Perceived Organizational Support and Psychological Empowerment as Determinants of Emotional Labor in the Call Center Context

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Abstract

The purpose of the current research is to address the mediating role of psychological empowerment (PE) in the effect of perceived organizational support (POS) on emotional labor (EL). Drawing upon Social Exchange Theory and the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) framework, this study highlights the ways in which external organizational resources and internal motivational processes jointly influence employee behavior in emotionally challenging work settings. Data were obtained via a questionnaire distributed to 200 call center employees employed in a customer service organization in Turkey, using a convenience sampling technique. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was applied for data analysis, utilizing SmartPLS version 4. The research results revealed that POS positively impacts deep emotional labor (deep acting). Additionally, POS positively influenced psychological empowerment dimensions that are meaning, self-determination, and impact. In turn, the meaning and self-determination dimensions were found to have a positive impact on deep emotional labor (deep acting). Moreover, the meaning facet of psychological empowerment played a partial mediation role in the association between POS and deep acting. These results suggest that psychological empowerment, alongside POS, may be an intrinsic motivator in shaping EL strategies within emotionally intensive service environments. In other words, employees' perceptions of organizational resources activate not only external support mechanisms but also internal processes of meaning-making and autonomy, which in turn shape their emotional regulation strategies.

Keywords: Call Center Employees, Emotional Labor (EL), Perceived Organizational Support (POS), Psychological Empowerment (PE).

Introduction

POS has emerged as a significant topic in management and organizational research, gaining considerable attention since the 1980s. The concept was introduced in 1986 within the framework of Organizational Support Theory (OST) (1). POS refers to employee perceptions of the extent to which an organization appreciates its members' efforts and cares for their well-being (1). This perception is regarded as a crucial factor influencing various work-related outcomes, including commitment, motivation, job attitudes, and performance (1, 2). Empirical studies indicate that POS enhances employees' psychological well-being and organizational citizenship behaviors, while simultaneously reducing job stress, burnout, and turnover intentions (3-7).

Emotional labor has garnered increasing attention from both scholars and practitioners, particularly within service-oriented industries, due to its critical role in shaping positive customer experiences (8). In the foundational study where the notion of emotional labor was first discussed, it was described as an occupational demand in service jobs, emphasizing that employees are expected to display emotions considered appropriate by their organizations (9). Within this conceptual framework, emotional labor is expressed through two distinct forms: *surface acting* and *deep acting*. Surface acting refers to displaying the emotions required by the organization without genuinely feeling them, while *deep acting* reflects an internal process in which employees attempt to authentically experience the emotions expected in their roles (10). The existing literature suggests that surface acting is generally associated with adverse work outcomes whereas

deep acting is linked to more favorable consequences in the workplace (11-14).

The significance of emotional labor is particularly pronounced among frontline service employees, such as call center workers, who engage in frequent and direct interactions with customers. A substantial body of research has conceptualized surface acting as a key predictor of adverse outcomes in this context, including emotional exhaustion and turnover intentions (15, 16). For instance, in a study conducted among call center employees in Turkey, emotional labor was found to heighten turnover intention by increasing job-related stress (17). Furthermore, emotional labor was significantly associated with both job-related musculoskeletal disorders and symptoms of depression among call center workers (18).

The relationships between POS, PE, and EL in this study can be understood within the frameworks of Social Exchange Theory and the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model. Social Exchange Theory posits that interpersonal relationships are based on the balance between mutual benefits and costs (19). A key principle of this theory is the Norm of Reciprocity, which suggests that when an individual receives something valuable or beneficial, they feel compelled to reciprocate (20). Within organizations, employees who perceive strong support from their employer—manifested through favorable working conditions, equitable compensation, and opportunities for professional growth—are more inclined to exhibit higher organizational commitment, enhanced job performance, and greater organizational citizenship behaviors (21). POS also aids in managing emotions at work, thereby reducing the levels of stress and burnout linked to emotional labor (22-24). Additionally, it enables employees to internalize organizational values and engage in authentic emotional expressions (25).

