Do mentors help emotional labor employees?

Linking mentoring and emotional labor strategies to work engagement

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Abstract

Previous studies suggest that mentoring promotes employees' learning and development at work. However, only a few studies have explored how mentoring influences emotional labor and work engagement. Drawing on the job demands–resources (JD-R) model, this study explores how different types of mentoring (i.e., psychosocial support, career development, and role modeling) affect work engagement through deep and surface acting. Using a two-wave survey data from employees of 14 Japanese hospitals (n = 336), we conducted a structural equation modeling (SEM) to test the hypotheses. The results showed that psychosocial support directly and indirectly promoted work engagement through deep acting, while role modeling indirectly promoted work engagement by minimizing surface acting. Career development had no significant effect on emotional labor strategies or work engagement. This study contributes to the literature by identifying the process by which two types of mentoring, as job resources, facilitate work engagement through deep and surface acting.

Keywords: Emotional labor, mentoring, JD-R model, work engagement

Introduction

In today's competitive world, frontline employees are crucial for service organizations because their service performance is significant to customers' service experience (Boukis et al., 2021; Grandey et al., 2013). Service roles involve frequent and intense interpersonal interactions with customers. As such, frontline employees must regulate their emotional expressions following the display rules that serve as a standard for expressing appropriate emotions at work (Chen et al., 2019; Hochschild, 1983). Such emotional regulations or displays are known as emotional labor (Hochschild, 1983; Shapoval, 2019), which reflects the self-regulatory process of ensuring that one's expression of emotions does not deviate from expectations (Diefendorff et al., 2019).

The current literature typically analyzes emotional labor using two types of emotional labor strategies (i.e., surface acting and deep acting). Surface acting refers to the suppression of expressions of emotions and the faking of unfelt emotions by using facial and bodily expressions, whereas deep acting refers to the conscious modification of felt emotions to fit expressed authentic emotions (Hochschild, 1983; Grandey & Gabriel, 2015). Researchers have identified that surface acting is more likely to enhance emotional exhaustion or burnout than deep acting. Moreover, deep acting tends to promote emotional performance and customer satisfaction with mild costs to the actor (Grandey & Sayre, 2019; Scherer et al., 2020; Yin et al., 2019). However, only limited research has explored the antecedents of emotional labor. Thus, further investigation is needed (Chen et al., 2019; Shapoval, 2019).

To address this research problem, we examined the effect of mentoring on deep acting and surface acting, drawing from the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014, 2017; Demerouti et al., 2001). According to the JD-R model, job resources, including social support, prevent negative

outcomes caused by job demands and improve work engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Demerouti et al., 2001). Although perceived organizational support promotes deep acting (Becker et al., 2018; Hur et al., 2013; Mishra, 2014; Wen et al., 2019), little is known about what type of supervisory support affects emotional labor strategies. Therefore, we focused on the effects of mentoring on deep and surface acting because mentoring as job resources benefits the mentored employees' favorable work attitudes (Eby & Robertson, 2020), lowers the turnover rate (Becker et al., 2018), and enhances work engagement (Anaza et al., 2016).

This study explored the mediating effect of emotional labor strategies on the relationship between mentoring and work engagement. We focused on hospital employees with direct patient contact because they are required to express positive emotions such as encouragement and hope toward patients and their families (Zammuner & Galli, 2005). Such emotional labors often lead to burnout or emotional exhaustion (Seery & Corrigall, 2009; Zaghini et al., 2020). Since emotionally demanding interactions with customers are often regarded as regular job demands (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Kim & Wang, 2018), mentoring from supervisors as a job resource may have an impact on hospital employees' emotional labor strategies. Only few studies have explored how mentoring affects work engagement, which has been shown to promote employees' performance (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Garg & Singh, 2020), in the emotional labor context. Therefore, this study contributes to the existing literature by identifying that two dimensions of mentoring (i.e., psychosocial support and role modeling) promote work engagement differently through deep acting and surface acting. The paper begins by presenting the theoretical framework and hypotheses, followed by the empirical methodology and statistical results. Finally, the paper summarizes the discussion and conclusion.

Literature Review

Emotional Labor

Emotional labor was first introduced as "the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display" for a wage (Hoschchild, 1983, p. 7). According to Grandey and Sayre (2019), emotional labor includes "display rules" such as explicit emotional requirements, and "emotion regulation" such as effortful strategies needed to meet those emotional requirements. Customer-contact employees, such as nurses, hotel staff, and call center employees, are required to perform according to a display rule. Such rule acts as a norm for expressing the emotions the organization requires (Grandey & Sayre, 2019). Display rules focus on the employees' attention toward regulating emotions, especially when events evoking incongruent emotions occur (Diefendorff et al., 2005). We consider that display rules function as job demands in the emotional labor context.

Employees utilize two emotional labor strategies, known as surface acting and deep acting, to meet display rules (Grandey & Sayre, 2019; Hochschild, 1983; Zapf, 2002). Surface acting refers to the suppression of emotions and the faking of unfelt emotions by using facial and bodily expressions (Hochschild, 1983). Employees express inauthentic emotions when they utilize surface acting (Grandey & Gabriel, 2015). This produces a discrepancy between feelings and job requirements (Hochschild, 1983). These inauthentic expressions must be constantly regulated in daily work (Grandey & Gabriel, 2015). As a result, surface acting causes negative outcomes, such as stress and intention (Anaza et al., 2016; Kim, 2020). These negative outcomes subsequently lower emotional performance, job satisfaction, well-being, and work engagement (Han et al., 2018; Hülsheger & Schewe, 2011; Nguyen & Stinglhamber, 2020). If the organization cannot regulate such negative psychological processes effectively, it

will suffer from low productivity, low customer orientation, and high turnover (Back et al., 2020).

