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## Benefits of Emotional Labor for Airlines

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### Abstract

The world economy is increasingly being dominated by service sector employment. Recent service management research has focused on the role of emotions in service delivery, particularly the emotional labor performed by front-line service employees. Moreover, today's air travelers have multiple expectations from service employees. Accordingly, the roles of front-line service employees, such as flight attendants, have changed, potentially causing flight attendants to perceive a conflict in their roles. According to the role theory, when the behaviors expected of an individual are inconsistent, the employee may perceive a role conflict. As a result, the employee will experience stress, become dissatisfied, and perform less effectively. As organizations become flatter and more team-based, organizational management tends to employ less dictatorial methods to gain employee trust. This study has two main purposes: The first is to assess the role conflict that is perceived by flight attendants and that is negatively associated with trust toward their employer. Second, it assesses the emotional labor aspects of flight attendants and identifies ways to increase trust in the changing airline industry climate. To accomplish this, a questionnaire survey was administered to 414 flight attendants working for a European airline. The results show that two emotional labor aspects, affective delivery and surface acting, moderate the decreasing propensity to trust the employer when the perception of role conflict was not very high. The implication is that the emotional labor practices of service employees may provide them with a sense of well-being in the workplace, a factor that can be used by employers to regain their trust.

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*Keywords:* Flight Attendants, Role Conflict, Trust, Emotion Labor, Customer Service Employees

### 1. Introduction

The world economy is increasingly being dominated by the service sector. For example, the number of workers in professional and business services increased by 11.75 % between 2000 and 2010 in the United States (Statistical Abstract, 2012). Organizational researchers are increasingly paying attention to the unique problems and issues involved in managing service providers, organizations, and employees. Recent service management research focuses on the role of emotions in service delivery, particularly the emotional labor performed by service employees (Groth,

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Henning-Thurau & Walsh, 2009). Service employees are often expected to display positive emotions, such as smiling and looking happy, while suppressing negative emotions, such as fear and anger during service transactions (e.g., Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993), which creates emotional labor (Brotheridge & Lee, 2003).

The current aviation industry operates 24 hours a day and 7 days a week, posing a variety of challenges to flight attendants, including extended duty periods, highly variable schedules, frequent time zone changes, and increased passenger loads (Avers et al., 2009). Moreover, in developed Western countries, there is an ongoing trend in the services and production industries to employ as few people as possible to do as much work as possible (Bergman and Gillberg, 2015). Further, IT and automated systems are performing work previously done by human contact center employees (Okabe, 2017a). Although safety, ensuring airplane is free from injury or loss, security, protecting the passengers' safety, and customer service providing passengers with support during a flight, are the three pillars of the role of flight attendants regardless of the airline or the business model (e.g., low-cost or legacy), recent air travelers have multiple expectations. Accordingly, the roles of flight attendants in terms of customer service have been changed under these new working conditions. Therefore, flight attendants may now perceive a role conflict in the workplace.

According to role theory, when the behaviors expected of an individual are inconsistent, the employee perceives role conflict (Katz & Kahn, 1978). As a result, the employee will experience stress, become dissatisfied, and perform less effectively than if the expectations imposed on the employee did not conflict (Rizzo et al., 1970). Classical organizational theory indicates that role conflict occurs because of a violation of the two classical principles (chain of command and unity of command/direction) and that role conflict decreases individual satisfaction and organizational effectiveness (Rizzo et al., 1970).

Although the topic of trust has long been of interest to organizational scholars, a variety of workplace trends have led to a renewed focus on its nature, antecedents, and consequences (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995). As organizations have become flatter and team-based, organizational authorities' surveillance of their subordinates has given way to less dictatorial modes of interpersonal influence, and managers' effectiveness depends on their ability to gain the trust of their subordinates (Brockner et al., 1997).