The JD-R model provides an additional theoretical lens for understanding the impact of workplace characteristics on worker-related consequences (26). This framework differentiates between job demands encompass any work-related conditions that call for high levels of physical or psychological energy and have the potential to create stress (e.g., emotional labor, time pressure)—and job resources, which represent workplace factors that help employees accomplish their objectives, buffer the impact of job demands, and foster favorable individual outcomes (e.g., autonomy, feedback) (27). When the requirements of a job are matched with adequate support mechanisms, workplaces tend to function more effectively, promoting productivity and lowering absenteeism; however, when this alignment breaks down, employees may experience mental overload, commit more mistakes, and be absent more frequently (26). From this perspective, high levels of POS and PE can function as essential job resources that help mitigate the negative consequences of demanding work conditions, such as EL. Conversely, employees with low POS and inadequate PE may experience heightened emotional dissonance, increased stress, and a greater risk of burnout (22). In this research, emotional labor—whose associations with POS and psychological empowerment are explored—has emerged as a prominent and extensively examined topic within the organizational behavior literature. Emotional labor means the process by which employees manage their emotions to comply with the organization's norms and rules, and job requirements (28). In the original study where emotional labor was conceptualized, the construct was described as consisting of two primary dimensions: deep acting and surface acting. Deep acting involves modifying inner emotions to align with expected standards, while surface acting means behaving and expressing emotions through those organizational standards (9).

Numerous researchers have examined the multifaceted nature of emotional labor, including its dimensions (23, 29, 30). In addition, other studies have examined the factors that trigger emotional labor as well as its potential outcomes (22, 31-35). Whereas earlier research mainly concentrated on exploring the factors that shape emotional labor and the outcomes that arise from it, recent scholarship has shifted toward exploring the mechanisms through which emotional labor affects job-related attitudes and performance (11, 12, 36). In this context, particular attention has been given to the mediating and moderating constructs that shape these relationships. For instance, a considerable body of research shows that POS can alter the strength of the association between various EL strategies and critical work-related results, including employees' involvement in their roles, exhaustion levels, and the quality of services delivered (37). Similarly, earlier studies

indicate that POS shapes how cognitive evaluations and EL relate to discretionary behaviors in the workplace (38). It also influences how different EL strategies—such as surface acting and deep acting—are associated with employees' job-related attitudes, including satisfaction and commitment (39).

When employees believe that their organization genuinely appreciates their contributions and shows concern for their well-being, they are more likely to embrace the emotional requirements of their job as part of their own role identity. From a social exchange viewpoint, greater perceived support encourages individuals to express emotions voluntarily and as a form of positive reciprocation rather than merely complying with display rules. This dynamic can promote deeper emotional engagement. In addition, feeling adequately supported tends to lessen emotional conflict, which in turn reduces the necessity to rely on surface acting.

Beyond POS, other types of support—namely organizational, managerial, and coworker support—have likewise been explored as potential moderating factors in the linkage between EL and job performance (40). Moreover, earlier scholarly work has examined how professional identity functions as an intermediary mechanism between POS and employees' EL (41). Other studies have also investigated the role of EL as a bridge linking POS with individuals' professional value orientations (42). These studies illustrate the increasing scholarly focus on uncovering the complex mechanisms through which EL interacts with diverse organizational and individual-level factors. Based on insights derived from the existing literature, the subsequent hypotheses are presented:

H1: POS negatively affects surface acting.

H2: POS positively affects deep acting.

Organizational support is an important factor for an individual to feel empowered. A high level of POS satisfies employees' basic socio-emotional needs, such as self-worth, emotional security, and belonging, thereby increasing their intrinsic motivation (43). When organizations value the contributions of employees and support them to be better in their jobs, they can automatically feel more efficient (44). Supporting employees' actions and contributions can motivate them to take even more impactful initiatives (45). As a result, they

may feel that their efforts make a meaningful difference in their work. Organizational support has been shown to be positively linked with employees' sense of social impact (46). Also, POS is positively associated with work meaningfulness (47).