In contrast, deep acting refers to the conscious modification of felt emotions to fit expressed emotions (Hochschild, 1983). Employees unify the required and authentic feelings to create a sincere performance whenever they use deep acting (Grandey & Sayre, 2019; Hochschild, 1983). As a result, deep acting leads to more positive outcomes, such as job satisfaction (Diefendorff et al., 2005) and work engagement (Han et al., 2018). Furthermore, deep acting protects employees from emotional exhaustion (Yin et al., 2018), emotional dissonance (Hülsheger & Schewe 2011) and burnout (Han et al., 2018). Thus, organizations are benefitted with better job performance and customers' satisfaction (Hülsheger & Schewe, 2011).

According to Grandey and Gabriel (2015), there are three personal antecedents of emotional labor: personality traits (e.g., agreeableness), emotional abilities (e.g., emotional intelligence), and work motives (e.g., customer orientation). Agreeable employees tend to show higher deep acting (Kiffin-Petersen et al., 2011), whereas emotional intelligence is positively related to deep acting but negatively related to surface acting (Mesmer-Magnus et al., 2012). As such, customer-oriented employees are more comfortable with deep acting than with surface acting to satisfy customers (Allen et al., 2010; Yoo & Arnold, 2016).

With regard to situational antecedents, previous studies have examined the effects of emotional events at work and supportive environment on emotional labor strategies (Grandey & Gabriel, 2015; Grandey & Sayre, 2019). For example, when employees face customers' incivility or organizational dehumanization, they tend to utilize surface acting but not deep acting (Nguyen & Stinglhamber, 2020). Furthermore, Lee et al. (2019) reported that person–organization fit is positively related to deep acting, but it is not significantly relat-

ed to surface acting. Importantly, past studies indicate that perceived organizational support is positively associated with deep acting, but it is negatively or not significantly associated with surface acting (Becker et al., 2018; Hur et al., 2013; Mishra, 2014; Wen et al., 2019). Since emotional interaction at work is considered as a job demand, and perceived organizational support is considered as a job resource, we briefly review the JD-R model in the next section.

The JD-R Model

The JD-R model assumes that all work environments or job characteristics can be modeled into two different categories: job demands and job resources (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014, 2017). Job demands are defined as the physical, psychological, or social aspects of work that require employees' physical and psychological performance and physiological costing and psychological energy. Furthermore, job resources are defined as the physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of the job that reduce job demands and stimulate personal growth, learning, and development (Bakker, 2011; Demerouti et al., 2001). For example, job demands include high work pressure or emotionally demanding interaction with customers, whereas job resources include job autonomy, social support, and the quality of the relationship with the supervisor (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017).

The JD-R model postulates that job demands and resources trigger a health impairment and motivational process (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014). Specifically, job demands are important predictors of exhaustion, psychosomatic health complaints, and repetitive strain injury, while job resources are unique predictors of work engagement, enjoyment, and motivation (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014, 2017). We included work engagement as a dependent variable in our model because the JD-R model places work engagement as a central factor of work motivation (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014). Moreover, work engagement is

believed to be a very good predictor of important employee and team outcomes (Bakker & Albrecht, 2018).

According to the JD-R model that regards social support and the quality of the relationship with the supervisor as job resources (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017), mentoring can be considered as job resources, because it refers to nurturing process where less experienced employees (i.e., protégés) receive support from their senior or more experienced members (i.e., mentors) (Kram, 1985). As the JD-R model assumes that job resources promote work engagement, mentoring may have a positive effect on work engagement by helping employees deal with emotionally demanding interactions with customers.

Mentoring

According to Kram (1985), mentor assists the protégé in advancing career and professional development, job performance, and individual's development. This process is based on mentorship defining a dynamic, collaborative, and reciprocal relationship. It benefits both the mentor and the protégé in the long run (e.g., Thomas & Lankau, 2009). The mentorship's quality is assessed by the protégés' or mentors' psychosocial support or career development support and satisfaction with the relationship (Eby & Robertson, 2020).

Scandura and Ragins (1993) classified mentoring functions into three dimensions. First is psychosocial support, that is, the activities improving the protégés' competence, identity, and effectiveness. This includes acceptance and confirmation, counseling, friendship, and encouragement. Second is career development, or the activities enhancing the protégés' advancement in organizations, professional performance, and improvement. It includes sponsorship, exposure-and-visibility, coaching, protection, and challenging work assignment. The last dimension is role modeling, pertaining to a process in which a protégé observes the mentor's attitudes and behaviors, admires the mentor as a mod-

el, and subsequently emulates the mentor (Kram, 1985). Many studies have adopted the three-factor model in mentoring research (Ghosh & Reio, 2013).

With mentoring support and high-quality mentorship, both protégés and mentors have potentials to achieve career development success, promotions, higher incomes, higher job satisfaction, and less stress as compared with non-mentored individuals (Gill et al., 2018; Jiang et al., 2020; Kram, 1985). Organizations benefit from successful mentoring programs. Through these programs, they achieve more satisfied and productive faculty, and secure a greater retention rate (Kram, 1985; Lapointe & Vandenberghe, 2017). However, only a few empirical research explored the relationship between mentoring and emotional labor strategies. Mentoring is conceptually different from perceived organizational support even though studies suggest that perceived organizational support is associated with emotional labor (Dawley et al., 2008).

Work Engagement

According to the JD-R model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014, 2017), job demands and resources affect work engagement, defined as "a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption" (Schaufeli et al., 2002, p. 74). Vigor refers to a determination to expend high levels of energy and mental resilience when facing difficulties, while dedication refers to the strong work involvement in finding meaningfulness and goals. Absorption is defined as a complete engagement in work. This reciprocal strengthening relationship leads to the involvement of employees in their jobs and the reduction or elimination of job burnout (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010).

