FEMALE EMOTIONAL LABOR IN THE WORKPLACE: EXAMINING THROUGH THE LENS OF SUPPORT AND RECIPROCITY

Arjun Mitra
California State University, Los Angeles

SUMMARY*: While past research has lamented the sex stereotypes related to emotional expression of female employees in the workplace, little is known about how environmental support can reassure female employees to engage in less emotional labor and express their authentic selves. Using the job demands-resources (JD-R) model, I theorize that perceived organizational support and team psychological safety leads to less female surface acting. Further, climate for inclusion moderates the negative relationship between perceived organizational support and female surface acting. I also theorize that servant leadership moderates the negative relationship between team psychological safety and female surface acting. Using norms of reciprocity, I argue that female employees reciprocate the support received from the organization and the team through increased affective commitment towards their organization and increased prosocial behaviors towards their team.*

Keywords: female emotional labor, job demands-resources, organizational support, reciprocity, surface acting, team Support

INTRODUCTION

"Women, on average, tend to be more aware of their emotions, show more empathy, and are more adept interpersonally. Men on the other hand, are more self-confident and optimistic, adapt more easily, and handle stress better."

-Daniel Goleman (Author of the New York Times bestseller 'Emotional Intelligence')

The emotional labor strategy of surface acting focuses on suppressing actual emotions and faking emotions based on requirements of the situation (Brodsky, 2021; Grandey, 2000). It includes regulating and modifying one's expressions and feelings in response to the situational display rules for meeting desired organizational goals (Zhan, Wang, & Shi, 2016). Surface acting is found to adversely impact employee well-being and job satisfaction as it is based on compromising one's authentic-self (Hülsheger, Alberts, Feinholdt, & Lang, 2013). It depletes cognitive resources due to constant effort to regulate one's display of emotions which in turn adversely impacts the individual's task performance (Zhan et al., 2016). Interestingly, daily surface acting leads to depletion of resources at the end of the day leaving the employee exhausted and less motivated to engage in organizational citizenship behaviors towards their coworkers (Trougakos, Beal, Cheng, Hideg, & Zweig, 2015).

Employee surface acting also leads to negative affective states (such as hostility and anger) which further causes employees to demonstrate withdrawal behaviors from work such as taking longer breaks or reducing effort to complete tasks (Güler et al., 2023; Scott & Barnes, 2011). Specifically, when employees engage in inauthentic expression of emotions, their interaction partners such as coworkers and clients, can detect this inauthentic emotional display and retaliate unfavorably in response (Hülsheger & Schewe, 2011). This further negatively impacts employee well-being as it causes psychological strain to employees (Grandey, 2000; Lim et al., 2025). Thus emotional labor has negative consequences on an employee in the form of reduced well-being, job satisfaction, and task performance and is not desirable (Hülsheger et al., 2013; Hülsheger & Schewe, 2011; Scott & Barnes, 2011; Zhan et al., 2016). I argue that female employees are forced to engage in the emotional labor strategy of surface acting in the workplace due to sex role expectations and this necessitates the attention of organizational science researchers (Brescoll, 2016; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Eagly, Karau, Miner, & Johnson, 1994)

Females are perceived to be more emotional than males (Shields, 2002) which further negatively impact their upward career mobility in organizations (Dolan, 2014). Although a meta-analytic study on self-conscious emotions (such as pride, guilt, shame, and embarrassment) revealed no significant sex differences in *experiencing* these emotions (Else-Quest, Higgins, Allison, & Morton, 2012), there were significant sex differences in *expressing* these emotions (Durik et al., 2006). Thus, females are more likely to be labelled as emotional because of greater outward display of such self-conscious emotions than males (Brescoll, 2016).

Females are expected to suppress negative emotions and express positive emotions while fulfilling managerial and professional roles unlike males as expression of negative emotions (such as anger, aggression) seem to be acceptable for males while fulfilling such roles (Simpson & Stroh, 2004). Due to their lower status in the sex based social hierarchy, female employees have to be further careful of their emotional expression as they are apprehensive about others' perceptions of their emotional competence (Taylor & Hood, 2011). Females are also perceived to be less competent and agentic than males when they express happiness while executing task-oriented leadership roles (Brosi, Spörrle, Welpe, & Heilman, 2016). Females are further believed to adopt

emotion-focused coping strategies (which involves escaping the stress situation) rather than problem-focused coping (which involves handling the source of stress) which are more frequently adopted by males (Srivastava & Tang, 2015).

Perceptions that emotions hamper logical decision-making further make females appear irrational, biased, and incompetent (Brescoll, 2016). According to social role theory, it's more desirable for females to possess communal attributes – for example, sympathy, kindness, and interpersonal sensitivity while males are expected to possess more agentic attributes – for example, assertiveness, dominance, and confidence (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Interestingly, presence of such agentic attributes makes males more likely to be perceived as competent leaders whereas presence of communal attributes makes females unfit to take leadership roles (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Eagly et al., 1994; Judge & Livingston, 2008). Furthermore, females are more likely to be penalized and negatively evaluated for displaying agentic attributes, and masculine emotions such as anger and pride (Brescoll & Uhlmann, 2008).

