

# Self-verification striving and employee outcomes

## The mediating effects of emotional labor of South Korean employees

Self-verification  
striving

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### Abstract

**Purpose** – The purpose of this paper is to test whether self-verification striving serves as an individual difference antecedent of emotional labor and explore whether various emotional labor tactics acted as mediating mechanisms through which self-verification striving relates to employee outcomes.

**Design/methodology/approach** – The sample used in this paper consisted of supervisor–subordinate dyads working in six hotels in South Korea and used multi-level analyses and the Monte Carlo method to test the research hypotheses presented in this paper.

**Findings** – Self-verification striving was positively and directly related to job performance as well as two out of three forms of emotional labor (i.e. the expression of naturally felt emotions and deep acting). Self-verification striving also indirectly related to job satisfaction through the expression of naturally felt emotions and indirectly related to job performance through deep acting.

**Practical implications** – The findings of this paper suggest that organizations should consider self-verification striving as an employment selection criterion and provide training programs to help their customer service employees engage in appropriate types of emotional labor.

**Originality/value** – This paper is the first to explore the underlying mechanisms through which self-verification striving relates to employee outcomes. It also empirically bolsters the notion that expressing naturally felt emotions is an important means of authentic self-expression that positively contributes to job

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satisfaction. Further, the authors found that self-verification striving positively relates to job performance partially through deep acting. Moreover, they have shown that self-verification striving, as an individual differences variable, is an antecedent of different types of emotional labor.

**Keywords** Job satisfaction, Job performance, Emotional labor, Self-verification striving

**Paper type** Research paper

## Introduction

Although self-verification (i.e. the confirmation of oneself) is an important universal goal (Swann, 1983), recent research has demonstrated that individuals differ in the extent to which this motivation serves as a personal priority (Cable and Kay, 2012; Cable *et al.*, 2013; Moore *et al.*, 2017). Self-verification striving refers to a tendency to help others to see themselves as they do (Cable and Kay, 2012). This disposition benefits not only individuals, but also organizations via its impact on employee job performance, citizenship behavior and job satisfaction (Cable and Kay, 2012; Cable *et al.*, 2013). Self-verification also enhances the cohesiveness and performance of teams (Swann *et al.*, 2004). For example, research indicates that when people in small groups receive self-verifying feedback, their creative performance improves (Swann *et al.*, 2003). Self-verification also promotes predictability in workgroups, leading to more comfortable social relations (Talaifar and Swann, 2017).

Although research has confirmed the positive linkage between self-verification striving and positive outcomes related to organizational performance, little is known about the mediating mechanisms through which self-verification striving exerts its effects (Cable and Kay, 2012; Cable *et al.*, 2013). According to the self-verification literature (Wood *et al.*, 2008), an important way to reveal one's true self is to express emotions consistent with one's current psychological and emotional state. Conceptually, high self-verifiers should be less inclined to disguise their feelings and more inclined to express their naturally felt emotions. However, even high self-verifiers sometimes need to express emotions that differ from their true feelings while they are on the job; that is, they need to engage in emotional labor (i.e. the process of managing feelings and emotional displays in response to organizational expectations, Diefendorff *et al.*, 2005; Gabriel *et al.*, 2015). In addition, the literature has shown that emotional labor significantly affects job satisfaction and performance (Hülshager and Schewe, 2011; Kammeyer-Mueller *et al.*, 2013). It is therefore critical to examine how high self-verifiers adapt to organizational display rules differently from low self-verifiers. Thus, one goal of the present study is to explore the mediating effects of emotional labor on the relationship between self-verification striving and employee outcomes (i.e. job satisfaction and performance).

In addition, we aim to extend our current knowledge of individual-difference antecedents of emotional labor tactics. As Grandey (2000) proposed her seminal framework, there has been increasing interest in identifying individual differences that predict various types of emotional labor (Cossette and Hess, 2012; Diefendorff *et al.*, 2005; Grandey and Melloy, 2017; Kammeyer-Mueller *et al.*, 2013). To extend this literature, we examine the direct association between self-verification striving and three distinct forms of emotional labor: the expression of naturally felt emotions, surface acting and deep acting. Including the expression of naturally felt emotions serves as a notable contribution to the emotional labor literature, given that this type of emotional labor has received the least amount of empirical attention in the literature (Cossette, 2014; Diefendorff *et al.*, 2005).

Moreover, our study contributes to self-verification striving literature by testing the impact of self-verification striving on performance outside the USA. Researchers have demonstrated that people view the self differently across countries. For example, people in collectivistic cultures (e.g. East Asians) tend to view the self as "a priori fundamentally

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interdependent with others; that is, the self is inherently social—an integral part of the collective”, while those in individualistic cultures (e.g. North Americans) try to “be true to their own internal structures of preferences, rights, convictions, and goals” (Markus and Kitayama, 1994, pp. 568-579). Accordingly, it is possible that self-verification striving on employee outcomes in collectivistic cultures may be somewhat different from those in individualistic cultures. Thus, as noted by Swann (2011) and Cable *et al.* (2013), it would be valuable to cross-validate the linkage between self-verification striving and employee outcomes found in the West in a collectivistic culture (e.g. South Korea).