Significant associations have been observed between organizational support and psychological empowerment (48-50). However, limited studies have examined the relationships between POS and the dimensions of psychological empowerment. Institutions that care about employees' well-being, enable them to produce their work and innovate, and provide the necessary resources for their projects and research, ensure that employees feel sufficient, autonomous, and find meaning in their work. POS fundamentally represents a form of reciprocal exchange between employees and their organization, fostering positive interaction and a sense of warmth (51). How workers view their employer shapes both their emotional responses and their conduct, often strengthening their sense of self-assurance and accountability. When employees hold favorable impressions of their organization, they are generally more capable of performing effectively in environments where they feel accepted and supported (21, 52). This research proposes that when employees believe that their employer genuinely supports them, they tend to experience an enhanced sense of autonomy and influence over their work roles. Accordingly, the study puts forward the following hypothesis:

H3: POS positively affects the a) meaning b) self-determination c) competence and d) impact dimensions of PE.

PE means perceptions of job roles of employees manifested in four cognitions, which are meaning, autonomy, impact, and competence (53). Meaning describes how closely a worker's own value system aligns with what their role demands (54). Competence captures employees' confidence in their capability to efficiently influence their work and surroundings (55). Autonomy denotes the extent of discretion individuals possess in initiating and managing work-related actions and processes, including the methods, pace, and effort they employ (56). Impact captures the extent to which employees can shape key organizational directions, decisions, and day-to-day practices (57). These dimensions reflect the employee's orientation toward their job role, each

contributing to the perception of psychological empowerment. To fully benefit from its advantages, organizations and managers should consider all dimensions together (58).

Feeling empowered serves as a crucial internal resource for employees (59). Employees who experience empowerment—stemming from the meaning, autonomy, impact, and competence they derive from their roles—tend to view themselves as adequately equipped and effective in dealing with the demands of their work (60). In other words, psychological empowerment offers employees internal resources such as a stronger sense of autonomy, personal capability, and purpose in their roles, which collectively foster intrinsic motivation. When these psychological conditions are present, individuals are more likely to engage in authentic emotional expression rather than merely complying with display requirements, making deep emotional responses more probable. In contrast, if employees experience higher empowerment, the pressure to manipulate or fake their emotions tends to diminish, which can lead to a reduced reliance on surface acting.

A path model was used to investigate the mediating role of the dimensions of POS (61). Within this framework, educators who perceive strong organizational support tend to feel more empowered — reflected in greater competence and self-determination — which may ultimately lead to higher job satisfaction. Prior studies have demonstrated that PE positively affects employees' work-related behaviors, such as innovation and proactivity (59, 62, 63). A sense of empowerment plays a substantial role in shaping how employees regulate and express their feelings in the workplace. Additionally, according to self-determination theory, when individuals experience autonomy in their actions, feel competent in their work, and perceive an impact in their relationships, they are more likely to be motivated and internalize their job responsibilities (64). Evidence indicates that deep acting is positively linked with the core components of PE, such as impact, self-determination, and competence (8). These empowerment dimensions were found to mediate the favorable impact of transformational leadership on deep acting. Informed by the reviewed literature, the following hypotheses have been developed:

H4: a) meaning b) self-determination c) competence and d) impact negatively affect surface acting

H5: a) meaning b) self-determination c) competence and d) impact negatively affect deep acting

A significant body of research embracing the principle of reciprocity underlying social exchange indicates that individuals often feel both a sense of obligation and a willingness to provide support to their colleagues and employers (65, 66). Similarly, employees who report stronger PE tend to see themselves as valuable contributors, trust in their ability to accomplish objectives, exert influence on how their duties are carried out, and engage in actions that support the organization's success (67). Recent studies highlight that psychological empowerment acts as a key intermediary linking POS to employees' job satisfaction (68). Based on the existing literature, it is posited that the psychological empowerment individuals experience mediates the emotional labor they exhibit in response to the organizational support they perceive. Accordingly, the study puts forward the following hypothesis:

H6: a) meaning b) self-determination c) competence and d) impact as mediators in the relationship between POS and surface acting

H7: a) meaning b) self-determination c) competence and d) impact as mediators in the relationship between POS and deep acting.