Hypotheses Development

Based on the JD-R model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014, 2017), mentoring is

expected to be positively associated with deep acting and negatively associated with surface acting, because mentoring as a job resource may assist employees in dealing with emotionally demanding interactions with customers in a favorable course of action. Of the three dimensions of mentoring, we hypothesized that psychosocial support promotes deep acting and minimizes surface acting by sustaining psychological safety, that is, an individual's feeling of showing and employing one's self without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status, or career (Kahn, 1990). Studies have found that psychological safety induces feelings of vitality for learning, creative behaviors, and work engagement (Edmondson, 1999; Edmondson & Lei, 2014; Frazier et al., 2017). Employees with high psychosocial support may feel greater psychological safety considering that psychosocial support involves acceptance and confirmation, counseling, friendship, and encouragement from the mentor (Kram, 1985). This enables them to unify required and authentic feelings, and they do not have to hide behind their untrue emotions. Therefore, we proposed the following hypotheses:

H1a. Psychosocial support is positively related to deep acting.

H2a. Psychosocial support is negatively related to surface acting.

We predicted that career development promotes deep acting and suppresses surface acting by helping protégés develop necessary emotion regulation skills and cope with emotional demands (Mann, 2005; Thomas & Landau, 2009). This is because many service organizations require employees to satisfy customers by following display rules (Anaza et al., 2016), and thus customer-oriented service by deep acting must be critical for developing their career within the organizations. Notably, Lee et al. (2016) found that employees' customer orientation enhanced their deep acting and prevented surface acting. Coaching and sponsorship included in career development helps protégés

improve their abilities and skills for authentic emotional expressions for high quality customer service. Furthermore, career development can adjust protégés' motives toward customers, especially when mentors assist in clarifying work roles (Thomas & Landau, 2009) and attaining in-role job expectations (Lankau et al., 2006). Such coaching for career development fosters protégés' customer orientation. It further aids in inducing protégés into adopting deep acting rather than surface acting in response to emotional requirements (Allen et al. 2010). Thus, we proposed the following hypotheses:

H1b. Career development is positively related to deep acting.

H2b. Career development is negatively related to surface acting.

We hypothesized that role modeling promotes deep acting and suppresses surface acting by helping the protégé acquire skills for authentic emotional expressions through vicarious learning (Abecassis-Moedas et al., 2016; Bandura, 1977; Manz & Sims, 1981). According to social and emotional psychology, observing others' emotional reactions can help individuals learn about the emotional implications of objects and events (Niedenthal & Brauer, 2012). That is, leaders can help employees learn service-oriented behavior by providing role models (Su et al., 2020). Specifically, protégés may identify organizational emotional requirements and improve skills for authentic emotional displays by observing mentors' attitudes and behaviors toward customers during the mentoring process. As a result, the mentor's attitudes and behaviors are transferred to the protégé's sense of self, subsequently cultivating identity development (Eby & Robertson, 2020; Lankau et al., 2006) which may decrease the depletion of emotional energy. Considering that protégés may minimize surface acting and increase deep acting when they hold enough emotional energy, we proposed the following hypotheses:

H1c. Role modeling is positively related to deep acting.

H2c. Role modeling is negatively related to surface acting.

We predicted that the three dimensions of mentoring (i.e., psychosocial support, career development, and role modeling) directly enhance work engagement, because the JD-R model postulates that job resources positively enhance work engagement when job demands are high (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014, 2017). Job resources may compensate for physiological costs and help in achieving work goals or stimulate individual learning and development (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010) when employees get used to job demands (Bakker, 2011). The three dimensions, regarded as job resources, may have direct positive influences on work engagement by sustaining psychological safety, providing coaching for emotional regulation skills, and facilitating vicarious learning. Anaza et al. (2016) reported the positive effect of mentoring on work engagement, but assessed mentoring using responses to a single survey question ("whether they currently had a mentor at work"). The present research seeks to systematically investigate the effect of mentoring by analyzing its efficacy along its three dimensions. Thus, we test the way in which mentoring functions have a positive influence on work engagement along these three dimensions, leading to the following hypotheses:

H3a. Psychosocial support is positively related to work engagement.

H3b. Career development is positively related to work engagement.

H3c. Role modeling is positively related to work engagement.

Prior research on the effects of emotional labor strategies on work engagement has found that deep acting is positively related to work engagement, whereas surface acting is negatively related to work engagement, because deep acting may restore emotional energy, but surface acting depletes emotional energy (Anaza et al., 2016; Han et al. 2018). Moreover, deep acting is a

customer-oriented emotional labor strategy, whereas surface acting is not customer-oriented one (Allen et al., 2010; Anaza et al., 2016; Yoo & Arnold, 2016). Considering that customer orientation has shown to promote work engagement (Yoo & Arnold, 2014), it is predicted that deep acting would enhance work engagement, while surface acting would lower work engagement. Based on the arguments and empirical evidence, we proposed the following hypotheses:

H4a. Deep acting is positively related to work engagement.

H4a. Surface acting is negatively related to work engagement.

Given the hypotheses mentioned above, deep acting and surface acting have partial mediating effects on the relationship between mentoring and work engagement. These emotional labor strategies play important mediating roles in linking job resources to work engagement, because we focused on medical professionals who have to deal with emotionally demanding interactions with customers or patients, which are seen as job demands (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Kim & Wang, 2018). In such demanding situations, appropriate emotional labor strategies supported by mentoring as a job resource, should prevent the depletion of emotional energy, which results in increased work engagement (Han et al., 2018). Accordingly, previous studies using samples of customer-contact employees, identified the mediating role of emotional labor strategies in linking situational factors to emotional exhaustion or job satisfaction (Chen et al., 2019; Hur et al., 2013; Xu et al., 2020; Yin et al., 2019). Therefore, we proposed the following hypotheses:

H5a. Psychosocial support indirectly affects work engagement through deep acting.

