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Leaders' Emotions and Followers' Behaviors: A New Perspective with Perceived Emotional Sincerity

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Abstract

Leaders' emotions management plays a significant role to shape the followers' behavioral outcomes, therefore, leaders try to regulate their emotions at the workplace with a view to influencing their followers' behaviors. Moreover, emotional sincerity is a relatively new concept and this study took the first attempt to give insight understanding and clear picture about the role of leaders' emotional sincerity in emotions management studies. The purpose of this study is to identify the new perspective of perceived emotional sincerity while discussing the role of leaders' emotional labor strategies to shape the followers' behaviors and this streamline of research is totally ignored in previous studies. This study examined the role of leaders' emotional labor strategies (surface acting & deep acting) towards followers' behaviors by concentrating on the moderating role of followers' perceived emotional sincerity. The study is descriptive and quantitative in nature. Data have been collected by 200 dyads (Leader-Follower) from Malaysian NGOs by applying simple random sampling technique. Scales validation has been checked by confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) by using Smart PLS. Moreover, the structural equation modeling technique (SEM) has been used to test the hypotheses.

Findings revealed that leaders' surface acting is negatively and significantly related to followers' behaviors (emotional engagement & positive emotional reactions). Moreover, results also enlightened that leaders' deep acting has a positive and significant association with followers' behaviors (emotional engagement & positive emotional reactions). Additionally, followers' perceived emotional sincerity also significantly moderates on the relationship between leaders' emotional labor strategies and followers' behaviors. This study gives new direction for future studies to empirical test the ignored role of leaders' emotional sincerity in emotions related studies.

Keywords: *Emotional Labor, Surface Acting, Deep Acting, Followers' Behaviors, Emotional Engagement, Positive Emotional Reactions.*

Introduction

Malaysian NGOs are deemed as key actors towards development initiatives but these NGOs have challenges and need effective leadership to tackle the existing challenges. These organizations have development issues to lack effective leadership (Kusmanto, 2013). Meanwhile, followers' behaviors also play a great role towards NGOs effectiveness (Ahmed, Irshad, & Jamshaid, 2014; Detert & Burris, 2007; Halle, 2016) and these behaviors ultimately influenced to organizational outcomes. Moreover, Halle (2016) purported the importance of followers' behaviors by indicating that followers contribute 80% while leaders only contribute 20% in organizational success, but previous studies almost ignored to followers' behaviors (Halle, 2016). Additionally, there are few recent studies that spotted gap to link the leaders' emotions with their followers' behaviors (Little, Gooty, & Williams, 2016; McCauley & Gardner, 2016; Wang, 2011). Therefore, It is really crucial to understand the role of leaders emotions towards followers' behaviors (Visser, 2013). Leaders manage their emotions by adopting emotional labor strategies and these emotions regulation strategies are considered key elements to positively shape the followers' behaviors (Wang, 2011).

Moreover, according to emotional contagion theory (R. Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Rapson, 1992) individuals try to mimic the emotions and they grab the emotions showed by others. As leaders are deemed as influential personalities in organizations, so followers try to catch their emotions (Dasborough, 2006; George, 2000). Therefore, leaders' emotional sincerity play may have a great role to influence the followers' emotional behaviors. Leaders' emotional sincerity is a relatively new concept in emotions related studies as Caza, Zhang, Wang, and Bai (2015) firstly introduced this construct in their study and claimed that their study is first to study to examine the role of leaders' emotional sincerity towards individual outcomes.

Meanwhile, leaders' emotional sincerity may strengthen or weaken the association between leaders' emotional labor strategies and followers' emotional behaviors. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to identify the new perspective of perceived emotional sincerity while discussing the role of leaders' emotional labor strategies to shape the followers' behaviors and this streamline of research is totally ignored in previous studies. This study gives new direction for future studies to empirical test the ignored role of leaders' emotional sincerity in emotions related studies.