This research introduces a new explanatory pathway by examining how psychological empowerment operates between perceived organizational support and emotional labor. In particular, identifying the meaning component of empowerment as a partial mediator highlights an internal motivational route that earlier frameworks have not captured sufficiently. By doing so, the present study broadens the discussion of POS and emotional labor within both Social Exchange Theory and the JD-R approach by incorporating an intrinsic motivation lens. In doing so, it addresses an underexplored area in the existing literature through examining how employees in emotionally demanding service environments, such as call centers, formulate their EL strategies based on their POS and levels of PE. The results provide novel insights by emphasizing the pivotal function of PE in promoting deep emotional labor and advancing a more refined understanding of the mechanisms that underlie EL in high-demand professional contexts.

Methodology

Measures

To test the proposed hypotheses, the research utilized established measurement instruments drawn from earlier academic studies. Each construct was captured through a set of multiple items rated on a five-point Likert continuum, anchored by 'strongly disagree' at the lower end and 'strongly agree' at the upper end.

The study adopted a survey method for data collection, comprising four distinct sections. The first section gathered demographic information through five items. The second section included an emotional labor scale composed of ten items organized into two dimensions: surface acting and deep acting (29). Representative items from this scale include: "I fake a good mood when interacting with customers" (surface acting), and "I work hard to feel the emotions that I need to show to customers" (deep acting). The third section included an eight-item, unidimensional POS scale that was originally developed and later adapted for use in different contexts (1, 69). Sample statement from this scale include: "My organization strongly considers my goals". The final section of the survey included a psychological empowerment scale structured into four dimensions, each represented by three items (53). Sample statement from this scale include: "The work I do is very important to me" (meaning), "I am confident about my ability to do my job" (competence), "I have significant autonomy in determining how I do my job" (self-determination), and "My impact on what happens in my department is large" (impact).

Sampling

This research seeks to analyze the intricate connections among POS, PE, and EL within the realm of customer service, with a particular emphasis on employees working in call centers.

To empirically test the proposed hypotheses, a sample of 200 call center employees working in a customer service firm in Turkey was included in the study using a convenience sampling method. The sufficiency of the sample size was assessed according to the sample-to-item ratio criterion. A minimum sample-to-item ratio of 5:1 is considered sufficient (70). As the survey instrument included 30 items, at least 150 valid responses were deemed necessary to ensure analytical reliability. Even so, in order to ensure more dependable and stable findings, the study ultimately included data from 200 respondents. The data was gathered via online questionnaires distributed to selected participants. The research received ethical clearance from the Ethics Committee of Social and Human Sciences at Kocaeli University (Decision No: 2025/03; 21 March 2025).

The present sample was drawn exclusively from call center personnel working in a single service-based company, which means that the outcomes may not automatically extend to other industries or organizational environments. In addition, features associated with the broader context or specific sectors (such as the degree of service orientation or the intensity of customer contact), as well as individual and organizational attributes (including age, tenure, or educational background), could shape or alter the associations found in this research. For these reasons, the findings should be approached with appropriate caution.

When we look at the demographic information of the sample, we see that males constituted the majority (60.5%, n = 121), while the largest age group was 20-30 years (47%, n = 94). In addition, 55.5% of the participants were married, and most respondents held either a bachelor's or an associate degree (31.5%).