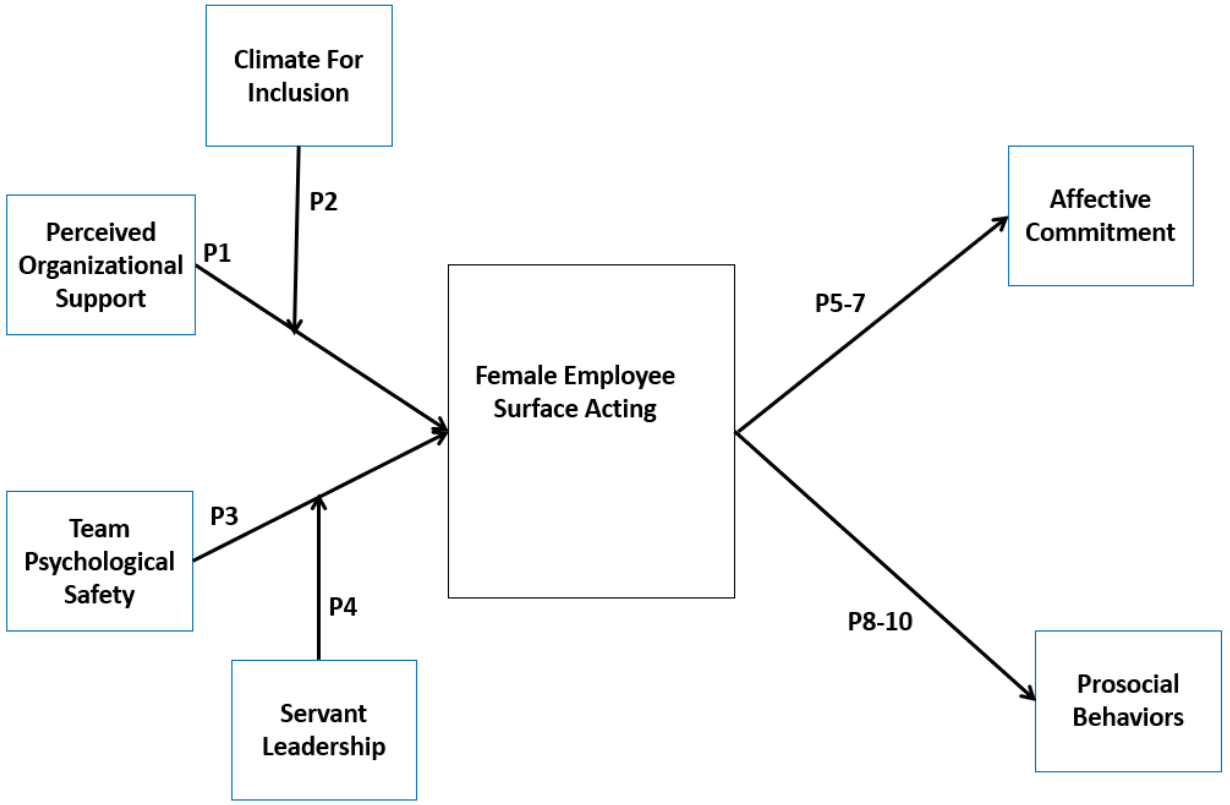
It becomes a lose-lose situation for females, as on one hand displaying feminine emotions such as sympathy, kindness, and interpersonal sensitivity makes them perceived less capable as leaders, whereas on the other hand displaying masculine emotions such as anger, pride, dominance gives them the label "bossy" or "ice-queen" (Heilman, 2001; Brescoll, 2016). Hence, females have to consciously and carefully control the outward display of emotions which they are experiencing in order to be perceived positively in the workplace (Brescoll, 2016). This leads to increased emotional regulation strategies such as surface acting adopted by female employees which negatively impacts their well-being, job satisfaction, and task performance (Hülsheger et al., 2013; Zhan et al., 2016).

Thus, it becomes imperative to understand the role of environmental actors which can lead to reduced surface acting in female employees which in turn will increase female employees' well-being and performance, and reduce their work withdrawal behaviors. Further, it becomes necessary to evaluate how the environmental actors benefit from the female employees once their emotional dissonance (discrepancy between felt and expressed emotions) gets reduced. Since a female employee's workplace identity is realized through team and organizational membership, I focus on the role of organization and team as important environmental actors when it comes to influencing female employees' necessity for surface acting. The objective of my paper is to develop theory on how environmental support (in the form of organizational and team level support) can reduce surface acting among female employees. Further, I theorize how the environment can benefit from female employees by reducing the need for surface acting among female employees.

While scholarly research has focused on the challenges members of different social identity groups face in the workplace, little research exists on the mechanisms or systems that can facilitate the process to overcome these challenges and foster an inclusive workplace. Therefore, I endeavor to make two theoretical contributions to the sex diversity literature. First, although past studies have examined the emotional labor processes females have to engage in order to conform to sex role expectations in the workplace (Brescoll, 2016; Brescoll & Uhlmann, 2008), we do not yet understand how different environmental actors can play a role in reducing emotional labor strategies such as surface acting among female employees. I therefore outline a research agenda to understand the role of proximal environment (such as the female employee's work team which includes coworkers and supervisor) and the distal environment (such as the organization) in diminishing female surface acting. Second, I build theory on how female employees' teams and organizations can benefit from reduced surface acting among its female employees.

