

EMOTIONAL LABOR AND PASSIVE DEEP ACTING: AN EXPLORATION OF EMOTIONAL LABOR EFFORTS OF OLDER WORKERS

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ABSTRACT

This article compares age differences in the performance of emotional labor and related outcomes. We contend that younger individuals are more likely to engage in surface and active deep acting than older individuals. Accordingly, we explore whether the emotional expression of older individuals tends to be more authentic, presented in the form of passive deep acting, and we evaluate attitudinal outcomes (i.e., job satisfaction, organizational commitment) related to these intervening emotional display efforts. While results did not show a positive association between age and the use of passive deep acting, findings did indicate that surface acting negatively affects job satisfaction and organizational commitment, and active deep acting positively affects organizational commitment. A discussion of future research to refine our understanding and measurement of passive deep acting and its implications for practice concludes the article.

Keywords: emotional labor; surface acting; deep acting; passive deep acting

INTRODUCTION

Much recent literature focuses on the effects of emotional labor in the workplace. Much of this literature concentrates on the negative consequences of the more contrived form of emotional labor, surface acting. Such consequences can include burnout, job dissatisfaction, and detrimental health effects (e.g., Grandey, 2000; Kim, 2008; Lewig & Dollard, 2003; Phillips et al., 2006; Zapf & Holz, 2006). In short, surface acting has repeatedly been demonstrated to be an antecedent to various undesirable workplace outcomes. In contrast, sans a few reports, active deep acting is not blatantly associated with negative workplace outcomes. In fact, active deep acting has been positively linked to both job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Brotheridge & Lee, 2002; Yoon & Lawler, 2006).

One purpose of this research is to answer the call of emotional labor scholars to further explore passive deep acting as an emotional labor strategy. In comparison to active deep acting, passive deep acting (i.e., the authentic display of emotions in the workplace; e.g., Hochschild, 1983) has not been as prevalent in the emotion's literature (see Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Dahling & Perez, 2010; Diefendorff et al., 2005 for some notable exceptions). Scholars have expressed the need to explore the value of genuine emotions as an emotional labor strategy (e.g., Diefendorff et al., 2005). Thus, we attempt to reconcile the disparate literature on the adverse effects of emotional labor and explore a more positive account. In doing so, we simultaneously examine the effects of age, passive deep acting, active deep acting, and surface acting on individuals' work attitudes (e.g., job satisfaction, organizational commitment) to provide a more complete and comprehensive view of age's impact on individuals' emotional labor behaviors and outcomes.

Responding to the call for studies to examine passive deep acting as a valuable emotional labor strategy, this study is important in that it investigates passive deep acting alongside the more well-known emotional labor strategies. Further, the study analyzes how one's age may affect the use of various emotional labor strategies and how these strategies may affect the outcomes of job satisfaction and organizational commitment, two common outcomes frequently studied in emotional labor research. Additionally, the study of age differences is pertinent due to the aging population of the workforce (Anderson & Morgan, 2017; Kim & Kang, 2017; Yaldiz et al., 2018). With age come changes in perceptions and purpose of work, and this study examines how such changes affect service work, specifically the use of emotional labor strategies and related outcomes.

This research attempts to answer the following questions. Question 1: Is passive deep acting a beneficial emotional labor strategy with positive attitudinal outcomes? Question 2: Does one's age play a role in one's choice of passive deep acting as an emotional labor strategy? Theoretically, this study has implications in the field of emotional labor. At this point, the results are mixed with regard to age and the use of passive deep acting or naturally felt emotions. This

study could add fodder to the argument that age does influence the use of passive deep acting as an emotional labor strategy with beneficial outcomes. Practically speaking, this study suggests that not all emotional labor strategies result in stress and other deleterious outcomes. It illustrates that emotional labor strategies can provide benefits such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment, and it is important to encourage such strategies for all employees.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conservation of Resources Theory

Promising and germane research to the present study comes from Conservation of Resources Theory (COR) literature (Bickerton & Miner, 2023; Brotheridge & Lee, 2002; Gorgievski & Hobfoll, 2008; Liu et al., 2008; Park et al., 2014; Wright & Hobfoll, 2004). Research on COR theory suggests that the emotional capital older adults accumulate may lead to beneficial outcomes such as increased work engagement, positive emotional regulation, and strong career identity (Kim & Kang, 2017). Further, this greater emotional capital can be attributed to the increased positive effects of more social interactions over time (Brotheridge & Lee, 2002; Gorgievski & Hobfoll, 2008; Liu et al., 2008; Witt et al., 2004; Wright & Hobfoll, 2004; Yaldiz et al., 2018), indicating that with aging comes a change in motivation regarding social interactions. Because older workers focus on enjoying their remaining time, they are more cognizant of the importance of positive social interactions. Kim and Kang (2017) argue that older individuals maintain a more positive emotional state and place more importance on emotional regulation because of their life orientation. As such, we contend that older adults may have more emotional capital in accumulated resource reserves than younger individuals.