The purpose of this research is first, to examine the role conflict perceived by flight attendants that is negatively associated with trust toward their employers. Second, it examines the aspects of emotional labor (affective delivery, surface acting, and deep acting) practiced by flight attendants to moderate or repair the decreasing propensity toward trust in the changing airline industry climate particularly for human contact customer service employees.

## **2. Literature Review**

### *2.1. Emotional Labor*

Emotional labor refers to the process by which workers are expected to manage their feelings in accordance with organizationally defined rules and guidelines (Wharton, 2009). The emotions of customer-service employees have long been part of organizational behavior studies, since Hochschild published *The Managed Heart* in 1983. Hochschild (1983) observed flight attendant recruitment, training, and work. Emotional labor represents an occupational category, the emotional effort or labor to perform that job, and interpersonal expression (Grandy & Gabriel, 2015).

### *2.2. Emotional Regulation*

Emotional regulation is defined as “the process by which individuals influence which emotions they have, when they have them, how they experience and express these emotions” (Gross, 1998). Emotional regulation requires employees to display the organizationally desired emotion (Zapf et al., 1999) and induce or suppress feelings to sustain the outward countenance and reassure others (Hochschild, 1983).

### 2.3. *Emotional Display Rules*

Emotional display in the organizational context has been referred to as display rules (Ekman & Friesen, 1975). Emotional display rules concerning emotional expression may either be stated explicitly in selection and training materials, or expected to be absorbed through observation of coworkers (Grandey, 2000). Display rules are standards of behavior that indicate not only which emotions are appropriate in a given situation, but also how those emotions should be conveyed or publicly expressed (Ekman, 1973). For example, customer service employees may be encouraged to smile often or show good humor.

### 2.4. *Affective Delivery*

Affective delivery, or expressing positive emotions in service interactions, promotes customer satisfaction (Grandey, 2003). “Employee affective delivery” refers to an employee’s “act of expressing socially desired emotions during service transaction” (Ashforth & Humphery, 1993) and affective service delivery is perceived as friendly and warm, which are desirable outcomes (Bettencourt, Gwinner, & Meuter, 2001).

#### *Emotional strategies*

#### 2.4.1. *Surface Acting*

Surface acting is an emotional strategy in which employees modify their facial expressions and behavioral displays without changing their feelings (Grandey, 2003). Engaging in surface acting, or antecedent-focused emotion regulation, is desirable for organizations because it allows customers to always see cheerful expressions, even when the employees may feel differently (Rafaeli & Sutton, 1987). The employees engaging in surface acting modify their behavioral displays without changing their feelings; however, such employees conform to the rules to keep their job, and not to help the customer or organization (Grandey, 2003). Previous research indicates that surface acting requires effort to suppress genuine emotion and expression of the appropriate emotion (Johnson & Spector, 2007). Thus, engaging in surface acting for a long duration entails experiencing emotional dissonance, or the tension felt when expressions and feelings diverge (Hochschild, 1983).

#### 2.4.2. *Deep Acting*

Deep acting is another emotional strategy in which employees modify their feelings and control their thoughts to meet the mandated emotional display (Grandey, 2003). Engaging in deep acting through reappraisal or self-talk has been called a “good faith” type of emotional labor, because it demonstrates that the employee has goodwill toward the organization (Rafaeli & Sutton, 1987). When engaging in deep acting, an employee attempts to modify their feelings to match the required display (Grandey, 2003). The intent, then, is to seem authentic to one’s audience, or customer. The employee displaying deep acting may “fake it” until he or she feels comfortable with the modified external feeling.

### 2.5. *Emotional Exhaustion*

Emotional exhaustion refers to a specific stress-related reaction, and it is considered a key component of burnout (Maslach, 1982). Emotional work can be stressful, and sometimes lead the employees to emotional exhaustion, burnout, and even resignation from their jobs (Hochschild, 1983; Cordes & Dougherty, 1993). Several researchers have suggested that emotional labor employed in response to organizational display rules is detrimental to employee well-being (e.g., Grandey, 2000).