The article is organized into two sections. First, using job demands- resources (JD-R) model, I will theorize how organizational and team level resources can help female employees cope with job demands such as emotional labor (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Second, using norms of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960), I will theorize how female employees reciprocate back to their teams and the organizations in exchange of these support resources (Foa & Foa, 1980; Gouldner, 1960). The conceptual framework appears in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework



LITERATURE REVIEW AND PROPOSITION DEVELOPMENT

Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model of Female Surface Acting

Workplace resources can serve as an important mechanism to deal with the physical and psychological costs associated with job demands. Specifically, job resources are found to be negatively related to burnout while having a positive relationship with employee engagement (Crawford, LePine, & Rich, 2010). This is because job resources enable employees to deal with psychological strain associated with job demands thereby reducing burnout, and further serves as a motivating factor fostering personal growth and goal attainment through increased employee engagement (Nahrgang et al., 2011).

The job demands-resources (JD-R) model suggests that employee working conditions can be classified into two categories-job demands and job resources (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001). While job demands refer to the organizational aspects of the work which incur a significant amount of cognitive, emotional, and physical effort, job resources refer to the tangible support that organizations provide in order to reduce job demands, promote goal attainment, and sustain employee growth and development (Nahrgang, Morgeson, & Hofmann, 2011). Job demands can be in the form of workload and time pressure whereas examples of job resources include workplace autonomy, coworker and supervisor support (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Demerouti et al., 2001).

Surface acting in the workplace can take the form of a major job demand for female employees leading to depletion of their internal resources causing emotional exhaustion and burnout (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Biron & Veldhoven, 2012; Demerouti et al., 2001; Lim et al., 2025). I propose that job resources such as organizational support and team support (in the form of supportive coworkers and supervisor) can reduce surface acting among female employees. Organizational support can prevent the loss of emotional resources among female employees and increase their emotional well-being (Shantz, Alfes, & Latham, 2016). Team support in the form of supportive colleagues and supervisor can reduce the psychological strain among female employees by reducing their need for surface acting (Brough et al., 2013). I specifically examine the effect of organizational resources (such as perceived organizational support and climate for inclusion), and team resources (such as team psychological safety and servant leadership) in reducing the demands of surface acting among female employees.

Perceived Organizational Support and Female Surface Acting

Perceived organizational support (POS) refers to employee beliefs about the organization's concern of their well-being and the degree to which the organization considers their contributions valuable (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986). It indicates the personification of the organization by the employees based on the organization's policies, norms, processes, culture, and to what extent the organization favors or disfavors its employees (Levinson, 1965). High level of POS prevents depletion of employee resources, motivates them to engage in their work roles, and reduces deviant behavior among them (Shantz et al., 2016).

POS can be manifested in the form of favorable working conditions and fair treatment of female employees in the organization (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). It indicates an organization's interest in meeting the socioemotional needs of the female employees so that the

female employees can execute their jobs effectively (Aselage & Eisenberger, 2003). POS leads to positive attitudes and behaviors among its female employees as the organization fulfills self-enhancement needs of its female employees through approval, caring, and respect (Vardaman et al., 2016). Further, the socio-emotional support extended by the organization to its female employees creates a sense of psychological empowerment among its female employees as they learn to derive meaning out of their work (Lamm, Tosti-kharas, & King, 2015).

POS reduces psychological strain among its female employees by providing them emotional support in meeting the challenging workplace demands (George, Reed, Ballard, Colin, & Fielding, 1993). POS in the form of interactional justice indicates that the organization treats all its employees with respect and dignity (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Female employees are therefore more likely to reduce the discrepancy between felt emotions and expressed emotions if they receive socio-emotional support and fair treatment from the organization. They will be further less likely to modify their outward display of emotions if they perceive that the organization is concerned about their welfare.

Proposition 1. Perceived organizational support is negatively related to surface acting by female employees.

The Moderating Effect of Climate for Inclusion in the Perceived Organizational Support-Female Surface Acting Relationship

Nishi (2012) defined climate for inclusion as a form of organizational climate which reduces interpersonal bias and consists of three dimensions-" (i) Foundation of equitable employment practices, (ii) Integration of differences, and (iii) Inclusion in decision making" (2012: 1761). While the first dimension focuses on the organizational practices adopted to eliminate workplace biases, the second dimension emphasizes on the formation of workplace norms through which diverse employees can assimilate into the collective without compromising their self-concepts, and the third dimension captures the degree to which diverse employees can participate in decision-making without the fear of being rebuked (Nishii, 2012). Organizations with a high climate for inclusion not only favorably regard unique contributions of its diverse employees but also infuses a sense of belongingness among them (Shore et al., 2011).

A climate for inclusion signals to all its employees that they are valued by the organization and will not be perceived inferior even if there are stereotypes attached to their social group memberships (Dwertmann & Boehm, 2016). It emphasizes the importance of self-expression making employees feel psychologically safe to disclose their authentic selves to their coworkers (Nishii, 2012). Further, leaders can create a climate for inclusion in the workplace by modeling relational transparency – where followers can behave in ways true to their authentic selves (Boekhorst, 2015).