H5b. Career development indirectly affects work engagement through deep acting.

H5c. Role modeling indirectly affects work engagement through deep acting.

H6a. Psychosocial support indirectly affects work engagement through surface acting.

H6b. Career development indirectly affects work engagement through surface acting.

H6c. Role modeling indirectly affects work engagement through surface acting.

Based on the hypotheses, we proposed a research model shown in Figure 1.

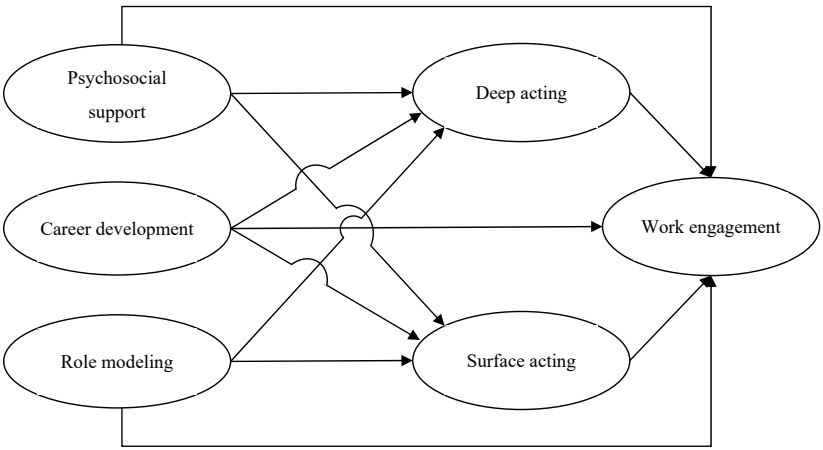

Figure 1. Research conceptual framework for the current study

Methodology

Sample and Procedure

Data were collected from employees working at hospitals who directly in-

teract with patients and their families. To examine the causal relationship between a cause and its effect, data should be collected using a longitudinal survey rather than a cross sectional one (Kline, 2016; Rindfleisch et al., 2008). Thus, 593 questionnaires were administered to employees of 14 hospitals over two sequential rounds. Mentoring was measured in the first round, while emotional labor and work engagement were measured in the second round. A two-month time lag may be appropriate, because both emotional labor strategies and work engagement are psychological constructs. Another reason is that employees in hospitals frequently interact with patients and their families in the workplace. This may be a reasonable period during which employees could use emotional labor strategies after receiving mentoring support. Although there is no specific theory or guidelines regarding the time interval for longitudinal data (Rindfleisch et al., 2008), previous studies that examined the effect of training on behaviors or performance adopted a time period from one to three months (e.g., Lopes et al., 2014; van Woerkom & Meyers, 2019). Over the course of two months, we received replies from 415 participants (69.98% response rate). After removing 79 questionnaires due to incompleteness, 336 responses were utilized in this study. Approximately 69.7% of the respondents were female. Respondents skewed to the younger side, with 62% aged between 20 and 39 years. The job types included nurses (52.7%), therapists (37.2%), pharmacists (9.5%), and doctors (0.6%). The job position of the majority of respondents was at the general staff level. Managers comprised only an additional 22.7%. Over half (56.4%) of the participants had worked at their present workplace for less than 10 years; 29.9% had been with their current employer for less than 5 years. Over 90% of the respondents were employed by a hospital, with 69.3% working at an acute-care hospital.

Measures

Given the survey was conducted in Japan, we employed back-translation technique to address divergence between the original and translated questionnaires (Cascio, 2012). First, the English language version was translated into Japanese. Second, a bilingual language professional back-translated the scale and again back-translated Japanese items that lacked equivalence with the original items. Previous studies have confirmed the reliability and validity of these measurement (e.g., Aw et al., 2020; Gong et al., 2020; Salem & Lakhal, 2018). Translated Japanese items are presented in the Appendix.

Emotional labor strategies were assessed using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree), developed by Diefendorff et al. (2005), including capturing surface acting with seven items and deep acting with four items. Sample items included "I put on an act in order to deal with customers in an appropriate way" to capture surface acting (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.92$). Another sample item was "I try to actually experience the emotions that I must show to customers" to capture deep acting (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.82$).

Mentoring was measured using Scandura and Ragin's (1993) multidimensional scale. Their 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree) includes psychosocial, career development, and role modeling. Psychosocial support was assessed using five items (e.g., "I share personal problems with my mentor"). Career development was measured using six items (e.g., "My mentor takes a personal interest in my career"). Finally, role modeling was measured with four items (e.g., "I try to model my behavior after my mentor"). Cronbach's alpha scores for psychosocial support, career development, and role modeling were 0.79, 0.88, and 0.90, respectively.

Work engagement was measured using the short version, with nine items, of the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-9). Developed by Schaufeli et al. (2006), UWES-9 is a five-point Likert scale, with responses ranging from 1

(never) to 5 (always). Each of the three UWES-9 sub-scales of vigor, dedication, and absorption were assessed using three items (e.g., "My job inspires me"). Unlike the UWES-13, which consists of 13 items, the UWES-9 assesses work engagement as a unitary construct (Schaufeli et al., 2019). The calculation of a combined Cronbach's alpha score of 0.91 for the UWES-9 scale implies an acceptable internal consistency and constructs the factor structure of the model.

Gender (1 = female; 2 = male) was included as a control variable based on the work of Grandey et al. (2013). They showed that women tend to outperform men in emotional labor. Age (1 = 20s, 2 = 30s, 3 = 40s, 4 = 50s, 5 = more than 60s) was controlled for, based on Dahling and Perez's (2010) findings that age positively affects deep acting and negatively affects surface acting.

