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## RELATIONSHIP BONDS AND EMOTIONAL LABOR: JOINT EFFECTS OF COLLECTIVISM AND WORK VIRTUALITY

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**Master in Management**

Supervisor:

PhD Nelson Jorge Campos Ramalho, Associate Professor Iscte – University Institute of Lisbon

September, 2023

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Department of Marketing, Strategy and Operations

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Time stretches out, I am going to graduate from ISCTE in very soon. Looking back on these years of schooling, it has left an indelible mark on the honing of my character, the shaping of my outlook, and the expression of my attitude towards life. Admittedly, in this nearly twenty years of academic career, I have to thank myself, in the countless times of turning and deconstruction still insist on their own, in the countless times of pain, anxiety and doubt still pick up the broken self, and these fragments one by one to collect, extract, and quenching the new me. As the saying goes, "I'd rather be me if I've been around me for a long time".

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One cannot run away from suffering, nor can one give up hope. Fate is not bribed, but hope is with you. Lastly, I hope that all the people in my life will realize the true meaning of life.

## Resumo

Na investigação sobre o trabalho emocional, presta-se relativamente menos atenção ao papel do ajustamento pessoa-organização, bem como à influência mais alargada dos valores sociais como o coletivismo num contexto de trabalho digital crescente. Isto é especialmente importante em sociedades como a China, onde o coletivismo está profundamente enraizado na vida quotidiana e a a virtualização dos ambientes de trabalho precedeu muitas outras economias. Com base numa amostra de 181 trabalhadores, este estudo testa um modelo de mediação sequencial condicional com início no coletivismo e fim no trabalho emocional através dos laços relacionais e do ajustamento pessoa-organização tendo em conta os potenciais efeitos de interação da virtualidade no trabalho.

Os resultados diferenciam os efeitos directos e indirectos da atuação superficial em comparação com a atuação profunda, em que o coletivismo tem um efeito positivo indireto sequencial sobre a atuação profunda mas não sobre a superficial. Isto não acontece com todos os de laços relacionais, uma vez que os laços sociais e os laços financeiros foram os que intervieram neste processo. Verificou-se que a virtualidade interage com o efeito indireto sequencial apenas através dos laços financeiros, o que ocorre quando a virtualidade é elevada. Os resultados são discutidos à luz da teoria e são derivadas consequências para os modelos existentes e também as implicações para a gestão.

**Palavras-Chave:** Trabalho emocional, Ajustamento pessoa-organização, Laços relacionais, collectivismo, virtualidade

**Códigos JEL:** M12

## Abstract

In emotional labour research there is relatively less attention paid to the role of PO-fit as well to the wider influence of societal values such as collectivism in a rising digital work context. This is especially important in societies like China where collectivism is deep rooted in everyday life and virtualization of work settings preceded many other economies. Based on a sample of 181 employees this study tests a conditional sequential mediation model stemming from collectivism towards emotional labour via relationship bonds and PO-fit accounting for potential interaction effects of virtuality at work. Findings differentiate direct and indirect effects towards surface acting as compared to deep acting where collectivism has a sequential indirect positive effect upon deep acting but not surface acting. This does not occur with all types of relationship bonds as the social bonds and financial bonds were the ones operating as intervening in this process. Virtuality was found to interact with the sequential indirect effect through financial bonds only which occurs when virtuality is high. Results are discussed in the light of theory and consequences derived both concerning extant knowledge and managerial implications.

**Keywords:** Emotional Labour, Person-Organization fit, Relationship Bonds, Collectivism, Virtuality

**JEL classification codes:** M12

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# 1. Introduction

Work is important to people in many ways. Work not only brings a pay check, but also a sense of personal worth by producing to meet the needs of others; it also provides the opportunity to develop an identity and make connections with people that become part of personal relationships and, in turn, part of the community (Rosso et al., 2010). Relationship bonds are the cement of this social structure at work (Copilsky & Wolf, 1990) and they fulfil many individual needs that drive work motivation such as the need to belong, the need to feel competent and the need to be autonomous (Deci & Ryan, 2008).

Social interactions at work always entail the need to compromise individual objectives with coworkers, supervisors and customers objectives. This means that as long as there is interpersonal interaction at work, employees will experience some sort of emotional stress that requires psychological effort into expressing the suitable emotions at work. This effort is known as "emotional labour" that was first mentioned by sociologist Arlie Hochschild in her book *The managed heart*. She argues that emotional labour is a type of work that is designed to manage one's emotions in order to meet the emotional demands of a particular job (Hochschild, 1983). Research has been showing the pervasive nature of emotional labour that has become a basic requirement in the workplace (Bhave & Glomb, 2016).