I propose that female employees are less likely to engage in surface acting in organizations which promote a climate for inclusion, based on fulfillment of its three dimensions. First, equitable employment practices will help reduce biases such as females are emotionally less competent than males (Taylor & Hood, 2011) or use emotion-focused coping strategies to escape stressful situations (Srivastava & Tang, 2015). Reduction of such biases will motivate female employees to reveal their actual emotions. Second, integration of differences will foster interpersonal harmony among female employees and their coworkers and also help female employees to be assimilated into their work teams making them feel more connected (Nishii, 2012). This will further reduce the need of a female employee to control the outward display of emotions among her coworkers

with whom she now shares interpersonal trust. Third, inclusion in decision-making will make them confident that the organization does not believe in sex stereotypes such as females make irrational decisions based on emotions (Brescoll, 2016). This will empower female employees to be their authentic emotional selves while participating in decision-making. Hence, climate for inclusion will further strengthen the perceptions of organizational support on female employees thereby motivating them to engage in less surface acting.

Proposition 2. Climate for inclusion moderates the negative relationship between perceived organizational support and female surface acting such that the relationship is stronger when climate for inclusion is high as opposed to low.

Team Psychological Safety and Female Surface Acting

Team psychological safety implies that members of a group value each other's skills and abilities, exchange unique information, feel comfortable to take risks, and discuss failures without fear of retaliation or negative evaluation (Kirkman, Cordery, Mathieu, Rosen, & Kukenberger, 2013). It also encourages learning behavior in work teams, as it reduces concerns about others' responses to actions that may cause potential embarrassment or threat (Edmondson, 1999). Team members feel more respected in an environment of high psychological safety and do not feel hesitant to bring up errors without the concern of being perceived as incompetent (Edmondson, 1999).

Team psychological safety promotes open communication and interaction among team members as individuals are more confident that their coworkers will not reject, punish, or embarrass them for freely expressing their opinions (Wang, Leung, & Zhou, 2014). Employees in teams with high psychological safety are also not afraid of negative consequences or retribution while expressing authentic personal behaviors (Roussin, MacLean, & Rudolph, 2016). Therefore, female employees in teams with high psychological safety will be more likely to be their authentic-selves and outwardly display the emotions that they are experiencing. They will also be less likely to fake emotional expressions or engage in surface acting as working in teams with high psychological safety will make them less concerned of embarrassment, retribution, or negative evaluation from other team members.

Proposition 3. Team psychological safety is negatively related to surface acting by female employees.

The Moderating Effect of Servant Leadership in the Team Psychological Safety-Female Surface Acting Relationship

Servant leaders refer to those leaders who prioritize on satisfying the needs of their followers before fulfilling their own personal needs (Greenleaf, 1970). Servant leaders contribute to organizational effectiveness by bringing out the best in their followers by engaging in a one-on-one communication with them understanding their needs, desires, abilities, potential, and goals (Liden, Wayne, Zhao, & Henderson, 2008). More importantly they place satisfaction of their followers' needs before their own needs. In this process, they offer emotional support, empathy, feedback, and other necessary resources to their followers and encourage them to be their authentic selves (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016).

A key dimension of servant leadership is *emotional healing* which emphasizes that servant leaders care and promote followers' well-being through interpersonal sensitivity (Liden, Wayne, Liao, & Meuser, 2014; Liden et al., 2008). Servant leaders also invest their time and resources for fulfillment of follower psychological needs and empower them to grow as a person (van Dierendonck, Stam, Boersma, de Windt, & Alkema, 2014). A servant leader will be more likely to encourage their followers to express their emotions freely without fear of rebuke or negative evaluation. A servant leader further creates a serving culture where team members prioritize the emotional needs of other team members and provides help and support to them (Liden et al., 2014). Hence it becomes indisputable that females will be more likely to express their authentic selves and engage in less emotional labor in teams with high psychological safety and supervised by a servant leader.

Proposition 4. Servant leadership moderates the negative relationship between team psychological safety and female surface acting such that the relationship is stronger when servant leadership is high as opposed to low.

Support and Reciprocity

Multiple resources can be interchanged between exchange partners based on certain rules and this exchange of resources can lead to formation of high quality relationships between exchange partners (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Further, reciprocity forms an important norm of exchange such that individuals when get resources from other individuals also give resources to them in return (Gouldner, 1960). Thus, beneficial support on the part of organization and team is more likely to result in beneficial actions on the part of female employees (Colquitt, Baer, Long, & Halvorsen-Ganepola, 2014).

For example, good will gestures exhibited by supervisors leads followers to reciprocate in the form of increased job satisfaction and reduced turnover intentions (Bagger & Li, 2014). When employees perceive the organization to yield justice to its employees, they reciprocate to the organization by increasing their task performance and discretionary behaviors (Colquitt et al., 2014). Similarly, employer over-investment on its employees with lesser expected contributions in return benefit from the employees in terms of increased loyalty demonstrated by employees (Hom et al., 2009).

Female employees engage in less surface acting when they receive support from their teams and organizations. Specifically, these forms of support reduce depletion of emotional resources among female employees as they are now less likely to spend resources on modifying the display of actual felt emotions. Female employees are now more likely to invest these emotional resources in yielding more positive outcomes and reciprocating back to the organization. Specifically, female employees will reciprocate the support received from organization in the form of increased affective commitment towards the organization. They will further reciprocate the support received from the team (coworkers and supervisor) in the form of increased helping behaviors towards them.

Female Surface Acting and Affective Commitment

Affective commitment refers to an individual's psychological state corresponding to which they have a high emotional attachment and identification with their organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991). For example, individuals high in emotional stability are less likely to view their

organizations in a negative light and are further motivated to build a stronger affective bond with the organization (Choi, Oh, & Colbert, 2015). Individuals also increase their emotional involvement with the organization in order to reciprocate to the distributive justice and procedural justice they receive from the organization (Wayne, Shore, Bommer, & Tetrick, 2002).

