions produced by deep acting as employees meet the guest's needs. This leads to employees who feel heightened confidence and personal accomplishment and thus to job satisfaction (Lee and Ok, 2012; Zapf, 2002). Accordingly, this study proposed the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 3a. Deep acting is positively related to job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 3b. Surface acting is negatively related to job satisfaction.

2.8. Relationships among customer orientation, emotional labor, and job satisfaction

To date, research has not explored how CO influences job satisfaction via emotional labor. However, the P–J fit mechanism of the fit theory offers a reasonable explanation of how the relationship between CO and job satisfaction is linked through the two forms of emotional labor. Therefore, drawing on P–J fit theory, we argue that the variance in the direct relationship between CO and job satisfaction is substantially explained by the form of a service employee's emotional labor. D–A fit theory suggests CO is linked with job satisfaction because employees with a natural predisposition for customer service have a good fit with the emotional demands of a job, enabling them to engage in deep acting. Because they can maintain their personal resources through deep acting, employees with good CO can regulate their emotions in demanding service interactions and derive personal satisfaction from their jobs (Hogan et al., 1984; Hartline and Ferrell, 1996). In contrast, employees with low CO, and thus fewer personal resources to cope with the demands of a service job, may continually display insincere emotions and experience high levels of emotional dissonance; the resulting emotional stress, conflict, and alienation may then lead to emotional exhaustion and ultimately undermine any satisfaction with their jobs (Grandey, 2000).

The N–S fit approach also touches on the mediating role of emotional labor between CO and job satisfaction. Employees with high CO successfully satisfy their customers using deep acting, which leads to satisfaction with their jobs; this gives them the sense of helping others and pride in their job, which may then lead to job satisfaction (Farrell and Oczkowski, 2009; Jaworski and Kohli,

1993). However, for employees with low CO the opposite holds true because superficial engagement and faking emotions to satisfy job requirements may limit their satisfaction with their jobs (Chatman, 1989).

This theoretical underpinning from prior research indicates the link between CO and job satisfaction can be explained by emotional labor. For example, Harris et al. (2005) and Farrell and Oczkowski (2009) found that high CO allows a service worker to derive satisfaction from making customers happy. Customer-oriented service workers, because they show a good fit to service work, may easily display sincere emotions and behaviors to the customers in service encounters. Positive responses from customers to this authentic, pleasurable emotional display positively influences employee job satisfaction. Grandey (2003) concurred, stating that CO, as an antidote to the detrimental effects of the demands of a job, makes employees more capable of deep acting. Sincere understanding and a genuine smile, consistently maintaining good levels of emotionality during interactions, all of which are typical of deep acting, may increase customer satisfaction, which again is a major source of job satisfaction (Donavan et al., 2004; Wiles, 2007). Thus the following hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 4a. Deep acting mediates the positive relationship between CO and job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 4b. Surface acting mediates the negative relationship between CO and job satisfaction.

2.9. Moderating effect of position

We also hypothesize that job position would have a moderating effect on the relationships of CO, emotional labor, and job satisfaction. According to Jones and James' (1979) psychological climate model, individual attitudes and behaviors are significantly influenced by how employees perceive primary domains of the work environment: role characteristics (e.g., ambiguity and conflict), leadership characteristics (e.g., support), work group and social environment characteristics (e.g., cooperation and pride), and organizational and subsystem attributes (e.g., management awareness and openness of information) (Carr et al., 2003). Similarly, Hackman and Oldham (1980) proposed the job characteristics theory, in which intrinsic work characteristics like task identity, skill variety, task significance, autonomy, and job feedback positively affect job satisfaction. This theory suggests that certain job attributes or conditions may lead employees to have different subjective perceptions of the meaningfulness of their work, as well as their sense of responsibility and knowledge of the results of their work, therefore causing employees to vary in their work-related attitudes and behaviors, including job satisfaction, job involvement, and job engagement (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007; Griffin et al., 2010).