## Literature review

### *Self-verification striving and employee outcomes*

People seek to self-verify, in part, to reinforce their perception that the world is coherent, predictable and controllable (Swann, 2011). The desire to enhance the perceived stability of one’s environment stems from the fact that unfamiliar and inexplicable events can be distressing (Byrne, 1971). According to Swann (1983), individuals try to reduce environmental ambiguity by striving to bring others’ perceptions into harmony with their self-image.

Importantly, self-verification striving relates to but is different from authenticity. Roberts *et al.* (2009, p. 151) defined authenticity as “the subjective experience of alignment between one’s internal experiences and external expressions”. Here, internal experiences include people’s thoughts, feelings and behavioral preferences. So authenticity focuses on intrapersonal congruence between genuine thoughts, feelings, behavioral preferences and expressions (Roberts *et al.*, 2009). Self-verification striving, alternatively, is a trait that varies across individuals and focuses on interpersonal aspects (i.e. accurately letting others know who we are, Cable *et al.*, 2013; Swann, 2011). In this study, we incorporate some of the findings related to authenticity into our hypothesizing because self-verification striving and authenticity are related concepts (i.e. high self-verifiers are also likely to act authentically) and because self-verification striving has frequently been couched in authenticity language in prior work (Chen *et al.*, 2006).

Self-verification striving has several implications in work settings. Individuals tend to seek self-verification in enduring relationships (e.g. with long-term colleagues; Giesler and Swann, 1999). As it is quite difficult to maintain an inauthentic self over long periods of time and in a variety of situations, acting authentically at work may be more advantageous than acting inauthentically. Nevertheless, not all employees are driven to engage in self-verifying behaviors (Cable and Kay, 2012). Those pretending to be someone else at work, however, may experience identity conflict, depleting the number of resources available to perform their jobs (Grandey, 2003). Self-control theory (Nye, 1958) provides insight into how this resource depletion may occur. Exercising self-control can lead to later decrements in self-control attempts, as each relies on the same pool of internal resources (Muraven and Baumeister, 2000). Stated alternatively, we posit that promoting a false image may deplete the cognitive energy resources at one’s disposal (Hobfoll, 1989), negatively impacting job performance. Alternatively, by acting authentically, high self-verifiers can invest these surplus resources in their core work tasks. Consistent with this, Cable *et al.* (2013) found that individuals were more likely to physically and cognitively engage in tasks and to perform effectively when their initial socialization focused on authentic self-expression rather than on building a strong organizational identity.

In addition to performance gains, we expected that the extent to which employees self-verify impacts their job satisfaction. A match between others’ expectations and one’s behavior increases interpersonal trust and attraction (Whitener *et al.*, 1998). Self-verification

striving should contribute to this consistency by decreasing the chance that others will form overly negative or positive appraisals and expect too little or too much (Swann, 2011). Accordingly, employees who engage in self-verification may be more satisfied with their work relationships, which positively relates to overall job satisfaction (Hackman and Oldham, 1980). In this study, we examine how self-verification striving is linked to job performance and satisfaction both *directly* and *indirectly* via emotional labor.

#### *Types of emotional labor*

Some jobs (e.g. customer service) demand the adherence of employees to display rule requirements (Diefendorff *et al.*, 2005). In other words, employees are sometimes expected to engage in emotional labor by feigning unfeigned feelings in an effort to regulate their emotions (Grandey and Melloy, 2017). For example, employees may be expected to conceal their negative emotions when talking to customers to protect the image of the organization. As identified by Hochschild (1983), people can disguise what they feel and pretend to feel what they do not, a tactic called “surface acting”, or they can reappraise work events and modify their thoughts and feelings to make their expressions more genuine, known as “deep acting”. Whereas deep acting involves the modification of both actual and displayed emotions, surface acting only involves the modification of displayed emotions (Grandey, 2003). As Diefendorff *et al.* (2005) and Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) noted, however, another option exists: expressing the emotions one is actually experiencing. The expression of naturally felt emotion can be considered a facet of emotional labor in that employees must be careful to express their true emotions in a professional manner (Diefendorff *et al.*, 2005). Research suggests that displaying naturally felt emotions at work may be more prevalent than either surface acting or deep acting (Cossette, 2014).

Several prior scholars have examined the different forms of emotional labor in the hospitality context. For example, Luo *et al.* (2018) found that transformational leadership positively impacted service recovery performance through increased deep acting for hospitality employees from the USA, but had the same positive impact by lowering surface acting for Chinese employees. Chen *et al.* (2019) noted that frontline service workers experiencing harmonious passion were able to avoid emotional exhaustion because of their greater usage of deep acting. However, workers who engaged in surface acting while experiencing obsessive passion were likely to suffer from exhaustion. In the present study, we build upon this prior work by showing how individual characteristics can differentially relate to various emotional labor tactics for hospitality workers.