### 3. Research Hypotheses

#### 3.1. Theory of Organizational Role Dynamics

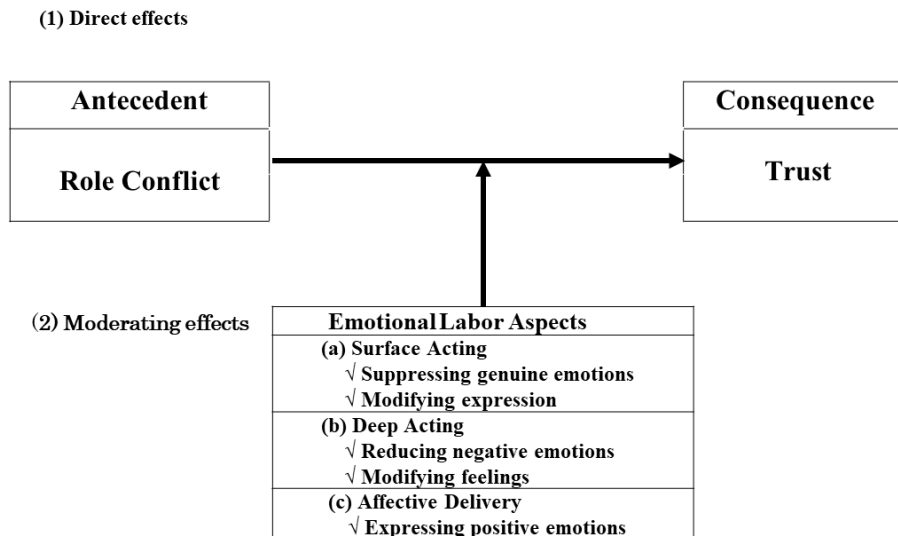
Since the theory of organizational role dynamics (or role theory) was first introduced (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, & Rosenthal, 1964), extensive research has examined the relationships between role conflict, role ambiguity, and a variety of their correlates, including trust, job satisfaction, and job performance (Turbre & Collins, 2000). The role theory is based on a dramaturgical metaphor, which argues that the elements of human interactions are dependent upon time, place, and audience. The study of a role, which is a cluster of social requirements that guide and direct an individual’s behavior in a given setting, is the study of the conduct associated with certain socially defined positions, rather than of the particular individuals who occupy those positions (Solomon et al., 1985).

Role conflict is defined in terms of the dimensions of congruence-incongruence or compatibility-incompatibility in the requirements of the role, where congruence or compatibility is judged relative to a set of standards or conditions that impinge upon role performance (Rizzo et al., 1970). Particularly, for customer service employees such as flight attendants or salespersons, role conflict occurs when the employee faces two or more incompatible job demands from their organizational superior, customers, family members, or other role partners (Walker et al., 1975).

The general conclusion of previous research is that role conflict tends to be negatively associated with trust, job satisfaction, and job performance (e.g., Rizzo et al., 1970; Jackson & Schuler, 1985; Abramis, 1994). Since organizations are role-based systems (Katz & Kahn, 1978) that depend on the interaction of system members, the author supposes that flight attendants may perceive role conflict because of the changing industrial climate and suggests the following direct effect hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 1:** Role conflict perceived by flight attendants is negatively related to trust toward the employer.