These theories commonly lead to the inference that line employees and managers differ in types of emotional labor and their levels of CO and job satisfaction. For example, line-employees are less empowered than managers to handle service failure and customer complaints; thus, line-employees are more likely to feel job dissatisfaction and less likely experience intrinsic rewards than managers (Aslan and Kozak, 2012). Also, managers with more autonomy and authority on the job are less likely to use surface acting than line employees because managers have more control over challenging service encounters than line employees (Wharton, 1993; Yavas et al., 2013). Similarly, a study of frontline hotel employees in New Zealand indicated that because job stress, burnout, and diminished personal accomplishment on the job increase as a result of relative frequency of serving demanding guests, managers are susceptible to higher levels of job dissatisfaction and burnout than line-employees (Karatepe and Olugbade, 2009; Ledgerwood et al.,
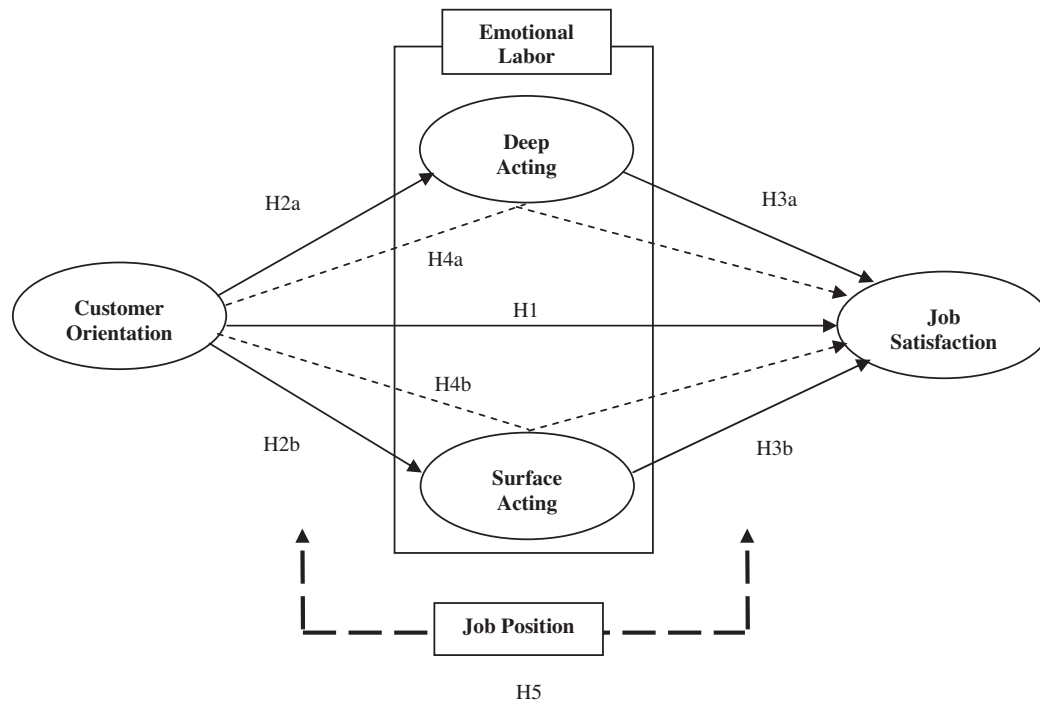
Fig. 1. *Proposed conceptual model. Note*: Hypothesis 4a: The mediating role of deep acting in the relationship between customer orientation and job satisfaction; Hypothesis 4b: The mediating role of surface acting in the relationship between customer orientation and job satisfaction. Hypothesis 5: Moderating effect of job position on the direct relationships.

1998). Additionally, managers may use more deep acting than line employees because, as problem-solvers, they should put in more effort when handling customer complaints (Cordes and Dougherty, 1993). Therefore, based on the differences in work characteristics, we hypothesize that the relationships of CO, emotional labor type, and job satisfaction may also differ between line employees and managers:

Hypothesis 5. There is a difference between line employees and managers in relationships among CO, emotional labor, and job satisfaction.

Our review of the literature is built around the model shown in Fig. 1.

3. Methodology

3.1. Sample and data collection

The study conducted convenience sampling of customer-contact frontline employees and managers working in hotels in the United States. These employees and managers are from five departments of hotel operations, including the front office department, food and beverage department, housekeeping department, engineering and maintenance department, and sales and marketing department. To collect data, we contacted about 1200 hotel managers, general managers and regional managers, directors and executives, and independent hotel owners via various hotel-professionals' online networking sites at LinkedIn and via regional hotel/lodging association directories. We sent invitation e-mails to these hoteliers to request them to distribute the invitation e-mail to their employees along with the URL link to the survey site. Hotel operators who opted to participate forwarded our survey invitation to their employees. Employees who agreed to participate in the survey were informed to voluntarily access the online survey site at any convenient place and time. We also included screening questions to strictly control the eligibility of the participants (i.e.,

age, U.S. location, and job duty) and thus increase the validity of responses. The survey was set to end if the participant eligibility was not met. Of the total of 356 responses, 47 responses were eliminated; 15 participants were disqualified and 32 respondents did not complete the survey. For our final analysis, 309 responses were used.