Literature Review

Leaders' Emotional Labor & Followers' Behaviors

There are different studies that identified the importance of emotions an behaviors in organizations (Ahmad-Mughal, Nisar, Othman, & Kamil, 2017; Butt, Nisar, Nadeem, & Baig, 2017; Gill, Nisar, Azeem, & Nadeem, 2017; Haider, Nisar, Baig, & Azeem, 2018; Hayyat, Nisar, Imran, & Ikram, 2017; Nisar, Imran, Othman, Kamil, & Marchalina, 2017; Nisar, Marwa, Ahmad, & Ahmad, 2014; Nisar, Mubeen, & Ashraf, 2016; Saleem, Nisar, & Imran, 2017). There are few recent studies that integrated leaders' emotions with followers' behaviors (Little, Gooty, & Williams, 2015; McCauley & Gardner, 2016; V. Visser, 2013; Wang, 2011). Wang (2011) identified followers' emotional engagement and their positive emotional reactions as important followers' behaviors. As this study is based on emotion, therefore followers' emotional engagement and their positive emotional reactions have been discussed in this study to measure the followers' behaviors.

Leaders' Emotional Labor and Followers' Emotional Engagement

One of the recent study conducted by Yoo and Yoo (2016) examined the relationship between emotional labor strategies and employees work engagement. Findings divulged that deep acting is significantly and positively related to employees' engagement while on the other hand; surface acting has a significant and negative association with their engagement. Similarly, there are few recent studies that identified a significant relationship between emotional labor strategies and employees' engagement (Henderson, 2001; Lu & Guy, 2014; Mauno, Ruokolainen, Kinnunen, & De Bloom, 2016; Mroz & Kaleta, 2016). Meanwhile, job engagement theory and social learning theory also supported that leaders' emotional labor strategies influence followers' emotional engagement (Bandura, 1977; Kahn, 1990).

Moreover, when leaders perform emotional labor strategies, their subordinates perceive emotionally engaged and followers' also try to emotionally attach to organizations (Humphrey, 2008). Moreover, another qualitative study identified that leaders perform different emotional labor strategies with a view to motivate their subordinates to achieve organizational goals. A study conducted by Grandey, Fisk, Mattila, Jansen, and Sideman (2005) also summed up that leaders' surface acting is negatively associated with followers' engagement while deep acting and genuine emotions have a significant and positive relationship with followers' engagement. Previous studies almost ignored the relationship between leaders' emotional labor and followers' emotional engagement as Wang (2011) first time integrated the leaders' emotional labor strategies with their followers' emotional engagement. He also divulged that surface acting has a negative association with followers' engagement. It means that when leaders express their fake and inappropriate emotions, followers perceive them negatively and they do not put emotional efforts toward the organization. Surface acting leads toward a lack of emotional engagement. Additionally, Wang (2011) also purported that leaders' deep acting is positively related to followers' emotional engagement (Nisar, Othman, & Kamil, 2018; Baig & Ullah, 2017). When leaders perform deep acting, their followers try to put emotional efforts and engage themselves to perform their work role. Previous studies paid less attention to examine the relationship between leaders' emotional labor strategies and followers' emotional engagement. Therefore, this study proposed this theoretical relationship that leaders' emotional labor may influence their followers' emotional engagement.

***H1a:** There is a significant and negative relationship between surface acting and followers' emotional engagement.*

***H1b:** There is a significant and positive relationship between deep acting and followers' emotional engagement.*

Leaders' Emotional Labor & Followers' Emotional Reactions

Emotional contagion theory (Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Rapson, 1994) described that individual mimic the emotions showed by others as emotional contagion is referred as the tendency of individuals to unconsciously imitate the others' emotions (Neumann & Strack, 2000). Furthermore, previous studies proved the significant relationship between leaders' emotional labor and followers' emotions

(Glaso, Ekerholt, Barman, & Einarsen, 2006; Humphrey, 2008). Leaders manage their emotions to keep away their subordinates from unfavorable and negative emotions (Glaso et al., 2006; Khan, Imran, & Nisar, 2016).

Despite this, emotional contagion is a process that leaders adapt to influence their followers' emotions (Bono & Ilies, 2006; Erez & Isen, 2002). Likewise, Leaders deemed as salient figure and icons with influential personalities (Dasborough, 2006) therefore, their subordinates imitate their emotions with concentration (Visser, Van Knippenberg, Van Kleef, & Wisse, 2013). Previous studies also identified that leaders' emotions might be transferred to their subordinates by emotional contagion process (Johnson, 2008). This contagion process has a strong effect on the leader-follower relationship because followers tend to be cognizant regarding their leaders' emotions (Coté, 2005). Moreover, when leaders perform emotional labor strategies to express appropriate emotions, followers tend to have positive emotional reactions (Brotheridge, Lee, Humphrey, Pollack, & Hawver, 2008; Wang, 2011).