Data Analysis

The analysis of data was carried out by using the PLS-SEM approach. This analytical approach was preferred as it allows researchers to model unobservable concepts, handle multiple outcome variables at the same time, and account for measurement inaccuracies within the estimation process. Moreover, PLS-SEM is particularly advantageous for assessing both direct and indirect relationships, including mediation effects, within the proposed framework (71).

The PLS-SEM procedure was executed using SmartPLS version 4.0. Within the SmartPLS environment, statistical significance was evaluated according to conventional thresholds, whereby p-values below 0.05 correspond to *t*-statistic values greater than 1.96 ($p < 0.05 = t > 1.96$).

Results

Descriptive

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics. Overall, employees reported relatively high levels of meaning, competence, impact, and self-determination. Surface acting scores were low,

while deep acting and POS were at moderate levels. These findings imply that employees perceive some organizational support, yet still consider it insufficient, and they occasionally engage in deep emotional regulation.

Measurement Validation

The construct reliability and validity were assessed by examining convergent and discriminant validity, and internal consistency. Convergent validity was assessed by examining

Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and factor loadings, in line with established methodological recommendations (72).

As shown in Table 2, all factor loadings and AVE values exceeded the recommended thresholds, indicating acceptable convergent validity. Reliability was further assessed using Composite Reliability and Cronbach's alpha. All coefficients were greater than 0.70. Taken together, these results demonstrate strong internal consistency across the constructs.

Table 1: Descriptive

	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD
POS	200	1	5	3.44	0.687
Surface acting	200	1	5	2.53	0.989
Deep acting	200	1	5	3.29	0.999
Meaning	200	1	5	3.92	0.907
Impact	200	1	5	3.83	0.887
Competence	200	1	5	4.31	0.673
Self-determination	200	1	5	4.00	0.805

Table 2: Convergent Validity and Internal Consistency Results

Construct	Statements	Factor Loadings	CR	AVE	Cronbach Alpha
POS*	7	0.642-0.914	0.943	0.673	0.918
Meaning	3	0.871-0.942	0.906	0.839	0.904
Competence	3	0.791-0.909	0.841	0.723	0.806
Impact	3	0.891-0.923	0.899	0.829	0.895
Self-determination	3	0.810-0,896	0.863	0.741	0.825
Surface acting	6	0.613-0.835	0.876	0.587	0.874
Deep acting	4	0.806-0.883	0.886	0.728	0.875

 * 1 statement was removed due to low factor loading

Table 3 reports the results of the discriminant validity analyses. The Fornell–Larcker and HTMT criteria were applied, and the square roots of the AVE values were greater than the correlations among constructs (73, 74). This pattern indicates that each construct is empirically distinct from the others and that discriminant validity has been achieved.

Table 4 presents the HTMT results. All coefficients remained below the 0.90 threshold, indicating that the correlations between constructs did not exceed acceptable limits. Taken together, these findings provide further support for the adequacy of discriminant validity in the model.

Structural Model

Table 5 reports the principal model fit and explanatory power indicators. The SRMR value (0.066) reflects an acceptable level of model fit, and the R^2 coefficients indicate that the predictors explain meaningful portions of variance (75). The PE dimensions account for part of the variance in POS, while POS itself explains 6% of surface acting and 23% of deep acting.

Moreover, to identify possible multicollinearity problems, VIF statistics were analyzed. The obtained values ranged from 1.503 to 4.486, remaining well below the accepted cutoff point of 5. Therefore, it can be concluded that multicollinearity was not present in the dataset.