Notably, the primary doctrine of COR theory indicates that individuals have innate and learned motivations “to create, foster, conserve, and protect the quality and quantity of their resources” (Gorgievski & Hobfoll, 2008, p. 2). Yaldiz et al. (2018) argue that these motivations and types of resources change over time. Kim and Kang (2017) describe emotional resources as resources that are of primary importance to older workers. Emotional resources are clearly demonstrated elsewhere in the literature to be valuable to individuals both intrinsically and as a means to accumulate other resources (Liu et al., 2008). Park et al. (2014) describe passive deep acting as naturally felt emotions, a form of emotional labor requiring the investment of fewer resources that could be used as a strategy to preserve and gain emotional resources. As such, passive deep acting can be an emotional labor strategy used by older workers to protect and garner resources.

In comparison, younger adults may be more likely to be resource-poor and thus experience undesirable outcomes including psychological unrest or dissonance, low levels of job performance, and burnout (Gorgievski & Hobfoll, 2008). The life orientation of younger workers influences their pursuit of opportunity and advancement. Social interactions in this context are a

means toward material rewards (Yaldiz et al., 2018). Relatedly, Brotheridge and Lee (2002) argue that emotional labor efforts may present a potential expenditure of one's personal resources in the area of service work. Moreover, this expenditure of personal resources is ascribed more to surface acting than active deep acting or passive deep acting. We argue that these effects are associated with higher levels of surface acting among younger adults.

Emotional Labor Efforts

Being required to modulate the expression of one's emotions in organizationally specific ways is a significant component of many people's occupations and has been referred to as *emotional labor* (Hochschild, 1983). However, this definition is too narrow and limited in scope for the present study because it suggests one must modify internal emotions to perform according to organizational requirements of emotional display. Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) referenced this problem, stating that the definition does not provide for authentic expressions of emotion, which may fulfill emotional display requirements when expressed.

Broadening the description of emotional labor to include genuine efforts, known as passive deep acting, provides a comprehensive view of the requirements and concordant practice's impact. An example of passive deep acting would be a retail salesperson who genuinely, without a conscious effort, enjoys assisting a customer in selecting the perfect accessory (Hochschild, 1983). Accordingly, this study examines three types of emotional labor efforts and considers the age of those performing acts of emotional labor. Unlike passive deep acting, the other two types, surface acting and active deep acting, require the one engaged in emotional work to regulate their emotional being (visually and/or internally) to fulfill organizational requirements. Surface acting is simply manipulating one's outward emotional display, as might occur when a customer service representative responds to a belligerent customer with a smile and pleasant tone, even though the representative feels resentful or defensive. By contrast, active deep acting requires cognitive manipulation of the emotional self so the individual can feel the emotion required. An example of active deep acting is a flight attendant who assists the parents of a wailing child patiently and pleasantly by choosing to feel compassion despite initial annoyance. As such, active deep acting is the more genuine or authentic of these two displays of emotional labor. Be this as it may, in both cases, there is a point in acting when individuals experience dissonance because their feelings are not expressed.

Emotional dissonance is the disconnect from one's true feelings or emotions. This situation is considered by many to be a consequence of the fulfillment of display rules: "Emotional display rules refer to norms about appropriate emotional expression for specific situations" (Schaubroeck & Jones, 2000, p. 63). Many authors have suggested that emotional display rules include some level of emotive dissonance (e.g., Kim, 2008; Lewig & Dollard, 2003; Phillips et al., 2006). However, some argue that this is not always the case.

Several researchers have expressed that emotional dissonance is not a foregone conclusion or influential factor in all emotional labor situations, arguing there are situations where employees feel the emotion being displayed (e.g., Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Brotheridge & Lee, 2003; Grandey, 2000; Hochschild, 1983; Morris & Feldman, 1996). Hochschild (1983) proposed this idea as a form of deep acting in her seminal piece on emotional labor. She described two types of deep acting: passive and active. She referred to passive deep acting as the situation where the employee already feels the desired emotion and no cognitive manipulation of emotion is necessary. Consistent with this line of thinking, we consider passive deep acting to be tied to perceived behavioral expectations with no resulting emotional dissonance.