#### *Individual difference antecedents of emotional labor*

In her model of emotional labor, Grandey (2000) proposed that individual differences including gender, emotional expressivity and emotional intelligence relate to emotional labor. Grandey and Melloy (2017) later expanded this model to also include social status and cultural values among the individual difference predictors. Other empirical studies have further emphasized the important role of individual differences in performing emotional labor. Schaubroeck and Jones (2000), for example, found that female (rather than male) employees were more likely to perceive demands to suppress positive emotion, and that both positive and negative affectivity were significantly related to perceived demands to suppress negative emotion. In discussing their findings, they surmised that “dispositional variables appear to be plausible antecedents of perceived emotional labor” (Schaubroeck and Jones, 2000, p. 179). Kammeyer-Mueller *et al.* (2013) concluded that negative and positive affectivity significantly affected surface and deep acting. Diefendorff *et al.* (2005) demonstrated the significant effects of Big-Five personality on emotional labor strategies

(e.g. agreeableness was negatively related to surface acting and was positively related to both deep acting and the expression of naturally felt emotions). Our study adds another variable to this collection of antecedents: self-verification striving. **Figure 1** depicts our conceptual model, which we explicate in more detail in the sections that follow.

## Research hypotheses

### *The direct effects of self-verification striving on job satisfaction and performance*

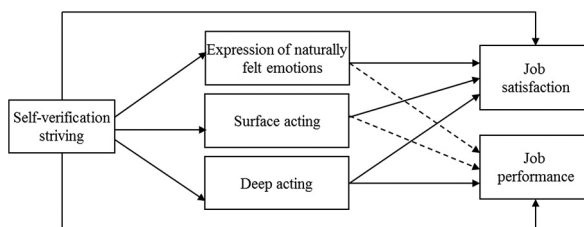
As discussed in our literature review, prior studies have noted that employees high in self-verification striving are both more satisfied at work and perform better (Cable and Kay, 2012; Cable *et al.*, 2013). By seeking to let others know them as they know themselves, people experience psychological benefits (i.e. more comfort and less anxiety) that help them work with others effectively. Given that self- and peer-perceptions are consistent, high self-verifiers engender more trust and group identification with others in the workplace (Swann *et al.*, 2004), leading to more positive attitudes and better job performance.

Although most of the extant self-verification striving research has been conducted in the Western context (Cable and Kay, 2012; Cable *et al.*, 2013), the theoretical arguments behind its effects should not be culturally bound. For example, no matter one's cultural background, confirmation of oneself can lead people to experience more comfort and less anxiety (Seih *et al.*, 2013; Swann, 2011), helping them to work with others effectively. In preliminary support of this idea, Cable *et al.* (2013) found self-verification striving to be positively associated with employee performance among Indian workers. Further, Kim *et al.* (2017) showed that self-verification perceptions (i.e. whether or not individuals believe that peers view them accurately) were positively and significantly linked to the in-role and extra-role performance of South Korean workers. Thus, we hypothesized that:

- H1. Self-verification striving positively relates to the (a) job satisfaction and (b) job performance of South Korean employees.

### *The relationship between self-verification striving and emotional labor types*

Prior scholars have noted that people tend to seek social environments that can provide self-confirmatory feedback (Swann, 2011). That is, when people choose occupations or organizations, they generally “contemplate the extent to which each of their alternatives will be likely to reap self-confirmatory reactions in the future” (Swann, 1983, p. 48). In particular, high self-verifiers tend to seek organizations whose job requirements and emotional display rules are consistent with their self-image (Swann, 2011). High self-verifiers who are low in agreeableness, for example, may not want to work in customer service jobs that require them to frequently interact with customers in a cheerful manner. If they experience



**Note:** Dotted lines were not hypothesized

**Figure 1.**  
Hypothesized model  
for the linkage  
between self-  
verification striving  
to employee  
outcomes through  
emotional labor

repetitive self-discrepant feedback (e.g. being required to express emotions that they are not naturally experiencing), then high self-verifiers may leave the organization in an effort to reaffirm their self-concepts (Swann, 1983). Thus, upon first consideration, we may expect that high self-verifiers would be more likely to express naturally felt emotions rather than engage in surface or deep acting.

However, employees – even high self-verifiers – may sometimes need to display emotions that are not naturally felt (e.g. cheerfully greeting customers despite experiencing negative emotions such as sadness and anger). This is particularly true in hospitality occupations where emotional displays are tightly scripted because of frequent contact with customers. In situations where high self-verifiers need to display emotions that differ from what they feel, we predict that they will choose to engage in deep rather than surface acting for several reasons. First, high self-verifiers are more at ease when their internal experiences and external expressions are consonant. This leads us to believe that they will seek to feel – rather than fake – the emotions that they are expected to display. This should be more psychologically comfortable than engaging in surface acting, which can create tension because of the disconnect between inner feelings and outward expressions (Grandey, 2003).

Second, high self-verifiers may choose to deep act rather than surface act because of their drive to help others to understand them as they understand themselves. Portraying false emotions runs directly counter to that drive. When faced with inconsistencies between internal emotions and externally mandated display rules, it may be more palatable for high self-verifiers to modify their feelings to match what they are expected to display. Although both deep acting and surface acting entail some deviation from what employees initially feel, changing how one feels rather than faking it seems more in line with the motivation to help others to see us as we truly are:

- H2. Self-verification striving positively relates to (a) the expression of naturally felt emotions and (b) deep acting, but negatively relates to (c) surface acting.