Table 3: Fornell and Larcker Values

Construct	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
POS	0.820	0.348	0.139	0.405	0.260	0.166	0.363
Meaning		0.916	0.538	0.368	0.449	0.217	0.382
Competence			0.850	0.461	0.601	0.095	0.224
Impact				0.910	0.632	0.046	0.319
Self-determination					0.861	0.103	0.329
Surface acting						0.766	0.151
Deep acting							0.853

Table 4: HTMT Values

Construct	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
POS		0.368	0.157	0.436	0.276	0.152	0.396
Meaning			0.627	0.408	0.510	0.208	0.427
Competence				0.540	0.718	0.140	0.262
Impact					0.739	0.082	0.356
Self-determination						0.123	0.377
Surface acting							0.230
Deep acting							

Table 5: Structural model

Construct	R^2	Adjusted R^2	SRMR
Meaning	0.121	0.117	
Competence	0.019	0.014	
Impact	0.164	0.160	0.066
Self-determination	0.068	0.063	
Surface acting	0.057	0.033	
Deep acting	0.232	0.212	

Hypothesis Testing

Table 6 reports the direct and indirect effects obtained from the hypothesis testing analyses. The results demonstrate that POS exerts a significant positive influence on deep acting (β = 0.217 p = 0.011). Furthermore, POS positively influences the meaning (β = 0.348 p < 0.01), impact (β = 0.405 p < 0.01), and self-determination (β = 0.260 p = 0.01) dimensions of PE. Additionally,

both the meaning (β = 0.245 p = 0.012) and self-determination (β = 0.156 p = 0.046) dimensions of PE showed a positive effect on the deep acting dimension of EL. Finally, the meaning facet of PE was identified as a partial mediator in the association between POS and deep acting (β = 0.086, *p* = 0.036). Based on these results, hypotheses H2 and H7 were fully supported, while H3 and H5 received partial support. Conversely, hypotheses H1, H4, and H6 were not supported.

Table 6: Hypothesis Testing

Effects	β	SD	t	p
Direct Effects				
POS->SA	-0,114	0.101	1.135	0.256
POS->DA	**0,217****	0.086	2,536	**0,011**
POS->M	**0,348****	0,075	4,634	**0,000**
POS->C	0,139	0,083	1,667	0,096
POS->I	**0,405****	0,075	5,394	**0,000**
POS->SD	**0,260****	0,078	3,335	**0,001**
M->SA	-0,191	0,099	1,927	0,054
M->DA	**0,245****	0,097	2,519	**0,012**
C->SA	0,014	0,124	0,113	0,910
C->DA	-0,066	0,088	0,750	0,453
I->SA	0,125	0,104	1,198	0,231
I->DA	0,072	0,092	0,780	0,435
SD->SA	-0,060	0,123	0,486	0,627
SD->DA	**0,156****	0,078	1,993	**0,046**
Indirect Effects				
POS->M->DA	**0,086****	0,041	2,101	**0,036**

POS: Perceived organizational support; M: Meaning; C: Competence; I: Impact; SD: Self-determination; SA: Surface acting; DA: Deep acting; p < 0.05

Discussion

The present study sought to explore how POS shapes call center employees' perceptions of PE and their EL behaviors. In addition, it analyzed the mediating function of PE—an intrinsic motivational process—in the connection between POS and EL.

The findings demonstrate that POS significantly enhances employees' deep acting EL. Consequently, H2 was supported. This result

indicates that employees who view their organization as supportive are more likely to internalize and authentically display the emotions expected from them, thereby engaging more deeply in emotional labor. Deep acting, often associated with favorable employee outcomes in the literature, suggests that employees tend to express emotions they authentically experience, rather than feign them. These findings align with earlier research in service-related settings, where

POS was found to be linked positively with employees' EL practices (24, 25, 41).

Additionally, the study found that POS positively impacts the meaning, impact, and self-determination dimensions of PE, thereby providing partial support for H3. If an employee senses that their organization genuinely backs them to interpret their tasks as purposeful, see themselves as having a notable impact on results, and perceive greater autonomy in how their duties are carried out. This pattern is in line with prior scholarly evidence (61).