Additionally, Wang (2011) firstly examined the relationship between leaders' emotional labor strategies and followers' emotional reactions. Study results purported that surface acting is negatively and significantly related to followers' emotional reactions. Moreover, deep acting and display of genuine emotions have a significant and positive relationship with followers' positive emotional reactions. Findings also divulged that followers have positive emotional reactions if leaders manage and regulate their emotion properly (Wang, 2011). Thus, on the basis of literature, it may be concluded that leaders' emotional labor strategies may influence their followers' positive emotional reactions. Previous studies almost ignored this streamline of research. Therefore, this study proposed this relationship that may be empirically examined in future studies.

H2a: Surface acting is negatively and significantly related to followers' positive emotional reactions.

H2b: Deep acting is positively and significantly related to followers' positive emotional reactions.

Moderating Role of Perceived Emotional Sincerity

Leaders' emotional sincerity play a great role to shape the followers' behavioral outcomes (Caza et al., 2015) because followers' not only imitate to leaders' emotions but also recognize and appreciate their leaders' emotional sincerity (Eberly & Fong, 2010). One of the previous studies also identified that leaders' sincerity as a key element during leaders' interaction with followers (Caza et al., 2015; Eberly & Fong, 2010). Moreover, "authentic leadership theory" also highlighted the importance of authenticity and emotional sincerity and this theory purported the sincerity attributes as a cornerstone for leadership effectiveness (Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans, & May, 2004). Additionally, another study highlighted the importance of leaders' integrity and divulged that leaders' integrity or sincerity may influence followers' behaviors. Integrity refers to being true to others but the role of integrity also ignored in previous studies (Palanski & Yammarino, 2009). One of the recent studies examined this totally ignored area and explored the role of leaders' emotional sincerity towards followers' trust. It majorly focused to measure the followers' perceptions regarding their leaders' emotional sincerity that ultimately influences their behavioral outcomes (Caza et al., 2015).

Moreover, Grandey (2000) integrated emotional labor strategies with emotional sincerity and identified emotional labor strategies as antecedents of emotional sincerity.

Perceived emotional sincerity is deemed as a crucial factor in the leaders' emotions management process because when leaders regulate their emotions during the interaction process, followers may perceive their sincerity of expressed emotions. Furthermore, Followers perceive their leader sincere when leaders adopt emotional labor strategies with sincerity and that leads toward positive followers' outcomes. Followers' perceived emotional sincerity may strengthen or weaken the relationship between the leader's emotional labor strategies and followers' behavioral outcomes. In addition, Caza et al. (2015) also signified that followers' perceived emotional sincerity may influence their behaviors. Followers have positive behaviors if they perceive their leaders as sincere. It means that leaders' emotional sincerity may affect followers' behaviors. This study also highlighted this gap that moderating role of perceived emotional sincerity should be further investigated in emotions management studies. Therefore, on the basis of the above literature and arguments, this study proposed a conceptual model that can be empirically tested in future.

H3a; Perceived emotional sincerity is significantly moderate on the relationship of surface acting and followers' emotional engagement.

H3b; Perceived emotional sincerity is significantly moderate on the relationship of deep acting and followers' emotional engagement.

H3c; Perceived emotional sincerity is significantly moderate on the relationship of surface acting and followers' positive emotional reactions.

H3d; Perceived emotional sincerity is significantly moderate on the relationship of surface acting and followers' positive emotional reactions.

Theoretical Framework

On the basis of emotions regulation theory and authentic leadership theory following the theoretical model has been proposed. This model introduced almost ignored perspective of emotional sincerity. Previous studies almost ignored the role of leaders' emotional labor strategies towards followers' behaviors. Moreover, perceived emotional sincerity may be examined as a moderator in future studies in this context.