A thorough search of the literature yields a few studies on passive deep acting, and fewer still consider the role of age differences in the use of emotional labor strategies. In one rare study by Dahling and Perez (2010), age was positively related to expressing naturally felt emotions. Other works mention passive deep acting as an emotional labor activity, and one study explored emotions in teaching (Zhang & Zhu, 2008). In this case, burnout and job satisfaction in Chinese higher education are investigated as consequences of surface, active deep, and passive deep acting. The authors found positive surface-acting burnout and links to surface-acting job dissatisfaction, but interestingly, they did not find authenticity to be a predictor of burnout or job dissatisfaction (Zhang & Zhu, 2008).

Cheung and Tang (2010) provide another study focusing on the age-passive deep-acting relationship, including an evaluation of how emotional labor strategies mediate the relationship between age and job outcomes (i.e., job satisfaction and psychological distress). The researchers found a positive relationship between naturally felt emotions and job satisfaction and a negative relationship between naturally felt emotions and psychological distress. Regarding age, they found that older employees tend to use active, deep-acting, and naturally felt emotions as emotional labor strategies.

Indeed, the literature suggests passive deep acting is a valid form of emotional labor that fulfills display rules when utilized. For instance, a study by Glomb and Tews (2004) attests that it may be an effective and beneficial form of emotional labor. In cases where passive deep acting is employed, one experiences the opposite of emotional dissonance (i.e., emotional harmony), such that one's emotions and behaviors are concordant with display rules. Consequently, such situations may desirably impact individuals' job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

The Influence of Age on Emotional Labor

Several writings focus on the effects of age and emotion. While most of them provide only a brief explanation of passive deep acting, we delve into these findings to provide context for the present study. In essence, the research reveals that older adults cope better with emotional stress, exhibit more positive emotional efference, and maintain a more balanced emotional condition than younger adults (Charles & Piazza, 2007; Johnson, Machowski, Holdsworth, Kern, & Zapf, 2017). Moreover, older adults are better equipped to navigate complex emotional contexts (Sheldon, Ryan, Rothstorne & Ilardi, 1997) and creatively solve problems (Sheldon et al., 1997). Further unpacking these research results, older adults are found to experience negative emotions less frequently than younger adults, sustain positive emotional states for longer durations, and have fewer instances of negative emotional efference (Carstensen & Charles, 1998). Additionally, older workers are often characterized by emotions such as contentment, calm, and ease (Ross & Mirowsky, 2008).

As mentioned by Witt and colleagues, “the accumulation of experiences and skills an individual gains as they age affects the manner in which they interpret and react to stimuli in their environment.” (2004, p. 41). As such, older workers may have a substantially different way of experiencing and managing emotions in the workplace compared to their younger counterparts. In other words, increased experience, over time, may contribute to more emotional resources as workers age. It is well established that older adults deal with emotional issues in a more balanced manner. Taken together, we contend that passive deep acting should notably apply to adults as they age.

Hypothesis 1: Age will be positively associated with passive deep acting (i.e., as age increases, passive deep acting will tend to increase).

Younger adults perform emotional labor tasks through surface acting and active deep acting for a plethora of reasons. Pointed among these are fewer emotional resources, less familiarity dealing with emotional behavior at work, higher emotional investment in cognitive performance, lower levels of emotional reasoning, and less saliency of emotional experience (Blanchard-Fields, 1986; Chow et al., 2007; Hur et al., 2014). The less familiarity one has in dealing with emotional behavior in the workplace, the more likely one will use surface acting and active deep acting as emotional labor strategies (Ross & Mirowsky, 2008). COR theory informs this supposition that younger individuals lack the resources to deal with emotional behavior in the workplace.

Additionally, in emotionally charged situations, younger adults may respond differently than older adults due to the importance of job investment. As stated by Chow et al., “Compared with older

adults, younger adults (appear) to be more emotionally invested in their cognitive performance” (2007, p. 778). At the earlier stages of a career, younger adults may experience a pressure to excel, a desire to conform, and the drive to prove their independence and maturity (Castro et al., 2006). Pertinently, the conspicuous desire to express emotion in conformity with display rule norms may play an active role in shaping their workplace behaviors. Whereas older adults will take a passive stance in emotionally striking situations, younger adults may adopt a more proactive stance (Blanchard-Fields et al., 2004). This proactive stance involves the conscious manipulation of emotion to meet display rule demands. In other words, the pressure to succeed in their job may motivate younger adults to surface and actively deep act. Under the doctrine of COR theory, the conscious manipulation of emotions to meet display rule demands is based on a lack of resources to cope with the mature level of emotional interaction necessary to deal with display rules sans emotional dissonance. Thus, we suggest the following two hypotheses regarding age-related emotional labor behaviors:

Hypothesis 2: Age will be negatively associated with surface acting (i.e., as age increases, surface acting will tend to decrease).