According to this Hochschild (1983) emotional labour can be expressed as either surface acting or deep acting. Surface acting refers to the concealment or altering of negative emotions and faking positive emotions according to organisational expectations while deep acting refers to the resignification of situations so to normalize emotions and avoid the experience of emotional dissonance. These are emotional regulation strategies (Grandey, 2003) that have very different outcomes. Surface acting has been mostly linked to negative outcomes among which the most prevalent are low job satisfaction and burnout (Hu & Shi, 2015; Humphrey, 2023) although deep acting bypass emotional dissonance and therefore has less or no detrimental consequences. Because the pressure to do emotional labour is socially constructed by society but mostly by the organizations themselves this creates the possibility that the feeling of fitting in (between the person and organization) plays a central role in deploying the specific emotional labour strategy. Most research conducted on emotional labour has not paid attention to the importance of (person-organization fit) PO-fit where relationship bonds can also be instrumental to explain emotional labor (Lee et al., 2019).

These interactions at work that produce emotional labour occur in a wider societal context where cultural values condition the acceptability about what is or not reasonable as regards hiding or faking

emotions. This closely relates with how much the individuals are taught to give precedence to collective interests as against their own or give precedence to their own self-interest over the collective one. This brings out the plausible role that collectivism plays in explaining how relationship bonds and PO-fit come together to produce emotional labour. This might be especially relevant in collectivistic cultures such as the Chinese traditional, which may be favourable to establish stronger relationship bonds and thus having better PO-fit and a more suitable emotional labour strategy, i.e. higher deep acting and less surface acting.

However, another context variable that must be considered as regards human interaction at work is the establishment of virtual work and the digital transformation. With the rise in popularity of mobile offices, virtual organisations and other forms of remote work (Messenger & Gschwind, 2016), individuals are working at a faster pace, with increased intensity, and a weakening contractual relationship with their employers. Employees in such a state have less social and non-verbal communication cues (Nydegger & Nydegger, 2010) and when required to display emotional labour, they should be more likely to make frequent emotional adjustments, which affects the quality of the emotional labour they display. This means that the virtuality of work settings should have the potential to change known process models that explain emotional labour as a contextual boundary.

Therefore, by bringing into the equation a focus on PO-fit, the wider role of collectivism and the potential interaction with virtuality this study intends to offer a more comprehensive and useful model, especially in collectivistic societies. This corresponds to a conceptual model that proposes a sequential mediation stemming from collectivism towards relationship bonds and then to PO-fit to end up explaining the adoption of both surface and deep acting. This sequential mediation is expected to change according to the degree to which individuals at work communicate in a more or less virtual fashion, which can be subsumed in the construct of virtuality.

For this purpose this thesis starts by introducing emotional labour highlighting surface acting and deep acting as main emotional regulation strategies, to then relate these to PO-fit as a protective factor. In exploring the antecedents of PO-fit, the literature review highlights relationship bonds explaining in detail the financial bonds, the social bonds and the structural bonds). At this stage a mediation hypothesis is motivated by literature. Once this psychological process is proposed, the literature explores collectivism as a main driver of relationship bonds highlighting its importance in China, which gives it a protective role also. This conflates into a sequential mediation hypothesis. Lastly, the literature review introduces the emerging role of virtuality and its potential to disrupt (or at least modulate) the proposed sequential process. This ends up with a conditional sequential mediation hypothesis that cumulates the overall model

complexity. After showing the conceptual model the thesis reports the methods deployed characterizing the sample, measures used to operationally define the constructs, and data analysis strategy. The thesis proceeds to showing results and how each of the hypotheses was supported or not supported by path analysis statistics. Findings are then discussed in the light of reviewed literature and theory to conclude about its theoretical and practical relevance.

## 2. Literature review

To address the research motivation, we firstly review literature to explore the construct of emotional labor, and its importance and relevance for managing organizations. Then, we explore the literature that builds on important aspects within work settings, namely person-organizational fit (PO-fit) and human bonds. After this, it makes sense to consider the peculiarities of Chinese culture that have shaped a unique style of business management - vertical management, taking a family history of management and centred on people management (Ardichvili et al., 2006). Because people occupy a central position in management, with a focus on ethics and the regulation of interpersonal relationships, literature review progresses towards studying the Chinese context with a focus on collectivism and the Confucianism as a relational philosophy that can drive human bonds.

All of this assumes relations are built and nurtured in a personal basis which implies face-to-face interactions. However, the emergence of COVID-19 has stimulated a surge in the development of telecommuting as a way of working. Therefore, literature review includes an exploration of digital transformation and the virtual work to highlight its nature, expression, and consequences within work settings in relation with the variables in the conceptual model.

### 2.1. Emotional labour

The concept of emotional labour is recurrently traced back to sociologist Erving Goffman work published in 1959 the “Presentation of self in everyday life”. In this work the scholar explored how in all real-world social interactions, people tend to play certain roles and try to produce certain impressions, which require the following of certain rules and the display of appropriate emotions.