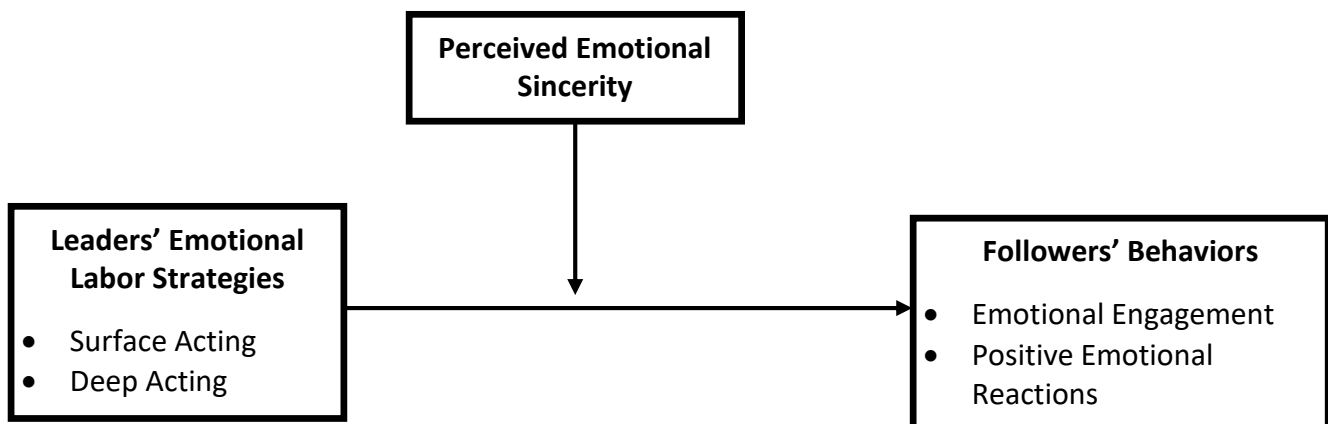


Figure1: Theoretical Framework

Methods

This study examined the role of leaders' emotional labor strategies (surface acting & deep acting) towards followers' behaviors in the NGOs sector in Malaysia. The study is descriptive and quantitative in nature. Targeted population includes employees (leaders & followers) of NGOs in Malaysia. Data have been collected by applying a simple random sampling technique.

Procedure

Survey questionnaire method was used for data collection. Four states of Malaysia were selected randomly and the list of NGOs has been taken from "Registry of Societies" of four selected states (Penang, Kedah, Kuala Lumpur, Pahang). 10 NGOs were selected from every state randomly and list of employees has been taken from their HR departments. The personal administrated survey method was used to collect data from most of the selected NGOs although, postal survey method was also used for data collection. Questionnaires were distributed and collected after a couple of days.

Measures

All the measures and instruments in this study were adopted from previously valid and reliable scales. The 5-point Likert scale used to measure the items of the questionnaire. In 5-point Likert scale, "5 representing "strongly agree", 4 representing "agree", 3 representing "neutral", 2 representing "disagree" and 1 representing "strongly disagree" state of mind".

Leaders' Emotional Labor Scale: As leaders' emotional labor is divided into three sub-variables so surface acting, deep acting, and display of natural emotions are measured by 7 items, 4 items, and 8 items scale respectively from (Diefendorff, Croyle, & Gosserand, 2005). Coefficient alpha value for surface acting and deep acting was 0.91 and 0.82 respectively (Diefendorff, Croyle, & Gosserand, 2005).

Followers' Emotional Engagement: A scale by May, Gilson, and Harter (2004) with 4 items is adapted to measure the "followers' emotional engagement". A sample item is "I really put my heart into my job".

Followers' Positive Emotional Reactions: Four items scale were adapted to measure the followers' positive emotional reactions. It was measured by two scales which adapted from the scale for positive and negative emotions (Bono, Foldes, Vinson, & Muros, 2007) and "effective reaction scale" (Van Kleef et al., 2009). A sample item for this scale is "*My leader makes me enthusiastic*". Wang (2011), reported a high value for coefficient alpha ($\alpha=0.91$) for this scale.

Perceived Emotional Sincerity: A scale by Caza et al. (2015) with six items is adapted to measure the perceived emotional sincerity. One of the sample item for this scale is "*My leader's emotions are credible*". A recent study reported the high coefficient alpha value ($\alpha=0.95$) (Caza et al., 2015).