*The indirect relationship between self-verification striving and work outcomes via emotional labor*

When considering our constructs of interest, we expected that the various types of emotional labor tactics would have differential relationships with job performance and satisfaction. First, employees may choose to forego acting altogether in lieu of expressing their naturally felt emotions at work. When employees display the emotions they are naturally feeling, they likely experience little or no emotional dissonance, resulting in more enjoyment of work (Ashforth and Humphrey, 1993). Supporting this, Hoffman (2016) found that it was helpful to allow employees – within reasonable bounds – to avoid the unhealthy build-up of negative emotions by moderately expressing anger in the workplace. Consistent with this, Cossette and Hess (2012) found that the expression of naturally felt emotions was positively associated with job satisfaction among employees in jobs with frequent customer contact.

The expression of naturally felt emotions may also help employees perform their jobs effectively in some work settings because employees do not need to spend resources to align internal emotional states with mandated display rules. However, we note that the expression of naturally felt emotions will not lead to good performance outcomes if it does not match the employer's customer-service expectations. For example, some employees may feel indignant when dealing with unreasonable customers. In cases like this, expressing naturally felt negative emotions may reduce customer service ratings and thereby negatively influence performance. Thus, it is conceivable that the simultaneous positive and negative effects of the expression of naturally felt emotions on job performance might cancel

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one another out. To summarize, we expect that self-verification striving is positively related to the expression of naturally felt emotions, which, in turn, positively relates to job satisfaction but is unrelated to job performance:

*H3a.* Self-verification striving is positively and indirectly associated with job satisfaction through the increased expression of naturally felt emotions.

Similarly, and in line with prior research (Hülsheger and Schewe, 2011; Kammeyer-Mueller *et al.*, 2013), we expect that surface acting would be negatively related to job satisfaction but would be unrelated to job performance. Kehr's (2004) propositions about volitional behavior and resource depletion provide a possible explanation for why that may be the case. Volition involves self-regulatory strategies to support explicit actions against competing behavioral impulses. Kehr suggested that volitional regulation may have negative side effects including blocked cognitive functioning. The resulting resource drain may partly account for surface acting's association with increased emotional exhaustion, negative mood and job dissatisfaction (e.g. Shanock *et al.*, 2013). Employees who are surface acting may also experience emotional dissonance, which can increase emotional exhaustion (Grandey, 2003). As such, we expect that surface acting will decrease job satisfaction, as employees engaging in such behavior view their jobs as forcing them to engage in emotional faking. However, surface acting does not unilaterally translate into poor job performance; surface actors are displaying emotions required to get their job done effectively. Indeed, two meta-analytic studies (Hülsheger and Schewe, 2011; Kammeyer-Mueller *et al.*, 2013) have shown that surface acting is not significantly related to job performance. In sum, we expect that self-verification would be negatively related to surface acting, which then negatively relates to job satisfaction (resulting in a positive indirect effect). However, given that there is no significant association between surface acting and job performance, we made no such indirect effect prediction for job performance:

*H3b.* Self-verification striving is positively and indirectly associated with job satisfaction through decreased surface acting.

Finally, in contrast with surface acting, we expect that deep acting is more positively related to performance outcomes. Deep actors internalize the positive emotions they are required to display, thus creating more peak experiences with customers and coworkers (i.e. work-related flow, Xanthopoulou *et al.*, 2018) that can prove to be both job relevant and personally satisfying (Hülsheger and Schewe, 2011). This notion is bolstered by the results from the Kammeyer-Mueller *et al.* (2013) meta-analysis showing that deep acting positively relates to both job satisfaction and job performance. Another reason for the observed positive associations between deep acting and job performance may be that deep actors are more likely to conform to what their employer values by adjusting their beliefs and emotions. So, if the organization's ethos is "customers come first", then deep actors may be inclined to integrate that belief into how they view their job and how they perform it. Once this attitudinal and behavioral shift occurs, deep acting employees should need fewer cognitive resources to enact organizationally preferred behaviors. Cumulatively, the preceding discussions imply indirect effect models wherein self-verification striving relates to more deep acting, which, in turn, positively relates to job performance and satisfaction:

*H3c.* Self-verification striving is positively and indirectly related to job satisfaction through increased deep acting.

## Method

### *Participants and procedures*

We collected our data from full-time supervisor–subordinate dyads working in six small-sized hotels (ranging from 33 to 68 full-time employees) in South Korea using a convenience sampling method. One of the co-authors obtained the participation of these six hotels based on a list of companies that cooperate with his university. The hotels in this study actively train employees to express the desired emotions to customers. The supervisors and subordinates in the selected hotels worked in three functional divisions (i.e. front and room, food and beverage and sales and marketing) and were in regular contact with their customers.