Organizations that invest more in corporate social performance and take care of its stakeholders are more capable to build a trusting relationship with its employees and benefit from them through increased employee affective commitment (Farooq, Payaud, Merunka, & Valette-Florence, 2014; Güler et al., 2023). A supportive work culture which provides flexible schedules (such as flextime and flexspace) is also found to motivate employees to increase their emotional bonding with the company (Chang, Chin, & Ye, 2014). However, past research also reveals individuals high in surface acting are more likely to have less affective commitment leading to increased withdrawal behaviors such as absenteeism especially when their surface acting self-efficacy is low (Nguyen, Groth, & Johnson, 2016).

When female employees engage in surface acting, it leads to reduced job satisfaction, and further negatively impacts their willingness to commit back to the organization (Abraham, 1999). Emotional labor also leads to depletion of resources leaving female employees with limited resources to invest in the organization. However, when female employees receive support from their organizations which motivates them to engage in less surface acting, it leads to conservation of emotional resources for them. Since every exchange is guided by norms of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960), female employees are now more likely to reciprocate to the organization and invest these saved emotional resources to increase their affective bond with the organization. In my proposed system, female surface acting is the linking mechanism between perceived organizational support and affective commitment.

Proposition 5. Surface acting by female employees is negatively related to their affective commitment.

Proposition 6. Surface acting by female employees will mediate the relationship between perceived organizational support and female affective commitment.

Proposition 7. Climate for inclusion moderates the indirect effect of perceived organizational support on female affective commitment through female surface acting.

Female Surface Acting and Prosocial Behaviors

Employee prosocial behaviors refer to the helping behaviors an employee engages in to benefit their coworkers, supervisors or customers (Balliet & Ferris, 2013; Grant & Sonnentag, 2010). Specifically, employees high on prosocial motivation engage in behaviors which have an other-focused emphasis and are directed towards making meaningful contributions to others (Grant & Berry, 2011). Caring and helping are core values of prosocially motivated employees and such employees are also more sensitive to fulfilling obligations towards other employees by engaging in behaviors that benefit the latter (Lanaj, Johnson, & Wang, 2016).

Employees are also more likely to engage in prosocial behaviors when they are closely connected to other employees and do not feel socially excluded by them (Kulkarni & Sommer, 2015). Further, employees execute prosocial actions to express gratitude and reciprocate the support and assistance they have received from their colleagues or supervisor (Grant & Gino, 2010; Güler et al., 2023). When employees can reduce attention to their individual selves, they are more

inclined to drive their attention towards others and engage in prosocial behaviors (Piff, Dietze, Feinberg, Stancato, & Keltner, 2015).

Prosocial behaviors such as helping others require investment of resources on the actor's side (Lanaj et al., 2016). By engaging in less surface acting, female employees prevent depletion of their emotional resources. These emotional resources can be further invested by female employees in the form of prosocial behaviors to reciprocate the support they receive from their team members and supervisor (Grant & Gino, 2010). Specifically, as female employees are less attentive to managing and regulating their emotional expression, they can drive their attention to actions which benefit their team members and supervisor (Piff et al., 2015). In my proposed system, female surface acting is the linking mechanism between team psychological safety and prosocial behaviors towards her coworkers and supervisor. Therefore,

Proposition 8. Surface acting by female employees is negatively related to their prosocial behaviors.

Proposition 9. Surface acting by female employees will mediate the relationship between team psychological safety and prosocial behaviors.

Proposition 10. Servant leadership moderates the indirect effect of team psychological safety on female prosocial behaviors through female surface acting.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

My study has two key managerial implications. Past researchers have repeatedly emphasized the challenges female employees have to face in the workplace with regards to managing their outward display of emotions to avoid victimization to sex stereotypes (Brescoll, 2016; Brescoll & Uhlmann, 2008; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Heilman, 2001; Simpson & Stroh, 2004). My study therefore attempts to provide an answer to two pertinent questions which arise with regards to female surface acting in the workplace- (i) In what ways can environmental actors (organization and team) reduce the need among female employees to engage in surface acting? (ii) How can the environment actors benefit from female employees who have to engage less in surface acting? My model provides guidelines to managers on the ways they can increase belongingness for female employees in the workplace. My framework posits that resources such as support from organization and team can help female employees to meet the demands of emotional labor. Second, using norms of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960), I highlight the ways organizations can benefit from reduced female emotional labor. My framework theorizes that female employees reciprocate the support received from the organization and team in the form of increased affective commitment and prosocial behaviors in the workplace. These outcomes are important for organizations as positive employee attitudes and behaviors are necessary for sustained success and growth of organizations.

My study has implications for future research. First, although I examine the ways the female employees' teams and organizations may benefit when female employees have to engage in less surface acting. Future researchers can look into the benefits female employees can gain personally (such as increased job satisfaction) when they do not have to modify their outward display of emotions. As female employees engage in emotional expression which is discordant with their initial emotional state, it will lead to dissonance and adversely impact their job satisfaction (Bhave & Glomb, 2016; Lim et al., 2025). This is because surface acting will diminish

employee well-being as it leads to depletion of internal resources and undermines female employees' expression of their authentic selves (Hülsheger et al., 2013). This reduced levels of job satisfaction due to surface acting will further increase female employee absenteeism as female employees in order to buffer depletion of cognitive or motivational resources will engage in withdrawal from work (Nguyen et al., 2016). Therefore, the greater the female employees engage in surface acting the more likely they will be to face a loss in their internal resources, leading to increased levels of job dissatisfaction. However, when female employees receive substantial support from their teams and organizations to be their authentic selves, females will be less likely to engage in surface acting and be more comfortable to express their authentic selves emotionally, which will further increase their levels of job satisfaction.

