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EDITED BY

Carmen Moret-Tatay,
Catholic University of Valencia
San Vicente Mártir, Spain

REVIEWED BY

Craig Leth-Steensen,
Carleton University, Canada

*CORRESPONDENCE

Shih-Chin Lee
icestorm@mail.chihlee.edu.tw

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To help others or not: A moderated mediation model of emotional dissonance

Ling Hu¹, Stanley Y. B. Huang², Hung-Xin Li³ and Shih-Chin Lee^{4*}

¹Department of Finance, Hsing Wu University, New Taipei City, Taiwan, ²Ming Chuan University, Master Program of Financial Technology, Taipei City, Taiwan, ³Department of Logistics Management, National Defense University, Taipei City, Taiwan, ⁴Department of Finance, Chihlee University of Technology, New Taipei City, Taiwan

This article proposes a moderated mediation model of emotional dissonance. In the model, emotional leadership negatively affects emotional dissonance, which, in turn, negatively affects helping behavior. Furthermore, the negative effect of emotional dissonance is assumed to be moderated by work-family conflict. Direct effects from both emotional leadership and work-family conflict to helping other behavior are also considered. Previous studies have neglected the mechanism of emotional dissonance, but this paper fills the gap with a moderated mediation model of emotional dissonance. This article not only provides an incremental contribution to the emotional dissonance literature but also suggests means by which companies might enhance employee helping behaviors in order to achieve greater organizational efficiency.

KEYWORDS

emotional dissonance, emotional leadership, help other behavior, work-to-family conflict, emotion regulation

Introduction

The service industry has become the main industrial structure in countries around the world (The World Bank, 2016; Indregard et al., 2018), so exploring emotion regulation mechanisms has become a major topic in the industry (Geisler et al., 2019; Madrid et al., 2020). However, due to the current highly competitive service industry environment, employees often experience emotional dissonance because their emotional resources are insufficient to meet the needs of emotional work (Park et al., 2019).

Emotional dissonance denotes the degree to which individuals show work emotions that are inconsistent with their values (Zapf and Holz, 2006). For example, organizations expect employees to smile and be professional to customers, but such behaviors might not necessarily be in line with the employees' own values, resulting in emotional dissonance. That is, some employees may have the value that, as long as the customer's problems are dealt with, there is no need to show additional emotional behaviors, such as showing a smile or professionalism.

To fill this gap, this article employs emotional leadership (Grandey, 2000) as an antecedent to emotional dissonance. Indeed, the emotional leadership of supervisors can shape an employee's values to conform more to a company's expectations (Huang et al., 2021). In this way, the company can deliver expectations of work emotions to the employee through emotional leaders, thus decreasing the inconsistency between individuals' values and work emotions (i.e., emotional dissonance). For example, by smiling and acting professionally, emotional leaders can convey the behaviors that the organization wants employees to show. Hence, emotional leaders can shape employees' values, which ultimately lead to employees' willingness to smile and be professional themselves. Emotional leadership denotes the degree to which a leader employs consideration, understanding, and respect to transform employees' emotions to meet organizational expectations (Grandey, 2000).

In addition, emotional dissonance can lead to low levels of helping other behaviors in employees because these employees rarely perform helping other behaviors that drain personal resources. Previous research has also examined work-family conflict and its impact on employee negative behavior (Li et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2021) because of the highly competitive service industry environment (Obrenovic et al., 2020). However, the moderating role of work-family conflict has not been examined in the service industry environment because work-family conflict is almost regarded as a driving factor of negative employee behavior. This article argues that work-family conflict can worsen the relationship between emotional dissonance and helping other behaviors, because employees with high levels of work-family conflict should lead to more resource scarcity problems, thereby further exacerbating the effect of emotional dissonance on helping other behaviors. For example, when employees have emotional dissonance, their values are inconsistent with the emotional performance expected by the organization. However, to continue to work, employees must display emotional behaviors that do not conform to their values but meet the organization's expectations, such as smiling and professionalism. Because employees may suppress their anger or sadness to show these emotional behaviors, this will inevitably consume more emotional resources. Moreover, if these employees have stronger work-family conflict, they have over lower resources to show helping other behaviors.

Literature review

This paper proposes a new framework in **Figure 1** that emotional leadership influences emotional dissonance, which then influences helping other behaviors, in the manner that is moderated by work-family conflict.

(1). Emotional leadership and emotional dissonance

Because an emotional leader can transform the original values of employees into the expected ones that meet the need of an organization by caring, understanding, and respecting the needs of employees (Huang et al., 2021), an emotional leader can pass the value expected by the organization to the employees (Shamir et al., 1993), which will eventually lead to the employees' values, meeting organizational expectations of work emotions. That is to say, emotional dissonance occurs when employees display work emotions that are inconsistent with their values (Zapf and Holz, 2006), and emotional leadership can reduce this dissonance through an emotional leadership process. Indeed, a leader is expected to manage the employees in a meaningful way that meets the expectations of the organization based on the theory of meaning management (Smircich and Morgan, 1982), so these employees should show emotional behaviors that are expected by organizations. Therefore, he/she will transmit the expected value of the organization to the subordinates, and also shape the work behavior of the subordinates to meet the expectations of the organization, hence reducing the emotional dissonance of these employees.