Hypothesis 3: Age will be negatively associated with active deep acting (i.e., as age increases, active deep acting will tend to decrease).

The Impact of Age and Emotional Labor on Individuals’ Work-related Attitudes

There are positive attitudinal outcomes associated with age and emotional labor efforts. First, we turn our attention to individuals’ job satisfaction. More specifically, the level of job satisfaction will likely be influenced by individuals’ emotional labor efforts. Further, research has found that age impacts individuals’ perceptions of their job role and satisfaction (Kalleberg & Loscocco, 1983; Zeitz, 1990). As stated by Kalleberg and Loscocco, “The basic and most consistent finding in research on age differences in job satisfaction is that older workers are more satisfied with their jobs than are younger workers” (1983, p. 78). Thus, the following was predicted:

Hypothesis 4: Age will be positively associated with job satisfaction (i.e., as age increases, job satisfaction will tend to increase).

Surface acting, the most inauthentic of the three discussed figurations of emotional labor, is not likely to promote job satisfaction. Whereas authenticity is unequivocally connected with personal well-being and role-specific satisfaction, the opposite is true of surface acting, which lacks consistency between feelings and outward display (Brotheridge & Lee, 2002). Relatedly, the social withdrawal inherent in surface acting suggests a lack of personal well-being tied to job demands (Morris & Feldman, 1996). Therefore, we posit the following:

Hypothesis 5: Surface acting will be negatively associated with job satisfaction.

However, we contend that because active deep acting is more genuine behavior (i.e., aligned with one's feelings), it should be more likely to promote job satisfaction. In some studies, active deep acting is positively related to job satisfaction (Kim, 2008; Martinez-Inigo et al., 2007; Yang & Chang, 2008). Consistent with this rationale, Steinberg and Figart (1999) postulate that the various configurations of emotional labor do not impact job satisfaction in a like manner. In line with this thinking, we propose that active deep acting has a substantially different impact on job satisfaction than surface acting.

Hypothesis 6: Active deep acting will be positively associated with job satisfaction.

Although research provides few examples of the impact of naturally felt emotions on job satisfaction, we contend that passive deep acting will also enhance individuals' job satisfaction. The skills older adults bring to jobs, acquired through experiences, may result in an accommodation process through which older adults learn to appreciate the intrinsic satisfactions of the job (Zeitz, 1990). In past studies, job satisfaction has been tied to the intrinsic rewards of work, such as one's enjoyment in fulfilling job requirements (Janson & Martin, 1982). In short, older adults perceived enrichment through intrinsic rewards as being conducive to increased job satisfaction (Zeitz, 1990).

Hypothesis 7: Passive deep acting will be positively associated with job satisfaction.

Second, we highlight the role of age and emotional labor in individuals' organizational commitment. Notably, Yang & Chang (2008) found surface acting negatively related to organizational commitment. We propose several reasons this may be the case. Younger adults, who exhibit increased levels of surface acting compared to older adults, may be more likely to leave an organization if they find the job requirements, like display rules and organizational regulations, inappropriate or undesirable (Cohen, 1993). In addition, younger adults are more liable to leave an organization if they cannot acquire a skill set conducive to their career ambitions (Finegold et al., 2002). Surface acting and its consequent emotive dissonance and stress may promote increased fatigue, apathy, and emotional exhaustion, which have been linked to lower levels of affective organizational commitment (Leiter & Maslach, 1988).

Hypothesis 8: Surface acting will be negatively associated with organizational commitment.

Contrary to the previous assertion, we tender active deep acting and passive deep acting will have the opposite relationship with affective organizational commitment. The cognitive

manipulation inherent in active deep acting is conducive to an entirely different emotive state and display of emotion in the workplace than surface acting. Such efforts, as aforementioned, put the actor in the position of relating to the other in the interaction. As such, emotional exchanges utilizing active deep acting tend to be both more successful at achieving their aims and more positive at the same time. Successful emotional exchanges, such as those rendered through active deep acting, result in higher rates of affective organizational commitment in the workplace (Yoon & Lawler, 2006). In addition, by employing the display of positive emotion through active or passive deep acting, emotional exchanges result in higher rates of affective organizational commitment in the workplace (Yoon & Lawler, 2006).