Second, future research can explore this phenomenon for females occupying leadership positions such as directors in corporate boards or executives in top management teams. Female representation in leadership positions is limited and the challenges faced by them to prove their competence is much more than their male counterparts (Glass & Cook, 2016). It thus becomes critical to examine the kinds of environmental support that can help female leaders to express their authentic selves while executing such demanding roles. Third, future research can investigate the emotional labor challenges faced by employees carrying a stigmatized identity. Employees belonging to a stigmatized social group (such as the LGBTQ+ community) are more likely to engage in surface acting due to the rigid stereotypes attached to their sexual orientation or gender identity (Ragins, 2008). Lastly, identity scholars can further extend my framework and explore it from the lens of identity intersectionality (Azmitia et al., 2023). Future research can explore the distinctive forms of environmental support needed by employees with multiple marginalized identities (such as Asian women or disabled women) engaging in surfacing acting in the workplace.

CONCLUSION

Past research has highlighted the challenges female employees face in the workplace with regards to modifying their emotional expression to avoid reinforcing sex stereotypes. My article attempts to address this phenomenon, and theorize the kinds of environmental support which can encourage female employees to engage in less emotional labor strategies such as surface acting and be their authentic selves in the workplace. Further, I theorize the ways female employees reciprocate the support received from their teams and organizations. I hope my study will create more discussions and encourage management scholars and organizational managers to further explore this phenomenon in different contexts.

Corresponding author: Dr. Arjun Mitra, amitra@calstatela.edu

REFERENCES

Abraham, R. (1999). The impact of emotional dissonance on organizational commitment and intention to turnover. *The Journal of Psychology*, *133*(4), 441–455.

Aselage, J., & Eisenberger, R. (2003). Perceived organizational support and psychological contracts: A theoretical integration. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *24*(5), 491–509.

Azmitia, M., Peraza, P. D. G., & Casanova, S. (2023). Social identities and intersectionality: A conversation about the what and the how of development. *Annual Review of Developmental Psychology*, *5*(Volume 5, 2023), 169–191.

Bagger, J., & Li, A. (2014). How does supervisory family support influence employees' attitudes and behaviors? A social exchange perspective. *Journal of Management*, *40*(4), 1123–1150.

Bakker, A. B., & Demerouti, E. (2007). The Job Demands-Resources model: State of the art. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, *22*(3), 309–328.

Balliet, D., & Ferris, D. L. (2013). Ostracism and prosocial behavior: A social dilemma perspective. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, *120*(2), 298–308.

Bhave, D. P., & Glomb, T. M. (2016). The role of occupational emotional labor requirements on the surface acting–job satisfaction relationship. *Journal of Management*, *42*(3), 722–741.

Biron, M., & Veldhoven, M. van. (2012). Emotional labour in service work: Psychological flexibility and emotion regulation. *Human Relations*, *65*(10), 1259–1282.

Boekhorst, J. A. (2015). The role of authentic leadership in fostering workplace inclusion: A social information processing perspective. *Human Resource Management*, *54*(2), 241–264.

Brescoll, V. L. (2016). Leading with their hearts? How gender stereotypes of emotion lead to biased evaluations of female leaders. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *27*(3), 415–428.

Brescoll, V. L., & Uhlmann, E. L. (2008). Can an angry woman get ahead? Status conferral, gender, and expression of emotion in the workplace. *Psychological Science*, *19*(3), 268–275.

Brodsky, A. (2021). Virtual surface acting in workplace interactions: Choosing the best technology to fit the task. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *106*(5), 714–733.

Brosi, P., Spörrle, M., Welpe, I. M., & Heilman, M. E. (2016). Expressing pride: Effects on perceived agency, communality, and stereotype-based gender disparities. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *101*(9), 1319–1328.

Brough, P., Timms, C., Siu, O., Kalliath, T., O'Driscoll, M. P., Sit, C. H. P., Lo, D., & Lu, C. (2013). Validation of the Job Demands-Resources model in cross-national samples: Cross-sectional and longitudinal predictions of psychological strain and work engagement. *Human Relations*, *66*(10), 1311–1335.

Chang, E., Chin, H., & Ye, J. (2014). Organizational work-family culture and working mothers' affective commitment: How career expectations matter. *Human Resource Management*, *53*(5), 683–700.

Chiniara, M., & Bentein, K. (2016). Linking servant leadership to individual performance: Differentiating the mediating role of autonomy, competence and relatedness need satisfaction. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *27*(1), 124–141.

Choi, D., Oh, I.-S., & Colbert, A. E. (2015). Understanding organizational commitment: A meta-analytic examination of the roles of the five-factor model of personality and culture. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *100*(5), 1542–1567.

Colquitt, J. A., Baer, M. D., Long, D. M., & Halvorsen-Ganepola, M. D. K. (2014). Scale indicators of social exchange relationships: A comparison of relative content validity. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *99*(4), 599–618.