Results

Psychometric Analysis

This study adopted a confirmatory factory analysis (CFA) to examine internal reliability, construct validity, and discriminant validity of the measures. Table 1 shows that the CFA's model fit assessed the construct validity ($\chi 2$ = 1245.29, df = 545, CFI = 0.89, TLI = 0.88, SRMR = 0.07, RMSEA = 0.06). Although the CFI and TLI fell slightly below 0.90, the model fit indices were deemed to be acceptable, considering that RMSEA scores between 0.05 and 0.08 indicate reasonable error (Browne & Cudeck, 1993), and that the SRMR cut off value is below 0.08 (Hu & Bentler, 1998).

Table 1 Results of confirmatory factor analysis.

Models	$\chi 2$	df	$\chi 2$/df	CFI	TLI	SRMR	RMSEA
6-factor model	1245.29	545.00	2.28	0.89	0.88	0.07	0.06
5-factor model	1676.17	550.00	3.05	0.82	0.80	0.09	0.08
4-factor model	1708.42	554.00	3.08	0.81	0.80	0.08	0.08
3-factor model	2136.77	557.00	3.84	0.74	0.73	0.09	0.09
2-factor model	3425.21	559.00	6.13	0.53	0.50	0.14	0.12
1-factor model	4592.66	560.00	9.33	0.34	0.30	0.18	0.15

Notes: n = 336. 6-factor model: each variable was loaded on a single factor; 5-factor model: deep acting and surface acting were loaded on the same factor; 4-factor model: psychosocial support, career development, and role modeling were loaded on the same factor; 3-factor model: psychosocial support, career development, and role modeling were loaded on the same factor, deep acting and surface acting were loaded on the same factor; 2-factor model: psychosocial support, career development, role modeling, deep acting and surface acting were loaded on one factor; 1-factor model: all variables were loaded on a single factor

Table 2 Descriptive statistics and correlations.

Variables	Mean	SD	CR	α	AVE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 Psychosocial support	2.47	0.74	0.80	0.79	0.46							
2 Career development	3.04	0.79	0.88	0.88	0.55	0.55***						
3 Role modeling	3.64	0.87	0.90	0.90	0.55	0.43***	0.66***					
4 Surface acting	3.14	0.72	0.92	0.92	0.70	−0.02	−0.05	−0.16**				
5 Deep acting	2.99	0.67	0.83	0.82	0.52	0.15**	0.08	0.01	0.31***			
6 Work engagement	2.44	0.72	0.91	0.91	0.63	0.34***	0.30***	0.30***	−0.22***	0.11*		
7 Gender	0.70	0.46	-	-	-	−0.05	0.05	0.09	−0.06	−0.02	−0.12*	
8 Age	2.22	1.03	-	-	-	−0.04	−0.18**	−0.14*	−0.14*	−0.10	0.04	−0.07

Notes: n = 336; *$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$; ***$p < 0.001$. CR = composite reliability. AVE = average variance extracted; Age: 1 = 20s, 2 = 30s, 3 = 40s, 4 = 50s, 5 = more than 60s. Gender: 1 = female, 2 = male.

In Table 2, the Cronbach's alpha values assessed internal reliability. Psychosocial support, career development, role modeling, work engagement, surface

acting, and deep acting were 0.79, 0.88, 0.90, 0.91, 0.92, and 0.82, respectively. All constructs were higher than the reference value of 0.7 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). As shown in Table 2, composite reliability for all constructs was higher than the reference value of 0.6 (Schumacker & Lomax, 2010). Convergent valid was assessed by AVE per construct, which was above the reference value of 0.5, with the exception of psychosocial support. However, we interpreted that psychosocial support had adequate convergent validity because it had high internal reliability (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Regarding discriminant validity, each square root of AVE was higher than the correlation coefficients between latent variables, suggesting that the scales had discriminant validity (Schumacker & Lomax, 2010). To demonstrate uni-dimensionality, the factor loadings of the latent variables were significant ($|t| > 1.96$, $p < 0.05$) and exceeded the reference value of 0.6 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Table 3 Results of the structural equation modeling.

Hypothesis	Structural path	Standardized estimate	Z-value	Hypothesis Testing
H1a	PS → DA	0.18	2.12*	Supported
H1b	CD → DA	0.04	0.34	Not supported
H1c	RM → DA	−0.03	−0.30	Not supported
H2a	PS → SA	0.07	0.88	Not supported
H2b	CD → SA	0.11	0.96	Not supported
H2c	RM → SA	−0.32	−3.07**	Supported
H3a	PS → WE	0.31	3.50***	Supported
H3b	CD → WE	0.10	0.83	Not supported
H3c	RM → WE	0.09	0.87	Not supported
H4a	DA → WE	0.20	3.11**	Supported
H4b	SA → WE	−0.28	−4.42***	Supported
	Control variables			
	Age → DA	−0.07	−1.28	
	Age → SA	−0.17	−2.93**	
	Age → WE	0.06	1.05	
	Gender → DA	−0.01	−0.08	
	Gender → SA	−0.05	−0.44	
	Gender → WE	−0.33	−2.60**	
	Covariances			
	PS ⇔ CD	0.58	12.745***	
	CD ⇔ RM	0.75	8.928***	
	RM ⇔ PS	0.46	24.556***	

Notes: n=336. *$p < 0.05$, **$p < 0.01$, ***$p < 0.001$. $\chi 2 = 1535.73$, $p < 0.001$. CFI = 0.87, TLI = 0.86, RMSEA = 0.07, SRMR = 0.07. PS = psychological support, CD = career development, RM = role modeling, DA = deep acting, SA = surface acting, WE = work engagement.