We argue the same relationship that we postulate active deep acting holds among those who demonstrate passive deep acting in the workplace. The same above cited two arguments apply to the situation of passive deep acting. Passive deep actors are both more positive and more successful in their social interactions. Moreover, the positive emotions displayed by both passive and active deep actors result in decreased intention to turnover jobs (Coté & Morgan, 2002). As such, from the evidence presented, affective organizational commitment would seem to be higher among both active deep actors and passive deep actors.

Hypothesis 9: Active deep acting will be positively associated with organizational commitment.

Hypothesis 10: Passive deep acting will be positively associated with organizational commitment.

A number of authors find a positive relationship between advanced age and satisfaction with one's work role (Busch & Bush, 1979; Cheung & Tang, 2010; Lee & Wilbur, 1985; Smith & Hoy, 1992). Age, as such, is definitively a factor in the magnitude of one's attachment to the organization. Regardless of the reasons for this increased affective organizational commitment, we can assert categorically that age is positively related to organizational commitment. A few studies corroborate this (e.g., Al-Emadi & Marquardt, 2007; Gellatly, 1995; Smith & Hoy, 1992). Those advanced in age, passive deep actors, show a strong positive correlation with affective organizational commitment.

Hypothesis 11: Age will be positively associated with organizational commitment (i.e., as age increases, organizational commitment will tend to increase).

METHOD

Sample

Employees from 29 stores of a retail bookstore chain were surveyed. A total of 550 employees and managers received survey materials, and 244 employees provided complete and usable data (40% response rate). All stores were located in the southeastern quadrant of the United States, and the stores were located in both urban and rural areas. The sample was primarily female (68.4%) and white (80.2%), with 7.4% African American, 1.2% Asian, 5.8% Hispanic, and 5.3% who regarded themselves as multicultural. Ages ranged from 18 to 78 years, with an average age of 31.3. The average tenure with the organization was 2 years, ranging between 1 month and 30 years. 52.8% of participants reported earning a college degree or higher. The Human Resources Director reported the characteristics of survey respondents as representative of the organization's demographics, indicating a lack of response bias.

Managerial staff, who represented 26.2% of the sample, were included in the data because their duties were similar to those of regular sales associates. All of these associates were responsible for front-line customer service. Their primary duties included helping customers locate, order, and/or purchase books, magazines, and other printed media. Some employees were also responsible for duties related to the operation of the in-store coffee shop, which also had similar emotional labor requirements.

Measures

Surface acting. Grandey's (2003) five-item scale was used to measure surface acting. Survey respondents were asked to report how they portrayed organizationally required emotions during customer service interactions. A 5-point Likert scale was used, with item responses ranging from "never" to "always," indicating how often the respondent performed specific actions. Items were "Just pretend to have emotions I need to display for my job," "Put on an act in order to deal with customers in an appropriate way," "Put on a mask in order to express the right emotions for the job," "Fake a good mood when interacting with customers," and "Put on a 'show' or 'performance' when interacting with customers." The data yielded a scale reliability of $\alpha = .88$.

Active deep acting. Active deep acting was measured using two questions sculpted by Brotheridge and Lee (2002). These items were "I made an effort to actually feel the emotions that I need to display to others" and "I try to actually experience the emotions that I must show." Another question by Grandey (1999) was added to the scale. This item states, "I really try to feel the emotions I have to show as a part of my job." A 5-point Likert scale was used, with item responses ranging from "never" to "always," indicating how often the respondent performed specific actions. The data yielded a scale reliability of $\alpha = .92$.

Passive deep acting. Passive deep acting was measured using the three-item scale developed by Prati (2004). These items were: “I experience the emotions I am required to express on the job,” “I don’t need to pretend to have the emotions that I am required to express at work,” and “I feel emotions similar to those I am required to express at work.” A 5-point Likert scale was used, with item responses ranging from “never” to “always,” indicating how often the respondent performed specific actions. The data yielded a scale reliability of $\alpha = .62$.

Job Satisfaction. Job satisfaction was measured using the three-item scale by Michigan Organizational Assessment (Cammann et al., 1983). A 5-point Likert scale was used, with item responses ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” Items included “All in all, I am satisfied with my job,” “In general, I like working here,” and “In general, I don’t like my job.” The data yielded a scale reliability of $\alpha = .89$.

Affective Organizational Commitment. Affective Organizational Commitment was measured using the five-item Affective Organizational Commitment scale developed by Meyer, Allen, and Smith (1993). A 5-point Likert scale was used, with item responses ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” Items included “I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization,” “This organization has a great deal of personal meaning to me,” “I really feel as if this organization’s problems are my own,” “I do not feel a strong sense of belonging to this organization,” and “I do not feel emotionally attached to this organization.” The data yielded a scale reliability of $\alpha = .84$.