Fig. 1. Conceptual Model



### 3.2 Moderating Effects

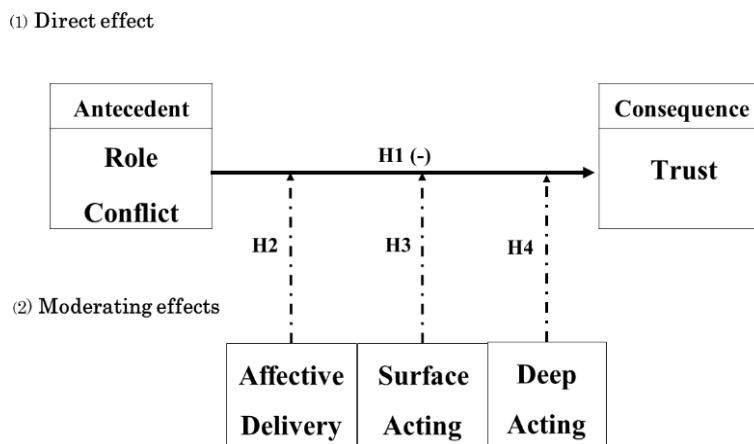
A moderator variable specifies when and under what conditions a predictor variable influences a dependent variable (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Holmbeck, 1997). A moderator variable may reduce or enhance the direction of the relationship between a predictor variable and a dependent variable, or it may even change the direction of the relationship between the two variables from positive to negative or vice versa (Lindley & Walker, 1993). The author suggests the following moderating effect hypotheses:

**Hypothesis 2:** The emotional labor aspect of affective delivery practiced by flight attendants moderates the negative relationship between role conflict and trust toward the employer.

**Hypothesis 3:** The emotional labor aspect of surface acting practiced by flight attendants moderates the negative relationship between role conflict and trust toward the employer.

**Hypothesis 4:** The emotional labor aspect of deep acting practiced by flight attendants moderates the negative relationship between role conflict and trust toward the employer.

Fig. 1. Hypotheses on the relations between role conflict and trust



## 4. Methods

### 4.1. Participants and Procedures

Based on a review of the literature, a questionnaire was developed using a 5-point Likert-type scale with either frequency or agreement anchors employed to assess the variables in the psychological contract context, organizational dynamic context, and emotional labor context, with 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree and 5 = strongly agree, unless otherwise noted. The items on each scale were presented in random order. Administration of the survey, the interviews, and field observations were all undertaken by the author.

The author randomly distributed approximately 500 questionnaires to flight attendants working for a European airline, and explained the purpose and anonymity of the survey, as well as the confidentiality of the collected data. The author then asked the participants to either complete the questionnaire on the spot and return it or to send the completed questionnaire by mail. A total of 414 valid questionnaires were received, resulting in a valid response rate of approximately 82.8 %. Regarding participant gender, 74 % were women and 26 % were men. The professional

experience of the respondents was as follows: 16-20 years (26.6 %), followed by 11-15 years (19.6 %), 26-30 years (18.6 %), 21-25 years (15.5 %), 6-10 years (11.6 %), more than 30 years (4.2 %), and less than 5 years (3.9 %). Regarding participant age, age range of the respondents was: 41-50 (53.6 %), followed by 51-60 (22.0 %), 31-40 (20.0 %), 21-30 (3.5 %), and more than 60 (0.9 %).

#### 4.1.2. Independent Variables

**Trust toward the employer.** The working definition of trust in this research is along with Mayer et al. (1995): “The willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party.”. Trust toward the employer was measured by using seven items ( $\alpha = .94$ ) derived from the bases of trust identified by Gabarro and Athos (1976).

**Job Satisfaction.** According to Tett & Meyer (1993), job satisfaction is understood to be one’s affective attachment to the job viewed either in its entirety (global satisfaction) or with regard to particular aspects (facet satisfaction; e.g. supervision). In this research, job satisfaction ( $\alpha = .83$ ) was measured by using two items derived from Robinson & Rousseau (1994).

**Careerism Orientation.** Careerism orientation ( $\alpha = .89$ ) was measured by using five items derived from Robinson & Rousseau (1994).

#### 4.1.3. Variables in the Organizational Dynamic Context

Rizzo, House, and Lirtzman’s (1970) role conflict scale and role ambiguity scale have been widely used in organizational psychology research (Kelloway & Barling, 1990). The role theory indicates that role conflict is generated from the violation of two classical principals; the chain-of-command principle and the unity-of-command principle. Role conflict causes decreased individual satisfaction and decreased organizational effectiveness (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek & Rosenthal, 1964). Role conflict was assessed using the following selected five items ( $\alpha = 0.87$ ).

**Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity.** Role conflict ( $\alpha = .93$ ) and Role ambiguity ( $\alpha = .84$ ) were measured by using five items on each variable derived from the scale developed by Rizzo et al. (1970).

**Emotional Exhaustion.** Emotional exhaustion can occur among individuals who do “people-work” (Brotheridge & Grandy, 2002). Emotional exhaustion was assessed using four items ( $\alpha = 0.93$ ) derived from Pines & Aronson (1988).

#### 4.1.4. Variables in the Emotional Labor Context

**Affective delivery.** Affective delivery was measured using three items ( $\alpha = .82$ ) derived from the bases of McLellan et al. (1998) and those items were slightly modified in line with the work characteristics of flight attendants.

**Surface acting.** Surface acting was measured using four items ( $\alpha = 0.89$ ) derived from the components of surface acting identified by Brotheridge & Lee (2003) and those items were slightly modified in line with the work characteristics of flight attendants.

**Deep acting.** Deep acting was measured using three items ( $\alpha = 0.91$ ) derived from the bases of deep acting also identified by Brotheridge & Lee (2003) and those items were slightly modified to in line with the work characteristics of flight attendants.

### 5. Results

The flight attendant survey contained measures of demographic information, independent variables (trust, satisfaction, and careerism orientation), variables in the organizational dynamics context (role conflict, role ambiguity and emotional exhaustion) and variables in the emotional labor context (affective delivery, surface acting and deep acting).

The Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics, reliability, and intercorrelations. All the scales demonstrated good internal consistency reliability, where an alpha ranging from 0.82 to 0.94 is considered acceptable (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011).

Hypothesis 1 proposed that role conflict perceived by flight attendants is negatively related to trust toward the employer. As predicted by Hypothesis 1, Table 1 presents that role conflict is significantly and negatively related to trust toward the employer ( $r = -.19, p < .001$ ), supporting Hypothesis 1.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics, Reliability, and Intercorrelation

	M	SD	$\alpha^4$	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Gender <sup>1</sup>	.74	.44		-											
2. Tenure <sup>2</sup>	4.11	1.51		.12**	-										
3. Age <sup>3</sup>	3.98	.79		.02	.76***	-									
Independent Variables															
4. Trust	3.13	.74	.94	.21***	.21***	.12**	-								
5. Satisfaction	4.08	.71	.83	.05	.14***	.11**	.54***	-							
6. Careerism orientation	2.18	.66	.89	.04	-.10**	-.07	-.10***	-.25***	-						
Variables in the Organizational Dynamics Context															
7. Role conflict	3.40	.74	.93	-.14***	-.05	-.02	-.19***	-.16***	.04	-					
8. Role ambiguity	1.63	.47	.84	-.12**	-.14***	-.12**	-.22***	-.14***	-.03	.18***	-				
9. Emotional exhaustion	3.43	.87	.93	-.16***	-.03	.01	-.26***	-.21***	-.04	-.48***	.25***	-			
Variables in the Emotional Labor Context															
10. Affective delivery	4.50	.53	.82	-.14**	.14***	.22***	-.04	.04	-.02	-.20***	-.20***	-.06	-		
11. Surface acting	3.92	.68	.89	.13**	.03	.08	.03	.01	.08*	.06	.11**	.07	.19***	-	
12. Deep acting	3.65	.90	.91	.01	.02	-.02	.03	-.02	.00	.21***	.06	.18***	.13***	.34***	-

Note: \*\*\*  $p < .001$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*  $p < .10$ . N = 414.  
<sup>1</sup> Gender: coded as Male = 0, Female = 1.  
<sup>2</sup> Job tenure: coded as 1 = 0 ~ 5 years, 2 = 6 ~ 10 years, 3 = 11 ~ 15 years, 4 = 16 ~ 20 years, 5 = 21 ~ 25 years, 6 = 26 ~ 30 years, 7 = more than 30 years.  
<sup>3</sup> Age: coded as 1 = less than 20, 2 = 21 ~ 30, 3 = 31 ~ 40, 4 = 41 ~ 50, 5 = 51 ~ 60, 6 = more than 60  
<sup>4</sup> Reliability is denoted by Cronbach Alpha coefficients.