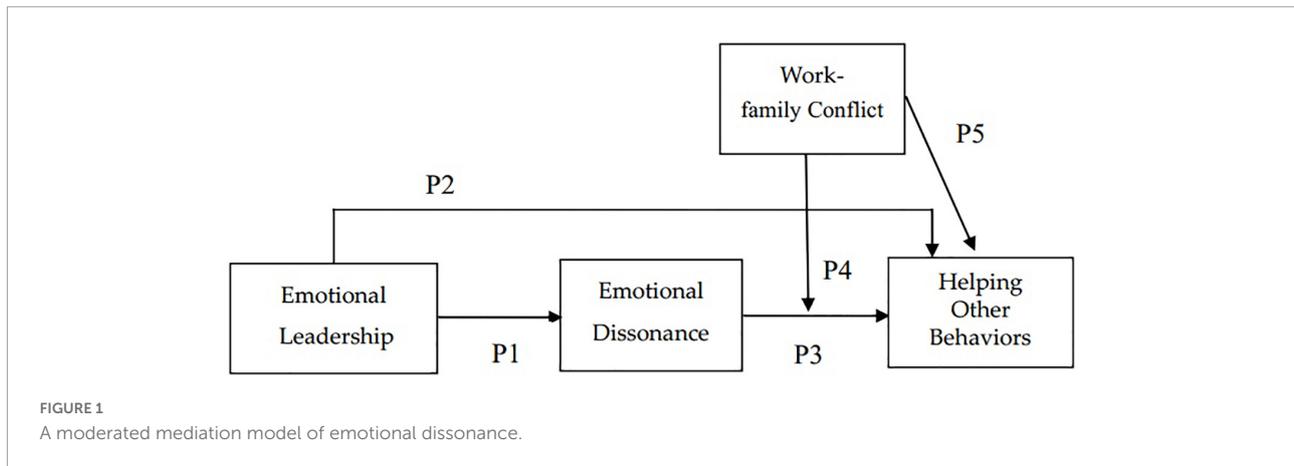
However, to date, there have been no surveys to explore that relationship. In addition, emotional leadership is a work resource that can support employees' emotional needs (Totterdell and Holman, 2003), because the emotional leadership process can guide the optimal management of employees' emotions, thereby generating more emotional resources for being used by employees. In the same vein, emotional leadership can shape the work values of employees into the expected organizations' values, so it will increase employees' positive behaviors more generally, such as helping others. Therefore, this article proposes the two propositions as follows:

Proposition 1: Emotional leadership can decrease emotional dissonance.

Proposition 2: Emotional leadership can increase helping-other behaviors.

(2). Emotional dissonance and helping other behaviors

Emotion regulation is an element of emotional work, which includes various positive and negative emotions of employees



(Zapf and Holz, 2006). An important dimension of emotion regulation is emotional dissonance (Zapf, 2002), which refers to the fact that employees express emotions that are in line with a company's expectations but are contrary to their emotional values. When employees are immersed in a state of emotional dissonance, they exhibit various negative behaviors, such as emotional exhaustion, absenteeism, and illness (Indregard et al., 2016). Indeed, when employees' emotional resources are unable to cope with job demands, they may display emotional exhaustion or absenteeism to preserve the last few resources. Since these employees have few resources, they may conserve resources by reducing helping-other behaviors. Employees are thoughtful in allocating key resources (Macan, 1994), and they should reduce non-performance-related helping behaviors in the absence of personal resources.

Proposition 3: Emotional dissonance can decrease helping other behaviors.

(3). Work-family conflict, emotional dissonance, and helping other behaviors

Work-family conflict denotes a "form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect" (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985, p. 777). That is to say, employees invest most of their resources in their work because these employees need to earn money to maintain their families. Based on the conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989), this will cause these employees to go home with very few resources. If employees occur high levels of work-family conflict, it follows that these employees do not have sufficient resources to meet work and family needs. Therefore, a high level of work-family conflict will further deteriorate the relationship between emotional dissonance and helping-other behaviors, because these employees with high-level emotional dissonance have little resources to yield helping-other behavior.

In the same vein, if employees do not have sufficient resources to meet work and family needs, these employees must reduce helping-others behavior to hold their resources. Therefore, this article proposes the two propositions as follows:

Proposition 4: Work-family conflict can moderate the relationship between emotional dissonance and helping-other behaviors

Proposition 5: Work-family conflict can decrease helping-other behaviors.

Discussion

This article proposes a new model of emotion regulation to predict the cognitive processes underlying helping behaviors, which is unique and cannot be explained by past models. Emotion regulation has emerged as an important antecedent of employee performance, as many negative employee behaviors are associated with the demands incurred by emotion regulation, such as emotional exhaustion (Alsashe et al., 2021), counterproductive behaviors (Huang et al., 2021), and disorders of emotion (Greening et al., 2014). However, past investigations have not explored the relationship between emotional leadership and emotional dissonance to predict helping behaviors. They have also not considered the role of work-family conflict as an important moderating variable, which could significantly advance the literature on emotion regulation.

In addition, contemporary businesses must develop strategies to deal with the emotional issues of employees, as employees are an important source of performance and competitive advantage. Indeed, emotional problems lead to many negative employee behaviors. This article considers emotional leadership as a significant organizational leadership mechanism because it should not only alleviate

emotional dissonance but also increases helping behaviors. Therefore, emotional leadership could be regarded as important educational and training content for cultivating executive leadership.

Finally, although this article proposes an emotion regulation model, future investigations should adopt empirical data to verify the model's validity. Moreover, a multi-country sample should be used to verify the external validity of the model.

Author contributions

All authors listed have made a substantial, direct, and intellectual contribution to the work, and approved it for publication.

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Conflict of interest

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