RESULTS

Table 1

Means, standard deviations, and correlations for the present study’s variables.

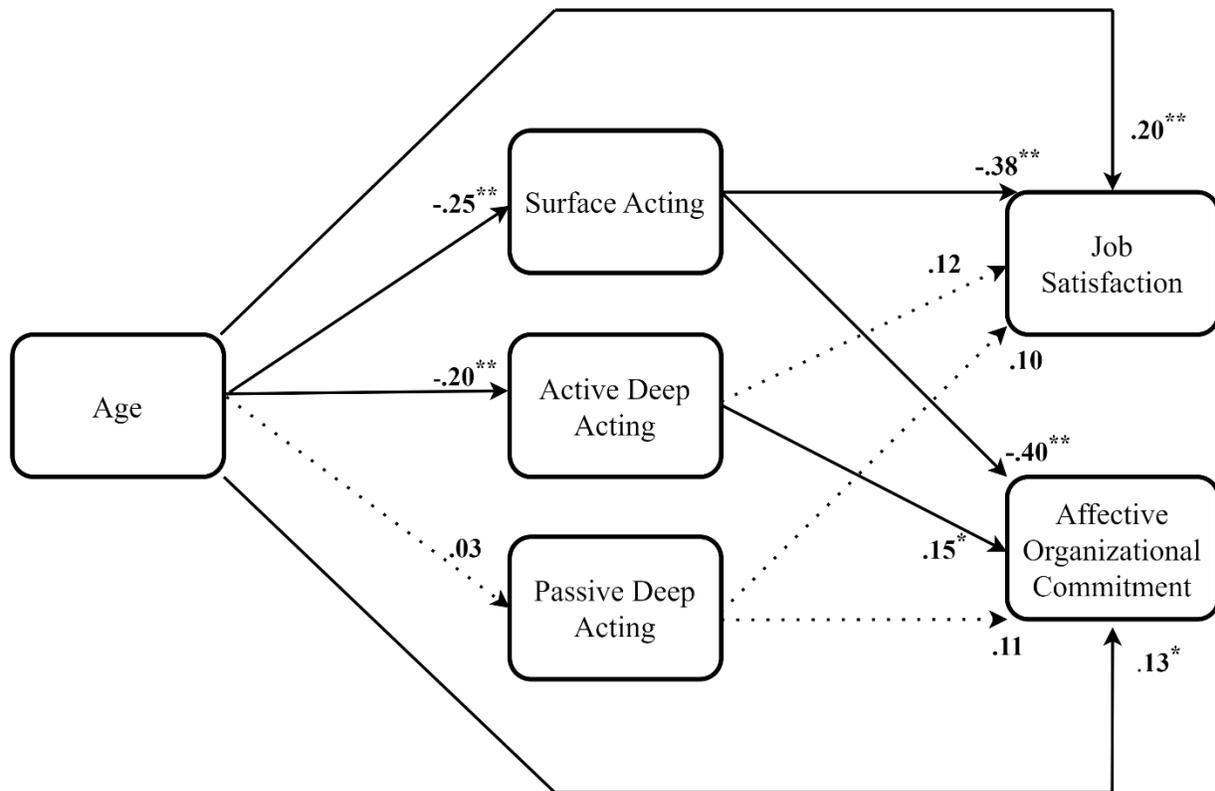
Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1 <u>Age</u>	31.29	13.32	..				
2 <u>Surface Acting</u>	2.17	0.82	-.25**	..			
3 <u>Deep Acting - Active</u>	3.02	1.22	-.20**	-.05	..		
4 <u>Deep Acting - Passive</u>	3.24	0.89	.03	-.40**	.42**	..	
5 <u>Job Satisfaction</u>	4.04	0.79	.29**	-.43**	.17**	.34**	..
6 <u>Organizational Commitment</u>	3.20	0.81	.22**	-.44**	.19**	.35**	.67**

Note: N = 244. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$ (two-tailed)

Preliminary and Confirmatory Factor Analyses

Table 1 highlights descriptive statistics and correlations for the present study. In preliminary support of our predictions, age was negatively associated with both surface acting ($r = -.25, p < .01$) and active deep acting ($r = -.20, p < .01$), and positively associated with both job satisfaction ($r = .29, p < .01$) and organizational commitment ($r = .22, p < .01$). Further, surface acting was negatively correlated with job satisfaction ($r = -.43, p < .01$) and organizational commitment ($r = -.44, p < .01$). Deep acting was positively related to job satisfaction (active: $r = .17, p < .01$; passive: $r = .34, p < .01$) and organizational commitment (active: $r = .19, p < .01$; passive: $r = .35, p < .01$).