Given the relatively large number of cases (n = 336), we assumed that the cases were mapped to a normal distribution based on the central limit theory (Schneeberger, 2009). To assess adherence to univariate normality, we measured skewness and kurtosis (|skewness| < 2, |kurtosis| < 7). Accordingly, we concluded that the data set exhibited a mild form of non-normality (Finney et al., 2016).

Common Method Bias

To avoid the common method variance (CMV) bias, this research applied longitudinal survey data, which are better than cross-sectional data. However, the bias may have occurred as the data were self-reported and collected from the same source. To address this issue, a Harman's one-factor method, a partial correlation procedure, and an unmeasured latent method construct (ULMC) were tested (Podsakoff et al., 2012).

First, Harman's one-factor method tested the factors and variances through exploratory factor analysis without a rotated factor solution. The analysis identified six factors with eigenvalues greater than one. Their variances were 13.80%, 13.50%, 11.70%, 6.70%, 5.80% and 5.30%. Given that the primary extracted factor did not explain more than 50% of the variance, we concluded that the common method bias was not a significant concern in this research (Podsakoff et al., 2012).

Second, based on Lindell and Whitney (2001), the partial correlation procedure was conducted by partialling out a "marker" variable that is not related to at least one other variable included in this study. The "marker" variable is an item (i.e., "I have a lot in common with the people around me") of the revised UCLA Loneliness Scale (Russell et al., 1980). The results showed that the original correlation matrix between variables was close to the partial correlation matrix, indicating that the effect of common method bias was minimized

in this study.

Third, based on the ULMC approach (Podsakoff et al., 2012), we added a method factor with all of the measures used as indicators of respective factors in a separate confirmatory factor analysis model. The results showed that the average variance of the items explained by the method factor was 12.3%. Such value is below the median method variance (25%) suggested by Williams et al. (1989).

Finally, Table 1 shows that the six-factor model fits the data better than the single-factor, two-factor, three-factor, three-factor, four-factor, and five-factor models. This suggests that common method bias did not affect the results (Podsakoff et al., 2012).

Hypothesis Testing

Table 3 shows the results of the SEM with standardized path coefficients ($\chi 2$ = 1535.73, CFI = 0.87, TLI = 0.86, RMSEA = 0.07, SRMR = 0.07), which indicate that psychosocial support was positively related to deep acting (0.18, $p < 0.05$), while career development (0.04, ns) and role modeling (−0.03, ns) were not significantly related to deep acting. Therefore, H1a was supported, but H1b and H1c were not supported. Table 3 shows that role modeling was negatively related to surface acting (−0.32, $p < 0.01$), while psychosocial support (0.07, ns) and career development (0.11, ns) were not significantly related to surface acting, which support H2c, but do not support H2a and H2b. The results also show that psychosocial support was positively related to work engagement (0.31, $p < 0.001$). Conversely, career development (0.10, ns) and role modeling (0.09, ns) were not significantly related to work engagement. As such, the result supports H3a, but does not support H3b and H3c. Regarding H4a and H4b, deep acting was positively related to work engagement (0.20, $p < 0.01$), whereas surface acting was negatively related to work engagement

(−0.28, p < 0.001). Thus, the result supports H4a and H4b.

Table 4 Results of the indirect effects based on bootstrap estimates.

Proposed relationship	Indirect effect	BC 95% CI	Significance ($p < 0.05$)
PS → DA → WE	0.04	[0.01, 0.11]	Yes
PS → SA → WE	−0.02	[−0.08, 0.04]	No
CD → DA → WE	0.00	[−0.05, 0.06]	No
CD → SA → WE	−0.03	[−0.09, 0.02]	No
RM → DA→ WE	−0.01	[−0.04, 0.04]	No
RM → SA → WE	0.07	[0.02, 0.14]	Yes

Notes: n = 336. Standardized estimates are reported. Bootstrap sample size = 2000. PS = psychosocial support; DA = deep acting; WE = work engagement; RM = role modeling; SA = surface acting; ab = completely standardized estimate of the mediating effect; SE = standard error; BC = bias corrected; CI = confidence interval.

A formal mediation test was conducted to verify whether the relationship between mentoring and work engagement was mediated by emotional labor strategies (Hair et al., 2016; Zhao et al., 2010). To test the indirect effect, the bootstrapping approach utilizing 2,000 random samples was implemented, and the results using the a 95% confidence interval (CI). Bootstrapping, a nonparametric re-sampling procedure that does not consider a normal distribution assumption of variables, is known as the most useful approach for specific mediating effects in most samples. As shown in Table 4, psychosocial support had a significant indirect effect on work engagement through deep acting (indirect effect = 0.04, 95% CI [0.01, 0.11]). Considering a direct effect of psychosocial support on work engagement, deep acting "partially" mediated the effect of psychosocial support on work engagement. Moreover, Table 4 also shows that role modeling had a significant indirect effect on work engagement

through surface acting (indirect effect = 0.07, 95% CI [0.02, 0.14]). As there was no significant effect of role modeling on work engagement, surface acting "fully or perfectly" (Preacher & Hayes, 2004) mediated the effect of role modeling on work engagement. Thus, the results support H5a and H6c. Other indirect effects included zero (i.e., career development => deep acting => work engagement, indirect effect = 0.00, 95% CI [−0.05, 0.06]; role modeling => deep acting => work engagement, indirect effect = −0.01, 95% CI [−0.04, 0.04]; psychosocial support => surface acting => work engagement, indirect effect = −0.02, 95% CI [−0.08, 0.04]; career development => surface acting => work engagement, indirect effect = −0.03, 95% CI [−0.09, 0.02]). Thus, the results did not support H5b, H5c, H6a, and H6b. A summary of the results is shown in Figure2, which controls the effects of age and gender.