Another key finding of the study is that the meaning and self-determination dimensions of PE positively influence deep emotional labor, lending partial support to H5. People who think their work is meaningful and believe they have autonomy are more inclined to internalize the emotions and behaviors expected by the organization. Thus, emotional labor is not experienced merely as a job requirement but as a personal responsibility. Despite the limited number of studies exploring the link between PE and EL, evidence suggests that autonomy contributes to higher levels of deep emotional labor among employees in call centers, while the self-determination and impact dimensions also act as mediators linking transformational leadership to deep emotional labor (8). These findings corroborate the present study's results.

Conversely, the current study did not identify a significant relationship between POS or PE and surface acting. As such, H1, H4, and H6 were not supported. This outcome is not unexpected, given that surface acting typically stems from external role expectations and obligations, rather than internal motivational or affective processes. Positive organizational perceptions such as empowerment and support are more likely to facilitate deep emotional engagement, rather than compel employees to suppress or fake emotions. Therefore, the findings may suggest that EL is influenced not only by organizational variables but also by individual differences such as satisfaction, personality traits, and intrinsic motivation.

Finally, the current study revealed that the meaning dimension of PE partially mediates the relationship between POS and EL, as a result confirming H7. As employees' POS increases, they are more inclined to see their work as meaningful, which in turn enhances their engagement in deep emotional labor. Although previous research has not directly examined this mediating effect, PE has been shown to operate as a mediator between POS and job satisfaction (61). Given that employee attitudes are foundational to employee behaviors, this prior finding supports the mediating role identified in the current research.

Our results indicate that the effect of POS on EL unfolds not only through external forms of assistance but also through internal motivational pathways linked to particular elements of PE. By showing that the meaning component partially conveys this effect, the study points to a mechanism that earlier theoretical models have largely overlooked, thereby encouraging a revised understanding of the POS–EL linkage. In this regard, the present research provides an original contribution to the EL literature from both a conceptual and an applied perspective.

Implications for Theory

Results of the current study offer meaningful theoretical contributions to both the JD-R model and Social Exchange Theory. Within the framework of the JD-R model, POS—as a key job resource—has a crucial role in strengthening employees' psychological well-being and nurturing their intrinsic motivation, ultimately contributing to a more engaged and efficient work setting. The present study demonstrates that POS enhances employees' PE, which in turn facilitates deeper engagement in EL. This underscores the importance of organizational resources not only in promoting performance outcomes but also in reinforcing employees' intrinsic commitment to their work—particularly in emotionally demanding service roles. The findings align with the principle of reciprocity, wherein employees respond to POS by investing greater emotional effort and displaying more genuine emotional expressions, which is aligned with the Social Exchange Theory perspective. This reciprocal relationship implies that organizational support fosters in employees a moral commitment to respond through genuine EL, thereby enhancing the quality of employee–customer interactions. Overall, the findings emphasize that both POS and PE operate as key mechanisms influencing not only employees' behavioral outcomes but also their emotional experiences within the workplace.

Implications for Practices

Evidence obtained from this research emphasizes the central role of managerial practices that foster a supportive organizational environment, particularly in emotionally demanding work settings such as call centers. Given that perceived organizational support enhances both employees' psychological empowerment and their engagement in deep emotional labor, it is essential for managers to implement strategies that promote meaningful work experiences. These may include assigning tasks that employees perceive as purposeful, designing a more interactive decision-making processes, and expanding their autonomy in managing work-related responsibilities. Such practices not only contribute to greater employee satisfaction but also enhance overall service quality. Moreover, cultivating a work climate that motivates employees to perform emotional labor through intrinsic motivation—rather than merely in response to external expectations—can strengthen the authenticity of employee-customer interactions while mitigating the adverse effects of emotional exhaustion. In view of the evidence presented, it is recommended that organizational leaders and human resource professionals design work systems that prioritize psychological support, foster a sense of purpose, reinforce employee recognition, and facilitate the development of employee competencies.