3.2. Measurement

Employee CO was measured with six items that tapped the attitudinal CO (Susskind et al., 2003, 2007). These items have been widely used in prior CO research (e.g., Susskind et al., 2003, 2007), demonstrating good internal consistency levels. For instance, Susskind et al.'s (2003) study showed a Cronbach's alpha of .91 for the items (Nunnally, 1978).

Emotional labor was measured with 15 items drawn from Chu and Murrmann's (2006) Hospitality Emotional Labor Scale (HELS). HELS assesses surface acting and deep acting hospitality employees use in service interactions. The psychometric properties of the scale have also been evaluated and confirmed by previous empirical studies (Gursoy et al., 2011; Lee and Ok, 2012; Kumar Mishra, 2014). Cronbach's alpha for both the deep acting and surface acting scales ranged from .73 to .93 in these studies.

Job satisfaction was assessed using Cammann et al. (1979) three-item job satisfaction scale. According to the study by Lee and Ok (2015), the values of Cronbach's alpha was .96, showing a high internal consistency level. Seven-point Likert-type scales (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*) were used to measure all constructs.

3.3. Data analysis

Data for this study was analyzed in three major phases. Initial data analysis included evaluating accuracy of data input, evaluating amount and distribution of missing data, and detecting outliers. Multicollinearity was also examined among independent variables

Table 1
Confirmatory factor analysis: Items and loadings.

Construct and Scale Item	Standardized Loading[a]
Customer orientation	
It is best to ensure that our customers receive the best possible service available	.91
If possible, I meet all requests made by my customers	.87
As an employee responsible for providing service, customers are very important to me	.94
When performing my job, the customer is most important to me	.84
I believe providing timely, efficient service to customers is a major function of my job	.91
I feel that the needs of our customers always come first	.76
Deep acting	
I try to talk myself out of feeling what I really feel when helping customers	.65
I have to concentrate more on my behavior when I display an emotion that I don't actually feel	.63
I try to actually experience the emotions that I must show when interacting with customers	.67
I try to change my actual feelings to match those that I must express to customers	.78
I work at calling up the feelings I need to show to customers	.77
When dealing with customers, I attempt to create certain emotions in myself that present the image my company desires	.81
Surface acting	
I put on a "mask" in order to express the right emotions for my job	.61
I have to cover up my true feelings when dealing with customers	.67
When dealing with customers, I display emotions that I am not actually feeling	.71
I fake the emotions I show when dealing with customers	.69
My smile to customers is often not sincere	.68
My interactions with customers are very robotic	.62
I put on an act in order to deal with customers in an appropriate way	.87
When dealing with customers, I behave in a way that differs from how I really feel	.91
I fake a good mood when interacting with customers	.88
Job satisfaction	
All in all, I am satisfied with my job	.91
In general, I like working at my organization	.83
In general, I do not like my job	.87

[a] All factors loadings are significant at $p < .05$.

using variance inflation factors (VIFs). Then, using confirmatory factor analyses (CFA), psychometric properties of all constructs were evaluated to ensure convergent and discriminant validity of the measures. Lastly, the hypothesized relationship model was tested and analyzed via structural equation modeling (SEM). To test the mediating role of deep acting and surface acting, the mediating models were compared with the constrained models using the chi-square difference test. Along with the chi-square measure, IFI (Incremental Fit Index), CFI (Comparative Fit Index), and RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation) were used to examine model fits. To test the moderating effect of job position on the hypothesized direct relationships, a multiple group analysis was also conducted.