Although implied in Goffman’s work, the concept of “emotion work” was only mentioned twenty years after, when Hochschild (1979) first mentioned it as expressing “the act of trying to change in degree or quality of an emotion or feeling”. quality an emotion or feeling (p. 561). In this article she endeavours to promote her view of emotion management as something that can be managed according to the demands of the environment. However, there is no mention of the word “emotional labour” in this article,

as it was only formally introduced by her some years later inspired by the work of flight attendants (Hochschild, 1983). Her definition was then: "Employees who are committed to the management of their emotions to create a face or body movement that is visible to the public, and emotional labour is performed to create a face or body movement that is visible to the public" (p. 7). She proposed emotional labour to be considered the third type of labour in addition to physical labour and mental labour.

Emotional labour is a common phenomenon in the workplace, especially in the service industry, such as the flight attendants mentioned above (who have to smile even in the face of arrogant and rude passengers), and nurses (who have to show sympathy and care for patients no matter how bad their condition is). In other words, these professions put pressure to show sympathy, compassion and care even when one feels the opposite.

Hochschild's concept of emotional labour did not receive immediate attention from researchers. It was not until the Rafaeli and Sutton (1987) series of qualitative studies on emotional labour for different occupations, that emotional labour began to attract the attention of researchers. Based on impression management, Ashforth and Humphrey (1993, p90) defined emotional labour as "the act of expressing appropriate emotions according to the rules of expression required by the occupation". By behaviour of appropriate emotions, they mean behaviour that meets the requirements of the organization, and this definition focuses on emotional labour as a form of impression grooming rather than the management of inner feelings as emphasised by Hochschild. They argue that emotional labour is a form of impression grooming in which individuals can purposefully and consciously regulate their behaviour in response to others, thereby enabling others to form a particular social perception of themselves and create a particular interpersonal climate.

Morris and Feldman (1996) defined emotional labor as "effort, planning, and control needed to express organizationally desired emotion during interpersonal transactions". (p. 987). This definition suggests that emotional labour is an integral part of an individual's job content, it requires the individual to appropriately hide and control their true inner emotions in their encounters with other people, and that even if the individual is exhausted and emotionally drained, they must still be smiling according to the organizations' requirements. John and James (1998) extend the definition given by Morris and Feldman (1996) and made explicit that the interactions were both external (e.g. customers) and internal (e.g. coworkers) stakeholders.

After 2000, a significant amount of research on emotional labour has focused more on integrating the boundaries of the concept itself. Grandey (2003) introduced the theory of emotion regulation developed by Gross (1991) into the concept of emotional labour, and integrated the ideas of Hochschild

(1983), Ashforth and Humphrey (1993), Morris and Feldman (1996), arguing that employees, particularly frontline workers in the service sector, often engage in the psycho-regulatory processing necessary to express the emotions desired by the organization. His study highlights the intrinsic mental activities such as goal identification, planning, monitoring, and information feedback that is carried out to regulate emotional behaviours. In that precise year Diefendorff et al. (2003) took on a cybernetic perspective to define emotional labour as "a cyclical discrepancy-monitoring and reduction process in which perceptions of emotional displays and display rules are continuously compared." (p. 950).

In exploring how feelings (negative vs. positive) and expression of those feelings (showing vs. hiding) co-occurred Glomb and Tews (2004) proposed four emotional states based on two dimensions: performance dimension (referring to appropriate vs inappropriate emotional display) and the feeling dimension (showing emotions that are consistent with internal feelings and the non-performance of emotions that are consistent with internal feelings). Using the performance dimension as the horizontal axis and the feeling dimension as the vertical axis, the coordinate plane was divided into four parts; they propose four emotional: a) Feeling negative emotions but not expressing them (repressed expression); b) Both feeling and acting out positive emotions (authentic expression); c) Not feeling positive emotions, but need to show them (feigned performance); d) Neither feeling nor needing to show negative emotions. After eliminating the "not feeling and not needing to show negative emotions" state, Glomb and Tews (2004) refine the concept highlighting both expression of emotions (that may not be felt) as well as the repression of emotions (that are felt) according to display rules.

One important distinction that emerged since the early work of Hochschild (1983) concerns the psychological processes underlying the emotion regulation: surface acting, and deep acting. When individuals perceive that their emotional experience is inconsistent with the requirements of the organizational rules, they can either adjust to the outward manifestation of their emotions, such as expressions, postures, and intonations; or they can also adjust their inner feelings and further display emotions that are in line with the rules utilizing self-persuasion, imagination. The former being referred to as surface acting and the latter as deep acting. Both provide the same presentation rules, but the first (surface) entails inconsistent psychological status while the second preserves a sense of consistency.