Figure 1. The present study's model. Standardized estimates of the path coefficients are provided. $N = 244$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$ (two-tailed).



Confirmatory factor analysis was used to assess the proposed five-factor structure of the measurement model. Specifically, fit indices and Chi-square difference tests were used to determine if the measurement model fit the data appropriately. Surface acting, active deep acting,

passive deep acting, job satisfaction, and affective organizational commitment were expected to load on separate factors. In other words, the five-factor model was expected to provide the best fit to the data compared to alternative models. Notably, results demonstrated that the expected five-factor measurement model fit the data reasonably well (χ^2 (N = 244; df = 160) = 385.38, SRMR = .05, CFI = .92). The model was then compared to an alternative unidimensional model in which all self-report measures were combined. The one-factor model did not fit the data well (χ^2 (N = 244; df = 170) = 1528.67, SRMR = .14, CFI = .49) and had a significantly worse fit than the hypothesized model ($\Delta\chi^2$ (N = 244; Δ df = 10) = 1143.29, $p < .001$). An alternative four-factor model combining job satisfaction and organizational commitment ($r = .67$) into a single factor was also assessed. This four-factor (χ^2 (N = 244; df = 164) = 504.87, SRMR = .06, CFI = .87) model did not fit the data particularly well and also had a significantly worse fit than the original hypothesized model ($\Delta\chi^2$ (N = 244; Δ df = 4) = 205.04, $p < .001$).

Nested Data

Employees were nested within retail stores, so ICC(1) values were calculated. This provided an effect size estimate concerning the variance in our outcome variables attributable to retail store membership (i.e., it provides a value indicating the extent to which independence assumptions are violated). Notably, although ICC(1) values were .00 for surface acting, active deep acting, passive deep acting, and job satisfaction, the ICC(1) value for organizational commitment was .03. In other words, 3% of the variance in organizational commitment was attributable to the retail store location in which employees were working (LeBreton & Senter, 2008).

Given the evidence of retail store locations' effects on organizational commitment scores (i.e., the assumption of independence was violated), multilevel modeling was necessary, and predictors were grand-mean centered (Hoffman & Gavin, 1998). This allowed for the estimation of level 1 (individual employee) effects while accounting for level 2 (retail store) effects (e.g., Alipour, Mohammed, & Raghuram, 2018). Specifically, hypotheses were assessed via multilevel path analysis in MPLUS 8, using maximum likelihood estimation. Because we did not hypothesize that relationships would significantly differ based on retail store membership, intercepts were allowed to vary across subsections. However, slopes were fixed for testing all level 1 (individual employee) relationships.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis 1 predicted that age would be positively related to passive deep acting. This prediction was not supported. Inconsistent with our expectations, we found that as employees' age increased, the display of passive deep acting did not tend to increase (unstandardized estimate = .00, SE = .00, $p > .05$).

Hypothesis 2 proposed that age would be negatively related to surface acting. This prediction was supported. As employees' age increased, surface acting decreased (unstandardized estimate = $-.02$, $SE = .00$, $p < .001$).

As Hypothesis 3, we expected that age would be negatively related to active deep acting. Results provided support for this prediction. As employees' age increased, active deep acting generally decreased (unstandardized estimate = $-.02$, $SE = -.01$, $p < .01$).

Hypothesis 4, which states that age is positively related to job satisfaction, was supported. As employees' age increased, job satisfaction increased (unstandardized estimate = $.01$, $SE = .00$, $p < .001$).

As per the prediction of Hypothesis 5, surface acting was expected to be negatively related to job satisfaction. Results were supportive of this assumption. As employees' surface acting increased, job satisfaction decreased (unstandardized estimate = $-.36$, $SE = .06$, $p < .001$).

Hypothesis 6 posited that active deep acting would be positively related to job satisfaction. This prediction was not supported. As employees' active deep acting increased, their job satisfaction did not tend to increase (unstandardized estimate = $.08$, $SE = .04$, $p = .06$).

Hypothesis 7 proposed that passive deep acting would be positively associated with job satisfaction. Our findings did not substantiate this prediction. As workers' passive deep acting increased, their job satisfaction did not generally increase (unstandardized estimate = $.09$, $SE = .06$, $p = .15$).