4. Results

4.1. Sample characteristics

Of the 309 respondents in the sample, 57.6% were female ($n = 178$), and 42.4% were male ($n = 131$). Approximately 35% of the

respondents ($n = 109$) were within the range of 20 to 29 years old, and 27.2% ($n = 84$) were within the range of 30 to 39 years old. In terms of the education level of respondents, slightly more than half had a four-year college degree (50.8%, $n = 157$), and 25.9% of the respondents ($n = 80$) had a 2-year college degree. 93.2% of the respondents ($n = 288$) were full-time employees. Of the respondents, 68% ($n = 210$) had been working in the hospitality industry more than 5 years while only 6.1% ($n = 19$) had been employed 1 year or less. 163 respondents (52%) described their work as front office, followed by 52 respondents at sales (16.8%) and 47 respondents at the F&B departments (15.2%). In addition, 43% ($n = 133$) were line employees, while 56% ($n = 176$) were managers.

4.2. Confirmatory factor analysis

CFA assessed the measurement model to refine the manifest variables representing the latent variables. The CFA results showed that the overall fit of the measurement model was satisfactory (IFI = .97; TLI = .97, CFI = .97; RMSEA = .05) (Byrne, 2001). Table 1 shows the variables used in this study with their standardized factor loadings.

The factor loadings were equal to or greater than .61, and all factor loadings were significant at $p < .05$, with t-values ranging from 9.62 to 23.14. As shown in Table 2, the average variance extracted (AVE) for all constructs was higher than .50, suggesting that convergent validity of the measurement scales was well established (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). The composite reliabilities of constructs were greater than .70, ranging from .90 to .96. These values indicated that all constructs in the model have adequate internal consistency (Hair et al., 2010). Finally, discriminant validity was evaluated by comparing the AVE values and squared correlations between the two constructs of interest (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). AVE for each construct was higher than all of the squared correlations (R^2) between any pair of constructs, suggesting that discriminant validity was statistically supported. In summary, the convergent validity, internal consistency, and discriminant validity of the measurement scales used in this study were well established.

4.2.1. Structural model

The proposed model with four constructs was estimated using SEM. Fit indices provided by AMOS showed that the proposed model had an adequate fit (IFI = .97; TLI = .96, CFI = .97; RMSEA = .05) (Byrne, 2001). Fig. 2 shows the SEM results with standardized coefficients and their t-values. First, the result showed that the effect of CO on job satisfaction was found significant ($\beta = .29$; $t = 4.67$, $p < .05$), supporting Hypothesis 1. In addition, the estimates of the standardized coefficients indicated that the linkages between CO and deep acting ($\beta = .33$; $t = 5.04$, $p < .05$) and surface acting ($\beta = -.26$; $t = -4.39$, $p < .05$) were significant, suggesting that Hypotheses 2a and 2b were supported. The results also revealed statistically significant influences of both deep acting ($\beta = .150$; $t = 2.37$, $p < .05$) and surface acting ($\beta = -.29$; $t = -4.89$, $p < .05$) on job satisfaction. Thus, Hypotheses 3a and 3b were supported.

4.2.2. Testing mediating effects

This study adopted Baron and Kenny's (1986) testing approach to investigate how the two mediators (i.e., deep acting and surface acting) affect the relationship between CO and job satisfaction. According to Baron and Kenny (1986), the following four conditions should be met to establish mediation exists between an independent variable and a dependent variable: (1) a significant relationship between independent variable and presumed mediator, (2) a significant relationship between presumed mediator and dependent variable, (3) a significant relationship between independent variable and dependent variable, and (4) a decrease in the

Table 2
Descriptive statistics and associated measures.

	No. of items	Mean (Std dev.)	AVE	Customer orientation	Deep acting	Surface acting	Job satisfaction
Customer orientation	6	6.53 (.85)	.74	**.96**[a]	.33[b]	−.27	.42
Deep acting	6	4.88 (1.30)	.53	.11[c]	**.91**	.17	.20
Surface acting	9	3.32 (1.42)	.56	.07	.03	**.92**	−.35
Job satisfaction	3	5.73 (1.34)	.76	.18	.04	.12	**.90**

Goodness-of-fit statistics: $\chi^2 = 397.14$, df = 235, $p < .001$, $\chi^2/df = 1.69$, IFI = .97, TLI = .97, CFI = .97, RMSEA = .05. _Note_: All correlations among study variables are significant at $p < .01$.