A sense of psychological coherence (Antonovsky, 1993) has been an important variable in the study of human behaviour, as individuals with a higher sense of being coherent are better equipped to deal with problems, to gain cognitive as well as emotional insights into the nature of the problem and to face it positively, and to be more flexible in adopting appropriate tactical approaches to adapt to the demands of the environment. It is therefore logical that surface behaviours are associated with negative outcomes

(Monga et al., 2020) as consistency is felt to be undermined and mental health eroded. Similarly, because deep acting does not produce such disruption, it is associated with positive outcomes (Van Colff et al., 2009).

### **2.1.1. Surface acting**

Surface acting refers to the expression of emotional behaviour in accordance with the organization's emotional display requirements by adjusting facial expressions, voice and body language when the felt emotions do not match the emotional display rules. It was developed by Hochschild on the basis of Goffman's (1959) theoretical view of theatre. Surface acting only regulates the visible external expression of emotions, while the individual's internal emotional feelings do not change, so the individual often feels emotional dissonance within which makes him or her nervous or even causes emotional disorders. The emotions expressed by the individual are 'faked' and not part of the real self, and the reason for following the emotional rules of the organization is for the sake of the job, not to satisfy the needs of the people they serve or to contribute to the organization. Surface acting can occur when individuals suppress negative emotions but also when they fake positive emotions. According to Mann (1999) surface acting occurs in almost 2/3 of all the workplace interactions.

Surface acting has been mostly linked to employee-customer interactions, but it may also emerge within the relationship established with coworkers and supervisors. Hu and Shi (2015) found that surface acting exerted negative effects on coworkers and team leaders namely fostering interaction avoidance, satisfaction and partner's communication, and lower perceived information sharing. The negative effects were attributed to a feeling of being inauthentic, which was especially stronger with coworkers or with leaders when surface acting was experience in faking positive emotions, rather than when it was experienced in suppressing negative emotions with the leader. A critical negative outcome of recurrent surface acting occurs with burnout (Humphrey, 2023) that has daring consequences for the individuals and the organizations (Alarcon, 2011; Houtsimani et al., 2019).

### **2.1.2. Deep acting**

Deep acting was developed by Hochschild, citing the ideas of theatre director Constantin Stanislavski (1965). This concept refers to the individuals' efforts to change their inner feelings to conform to the rules of emotional expression required by the organization, and really experience the emotions that are being asked.

Deep acting out is so heartfelt and consistent that the individuals feel that their feigned emotions are really part of the self, and Hochschild argues that deep acting out at work is a more serious loss of self and

leads to dysregulation of the individual's emotions. However, subsequent researchers hold a different view. Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) suggest that when employees sincerely express the emotions required by the organization by means of deep acting, their inner feelings and outer emotions converge and they are less likely to feel emotionally dysfunctional; and that the emotions expressed in deep acting are more sincere than those expressed in surface acting and that employees are able to take into account their concern for the people they serve. At the same time, deeper disguise emotions are more sincere than surface disguise emotions, and employees are able to take into account their concern for the feelings of their clients and interact more sincerely with them.

Also, directed towards own team, deep acting leads to coworkers providing emotional support which increases the likelihood of experiencing a positive affect state at the end of the work (Shoshan & Venz, 2022).

Many subsequent researchers have discussed the results of these two dimensions. Among them, Beal et al. (2006) found that surface and deep acting are relatively independent, and that an individual's use of one type of acting does not affect his or her use of the other, so that surface and deep acting can lead to different results.

Emotional labour has been abundantly linked to outcomes among which one of the most obvious is person-organization fit.

## **2.2. PO fit**

Personal-Environmental Fit Theory originated from interactional psychology (Vianen, 2018). The concept of Person-Organization fit (PO-fit), on the other hand, originates from the study of individual-environmental fit as a dimension of personal-environmental fit. PO-fit was first proposed by Kurt Lewin, an American psychologist, who emphasised that individual behaviour is a result of the interaction between the individual and the environment, and that such a fit brings positive benefits to the individual and to the organization (Lewin, 1951). Broadly taken, PO-fit has this shared meaning, but it emerges in literature with nuances. Early research on PO-fit was based on Schneider's (1987) study, which used the Attraction-Selection-Attrition (ASA) model to explain the concept of PO-fit to describe the attraction that occurs when individuals and organizations perceive each other as having similar background qualities, allowing employees to enter the organization and be placed in the most appropriate position. After Chatman (1989) used the fit between organizational characteristics and individual traits and values and motivations to study PO-fit, many scholars have been exploring PO-fit from the perspective of values fit. Currently, due to the different research focuses of different scholars, such studies can be broadly divided into three emphases: cultural fit, goal fit, and demand-supply fit.

Firstly, PO-fit is defined in terms of organizational culture fit. Chatman proposed to describe organizational performance fit in terms of the degree of similarity between organizational norms, organizational values and personal values, and to focus the attention of organizational performance fit on the degree of values fit between the two (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986). O'Reilly et al. (1991) provided a deeper interpretation at the values level, i.e., organizational culture has a powerful shaping and moderating effect on individual behaviour, and values are the most fundamental and enduring ideological dimension of organizational culture so that PO-fit can be assessed in terms of the fit between individual values and organizational values. In short, PO-fit is the expression of cultural integration of the individual with the organization (O'Reilly et al., 1991). Thus, values fit is the key to employees' cultural fit with the organization.