Limitations and Noted Directions

As with all empirical studies, this research is subject to several limitations that needs be mentioned. First, the data were acquired through self-report measures, which may have led participants to respond in a socially desirable manner, potentially portraying themselves more favorably or in alignment with perceived social norms. This introduces a limitation, as such response tendencies can result in spurious associations between variables or obscure genuine relationships. Second, relying solely on a survey-based research design may increase the likelihood of common method bias, because the data collection relied solely on participants' self-reported perceptions at a single time point. Third, the employment of a convenience sampling approach and the focus on call center employees constrain the generalizability of the results, leaving it uncertain whether comparable outcomes would be observed across other professions or industries.

Additionally, since research draws on data obtained in one temporal snapshot, it is not suited for examining cause–effect mechanisms, or changes that might occur over different periods. Taking together, these limitations indicate that the findings should be interpreted with care, and future studies are encouraged to overcome these methodological constraints to strengthen the validity and practical relevance of the results.

Future Research

The findings indicate that POS and PE are pivotal in promoting employees' deep emotional labor behaviors. Nonetheless, certain methodological limitations—such as the study's cross-sectional nature, reliance on convenience sampling, and the exclusive focus on call center employees—underscore the importance of future research employing broader and more representative samples across multiple sectors. Broadening the research scope in this manner would enhance the external validity of the findings and allow for an assessment of whether similar patterns persist across diverse occupational and organizational settings.

Furthermore, using only self-administered questionnaires may give rise to distortions in responses, particularly when individuals attempt to present themselves favorably. To address this issue in subsequent studies, researchers could incorporate data drawn from multiple informants—for example, complementing employee reports with evaluations from managers, colleagues, or clients.

The present study also revealed that only certain sub-dimensions of PE—such as meaning" and self-determination—significantly influenced deep acting. This underscores the importance of examining the construct of PE in greater depth, particularly given its multidimensional nature. Future studies might explore, for instance, why the competence dimension did not exert a significant influence and investigate the extent to which such dimensions interact with contextual or organizational variables.

Furthermore, future studies could be enriched by including individual-level variables such as personality traits, emotional intelligence, and intrinsic motivation to develop a more holistic understanding of the determinants of EL. In addition, employing longitudinal research designs would make it possible to track changes over time

and yield stronger empirical evidence regarding the causal links among the examined variables.

Conclusion

This study investigated the impact of employees' POS on EL behaviors—defined as the management and expression of emotions as a component of the job—through the mediating role of PE, which reflects employees' sense of competence, meaning, impact, and self-determination in their work. A survey was administered to 200 call center employees in Turkey, and the data were analyzed using SEM. The findings revealed that POS significantly enhances employees' deep acting, referring to the genuine expression of emotions required by their roles. Furthermore, POS enabled employees to find meaning in their work, feel more autonomous at work, and feel they had an impact on important decisions. Furthermore, autonomy and meaning were significant antecedents of deep acting. Importantly, the meaning dimension emerged as a partial mediator in the association between POS and deep acting. Overall, the study demonstrates that both PE, as an intrinsic motivator, and POS, as an external resource, play critical roles in shaping employees' EL strategies in emotionally demanding service environments such as call centers, thereby contributing valuable insights to existing literature.

Abbreviations

EL: Emotional Labor, PE: Psychological Empowerment, PLS-SEM: Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling, POS: Perceived Organizational Support.

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Author Contributions

Jale Balkaş: contributed to study design, data analysis, interpretation of results, manuscript writing, Hülya Gündüz Çekmecelioğlu: contributed to conceptual framing, literature review, theoretical development, critical revision of the manuscript, Meryem Özcan: contributed to literature review, data processing, manuscript editing, Emine Türkkent: contributed to literature review, data collection, manuscript editing.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Declaration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) Assistance

AI tools were used solely to improve the fluency, clarity, and linguistic accuracy of the manuscript, and all intellectual content, interpretations, and conclusions were produced by the authors.

Ethics Approval

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