Table 2 presents the summary of the hierarchical regression analyses conducted in this study. In step 1, the control variables—including gender, tenure, age—and additional independent variables—including satisfaction, careerism orientation, role conflict, role ambiguity, and emotional exhaustion—were inserted into the regression equation to eliminate alternative explanations. In step 2, the independent variables of emotional labor aspects (affective delivery, surface acting, and deep acting) were inserted into the regression equation.

#### 5.1 Interaction effects

Hypotheses 2 proposed that the affective delivery of flight attendants moderated the negative relationship between role conflict and trust toward the employer. This moderator hypothesis is supported if the interaction is significant (Baron & Kenny, 1986). Table 2 presents that, when the interaction term (1): RC x affective delivery is inserted into the equation in the step 3, the interaction is significant [ $F(13, 400) = 36.454, p < .001, \Delta R^2 = .172$ ], and explained 17.2% of additional variance in trust.

Figure 2 (a) presents the plot of the interaction effects of role conflict (RC) and affective delivery on trust. The result explains that, when employees perceive a low level of RC, although the difference in the level of trust of the

two groups (high and low affective delivery groups) is not significant, the high affective delivery group reports a higher level of trust (3.32,  $p > 0.10$ ) than does the low affective delivery group (3.24,  $p > 0.10$ ). Conversely, when employees perceive a high level of RC, although the two groups report a decreasing propensity to trust, the low affective delivery group reports a significantly higher level of trust (3.12,  $p < 0.10$ ) than the high affective delivery group (2.94,  $p < 0.10$ ). This result reveals that affective delivery might moderate the decreasing propensity of trust when the level of RC is low. By contrast, when the level of RC is high, affective delivery might not able to moderate the decreasing propensity of trust. Consequently, Hypothesis 2 is partially supported.

In the plot of the interaction effects in this research, the high affective delivery group, high surface acting group, and high deep acting group define the groups of participants whose scores of independent variables (affective delivery, surface acting, and deep acting) are higher than the average. Conversely, the low affective delivery group, low surface acting group, and low deep acting group define the groups of participants whose score of independent variables (affective delivery, surface acting, and deep acting) are lower than the average.

Table 2. Hierarchical Regression Analyses

<b>Dependent variable: Trust Toward Employer</b>					
<b>H2 (RC and affective delivery), H3 (RC and surface acting), and H4 (RC and deep acting)</b>					
Independent variables	(Step 1)	(Step 2)	(Step 3)	(Step 4)	(Step 5)
Gender	.14***	.13**	.11**	.14**	.14**
Tenure	.15**	.13**	.13**	.15**	.15**
Age	-.05	-.02	-.03	-.05	-.05
Satisfaction	.49***	.48***	.41***	.49***	.49***
Careerism Orientation	.02	.02	.04	.02	.02
Role Conflict	-.03	-.06	-.02	-.03	-.03
Role Ambiguity	-.10**	-.12**	-.07**	-.10**	-.10**
Emotional Exhaustion	-.10**	-.10**	-.09**	-.10**	-.10**
<b>Step 2</b> (Emotional Labor)					
Affective Delivery		-.10**	-.10**	-.10**	-.07*
Surface Acting		.01	.03	.01	.02
Deep Acting		.06	.02	.06	.36***
<b>Step 3</b> Interaction (1)			<b>-.46***</b>		
<b>Role Conflict x Affective Delivery</b>					
F	33.35***	20.19***	<b>36.77***</b>		
Adjusted R-square	.353	.358	<b>.530</b>		
Δ R-square		.004	<b>.172</b>		
<b>Step 4</b> Interaction (2)				<b>-.49***</b>	
<b>Role Conflict x Surface Acting</b>					
F				<b>36.42***</b>	
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>				<b>.527</b>	
Δ R <sup>2</sup>				<b>.169</b>	
<b>Step 5</b> Interaction (3)					<b>-.52</b>
<b>Role Conflict x Deep Acting</b>					
F					<b>35.43***</b>
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>					<b>.520</b>
Δ R <sup>2</sup>					<b>.162</b>