The second emphasis focuses on fit from the viewpoint of organizational goals. Schneider (1987) argued that the greater the similarity between employee goals and organizational goals, the greater the individual-organizational fit, which will help the organization to achieve its intended performance and the employees to achieve their personal goals with the help of the organization. Goal fit does not exclude value fit but it adds a complementary dimension to the former as illustrated by Ertas (2019) study on motivation, PO-fit and emotional labour related to turnover intention, where PO-fit is taken as an expression of both value fit and goal fit.

The third emphasis of PO-fit research explains it terms of supply and demand between individuals and organizations. Calpan (1987) defined PO-fit in terms of demand-supply fit and demand-capability fit, the basic requirement of which is that individuals and organizations satisfy each other's needs. Demand-supply fit is viewed from the perspective of the individual, i.e. the organization can provide what the individual needs, thus achieving a balance between the individual's needs and the organization's supply. From the organization's point of view, demand-capability fit occurs when the individual has the competencies that the organization needs. In other words, the individual provides the competencies needed by the organization. This view matches the job-demands resources theory (JDR, Bakker et al., 2003; Demerouti et al., 2001) that advocates every job has a determined level of required effort and stressful physical, social and organizational conditions that created strain, and (demands) that can help overcome such strain when individuals have the right resources to cope with e.g. team cohesion, supervisor support, or job autonomy among others (resources). From a JDR perspective, employees provide work capabilities in exchange for compensation or benefits provided by the organization, while the relative organization provides various physical, social and psychological work conditions to attract individuals to contribute to the organization, and the more they can match each other's requirements, the better the fit will be.

In addition, Muchinsky and Monahan (1987) classified PO-fit into two types: supplementary fit and complementary fit. Supplementary fit emphasises the degree to which an individual's characteristics are similar to the organization's traits, i.e., the fit stemming from the fact that the individual and the organization share similar traits in terms of values, goals, or core competencies, also referred to as similarity fit. Complementary fit refers to the complementarity between the individual and the organization due to differences, where the individual provides the organization with its missing factors and the organization provides the individual with the conditions and opportunities to develop, thus achieving the complementarity between the individual and the organization in terms of resources, which means that the organization's needs are fulfilled through the effective work of the employees.

Based on the diversity of PO-fit content, Kristof (1996) proposed the integration model of fit based on previous research. She summarised the definition of PO-fit integration to comprehend three scenarios of an organizational fit: a). Either the organization or the individual meet the needs of the other; b). The employee and the organization are similar in some basic characteristics; and c). The similarity is put out when both of the above scenarios are present. Cable et al. (2002) extended Kristof's view by dividing the two concepts of complementary fit - i.e. individual needs fit with organizational supply (need-supply fit); and organizational job requirements fit with individual competencies (need-competency fit). Most of the current research related to PO-fit is based on this understanding of the definition mainly because it is a multi-faceted understanding that includes a fuller range of content and a reasonable division of dimensions.

As mentioned, many person-environment fit (PE-fit) theories and empirical studies assume that the person-environment itself has the same effects, such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment and job performance (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005), and that the fit or inconsistency between human (P) variables (i.e., competencies, needs, and values) and environmental (E) variables (job demands, job attributions, the social environment, and the organizational culture) may result in either positive or negative consequences (Edwards et al., 2008; Schneider et al., 2001). PO-fit enables organizational members to be competent in their team roles, achieve good work results and have good job performance, thus contributing to organizational effectiveness to a certain extent. Harter et al. (2002) found that PO-fit leads to positive work attitudes.

Conversely, a mismatch between the individual and the organization will make the employees reduce their enthusiasm for work and produce negative work performance and lower performance, which is detrimental to the organization's development. One of the negative consequences of low PO-fit relates to the inner psychological states produced. Ertas et al. (2019) found a negative association between PO-fit

and emotional labour, mostly with surface acting which can suggest PO-fit protects from emotional strain. Individuals with higher PO-fit were also found to have more deep acting than those with low (Lee et al., 2019). Lam et al. (2018) conducted a time-lagged study on front-service employees and customers to find PO-fit fosters deep acting and hampers surface acting.

Given this, we propose the following hypothesis:

H1: Person-organization fit has a negative direct effect on emotional labour

H1a: Person-organization fit has a negative direct effect on surface acting

H1b: Personality-organization fit has a positive direct effect on deep acting

Among the job resources that contribute to PO-fit, the social dimension plays an important role as expressed in some of its antecedents, namely social bonds (Lee et al., 2019) and societal level values (Trevino et al., 2020).