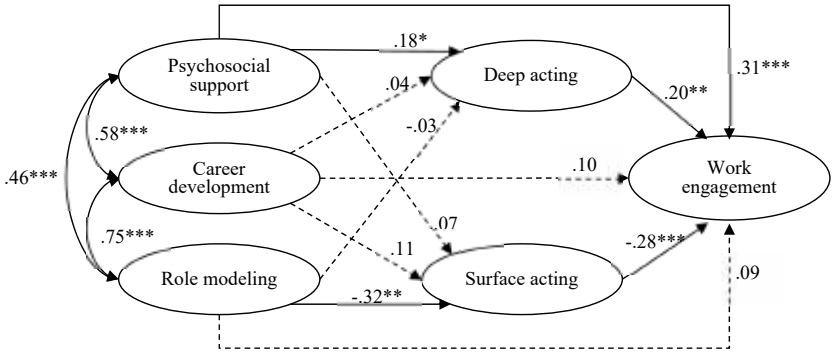

Figure 2 Structural equation modeling results

Notes: n = 336. Standardized estimates are presented. The dotted line indicates that the coefficient is not statistically significant.

Discussion

Theoretical Implications

First, the results show that psychosocial support directly and indirectly promotes work engagement mediated through deep acting. Psychosocial support may enhance protégés' psychological safety because the former involves activities such as acceptance, counseling, and friendship (Scandura & Ragins, 1993). These allow employees to have feelings of vitality (Edmondson, 1999; Edmondson & Lei, 2014) for authentic emotional displays and a positive psychological state at work (Frazier et al., 2017). These findings are consistent with the JD-R model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014, 2017), suggesting that psychosocial support is a job resource that enables employees to deal with emotionally demanding interactions with customers. Specifically, protégés are likely to acquire emotional resources to unify the required and authentic feelings with high psychosocial support to create a sincere performance at work (Grandey & Sayre, 2019). The non-significant effect of psychosocial support on surface acting suggests that psychological safety is not enough for protégés to minimize faking unfelt emotions. The present research contributes to the emotional labor literature by identifying a mentoring function for improving protégés' deep acting. Although previous research found a positive impact of perceived organizational support on deep acting (Becker et al., 2018; Hur et al., 2013; Mishra, 2014; Wen et al., 2019), this study is the first to identify the specific mentoring function for the promotion of deep acting.

Second, the results show that role modeling indirectly enhances work engagement by suppressing surface acting. However, there is no significant relationship between role modeling and deep acting. The findings indicate that role modeling helps protégés learn emotional responses to customers through vicarious learning (Abecassis-Moedas et al., 2016; Bandura, 1977; Manz & Sims,

1981; Niedenthal & Brauer, 2012). Specifically, protégés who observe mentors' attitudes and behaviors are likely to learn not to fake unfelt emotions toward customers. Furthermore, deep acting is a complicated cognitive strategy to proactively change one's feelings (Grandey & Sayre,2019). As such, it may be difficult for protégés to learn deep acting through vicarious learning. Although Chi and Wang (2018) suggested that protégés who receive high levels of role modeling were found to increase supervisor or self-rated service performance, our study provides a more detailed and clearer understanding of the dynamics between role modeling and surface acting.

Third, the first and second findings indicate that emotional labor strategies play important roles as mediators between mentoring and work engagement, especially for customer-contact employees, such as those in hospitals. This is because customer-contact employees are required to regulate their emotions in accordance with display rules for emotional expression (Diefendorff et al., 2005; Grandey & Sayre, 2019). To deal with emotionally demanding interactions with customers and have a higher level of work engagement, employees need to perform deep acting and avoid surface acting, which should be supported by mentoring relationships. The results correspond to previous research that reported the mediating effect of emotional labor strategies on the relationship between situational factors and job satisfaction or emotional exhaustion (Chen et al., 2019; Hur et al., 2013; Xu et al., 2020; Yin et al., 2019). This study may be the first to identify the mediating role of emotional labor strategies in linking mentoring to work engagement.

Finally, contrary to the hypothesis, career development was not significantly related to emotional labor strategies and work engagement. The results suggest that coaching and sponsorship through career development support (Kram, 1985; Scandura & Ragins, 1993) have limited roles in helping protégés acquire skills for emotional labor strategies. Although career development is believed to

adjust protégés' motives toward customers (Thomas & Landau, 2009) and attain in-role job expectations (Lankau et al., 2006), such support may not be useful for protégés to handle emotionally demanding interactions with customers. Considering that the three mentoring dimensions can be categorized into career-related development (i.e., career development) and psychosocial support (i.e., psychosocial support and role modeling) (Eby & Robertson, 2020), this study found that psychosocial support, including role modeling, has an important function in promoting positive emotional labor strategies.

Managerial Implications

Our findings offer managerial implications for a better understanding of the relationships among mentoring, emotional labor, and work engagement. First, human resources (HR) managers in service organizations have to recognize that mentoring can be an essential method in helping customer-contact employees deal with emotionally demanding interactions with customers. Therefore, mentoring programs should be designed to help protégés develop strategies to deal with emotional labor, which has a direct impact on work engagement. HR managers and mentors need to understand that the two mentoring functions, psychosocial support and role modeling, have different effects on protégés' emotional labor strategies. Specifically, psychosocial support enhances protégés' authentic emotional displays (i.e., deep acting). Conversely, role modeling minimizes faking unfelt emotions (i.e., surface acting). Therefore, HR managers must design mentoring programs for customer-contact employees so that mentors can learn skills for psychosocial support and role modeling.