Findings

Table 1

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Constructs	Items	Loadings	CR	AVE
Surface Acting	SA1	0.637	0.895	0.551
	SA2	0.816		
	SA3	0.764		
	SA4	0.670		
	SA5	0.821		
	SA6	0.711		
	SA7	0.758		
Deep Acting	DA1	0.898	0.857	0.612
	DA2	0.721		
	DA3	0.933		
	DA4	0.501		
Followers' Emotional Engagement	FEE1	0.936	0.956	0.845
	FEE2	0.921		
	FEE3	0.902		
	FEE4	0.918		
Positive Emotional Reactions	PER1	0.940	0.952	0.87
	PER2	0.923		
	PER3	0.934		
Perceived Emotional Sincerity	PES1	0.912	0.967	0.831
	PES2	0.902		
	PES3	0.904		
	PES4	0.920		
	PES5	0.920		
	PES6	0.912		

Table 1 divulged average variance extract (AVE), composite reliability (CR) and factor loadings of all constructs that are used to access the convergent validity. Hair et al (2010) mentioned that a construct is supposed to be convergent if items load high on the constructs (> 0.50). Table 1 showed that values of factor loadings are greater than 0.50. Moreover, convergent validity of all constructs is measured by using composite reliability and average variance extract. The value of AVE for all constructs is above 0.50, and composite reliability is greater than 0.8, indicating that the convergent validity of all constructs has been established.

Heterotrait – Monotrait Ratio

Table 2

Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio

	DA	EE	PER	PES	SA
DA					
EE	0.511				
PER	0.482	0.442			
PES	0.198	0.369	0.383		
SA	0.261	0.583	0.590	0.117	

Table 2 shows the HTMT ratio that is an effective approach to access the discriminant validity. Kline (2011) defined that HTMT ratio should be less than 0.85 to ensure the discriminant validity and according to this criterion, all the ratio values are greater than a minimum threshold that is the evidence of discriminant validity.

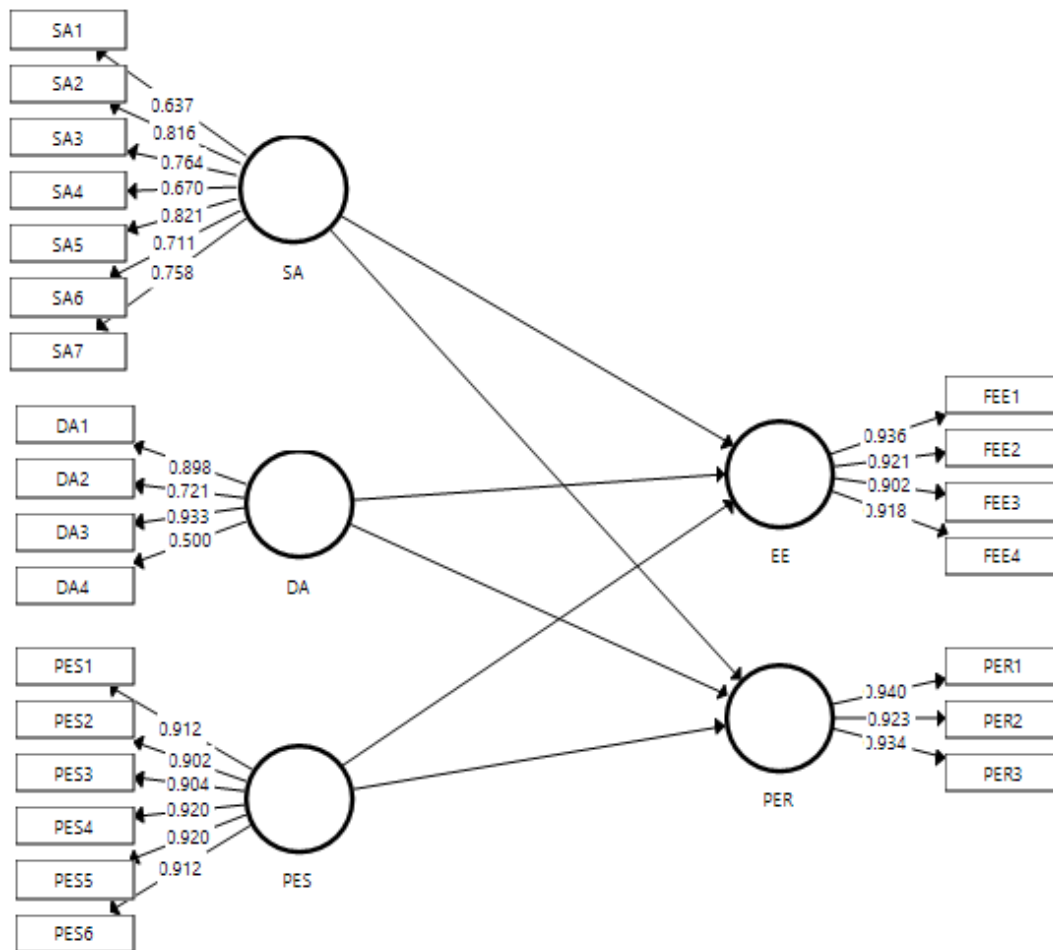


Figure 2: Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Structure Equation Modeling