### **2.3. Relationship Bonds**

According to Copilsky and Wolf (1990) and Wu and Lin (2014), the term 'relational ties' refers to the ways in which organizations are able to reach out to stakeholders more effectively and build long-term and ongoing relationships.

Based on the characteristics of relational ties as approached in early studies (e.g. Berry, 1995), Kim and Kim (2018) categorised relational bonds into three types: financial, social, and structural bonds.

As a concept, relationship bonds originated from the concept of relationship marketing in the field of marketing. Relationship marketing was introduced in the 1970s and evolved from transactional marketing. Transactional marketing refers to the attraction of new customers, while relationship marketing is based on the achievement of transactions, and the development and maintenance of customer relationships and the cultivation of loyal customers through systematic methods and tools after the transaction has taken place. Berry (2002) supposed that relationship marketing is attracting, maintaining and enhancing customer relationships. Servicing and selling to existing customers is just as important to long-term marketing success as acquiring new customers.

Relationship marketing conceives exchange not only in relation to the goods or services traded but also comprehending intangibles such as feelings, commitment and trust. In addition, relationship marketing has a longer duration cycle, placing more emphasis on subsequent mutual benefits for both parties, and the rewards are often non-immediate and not immediately available to give back throughout the process. The most central task of relationship marketing is to identify its constituent factors. A reading of the literature reveals that most studies identify perceived reciprocity, organizational trust and

organizational commitment as important factors that make up the relationship marketing model (Bastug et al., 2106). This will be discussed in detail below.

From the perspective of organizational support theory (OST, Eisenberger et al., 1986; Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011), the sense of organizational support is another important aspect in organizational management. Perceived organizational support refers to the overall feeling of employees about the extent to which “the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being” (Kurtessis et al., 2015, p.124). Kraimer et al. (2004) classified the sense of organizational support as adaptive support, career support, and financial support. Micell and Mulvey (2000) found that pay system satisfaction and pay level satisfaction were among the main dimensions that maintain the bonds between the organization and its members.

Structural bonds, social bonds and financial bonds are thus the main dimensions considered in relationship bonds (Lee et al., 2019). Those three dimensions play an important role in the research of relationship bonds. Therefore, a specific discussion of the three branches of relationships bonds will follow.

### **2.3.1. Financial bonds**

According to Berry (1995), financial bonds concept refers to the provision of monetary benefits as the primary way of building relationships. Organizational support theory (Eisenberger et al., 1986) states that besides training and promotion, organizational rewards enhance employees' perceptions of organizational support (Rhoades et al., 2002). Griffin et al. (2001) conducted a multilevel study with a sample of 3009 teachers aggregated in 148 groups to find that salary satisfaction positively predicts teachers' perceived social support above and beyond average district salary. Likewise, in China, Bao et al. (2010) conducted a study on a sample of 184 teachers from Chinese institutions to find salary satisfaction was significantly and positively related to the level of perceived organizational support. Alongside, because pay is an indicator of what the organization values (Wiley, 1997) and PO-fit is also an expression of how aligned individual and organizational values, it is not surprising to find pay justice as a direct positive predictor of PO-fit as Saether (2019) report.

Overall financial bonds refer to the satisfaction with the global yearly pay and monthly pay together with the possibility of flexible financial arrangements with the organization such as anticipated wage (Lee et al., 2019).

### **2.3.2. Social bonds**

According to Liang and Wang (2005), the formation of social bonds is premised on the establishment of strong ties between stakeholders through social interaction or friendship. SDT informs on the role social

bonds play at work because it established the “relatedness need” as one of the three fundamental human motivations (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Therefore, all individuals are conceived as being fundamentally social in nature, i.e. the natural evolution modelled humankind to seek out for other people so to establish groups, which has improved survival chances (Sheldon & Gunz, 2009). In organizational settings, this association between the satisfaction of relatedness needs and PO-fit was empirically tested by Greguras and Diefendorff (2009) that found PO-fit does have a positive association with relatedness need satisfaction ( $\lambda=.24, p<.01$ ). As regards employee relationship, social bonds refer to employee quality of communication and relations with both coworkers and supervisors (Lee et al., 2019).

### **2.3.3. Structural bonds**

The term "structural bond" refers to the process of creating value that is desired by a large number of stakeholders (Wang, 2014). Palmatier (2006) pointed out that organizational trust and organizational commitment are key indicators of relationship marketing, which play a decisive role in the maintenance and development of customer relationship, and which in turn can be an important measure of the quality of that relationship. As regards employee relationship, structural bonds refer to employee discretion about working hours, extra work, and work schedule (Lee et al., 2019).