Hotels provide an appropriate source of participants for our study. The global hospitality industry is quite competitive, and many hotels seek to differentiate themselves by focusing on creating a luxurious service experience (Harkison *et al.*, 2018) and ensuring that customers are a priority (Zhou *et al.*, 2009). Despite these organizational strategies, prior scholars have reported that employees may sometimes choose to *sabotage* service. As an example, Lee and Ok (2014) found that emotional dissonance resulting from emotional labor constitute a major source of service sabotage. In addition, emotional labor is quite pervasive in the hotel industry (Kim, 2008; Lam and Chen, 2012). Accordingly, hotels provide a setting in which employees are known to engage in emotional labor, but also one in which there is evidence that emotional labor can have costly negative consequences.

With these motivations in mind, we asked 236 full-time employees who do not have direct reports (nearly the entire population of the sampled six hotels) and their supervisors to complete the questionnaire at different places (i.e. not in the same room) during working hours. Thus, the possible negative effects of supervisors on subordinates' responses may not be significant. The subordinates assessed their level of self-verification striving, three types of emotional labor and job satisfaction, while the supervisors assessed subordinate job performance. In total, we received completed data for 145 employees nested under 24 supervisors (response rate = 61.4 per cent). Male employees comprised approximately 54 per cent of all the subordinates, who had an average age of 35.9 years ( $SD = 9.9$ ) and averaged 6.2 years of organizational tenure ( $SD = 4.2$ ). For supervisors, 68 per cent of the 24 supervisors were male, and they were, on average, 41.6 years old ( $SD = 5.2$ ) with an average organizational tenure of 10.6 years ( $SD = 5.4$ ).

### *Measures*

Following the translation and back-translation methods described by Brislin (1986), we translated the questionnaires that were initially written in English into Korean. Our variables were assessed using a seven-point Likert-type scale (1 = “*Strongly disagree*” and 7 = “*Strongly agree*”) with the exception of job performance. For job performance measure that supervisors assessed, we used a five-point scale (1 = “*Never*” and 5 = “*Always*”) to increase response rate and quality because supervisors need to evaluate many subordinates (Hayes, 1992) and to be consistent with the original scale of Williams and Anderson (1991).

*Self-verification striving.* We assessed the degree of self-verification striving of subordinates using the eight-item scale described by Cable and Kay's (2012). Sample items include “I like to ‘be myself’ rather than trying to act like someone I’m not” and “I’d rather have people know who I really am than have them expect too much out of me”.



*Emotional labor types.* We measured subordinates' emotional labor tactics using Diefendorff *et al.*'s (2005) fourteen-item scale (i.e. seven items for surface action, four items for deep acting and three items for the expression of naturally felt emotions). An example item for expression of naturally felt emotions is "The emotions I express at work are genuine". An example item for surface acting is "I put on a 'mask' in order to display the emotions I need for the job". An example item for deep acting is "I try to actually experience the emotions that I must show at my workplace".

*Job satisfaction.* We assessed subordinates' job satisfaction using Edwards and Rothbard's (1999) three-item scale. The three items are "My job is very enjoyable", "In general, I am satisfied with my job" and "All in all, the job I have is great".

*Job performance.* The supervisors were asked to assess the job performance of their subordinates using the seven-item measure of Williams and Anderson (1991). Example items include "Meets formal performance requirements of the job" and "Adequately completes assigned duties".

*Control variables.* To better estimate the hypothesized effects, we controlled for the employees' sex, age and organizational tenure. These variables may relate to work attitudes and behaviors (Van Dyne and Pierce, 2004).

### Analysis

Given that the same supervisor often assessed several subordinates, we ran multi-level analyses using Mplus 7.3 (Muthén and Muthén, 2012). We used a three-level model with employees at Level 1, supervisors at Level 2 and organizations at Level 3. Specifically, we used an intercept-only model at the supervisor and organization level (i.e. without including any specific supervisor- or organization-level variables) to take into account the potentially confounding influence of supervisors on the links tested. In addition, we examined the indirect effects of self-verification striving on job satisfaction and performance via emotional labor using a path analysis model to test multiple mediators simultaneously and the Monte Carlo simulations to generate confidence intervals (CIs) as suggested by Preacher *et al.* (2010).

### Results

We performed confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs) using AMOS 18.0 on the six key research variables (self-verification striving, expressing naturally felt emotions, deep acting, surface acting, job satisfaction and job performance). We made three-item parcels for the measures with more than three items using an item-to-construct-balance method to adequately evaluate our model at an appropriate parameter-to-sample-size ratio (Hair *et al.*, 1995; Little *et al.*, 2002). We examined the model fit using comparative fit index (CFI), root-mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), Tucker–Lewis index (TLI) and chi-square statistics. The results show that the six-factor model fits the data well ( $\chi^2[137, N = 145] = 258.39$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 1.89$ , CFI = 0.92; RMSEA = 0.08; TLI = 0.90). The six-factor model fits the data better than either a five-factor model integrating self-verification striving and the expression of naturally felt emotion ( $\chi^2[142, N = 145] = 314.57$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 2.22$ , CFI = 0.88; RMSEA = 0.09; TLI = 0.86; chi-square difference test,  $\chi^2[5, N = 145] = 56.18$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) or a one-factor model ( $\chi^2[152, N = 145] = 1157.14$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 7.61$ , CFI = 0.31; RMSEA = 0.21; TLI = 0.22; chi-square difference test,  $\chi^2[15, N = 145] = 898.75$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). For the employee-reported variables (i.e. self-verification striving, expressing naturally felt emotions, deep acting, surface acting and job satisfaction), the CFA result shows that the five-factor model demonstrates good model fit ( $\chi^2[94, N = 145] = 193.24$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 2.06$ , CFI = 0.92; RMSEA = 0.08; TLI = 0.90) that is better than either a four-factor model combining self-verification striving and the expression of naturally felt emotion ( $\chi^2[98, N = 145] = 248.44$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 2.54$ , CFI = 0.88; RMSEA = 0.10;