Table 3

Direct Effects

Hypothesis	Relationships	Std. beta	Std. Error	t-Value	Decision	R2	f2	Q2	VIF
H1a	SA -> EE	-0.393	0.044	8.963	Supported	0.528	0.320	0.444	1.093
H1b	DA -> EE	0.386	0.046	8.410	Supported		0.304		1.12
H2a	SA -> PER	-0.407	0.044	9.20	Supported	0.513	0.328	0.436	
H2b	DA -> PER	0.352	0.046	7.671	Supported		0.244		

SEM PLS structural model analysis was conducted to examine the main relationship effects between the constructs. This study used a bootstrapping procedure to assess the significance of path coefficients. Findings identified that leaders' surface acting has a significant and negative relationship with followers' emotional engagement ($\beta = -0.393$, $t = 8.96$) and supported to H1a. Additionally, leaders' deep acting is significantly and positively related to followers' emotional engagement ($\beta = 0.386$, $t = 8.41$) and supported to H1b. Results also divulged that leaders' surface acting is also negatively and significantly related to followers' positive emotional reaction ($\beta = -0.407$, $t = 9.20$) and supported to H2a. Moreover, there is a significant relationship between deep acting and followers' positive emotional reaction ($\beta = 0.352$, $t = 7.671$) and supported to H2b. Additionally, the effect size of all predictor is also highlighted in the table. The study also used a test of the predictive relevance of research model using blindfolding method (Stone, 1974). A cross-validated redundancy measure (Q^2) was applied to assess the predictive relevance (Hair et al., 2013). Q^2 for research model is greater than zero that showed predictive relevance. Results also identified that there is no multicollinearity issue with data as VIF value is less than 5 as suggested by (Hair et al., 2011).

Table 4

Moderation Analysis

Hypothesis	Relationships	Std. beta	Std. Error	t-Value	f2	Decision
H3a	SA*PES -> EE	-0.162	0.042	3.833	0.054	Supported
H3b	DA*PES -> EE	0.10	0.046	2.153	0.021	Supported
H3c	SA*PES -> PER	-0.13	0.046	2.799	0.033	Supported
H3d	DA*PES -> PER	0.09	0.064	1.41	0.015	Not Supported

The results indicated that the interaction term representing SA*PES ($\beta = -0.162$, $t = 3.83$) are significant which means that followers' perceived emotional sincerity significantly moderates on the relationship of leaders' surface acting and followers' emotional engagement and supported to H3a. Similarly, followers' perceived emotional sincerity also significantly moderate on the relationship of leaders' deep acting and followers' emotional engagement ($\beta = 0.10$, $t = 2.15$) and supported to H3b. Followers' perception regarding their leaders' emotional sincerity strengthens this relationship. Additionally, findings also divulged that perceived emotional sincerity also significantly moderates on the relation of surface acting and followers' positive emotional reactions ($\beta = -0.13$, $t = 2.79$) and supported to H3c. Results highlighted that perceived emotional sincerity doesn't moderate on the relationship of deep acting and followers' positive emotional reactions ($\beta = 0.09$, $t = 1.41$) and not supported to H3d.