[a] Composite reliabilities are along the diagonal.
[b] Correlations are above the diagonal.
[c] Squared correlations are below the diagonal.
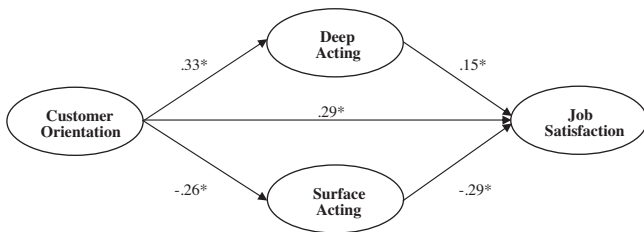
Fig. 2. _Standardized theoretical path coefficients. Note 1:_ *$p < .05$, _Note 2_: Hypothesis 4a (the mediating role of deep acting in the relationship between customer orientation and job satisfaction) was supported; Hypothesis 4b (the mediating role of surface acting in the relationship between customer orientation and job satisfaction) was supported.

strength of the relationship between independent and dependent variables when the presumed mediator is added to the model.

In the case of Hypothesis 4a, the first three conditions were met (that is, Hypotheses 1, 2a, and 3a were proved). To check the fourth condition, the structural model was re-estimated by constraining the direct effects of deep acting on job satisfaction (set $\beta = 0$). Fig. 3 shows that deep acting was a partial mediator between CO and job satisfaction because the strength of the relationship between CO and job satisfaction was significantly reduced when deep acting was added to the model (constrained model: $\beta = .35$; mediating model: $\beta = .29$). Furthermore, the difference in χ^2 value between the constrained model ($\chi^2_{(237)} = 422.43$) and the mediating model ($\chi^2_{(236)} = 416.73$) was significant ($\chi^2 = 5.70 > \chi^2 = .5(1) = 3.84$, df = 1). This result suggests that the mediating model was a significant improvement over the constrained model, supporting the mediating effect of deep acting in the relationship between CO and job satisfaction (Hypothesis 4a).

For Hypothesis 4b, the first three conditions were satisfied (that is, Hypotheses 1, 2b, and 3b were proved), so to test the fourth condition, the structural model was re-estimated by constraining the direct effects of surface acting on job satisfaction (set $\beta = 0$). Fig. 4 shows surface acting is a partial mediator in the relationship between CO and job satisfaction (constrained model: $\beta = .40$; mediating model: $\beta = .29$). In addition, the result of the difference in χ^2 value between the constrained model ($\chi^2_{(237)} = 440.54$) and the mediating model ($\chi^2_{(236)} = 416.73$) was also significant ($\chi^2 = 23.82 > \chi^2 = .5(1) = 3.84$, df = 1). Thus, the mediating model was a significant improvement over the constrained model, showing surface acting had a mediating effect in the relationship between CO and job satisfaction (Hypothesis 4b).

4.2.3. Testing moderating effects

Multiple-group analyses were conducted to test the moderating effect of job position. Respondents ($n = 308$) were split into two groups: line employees and managers. The multiple group analyses were conducted using a hierarchical approach that compared the two groups. To check the differential effects of position between line employees and managers, the chi-square difference between constrained and unconstrained models was examined concerning

the difference in degrees of freedom (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988). The results showed that all chi-square differences between the constrained model and the unconstrained model were not significant at the .05 level, suggesting that job position has no moderating effect in the proposed model; thus, Hypothesis 5 was not supported.

5. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to analyze the direct relationship between CO and job satisfaction (Donavan et al., 2004) from the perspective of hospitality service. More specifically, this study aimed to demonstrate why hospitality employees with high (or low) CO show high (or low) levels of job satisfaction. For this purpose, this study applied the concept of emotional labor and investigated mediating factors affecting the relationship based on P–J fit theory. Results of this study showed the type of employee emotional labor may explain the relationship between CO and job satisfaction among hospitality service workers. Consistent with findings in previous research, all of the seven hypothesized direct and indirect relationships were statistically significant. Therefore, our study suggests that CO has a direct relationship with deep acting, surface acting, and job satisfaction. More importantly, this study found that deep acting mediates the positive link between CO and job satisfaction while surface acting mediates the negative link between the two. However, contrary to our prediction, this study found no moderating effect of job position on the direct relationships between CO, deep acting, surface acting, and job satisfaction, suggesting line employees and managers do not differ in how they find job satisfaction through CO and deep acting. The findings of this study suggested a variety of significant theoretical and practical implications.