TLI = 0.85; chi-square difference test,  $\chi^2 [4, N = 145] = 55.2, p < 0.01$ ] or a one-factor model ( $\chi^2 [104, N = 145] = 872.81, \chi^2/df = 8.39, CFI = 0.36; RMSEA = 0.23; TLI = 0.27$ ; chi-square difference test,  $\chi^2 (10, N = 145) = 679.57, p < 0.01$ ). Taken together, the CFA results provide good support for the distinctiveness of the variables used in this study.

Table I presents the means, standard deviations and correlations among the study variables. The average reliability of the measures was 0.86, with all reliability estimates higher than 0.70. As expected, self-verification striving was positively and significantly related to job performance ( $r = 0.28, p < 0.01$ ) but, surprisingly, was not significantly related to job satisfaction (though the effect was in the hypothesized direction;  $r = 0.12, n.s.$ )[1].

H1 proposed that self-verification striving would positively and directly relate to job satisfaction and job performance among South Korean hospitality employees. The results showed that self-verification striving was significantly and positively related to job performance ( $\gamma = 0.14, p < 0.01$ ), but not job satisfaction ( $\gamma = 0.18, n.s.$ ), supporting H1b but not H1a.

H2 stated that self-verification striving would positively relate to the expression of naturally felt emotions and deep acting, but negatively relate to surface acting. Our results were largely consistent with these predictions, supporting H2a ( $\gamma = 0.58, p < 0.01$ ) and H2b ( $\gamma = 0.37, p < 0.01$ ), but not H2c (though the effects were in the hypothesized negative direction;  $\gamma = -0.23, n.s.$ ).

H3 proposed that self-verification striving would indirectly relate to job satisfaction and job performance through different types of emotional labor. The path analytic results (shown in Figure 2) demonstrate that the expression of naturally felt emotions was positively and significantly associated with job satisfaction ( $\gamma = 0.30, p < 0.01$ ), but that surface acting and deep acting were not ( $\gamma = 0.06, n.s.; 0.03, n.s.$ , respectively). In contrast, deep acting was positively and significantly related to job performance ( $\gamma = 0.33, p < 0.01$ ), whereas the expression of naturally felt emotions and surface acting were not ( $\gamma = -0.12, n.s.; -0.10, n.s.$ ). In addition, the Monte Carlo method results reported in Table II show that the indirect effect of self-verification striving on job satisfaction through the expression of naturally felt emotions was significant (indirect effect = 0.11, 95 per cent CI = [0.02, 0.19]). Thus, H3a was supported. However, the indirect effect of self-verification striving on job satisfaction through surface acting was not significant (indirect effect = -0.01, 95 per cent CI = [-0.04, 0.03]), failing to support H3b. For the indirect effects of deep acting, Table II shows that the indirect effect of self-verification striving on job performance through deep acting was significant (indirect effect = 0.04, 95 per cent CI = [0.01, 0.08]). However, the indirect effect of self-verification striving on job satisfaction through deep acting was not

**Table I.**  
Means, standard deviations, correlations and reliabilities

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Age	35.88	9.90	-								
2. Sex (0 = male, 1 = female)	-	-	0.10	-							
3. Organizational tenure	6.20	4.18	0.47	0.05	-						
4. Self-verification striving	4.86	0.84	-0.08	0.05	0.01	(0.81)					
5. Surface acting	3.75	1.10	-0.26	0.01	-0.21	-0.14	(0.86)				
6. Deep acting	3.93	1.18	0.14	-0.07	-0.09	0.23	0.19	(0.88)			
7. Expression of naturally-felt emotions	4.51	1.23	0.28	-0.03	0.17	0.31	-0.40	0.36	(0.89)		
8. Job satisfaction	4.25	1.16	0.62	-0.03	0.07	0.12	-0.06	0.14	0.29	(0.85)	
9. Job performance	3.67	0.59	0.06	-0.06	0.07	0.28	0.01	0.29	0.09	0.18	(0.87)

**Notes:** ( $N = 145$ ). Reliabilities are in parentheses. For all correlation above  $|0.17|, p \leq 0.05$ ; and above  $|0.22|, p \leq 0.01$

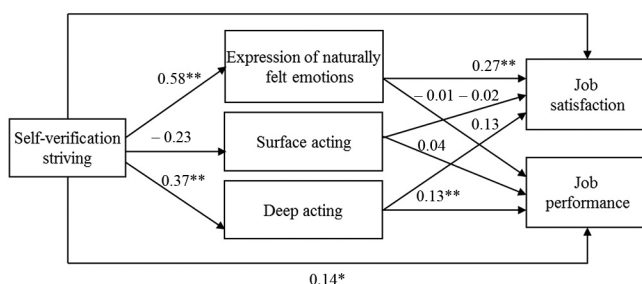
significant (indirect effect = 0.05, 95 per cent CI = [-0.01, 0.11]). Taken together, *H3c* was not supported, but *H3d* was supported.