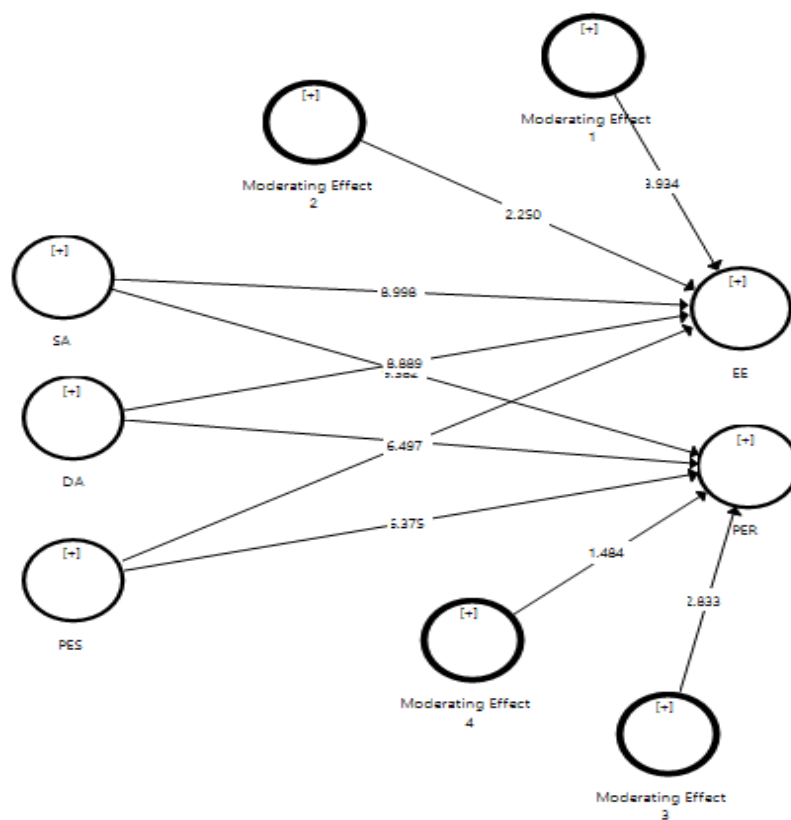


Figure 3: Structure Equation Modeling

Discussion & Conclusion

The purpose of this was to identify the role of perceived emotional sincerity that was completely ignored in previous studies. This study examined the role of leaders' emotional labor strategies towards their followers' behaviors while mainly concentrating on the moderating role of followers' perceived emotional sincerity. Previous studies also ignored the role of leaders' emotional labor towards followers' behaviors. This study discussed perceived emotional sincerity with a new perspective in the context of leaders' emotions because previous studies ignored this construct. The study is based on the supposition that followers perceive and judge the emotional sincerity of their leaders and this perception leads to build their positive behaviors. Findings divulged that leaders' surface acting is negatively related to followers' behaviors (emotional engagement, positive emotional reactions) and supported to H1a and H2a. Moreover, leaders' deep acting also significantly and positively related to their followers' behaviors (emotional engagement, positive emotional reactions) and supported H1b and H2b. These results are aligned with previous studies (Henderson, 2001; Lu & Guy, 2014; Mauno et al., 2016; Mroz & Kaleta, 2016; Yoo and Yoo, 2016).

This study signified the crucial role of leaders' emotional labor strategies to shape their followers' behaviors positively. Results concluded that leaders' emotional labor strategies (surface acting & deep acting) have a significant relationship with followers' behaviors (emotional engagement & positive emotional reactions). Furthermore, findings also enlightened that followers' perceived emotional sincerity significantly moderate on the relationship of leaders' emotional labor strategies (surface acting, deep acting) and followers' behaviors (emotional engagement & positive emotional reactions) and supported to H3a, H3b & H3c. This indicated that followers' perceptions regarding their leaders' emotional sincerity play a vital role to strengthen or weaken the relationship between leaders' emotional labor strategies and followers' behaviors.

As this study is one of the first attempts to examine the moderating role of perceived emotional sincerity, therefore, it gave new direction for future studies to check the moderating effect of followers' perceived emotional sincerity on the association of leaders' emotional labor and their followers' behaviors. Meanwhile, a recent study by Caza et al. (2015) also spotted out this gap that emotional sincerity may be examined as a moderator in further emotions' related studies. This study proposed that followers' perceived emotional sincerity may strengthen the relationship between leaders' emotional labor strategies and followers' behaviors. It is the first attempt to theoretical and empirically proves the moderating role of emotional sincerity in leaders' emotions management process. Therefore, future studies may empirical test this conceptual model to enrich their body of knowledge regarding the role of emotional sincerity to shape the followers' behaviors.

Limitations & Future Directions

While our study has some valuable strengths, it also included a few limitations that recommend promising future directions. This study ignored the demographic characteristics and contextual factors that may play a significant role to shape leaders' attitudes, therefore future studies should concentrate on demographics and contextual and cultural factors in their studies. This study just focused on leaders' emotions and ignored the other aspect of emotions. Further studies can include leaders' emotional intelligence and their emotional consonance with emotional labor to have in-depth understating of understudy relationships. The present study has been conducted among the employees of Malaysian NGOs leading to the limitation of the limited population target. A comparative study of different cultures and countries may be a good future avenue for further research.

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