Crawford, E. R., LePine, J. A., & Rich, B. L. (2010). Linking job demands and resources to employee engagement and burnout: A theoretical extension and meta-analytic test. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *95*(5), 834–848.

Cropanzano, R., & Mitchell, M. S. (2005). Social exchange theory: An interdisciplinary review. *Journal of Management*, *31*(6), 874–900.

Demerouti, E., Bakker, A. B., Nachreiner, F., & Schaufeli, W. B. (2001). The Job Demands–Resources model of burnout. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *86*(3), 499–512.

Dolan, A. K. (2014). *When does gender matter? Women candidates and gender stereotypes in American elections.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Durik, A. M., Hyde, J. S., Marks, A. C., Roy, A. L., Anaya, D., & Schultz, G. (2006). Ethnicity and Gender Stereotypes of Emotion. *Sex Roles*, *54*(7–8), 429–445.

Dwertmann, D. J. G., & Boehm, S. A. (2016). Status matters: The asymmetric effects of supervisor-subordinate disability incongruence and climate for inclusion. *Academy of Management Journal*, *59*(1), 44–64.

Eagly, A. H., & Johannesen-Schmidt, M. C. (2001). The leadership styles of women and men. *Journal of Social Issues*, *57*(4), 781–797.

Eagly, A. H., & Karau, S. J. (2002). Role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders. *Psychological Review*, *109*(3), 573–598.

Eagly, A. H., Karau, S. J., Miner, J. B., & Johnson, B. T. (1994). Gender and motivation to manage in hierarchic organizations: A meta-analysis. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *5*(2), 135–159.

Edmondson, A. (1999). Psychological safety and learning behavior in work teams. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *44*(2), 350–383.

Eisenberger, R., Huntington, R., Hutchison, S., & Sowa, D. (1986). Perceived organizational support. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *71*(3), 500–507.

Else-Quest, N. M., Higgins, A., Allison, C., & Morton, L. C. (2012). Gender differences in self-conscious emotional experience: A meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*, *138*(5), 947.

Farooq, O., Payaud, M., Merunka, D., & Valette-Florence, P. (2014). The impact of corporate social responsibility on organizational commitment: Exploring multiple mediation mechanisms. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *125*(4), 563–580.

Foa, E. B., & Foa, U. G. (1980). Resource Theory. In K. J. Gergen, M. S. Greenberg, & R. H. Willis (Eds.), *Social Exchange* (pp. 77–94). Springer US.

George, J. M., Reed, T. F., Ballard, K. A., Colin, J., & Fielding, J. (1993). Contact with AIDS patients as a source of work-related distress: Effects of organizational and social support. *Academy of Management Journal*, *36*(1), 157–171.

Glass, C., & Cook, A. (2016). Leading at the top: Understanding women's challenges above the glass ceiling. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *27*(1), 51–63.

Gouldner, A. W. (1960). The norm of reciprocity: A preliminary statement. *American Sociological Review*, *25*(2), 161–178.

Grandey, A. A. (2000). Emotional regulation in the workplace: A new way to conceptualize emotional labor. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, *5*(1), 95–110.

Grant, A. M., & Berry, J. W. (2011). The necessity of others is the mother of invention: Intrinsic and prosocial motivations, perspective taking, and creativity. *Academy of Management Journal*, *54*(1), 73–96.

Grant, A. M., & Gino, F. (2010). A little thanks goes a long way: Explaining why gratitude expressions motivate prosocial behavior. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *98*(6), 946.

Grant, A. M., & Sonnentag, S. (2010). Doing good buffers against feeling bad: Prosocial impact compensates for negative task and self-evaluations. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, *111*(1), 13–22.

Greenleaf, R. K. (1970). *The servant as leader. Newton Centre,* MA: The Robert K. Greenleaf Center.

Güler, M., Ocak, M., & Köksal, O. (2023). The moderating role of surface and deep acting on the relationship between natural emotional labor and organizational commitment. *Current Psychology*, *42*(25), 21681–21692.

Heilman, M. E. (2001). Description and prescription: How gender stereotypes prevent women's ascent up the organizational ladder. *Journal of Social Issues*, *57*(4), 657–674.

Hom, P. W., Tsui, A. S., Wu, J. B., Lee, T. W., Zhang, A. Y., Fu, P. P., & Li, L. (2009). Explaining employment relationships with social exchange and job embeddedness. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *94*(2), 277–297.

Hülsheger, U. R., Alberts, H. J. E. M., Feinholdt, A., & Lang, J. W. B. (2013). Benefits of mindfulness at work: The role of mindfulness in emotion regulation, emotional exhaustion, and job satisfaction. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *98*(2), 310–325.

Hülsheger, U. R., & Schewe, A. F. (2011). On the costs and benefits of emotional labor: A meta-analysis of three decades of research. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, *16*(3), 361–389.

Judge, T. A., & Livingston, B. A. (2008). Is the gap more than gender? A longitudinal analysis of gender, gender role orientation, and earnings. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *93*(5), 994.

Kirkman, B. L., Cordery, J. L., Mathieu, J., Rosen, B., & Kukenberger, M. (2013). Global organizational communities of practice: The effects of nationality diversity, psychological safety, and media richness on community performance. *Human Relations*, *66*(3), 333–362.