Hypothesis 8 predicted that surface acting would be negatively related to affective organizational commitment. Results confirmed this prediction. For example, as employees' surface acting increased, their organizational commitment decreased (unstandardized estimate = $-.37$, $SE = .06$, $p < .001$).

Hypothesis 9 posited that active deep acting would be positively related to organizational commitment. This hypothesis was supported. As workers' active deep acting increased, their organizational commitment generally increased (unstandardized estimate = $.09$, $SE = .04$, $p < .05$).

Hypothesis 10 proposed that passive deep acting would be positively related to affective organizational commitment. Results were not supportive of this expectation. As employees' passive deep acting increased, their affective organizational commitment did not tend to increase (unstandardized estimate = $.10$, $SE = .06$, $p = .11$).

Lastly, Hypothesis 11, which predicted that age would be positively related to organizational commitment, was supported. As workers' age increased, organizational commitment generally increased (unstandardized estimate = .01, SE = .00, $p < .05$). Standardized coefficient estimates for the hypothesized model are presented in Figure 1.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of age on both proximal (i.e., surface acting, active deep acting, passive deep acting) and distal (i.e., job satisfaction, affective organizational commitment) outcomes. We proposed that younger individuals would be more likely to surface act and active deep act and that older individuals would be more likely to passive deep act. We found that younger adults strongly associate surface acting with active deep acting. However, the evidence did not suggest that older adults display an association with passive deep acting. We found that younger employees are more likely to surface and deep act, yet our efforts did not reveal conditions under which emotional labor types are strengthened or weakened as age increases. It is likely that moderators and additional mechanisms explaining these relationships exist and are not captured in our model.

Relatedly, the evidence failed to support passive deep acting as a predictor of job satisfaction and organizational commitment. The lack of support for these expectations is interesting and likely relates to the need for further measurement clarity for the passive deep-acting construct. However, our investigation of the relationships between age and other forms of acting (i.e., surface acting, active deep acting) and age and work-related attitudes (i.e., job satisfaction, organizational commitment) was fruitful. Findings indicate that older employees have higher job satisfaction and organizational commitment levels than younger workers. This result suggests a temporal component worthy of further study. That is, older workers have had time to explore and find (or craft) satisfying jobs and develop exchange relationships with organizations, resulting in heightened organizational commitment. Perhaps, at some point, older employees' labor is emotionally promoted, and this labor eventually promotes passive deep acting, such that our proposed model might be improved with a longitudinal approach that examines changes in passive deep acting over time.

Additionally, although surface acting had a negative effect on job satisfaction and organizational commitment, active deep acting elicited positive effects. Thus, we understand that younger workers experience decreased levels of job satisfaction, and as surface acting increases, job satisfaction tends to decrease. Consistent with COR theory, younger workers may experience emotional dissonance, contributing to unhappiness and lack of commitment to their jobs.

This study contributes to practice in that it suggests the need to support younger workers in their efforts to perform emotional labor in accordance with emotional display rules. Organizations

would do well to offer developmental programming that helps younger workers identify areas of emotional dissonance that may contribute to their stress and burnout. When irreconcilable, this dissonance may indicate an employee will be happier and healthier in another job; however, where a heightened understanding of the rationale for display rules may alleviate this dissonance, younger workers may experience enhanced emotional resources.

Limitations and Future Directions

The lack of support for age as a positive predictor of passive deep acting was unexpected, especially given that age was found to be negatively associated with both surface acting and active deep acting. It begs the question of whether passive deep acting, given the authenticity of emotions displayed, is actually emotional labor at all. Perhaps, as operationalized in this effort, it simply represents non-acting. Possibly, the process of internalizing emotional display norms is so closely tied to understanding/knowledge of display rules that the result is a lack of complete distinction between the deep acting constructs, as we note active deep acting and passive deep acting are positively correlated (.42). This finding suggests the potential for some construct overlap. That is, an emotionally intelligent individual may rather seamlessly interpret and internalize emotional display rules. The “acting” that occurs is, then, a result of both an understanding of and agreement with the display rules. As such, perhaps passive deep acting did not significantly impact this effort because it is not entirely distinguishable from active deep acting as measured.

Moreover, this lack of statistical support could be due, in part, to the low reliability of the passive deep acting scale. However, given the low reliability of our passive deep acting measure, we acknowledge that the inferences that can be made from Hypotheses 7 and 10 are limited. We argue that a reliable scale to measure passive deep acting is urgently needed to advance research on emotional labor. Also, the hypotheses were tested using a relatively homogenous sample from cross-sectional survey data. Thus, future research could benefit from both the improvement of existing measures and the inclusion of more diverse samples.

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