Among the theoretical contributions of this study is that it explains the roles of deep acting and surface acting in the relationship between CO and job satisfaction. Although much research has examined CO and its relationships with job-related outcomes like job satisfaction, little research in the hospitality literature has investigated these relationships from the perspective of emotional labor. Hospitality employees daily use their emotions on the job in customer service interactions, so emotional labor is a critical component of hospitality work, and consequently become an important topic requiring more focus and attention. Given this, therefore, studying how emotional labor links important variables should be pivotal to hospitality research. By accounting for the emotional nature of hospitality service, this study extends the extant research into CO and job satisfaction, broadening the theoretical perspectives and supporting more research into developing a more comprehensive model of the relationship between CO and job satisfaction.

Moreover, Whetten (1989) argued that it is necessary in developing theory to discover the psychological process underlying in the relationships of predictor variable and outcome variables. Therefore, by examining how emotional labor helps explain the relationship between CO and job satisfaction, this study has
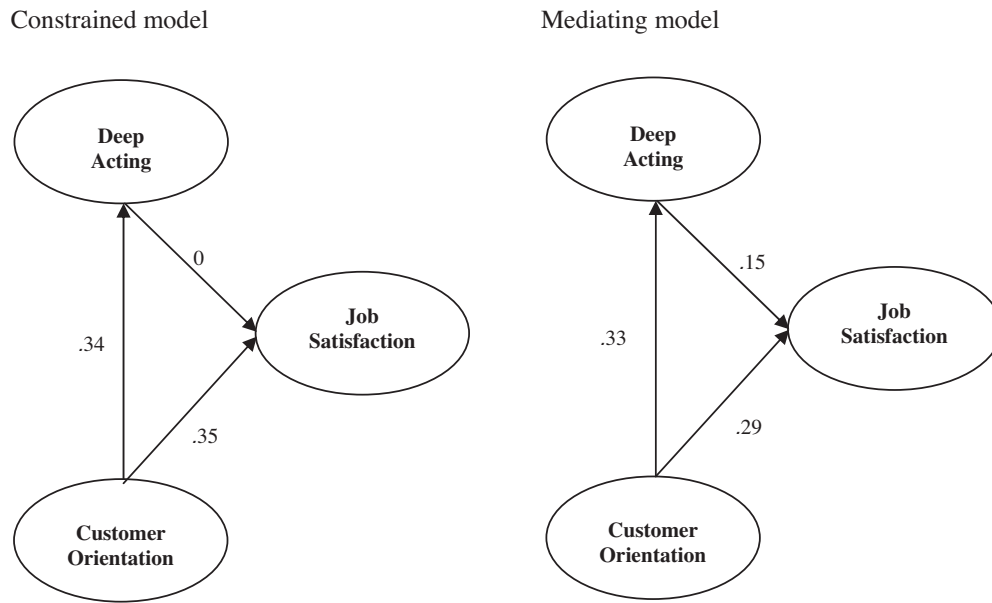
Constrained model

Mediating model

Fig. 3. *Testing mediating effect of deep acting. Note*: The constrained model: $\chi^2 = 422.43$, df = 237, $p < .001$, $\chi^2/df = 1.78$. The mediating model: $\chi^2 = 416.73$, df = 236, $p < .001$, $\chi^2/df = 1.77$.
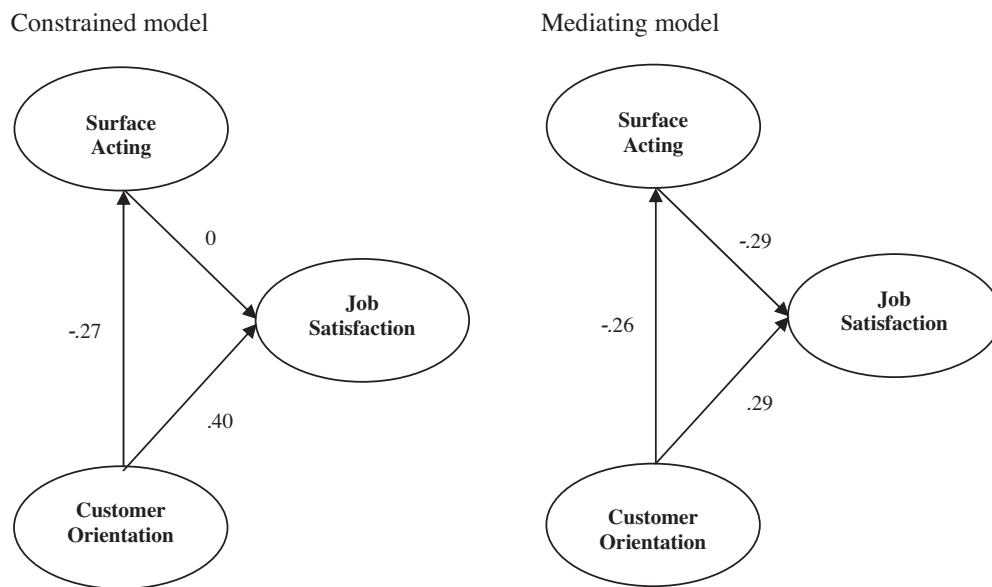
Constrained model