Kluemper, D. H., DeGroot, T., & Choi, S. (2013). Emotion management ability: Predicting task performance, citizenship, and deviance. *Journal of Management, 39*(4), 878–905.

Kulkarni, M., & Sommer, K. (2015). Language-based exclusion and prosocial behaviors in organizations. *Human Resource Management*, *54*(4), 637–652.

Lamm, E., Tosti-kharas, J., & King, C. E. (2015). Empowering employee sustainability: Perceived organizational support toward the environment. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *128*(1), 207–220.

Lanaj, K., Johnson, R. E., & Wang, M. (2016). When lending a hand depletes the will: The daily costs and benefits of helping. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *101*(8), 1097–1110.

Levinson, H. (1965). Reciprocation: The relationship between man and organization. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *9*(4), 370–390.

Liden, R. C., Wayne, S. J., Chenwei Liao, & Meuser, J. D. (2014). Servant leadership and serving culture: Influence on individual and unit performance. *Academy of Management Journal*, *57*(5), 1434–1452.

Liden, R. C., Wayne, S. J., Zhao, H., & Henderson, D. (2008). Servant leadership: Development of a multidimensional measure and multi-level assessment. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *19*(2), 161–177.

Lim, H., Lee, T.-J., Weng, C., & Lee, S. M. (2025). Effects of surface acting on exhaustion of Korean school counselors. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, *103*(1), 49–59.

Meyer, J. P., & Allen, N. J. (1991). A three-component model conceptualization of organizational commitment. *Human Resource Management Review*, *1*(1), 61–89.

Nahrgang, J. D., Morgeson, F. P., & Hofmann, D. A. (2011). Safety at work: A meta-analytic investigation of the link between job demands, job resources, burnout, engagement, and safety outcomes. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *96*(1), 71–94.

Nguyen, H., Groth, M., & Johnson, A. (2016). When the going gets tough, the tough keep working: Impact of emotional labor on absenteeism. *Journal of Management*, *42*(3), 615–643.

Nishii, L. H. (2012). The benefits of climate for inclusion for gender-diverse groups. *Academy of Management Journal*, *56*(6), 1754–1774.

Piff, P. K., Dietze, P., Feinberg, M., Stancato, D. M., & Keltner, D. (2015). Awe, the small self, and prosocial behavior. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology: Interpersonal Relations and Group Processes*, *108*(6), 883–899.

Ragins, B. R. (2008). Disclosure disconnects: Antecedents and consequences of disclosing invisible stigmas across life domains. *Academy of Management Review*, *33*(1), 194–215.

Rhoades, L., & Eisenberger, R. (2002). Perceived organizational support: A review of the literature. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *87*(4), 698–714.

Roussin, C. J., MacLean, T. L., & Rudolph, J. W. (2016). The safety in unsafe teams: A multilevel approach to team psychological safety. *Journal of Management*, *42*(6), 1409–1433.

Scott, B. A., & Barnes, C. M. (2011). A multilevel field investigation of emotional labor, affect, work withdrawal, and gender. *Academy of Management Journal*, *54*(1), 116–136.

Shantz, A., Alfes, K., & Latham, G. P. (2016). The buffering effect of perceived organizational support on the relationship between work engagement and behavioral outcomes. *Human Resource Management*, *55*(1), 25–38.

Shields, S. A. (2002). *Speaking from the heart: Gender and the social meaning of emotion.* Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Shore, L. M., Randel, A. E., Chung, B. G., Dean, M. A., Holcombe Ehrhart, K., & Singh, G. (2011). Inclusion and diversity in work groups: A review and model for future research. *Journal of Management*, *37*(4), 1262–1289.

Simpson, P. A., & Stroh, L. K. (2004). Gender differences: Emotional expression and feelings of personal inauthenticity. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *89*(4), 715–721.

Srivastava, R., & Tang, T. L. (2015). Coping intelligence: Coping strategies and organizational commitment among boundary spanning employees. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *130*(3), 525–542.

Taylor, S. N., & Hood, J. N. (2011). It may not be what you think: Gender differences in predicting emotional and social competence. *Human Relations*, *64*(5), 627–652.

Trougakos, J. P., Beal, D. J., Cheng, B. H., Hideg, I., & Zweig, D. (2015). Too drained to help: A resource depletion perspective on daily interpersonal citizenship behaviors. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *100*(1), 227–236.

van Dierendonck, D., Stam, D., Boersma, P., de Windt, N., & Alkema, J. (2014). Same difference? Exploring the differential mechanisms linking servant leadership and transformational leadership to follower outcomes. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *25*(3), 544–562.

Vardaman, J. M., Allen, D. G., Otondo, R. F., Hancock, J. I., Shore, L. M., & Rogers, B. L. (2016). Social comparisons and organizational support: Implications for commitment and retention. *Human Relations*, *69*(7), 1483–1505.

Wang, J., Leung, K., & Zhou, F. (2014). A dispositional approach to psychological climate: Relationships between interpersonal harmony motives and psychological climate for communication safety. *Human Relations*, *67*(4), 489–515.

Wayne, S. J., Shore, L. M., Bommer, W. H., & Tetrick, L. E. (2002). The role of fair treatment and rewards in perceptions of organizational support and leader-member exchange. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *87*(3), 590–598.

Zhan, Y., Wang, M., & Shi, J. (2016). Interpersonal process of emotional labor: The role of negative and positive customer treatment. *Personnel Psychology*, *69*(3), 525–557.