Given that job satisfaction has been positively linked to job performance (Judge *et al.*, 2001), as a supplementary analysis, we tested whether self-verification striving's effects on job performance operated through the expression of naturally felt emotions and job satisfaction. The path analytic results based on Mplus 7.3 showed that the linkages between self-verification striving and the expression of naturally felt emotions ( $\gamma = 0.38, p < 0.01$ ), between the expression of naturally felt emotions and job satisfaction ( $\gamma = 0.29, p < 0.01$ ) and between job satisfaction and job performance ( $\gamma = 0.18, p < 0.05$ ) were all significant. In addition, the Monte Carlo method showed that the indirect effect of self-verification striving on job performance through the expression naturally felt emotions and job satisfaction was significant (indirect effect = 0.014, 95 per cent CI = [0.002, 0.03]).

### Discussion and conclusions

#### Conclusions

Our results revealed that self-verification striving significantly related to job performance, yet failed to relate to job satisfaction. Self-verification striving was positively related to job performance through deep acting and to job satisfaction through the expression of naturally felt emotions. Stated alternatively, self-verifying employees are happier if they are allowed to show their true emotions. They also perform better when they let others know who they truly



**Notes:** Unstandardized path coefficients for the hypothesized model \* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$

**Figure 2.** Results for the linkage between self-verification striving to employee outcomes through emotional labor

Indirect effect	Estimate	SE	95% Confidence intervals	
			Lower 2.5 (%)	Upper 2.5 (%)
SVS-SA-JS	-0.01	0.02	-0.04	0.03
SVS-SA-JP	-0.01	0.01	-0.03	0.01
SVS-DA-JS	0.05	0.03	-0.01	0.11
SVS-DA-JP	<i>0.04</i>	<i>0.02</i>	<i>0.01</i>	<i>0.08</i>
SVS-EFE-JS	<i>0.11</i>	<i>0.04</i>	<i>0.02</i>	<i>0.19</i>
SVS-EFE-JP	0.03	0.02	-0.01	0.07

**Notes:**  $N = 145$  employees and 24 supervisors. Indirect effects in italic are significant (i.e. the confidence interval does not include zero). SVS = self-verification striving; SA = surface acting; DA = deep acting; EFE = expression of naturally felt emotions; JP = job performance; JS = job satisfaction

**Table II.** Indirect effects of self-verification striving on employee outcomes through emotional labor

are, even if this means changing their emotions to accommodate external rules. Hospitality organizations should encourage employees to bring their whole selves to work and to adopt emotional display rules as their own or reveal their true emotions as appropriate. If leaders are able to clarify the behavioral expectations of the job while simultaneously supporting employees to be open and authentic, then employees may be both happier and better performers. These results support and extend Cable and his colleagues' (Cable and Kay, 2012; Cable *et al.*, 2013) findings by demonstrating the positive effects self-verification striving on job performance among job incumbents and by examining the mediating mechanisms that underlie this relationship. In the sections below, we delve into the implications of our findings, which may be of interest to scholars from a wide range of disciplines including hospitality, management and human resource management.

#### *Theoretical implications*

Our findings offer several important theoretical implications for the self-verification striving and emotional research streams. It is noteworthy that – contrary to prior research findings in service contexts (Bhave and Glomb, 2016) and a meta-analytic study (i.e. Kammeyer-Mueller *et al.*, 2013) – neither deep acting nor surface acting significantly related to job satisfaction. It is plausible that both surface and deep acting have null effects on job satisfaction among South Korean employees. In South Korea, especially in the hotel industry, employees are strongly expected to adhere to the norm of “service with a smile” (Sohn and Kim, 2015). As a result, acting (either surface or deep) may be an in-role behavior that is accepted by employees as simply part of the job. Engaging in acting, therefore, may not substantially affect employees' attitudes toward their job.

Our findings also contribute to the emotional labor literature. Prior studies have predominantly focused on the consequences of emotional labor, giving comparatively less attention to the role of individual difference antecedents (Cossette and Hess, 2012; Grandey, 2000; Grandey and Melloy, 2017). Our study, along with others (Diefendorff *et al.*, 2005; Kammeyer-Mueller *et al.*, 2013; Schaubroeck and Jones, 2000), responds to Cossette and Hess's (2012) call for more research examining the antecedents of emotional labor tactics. We found that the trait of self-verification striving negatively (yet insignificantly) related to surface acting and positively and significantly related to both deep acting and the expression of naturally felt emotions. In general, our results suggest that employees who strive to confirm their self-views should be more inclined to make their internal and external experiences consistent by either expressing their naturally felt emotions or by adopting the emotions that are required by their organizations. When choosing the former, employees are likely to experience greater job satisfaction. When choosing the latter, they are likely to excel in their job performance.