Second, the results indicate that psychosocial support not only promotes deep acting, but also enhances work engagement. It is advisable that HR managers consider "setting a close relationship between a mentor and a protégé" when designing the mentoring program. Moreover, creating friend-

ships between mentors and protégés is also recommended. When HR managers establish the mentoring programs, they should realize that the development of mentorship may take a long time, perhaps one or two years, and requires the frequency and strength between mentors and protégés (Kram, 1985). Therefore, HR managers should provide mentors with more guidance and inclusiveness to increase interactions between mentors and protégés. In turn, it could be easier for them to set and maintain a close relationship.

Third, this study indicates that role-modeling functions can minimize the surface acting of protégés. Thus, HR managers should help employees find and strictly select their role modeling. The reason for this is that mentors' attitudes and behaviors are incorporated into protégés' own attitudes and behaviors (Bandura, 1977; Eby & Robertson, 2020; Lankau et al., 2006). HR managers need to strictly select mentors who perform more deep acting than surface acting to prevent the potential threat of surface acting on work engagement. Such behaviors will be emulated by protégés. Consequently, protégés with mentor support are more likely to experience deeper emotions and be less exposed to the negative effects of surface acting. Additionally, organizations cannot guarantee that every protégé will benefit from a mentoring relationship and its functions due to limited resources. Therefore, mentors becoming role models could be an economical way to rule out the potential threat of surface acting on the organization.

Limitations and Future Suggestions

Our study has some limitations. First, mentoring was measured from the perspective of the protégés. Thus, it is likely to be influenced by perceived mentoring desirability. For example, a multi-level or dyadic investigation of how mentorship influences work engagement may be useful for future research. In some regard, this is not problematic because the focus of the study

was on the effects of protégés' perceptions of mentoring. It explores the direct measures of emotional labor strategies, necessitating the employed data collection method. However, future research may still be aided by mentor-reported data to eliminate such potential risks.

Second, this study identified emotional labor strategies as mediating factors by which mentoring influences protégés' work engagement. However, the moderators affecting the link between mentoring and work engagement were not included in our model. Therefore, future studies should include moderators such as personal resources (e.g., emotional intelligence and self-efficacy), job demands (e.g., customers' interaction, workload), and job crafting (e.g., asking for feedback and mobilizing social networks) that fluctuate relationships among variables.

Third, a more exploratory or prospective research design should be adopted to explore how mentoring affects emotional labor strategies. For example, a grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) can be used to identify the processes by which different types of mentoring promote work engagement through emotional labor strategies, using interview data in future research.

Fourth, the generalizability of our findings to other cultures and organizations is limited because of the Japanese cultural context. Future research should consider additional cross-cultural models to effectively understand the influence of culture on the relationship between mentoring, work engagement, and emotional labor. It may be desirable to confirm the findings using new survey data in different contexts because some model fit indices of CFA and SEM were not satisfactory.

Fifth, following previous studies, respondents were asked to evaluate supervisors' mentoring, emotional labors, and work engagement. However, in future research, it would be interesting to examine the relationships between change scores of these variables using a longitudinal survey.

Finally, following previous studies, we adopted a two-month interval in two-wave survey. However, there is a possibility that longer time interval is needed for evaluating the influence of mentoring on emotional labors, and that three mentoring dimensions require different times to be effective. In exploring the effect of mentoring on emotional labors, future research needs to consider these issues.

Conclusion

Perceived organizational support promotes deep acting (Becker et al., 2018; Hur et al., 2013; Mishra, 2014; Wen et al., 2019). However, little is known about how mentoring influences emotional labor strategies. Our study contributes to the existing literature by identifying that psychosocial support directly and indirectly facilitates work engagement through deep acting, whereas role modeling promotes work engagement by minimizing surface acting. These findings suggest that organizations need to introduce mentoring programs for customer-contact employees to help them adopt positive emotional labor strategies.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

Conflict of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest relevant to the content of this article.

Ethical Approval: All procedures performed were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee. The study is compliant with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

Informed Consent: Informed consent was obtained from all participants included in the study.

Data Availability Statement: The datasets generated and analyzed in this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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Appendix. Measurement items translated into Japanese

Psychosocial support

私は，自分の個人的問題を上司と共有している
私は，上司と業務外で付き合いがある
私は，上司と互いにうちとけ話をする
私は，上司のことを友人だと思う
私は，上司とよく食事に行く

Career development

私の上司は，私のキャリアに関心を示してくれる
私の上司は，私に重要な課題を出してくれる
私の上司は，私の仕事に関して特別なコーチをしてくれる
私の上司は，昇進の機会に関する情報をくれる
私の上司は，仕事上の目標設定のときに支援してくれる
私の上司は，時間をとって，私のキャリアを考えてくれる

Role modeling

私は，上司をお手本として行動するようにしている
私は，やる気をおこさせる上司の能力に感服している
私は，上司が持つ職業的な知識を尊敬している
私は，上司の指導力を尊敬している

Surface acting

適切に患者・家族を扱うために，演技をしている
患者・家族と接するときに，気分が良いふりをしている
患者・家族と接するとき，芝居をしている
仕事において求められる感情を示すふりをしている

仕事において求められる感情を示すために，仮面をかぶっている
本当の感情とは異なる感情を患者・家族に示している
患者・家族と接するときには，感情をよそおっている

Deep acting

患者・家族に示さなければならない感情を実際に経験しようとしている
患者・家族に示す必要のある感情を，実際に感じようと努力している
患者・家族に示す必要のある感情を，精一杯感じようとしている
患者・家族に示す必要のある感情を，私の内で作り上げている

Work engagement

仕事をしているとき，エネルギーが満ちている感じがする
仕事をしているとき，自分の中に力強さや活力を感じる
私は，自分の仕事に熱中している
仕事は，私に意欲を与えてくれる
朝目覚めたとき，仕事がしたくなる
集中して仕事をしているとき，幸せを感じる
私は，自分の仕事に誇りを感じる
私は，仕事に没頭している
私は，仕事をしているとき我を忘れている