This was vastly studied in organizational literature under the topic of job autonomy emerged in literature in the mid-1960s (i.e. Turner & Lawrence, 1965). With the establishment of the Job Characteristics Model (JCM, Hackman & Oldham, 1976) job autonomy gained more centrality as the key feature in job outcomes. Its conceptual nature makes it different from job independence and it can be taken as a relative freedom to self-determine what work to do and how to do it (Krimmeyer & Shirom, 1986). Autonomy has been related with more employee innovative behaviour (Spiegelaere et al., 2014) and to higher job satisfaction (Saragih, 2015). In a study with 262 employees, Kao et al. (2020) treated PO-fit and job autonomy as independent variables where PO-fit was conceived as a contextual boundary. However, the correlation table clearly shows a positive association ( $r=.57, p<.001$ ) between job autonomy and PO-fit, which is in line with motivational theories such as Self-Determination Theory (SDT, Deci & Ryan, 2008) that suggest autonomy is a fundamental human need.

Considering all the relationship bonds, we hypothesize that:

H2: Relationship bonds have a positive direct effect on person-organization fit

H2a: Structural bonds have a positive direct effect on person-organization fit

H2b: Social bonds have a positive direct effect on person-organization fit

H2c: Financial bonds have a positive direct effect on person-organization fit

All in all, relationship bonds exact an important influence in organizational relationships. However, the harmony of organizational relationships does not only depend on relationship bonds, but from a more macro perspective, it also depends on PO-fit, as mentioned. Therefore, because relationship bonds are expected to foster better PO-fit and PO-fit this is also expected to reduce the need to do emotional labour we hypothesize that:

H3: There is an indirect effect of relationship bond on emotional labour via person organization fit.

H3a: There is a negative indirect effect of relationship bond on surface acting via person organization fit.

H3b: There is a positive indirect effect of relationship bond on deep acting via person organization fit.

#### **2.4. Collectivism**

Individualism and collectivism, as two relative concepts, are usually used by psychologists to characterise the behaviour of groups in a society, and at the same time have been widely studied in the field of sociology as two cultural values.

One of the most valuable studies on the perception of the two stems from the cultural framework proposed by Hofstede alongside with Inglehart and Schwartz (Kaase, 2021). Hofstede (2010) summarised six dimensions for measuring culture through usual analyses from the national level: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism/collectivism, masculinity/femininity, long term orientation versus short term orientation, and indulgence versus restraint. The individualism-collectivism dimension emerged from Hofstede's original model back in the 1980s where it was defined as expressing individualism (individualistic societies have loose ties and are more related to one's own family) contrasted with collectivism (where ties extend to other individuals in the society outside direct family, thus fostering a strong cohesive group, Hofstede, 1980).

Some other definitions place the emphasis on other aspects of collectivism. For example, Mills and Clark (1982) argued that collectivism pays more attention to interpersonal relationships, and usually sacrifices its characters in order to maintain the relationship between members of the inner group. Wanger and Moch (1986) characterized collectivism as a focus on the collective good towards which people work to achieve team goals rather than individual goals. Schwartz (1990) argued that collectivism is a socialist society characterised by decentralised mutual obligations and expectations based on a state of belonging. Markus and Kitayama (1991) argued that collectivist cultures place a greater value on

teamwork and place great emphasis on interaction with those around them. One of the most comprehensive and authoritative definitions is by Triandis (1995), who, after synthesising the views of many scholars, suggests that the needs, desires, and achievements of individuals with collectivist tendencies must be subordinated to those of the group or organization to which they belong, and that the attainment of individual goals is ranked under organizational goals.

Individuals are held together in a collectivist society by means of a rigid social framework, and those individuals are then divided into in-group and out-group categories. Individuals exhibit a great degree of deference for their in-group and have the expectation that their in-group would look out for their best interests (Hostede, 1980). According to Ozedemire and Hewett (2010), service providers who have a strong collectivist orientation place a bigger focus on relational features than is necessary and make reactions that are cooperative toward the organization after believing relational behaviours to be relevant. Individuals who have collectivist values are more likely to have an interest in harmonizing with organizations (Mulki et al., 2015), which means that they are better able to align their personal values with the values of organizations and do so more quickly.

China has been mostly classified as a collectivistic culture (Earley, 1994), and collectivism has been deeply rooted in ancient Chinese philosophy as visible in the Confucian doctrine (Jin et al, 2023). Social harmony requires individuals to take into consideration the needs and desires of the others and this implies the possibility of compromising between individual goals and collective goals in such a way that, when both are not possible, the former must submit to the latter. According to the Confucian ethics, individuals build a relational-oriented social identity (Liu et al., 2010) and the self is thought of as having two dimensions: the little-me (xiaowo) and the great-me (dawo) that designate respectively the individual per se and the individual as expressed in his or her group (Barbalet, 2014). So, collectivism is so ingrained in the Chinese traditional culture that the group is considered an extension of the self and vice versa. Because collectivism is intrinsically relational and as a value it supersedes behavioral choices such as relationship bonds, we hypothesize that:

H4: Collectivism has a positive direct effect on relationship bonds

Considering this hypothesis and the previously stated hypotheses that link relationship bonds to person-organization fit and to emotional labour, we hypothesize that:

H5: There is a sequential indirect negative effect of collectivism to emotional labour through relationship bonds and person organization fit.