#### *Practical implications*

Our findings also provide several practical implications. First, managers who aim to enhance employee job performance should consider hiring employees high in self-verification striving. Before implementing this practice, however, the predictive power of self-verification striving needs to be compared to other known predictors such as cognitive ability and conscientiousness. Self-verification striving may have an incremental power to predict the future job performance of applicants, particularly for jobs where employees must display prescribed emotions when assisting customers.

Second, the present study demonstrates that deep acting was the primary emotional labor tactic underlying the link between self-verification striving and employee performance. Employees in the hospitality industry must ensure that guests receive attentive service (Gupta *et al.*, 2007). Employees who cultivate the necessary emotions for the effective delivery

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of customer service are likely to be evaluated by their supervisors as effective workers. Our results imply that organizations should provide training programs to help their customer service employees understand the differences between surface and deep acting, as well as to teach them how to implement deep acting through helpful self-talk (Shockley *et al.*, 2012).

In addition, our study shows that the expression of naturally felt emotions positively relates to job satisfaction. This finding suggests that supervisors should not reflexively discourage employees from expressing their naturally felt emotions. If employees' emotions match display rules, then the expression of naturally felt emotions can lead to authentic positive affective displays and may subsequently increase customer service ratings. On the other hand, if employees' feelings do not match display rules, then supervisors might encourage them to express their naturally felt emotions in a professional manner rather than simply suppressing them. In practice, however, this may prove to be challenging in a culture or industry where customers are always right and service must always be provided with a smile. We suspect that, *ceteris paribus*, employers who permit employees to be authentically connected to their customers rather than simply pressuring them to provide "service with a smile" will have happier and more productive employees.

#### *Limitations and future research*

Coupled with our strengths, we must also consider certain limitations of our study. First, our data were cross-sectional, which could raise questions of the causal order among the variables. For example, it is possible that those who are more satisfied with their jobs are most likely to self-verify. Consistent with other researchers (Cable *et al.*, 2013; Swann, 2011), however, we think self-verification striving is an individual trait that is stable over time and not caused by fluctuations in job attitudes. Nevertheless, we cannot statistically rule out the possibility of reverse causality. Therefore, future research must adopt a longitudinal design or conduct an experiment in which the levels of self-expression are manipulated for a more rigorous test of causality. Second, we acknowledge some potential weaknesses of our data sources. Although supervisor ratings of employee job performance are usually viewed as the best single source of performance information, supervisor ratings can be contaminated by factors other than "true performance" (Yam *et al.*, 2014).

Third, all variables were measured by subordinate ratings except for job performance, raising concerns about common method variance (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003). However, in addition to the high distinctiveness among variables based on CFA results, the bivariate correlations between self-verification striving and surface acting and between surface acting, deep acting and job satisfaction were not significant ( $r = -0.14$ , n.s.;  $-0.06$ , n.s.;  $0.14$ , n.s.). These results suggest that the potential response bias may not be serious because the bivariate correlations would be high and significant if the common method variance was strong (Spector, 2006). Nevertheless, corroborating our findings using other measurement methods (e.g. coworker assessment of emotional labor) would be useful.

Finally, we collected the data exclusively from one cultural context (i.e. South Korea) and one sector (i.e. hotels). Future research needs to corroborate our conclusion that various types of emotional labor differently link self-verification striving to employee outcomes in other cultural contexts. Further, to ensure the generalizability of our findings, our results need to be replicated in samples from different industries.

We also highlight several potential avenues for future studies that build on our understanding of the links between self-verification striving, emotional labor tactics and employee outcomes. We encourage research investigating in more detail how self-verifiers deal with the situations in which their displayed emotions are not consistent with their personal traits (e.g. whether disagreeable self-verifiers actively express the happiness and

excitement that they need to display toward their customers). Additional research could investigate how self-verification striving affects the emotional labor of people who are neurotic or anxiety-prone or who otherwise hold a negative self-view. Knowing how various self-concepts affect the relations between self-verification striving and emotional labor choices would be helpful. The question touches on the potential conflict between being true to one's self and the need to adopt a work-setting-appropriate form of emotional labor. There seem to be circumstances where those with negative self-views seek to bring others to see them more positively than view themselves, while under other circumstances they seek self-confirming negative views from others (Seih *et al.*, 2013). When relationship maintenance is at stake, people with negative self-views may engage in strategic self-verification to engender positive perceptions concerning the personal dimensions that are important for relationship maintenance (Seih *et al.*, 2013). It seems likely that the employer–employee relationship would be important enough to encourage the use of strategic self-verification, thereby affecting emotional labor choices. Finally, future research might also examine the contextual factors that moderate the effects of self-verification striving on other relevant criteria (e.g. authentic leadership, Gardner *et al.*, 2011).

#### Note

1. As our data are nested within organizations, we ran additional analyses by controlling for organizational dummy variables to take into account any potential confounding factors at the organizational level. The outcomes are nearly identical when compared to those without controlling for the company dummy variables.

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