Mediating model

Fig. 4. *Testing mediating effect of surface acting. Note*: The constrained model: $\chi^2 = 440.54$, df = 237, $p < .001$, $\chi^2/df = 1.86$. The mediating model: $\chi^2 = 416.73$, df = 236, $p < .001$, $\chi^2/df = 1.77$.

developed an extensive and comprehensive theoretical path model that clarifies the mechanism through which CO influences job satisfaction differently via the two different types of emotional labor and explaining more clearly why employees with high CO are more likely to be satisfied with their jobs while employees with low CO are less likely to be satisfied with their jobs.

Another contribution of this study is that, through empirical testing with the sound theoretical underpinning of fit theory, this study provides theory-based empirical evidence of how CO and job satisfaction are linked via emotional labor behaviors among hospitality employees. Emotional labor has two distinct dimensions, and as predicted, both are related to CO separately in opposite directions affecting employee satisfaction with their jobs. Hospitality employees with high CO are more likely to use deep acting and consequently more likely to have higher levels of job satisfaction;

employees with low CO are more likely to engage in surface acting and thus show lower levels of job satisfaction. These relationships are explained by the mediating effects of the two types of emotional labor, indicating that P–J fit theory is a particularly relevant theoretical framework for robust theoretical reasoning and for answering the research questions of this study.

From the D–A fit perspective, because CO is a dispositional resource for serving others, employees with high CO can cope with the demands of employers who require specific emotional displays and can engage in regulating with sincerity their emotions for the sake of their customers. Successful service commitment using deep acting may lead to higher levels of job satisfaction. However, employees with low CO are more likely to lean on surface acting because they have low levels of personal resources for coping with emotional demands of the job, and therefore, due to emotional

dissonance and other dysfunctional outcomes of surface acting like emotional distress and burnout (Grandey et al., 2004), they are more likely to be dissatisfied with their job.

From the N–S fit approach, employees with high CO tend to have higher levels of satisfaction with their job as they feel affective need satisfaction through engaging in deep acting. Their self-esteem and authenticity, sense of personal achievement, ability to solve problems and fulfill service demands, and a stronger emotional attachment to customers or job mean they may perceive high levels of fit with their job. On the contrary, employees with lower levels of CO tend to be dissatisfied with their job because low CO induces surface acting rather than deep acting, and continuing to engage in faking or suppressing their true emotions, done only to meet their basic job requirements, may generate negative psychological outcomes. Such outcomes reduce the motivation to perform a job in hospitality.

Finally, according to previous research (Jones and James, 1979; Hackman and Oldham, 1980), work characteristics impact critical psychological states that influence internal work motivation and consequently job attitudes and behaviors. Based on this, we hypothesized that difference of specific job characteristics between line employees and managers may influence CO, emotional labor, and job satisfaction differently, and therefore the relationships between these variables are also different. However, contrary to our expectations, job position did not moderate the relationships among CO, emotional labor, and job satisfaction, indicating that there is no difference between line employees and managers in how CO influences hospitality worker job satisfaction through emotional labor.