Standardized regression coefficients are reported. \*\*\*  $p < .001$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*  $p < .10$ .

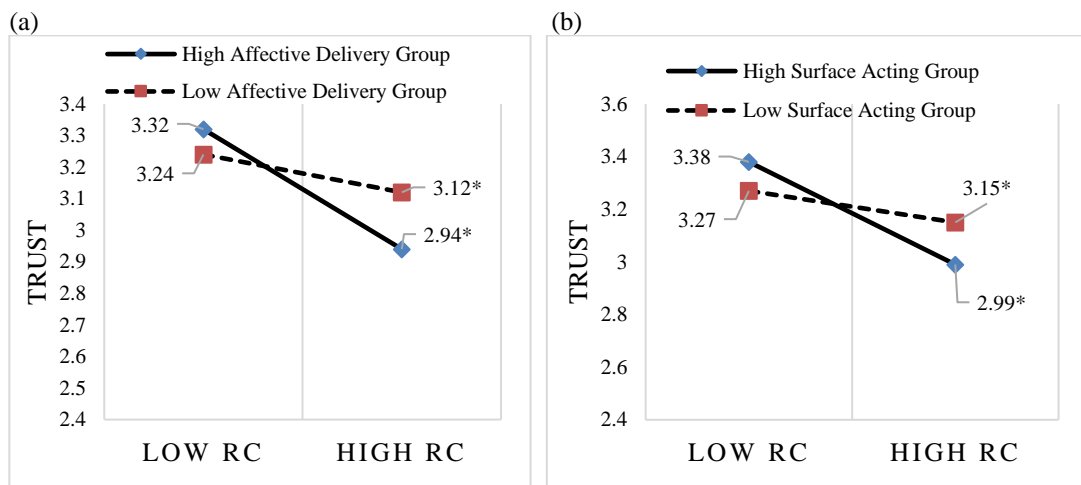


Hypotheses 3 proposed that the surface acting of flight attendants moderates the negative relationship between role conflict (RC) and trust toward the employer. Table 2 shows that when the interaction term (2): (RC x surface acting) is inserted into the equation in step 4, the interaction is significant [ $F(11, 402) = 41.901, p < .001, \Delta R^2 = .167$ ], and explained 16.7 % of additional variance in trust.

Figure 2 (b) presents the plot of the interaction effects of RC and surface acting on trust. The result explains that, when employees perceive a low level of RC, though the difference in the level of trust for the two groups (high and low surface acting groups) is not significant, the high surface acting group reports a slightly higher level of trust (3.38,  $p > 0.10$ ) than does the low surface acting group (3.27,  $p > 0.10$ ). Conversely, when a high level of RC is perceived, the low surface acting group significantly reports a higher level of trust (3.15,  $p < .10$ ) than does the high surface acting group (2.99,  $p < .10$ ). The result reveals that surface acting may moderate the decreasing propensity of trust, when the level of RC is low. By contrast, when the level of RC is high, surface acting might not able to moderate the decreasing propensity of trust toward an employer. Consequently, Hypothesis 3 is partially supported.

Hypotheses 4 proposed that deep acting of flight attendants moderates the negative relationship between role conflict and trust toward the employer. Table 2 shows that when the interaction term (3): (RC x deep acting) is inserted into the equation in step 5, the interaction is not significant, thus not supporting Hypothesis 4.