This result could be explained in the underlying assumption that CO and emotional labor are common and fundamental to hospitality service jobs for both line employees and managers. Although work characteristics like task significance, degree of job autonomy, or frequency and intensity of service interaction differ for line employees and managers, and this difference may further cause different job attitudes and behaviors, both groups of service providers regulate their emotions the same or similar way in the same environment of servicing customers. Moreover, both operate under the same service requirement—abiding emotional display rules set by the organization. Whether they are in the frontline or a managerial position, the goal of their job is to satisfy customers regardless of their position, and thus both groups may not completely avoid engaging in emotional labor to achieve the goal. In performing emotional labor, both line employees and managers need emotional resources, and CO is such a fundamental, common resource for the two groups alike. Since line employees and managers would not differ significantly in that they use CO as a major resource for their emotional labor, we suspect that this inherent similarity between the two groups would nullify any moderating effect of unique job characteristics on emotional labor and job satisfaction. Future research is needed to further investigate how the relationships among CO, emotional labor, and job satisfaction differ for line employees and managers.

Although this study was primarily intended to test theoretically derived hypotheses, our findings do have practical implications. First, the findings illustrate that developing employee job satisfaction is substantially affected by emotional labor, specifically whether an employee uses deep acting or surface acting. CO level determines the type of emotional labor, so the main implication for hospitality practitioners is to pay attention to P–J fit, the compatibility between an employee's customer-oriented disposition and the hospitality job characteristics in practice. Attracting and hiring applicants who have an appropriate fit or chemistry with the emotional labor in the work environment would be advantageous. Thus, using good measures of CO and job fit while hiring may yield a better person–job fit, especially because CO is positively associated with deep acting, which would help employees perform emotional labor better than surface acting. Moreover, CO might influence job placement decisions. Employees with higher levels of CO should find the most job satisfaction using their service abilities to make customers happy (i.e., deep acting), so HR managers should consider placing them where higher levels of customer service, emotional demands, and problem-solving are needed. Employees with high levels of CO are more likely to enjoy their jobs when spending more time helping customers. HR managers can also place employees with low CO where customer interactions are highly scripted and short, involving less intense emotional display (Morris and Feldman, 1996; Sutton and Rafaeli, 1988).

Second, our results also suggest that employees may engage in surface acting when their CO level decreases, and thus surface acting is not completely avoidable among service employees. Therefore, hospitality organizations should strive to minimize the detrimental effect of surface acting. Hospitality firms could focus on creating developmental interventions that foster employee CO as important resources for the demand of emotional labor, Moreover, since we found that CO is directly linked with emotional labor, these training programs should involve familiarizing employees with deep acting skills and preventing the negative consequences of surface acting. For this, training programs might work to improve cognitive reappraisal and attention deployment (see Grandey, 2000; Totterdell and Holman, 2003) and on how employees can change or refresh their understanding of the customer and develop better customer relationships.

5.1. Limitations and suggestions for future research

This study has some limitations that need careful consideration. First, the respondents in this study came from hotels in the United States. Since the results of this study are based on a sample of American hotel workers, the generalizability of the findings is limited, and therefore, applying the findings of this study to other contexts or other cultures may not be suitable. Future research needs to replicate this study in different settings or use a cross-cultural data to establish the generalizability of our findings.

Second, the cross-sectional design of the study did not allow us to test causal relationships among the variables. Future research tracking changes in variables over time would strengthen the ability to make causal inferences. Also, although directions of the relationships investigated in our study were proposed based on the theoretical basis, other opposite directions may be plausible as well. This possibility, however, does not negate the contribution of this study to the literature. More investigation in future studies would verify causal relationships among the variables.

Third, this study used perceptual self-reported measures, which may have biased results due to the common method variance (CMV, Podsakoff et al., 2003). Harman's one-factor test and a confirmatory factor analysis were performed to assess the possible existence of CMV, and the results suggested that CMV was not of great concern and was unlikely to confound the interpretation of results. Confirmatory factor analyses also showed that the variables were distinct. Nevertheless, to alleviate this bias, future research needs to obtain more objective and potentially less biased measures of variables like surveying respondents' superiors or coworkers (Beal and Weiss, 2003).

Finally, this study relied on hotel managers to distribute the questionnaires to their employees. Such data collection methods may cause selection bias or non-response bias (Blair and Zinkhan, 2006), especially if distribution of the questionnaires did not conform to instructions (Karatepe et al., 2010). To ensure the findings of this study were not undermined by our data collection method, we conducted a time-trend extrapolation test and found that selection bias or non-response bias did not significantly affect

by the findings (Armstrong and Overton, 1977; Karatepe and Olugbade, 2009). Future research may consider collecting data directly from the sample.

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