Fig. 2. (a) Interaction effect of role conflict and affective delivery on trust (H2)  
(b) Interaction effect of role conflict and surface acting on trust (H3)



## 6. Discussion

Customer service employees serve an important interfacing role between the organization and customers. Although the topic of trust has long been of interest to organizational scholars and practitioners, it would be useful to rethink the nature, antecedents, and consequences of trust within organizations. As organizations have become flatter and more team-based, organizational authorities' surveillance of their subordinates has given way to less dictatorial modes of interpersonal influence (Brockner et al., 1997).

Competition has intensified in the airline industry. As a result, downsizing, cost reduction, layoffs, and early retirement programs have become recent trends. Moreover, IT and the automated machines have replaced human employees (Okabe, 2017b). This research examined whether flight attendants' emotional labor was moderated by the decreasing propensity of trust in the changed industrial climate, where less role conflict is perceived by customer service employees. The findings of this study extended the previous research and contributed to the literature.

First, affective delivery, which is the expression of positive emotions in service interactions, moderates the decreasing propensity of trust toward employers, when the customer service employees perceive a role conflict. Williams (2001) has pointed out that affective responses influence how people (e.g. flight attendants) evaluate their level of trust in another party (e.g., employer). While role conflict has a negative impact on trust, the findings of this study showed that such a negative impact on trust could moderate or reduce working practice with affective delivery in customer service employees in the changed industrial climate, where the employees perceive even less role conflict. Robinson & Rousseau (1994) suggested that trust has ‘spiral reinforcement’ quality such that a decline in trust often leads to further decline in trust. Thus, this result may be interpreted that the decreasing propensity of trust towards the employer may lead the employees to reduce working practice with affective delivery in service interaction.

Second, surface acting, which is the suppression of genuine emotion in service interactions, moderates the decreasing propensity of trust toward employers. While some previous research indicates that the use of surface acting to comply with the emotional display rules required by the employer is associated with burnout, the findings of this study suggest that when employees perceive less role conflict, practicing surface acting moderates or repairs the decreasing propensity of trust.

However, when the level of perception of role conflict was very high, emotional labor aspects may be not able to moderate the negative effect on trust; thus, it may lead employees to feel conflicted about how much of themselves to give to their roles, and how much to protect themselves from role conflict. Nevertheless, in the competitive industrial environment, emotional labor practiced by customer service employees may help the employees work harmoniously in a stressful workplace. Emotionally competent employees provide an organization with harmony and integrity, and can increase the competitiveness of the company in the long term because such an employee effectively adopts the company’s strategy and works efficiently (Okabe, 2018 July).

## **7. Research and Industrial Implications**

The author believes that, in a complex, large, and changing industrial climate such as the airline industry, employees must perform a large amount of work within a short time period. For example, when flight attendants must deal with security, safety, and customer service at the same time in the aircraft, surface acting might be able to reduce the mental burden of workers and help in fulfilling their duties.

Another implication of the result is that emotional labor may protect front-line employees by serving as psychological protection tools or mental protection strategies (Okabe, 2017b), when they perceive a role conflict in the workplace and need to judge the situation to perform effectively. Furthermore, strategies of trust repair are necessary to maintain a good relationship between the employees and the employer.

## **8. Limitation and Future Research Direction**

The cross-sectional design and the use of only self-evaluated responses of flight attendants may be considered as limitations of this study. However, the author believe that self-reporting of psychological variables provides accurate measurement, because it would be difficult for a co-worker or supervisor to accurately estimate whether another individual perceives role conflict or to estimate another individual’s practice, for example, surface acting.

A suggestion for future research would be an investigation of the interaction effects of emotional labor in different service organizations with different sets of professionals that are required to display emotional labor. Therefore, a similar topic in a different industrial area and within different organizations would be an interesting future research avenue.

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