## 2.5. Virtuality

With the growth of the service-based economy and the expansion of the use of information technology, many companies have introduced the option of working from home as a means of replacing traditional workplaces. This practice has been named "telecommuting" because employees will continue to perform most of the duties they previously performed, but it is no longer assumed that they must be physically present at the workplace in order to fulfil those duties (Babu et al., 2020).

Townsend et al. (1998) described this virtual team as a form of team unconstrained by space and time, linked by advanced network technology. By taking advantage of the diverse perspectives and resources brought by their members, virtual teams have greater creativity and problem-solving capabilities, as well as being able to allocate and use human resources more effectively, facilitating more efficient teamwork.

Research on virtual teamwork has been conducted for decades (Raghuram et al., 2019). The term 'virtual teamwork' has been defined as "a working arrangement in which team members are geographically dispersed, have limited face-to-face contact, and work interdependently through the use of electronic communication media to achieve a common goal" (Dulebohn & Hoch, 2017, p. 569).

The significant differences between remote and traditional teams have been categorised by scholars as the 'virtuality' of teams. Initially, scholars defined virtuality as a singular, either/or phenomenon, arguing that traditional face-to-face and remote working teams are differentiated and that a team is either a face-to-face team or a remote team. However, a growing number of scholars argued that this definition is too simplistic and one-dimensional (e.g. Cohen & Gibson, 2003). Nowadays teams cannot simply be categorised into face-to-face and remote teams, meaning that one should not just consider whether a team is virtual or not, but how virtual a team is.

The concept of virtuality can be used to describe any team; a team with zero virtuality would be a team that collaborates completely face-to-face, while at the other end of the spectrum would be a team that never works together at the same time, in the same place whose members never meet face-to-face, and is completely virtual. The moment where collaboration can be categorized as face-to-face or virtual is defined by the communications established between individuals. A face-to-face communication is undoubtedly a zero-virtual moment, but even if individuals are sharing the same workspace, if they opt to send an email to a coworker instead of heading towards and have a face-to-face interaction, then we can state such option brings some degree of virtuality into the situation. Therefore, by taking communication channels options as expression of in-person versus virtual implies that working in the same physical space does not necessarily mean 0% virtuality. Thus, measuring virtuality by means of the relative use of communication channels is more rigorous than simply considering how much time people work in-person

versus remotely (Jong et al., 2008).

Virtuality brings many advantages but also challenges. Taras et al. (2019) argue that virtual teams, by taking advantage of the diverse perspectives and resources brought by their members, are able to enhance creativity and problem-solving capabilities, as well as allocating and using human resources more effectively, facilitating more efficient teamwork, the use of human resources, facilitating teams to work more efficiently. This goes in line with Hou (2012) that claimed for the superiority of this virtual team arrangement when project-based structure is in operation due to its direct communications across the entire structure which enables the flexibility and efficiency required. This same author also calls attention to the greater dependency that such virtual organizations have on the quality of the communication.

This brings us to the key disadvantage of virtual communication which lies on negative effects of physical distance which is known to relate with weaker team engagement from individuals (Ackerman, 2009). This creates more difficulty in building interpersonal trust which is also due to the lack of informal interactions upon which a deeper personal relation bond is built between individuals (Olson & Olson, 2014). Likewise, the use of some very restrictive channels, e.g. email, create a lack of nonverbal cues in the communication (Eisenberg & Krishnan, 2018) which, from the Media Richness Theory (Daft & Lengel, 1984) viewpoint is hampers communication quality. Evolutionary pressures operated in favour of face-to-face communication (Kock, 2010) which is the one that enables more rich communication through immediate feedback both using visual and audio channels, and with verbal and nonverbal cues. Although technology can also offer solutions to mitigate these negative effects (Morrison-Smith & Ruiz, 2020) it is yet far from being able to create communication channels that are psychologically indistinguishable from the naturalness of face-to-face communication. According to the Media Richness Theory, Daft and Lengel (2022) categorised media that enable seamless communication similar to face-to-face interaction as 'rich' media and media that do not enable seamless communication as 'poor' media. The use of rich media tools in leader-subordinate communication can enhance the organisational communication process. The most effective media-based communication channels include email, Facebook, Twitter, and Google Docs (Aritz et al., 2018).

Still, the advantages virtual communication brings to organizations and individuals seem to outweigh the disadvantages as telework has expanded continuously especially after the 2020 outbreak of the COVID-19 where global expatriate work has been greatly hit, due to the high propagation characteristics of the epidemic, the expatriate team has shifted from the traditional team to the virtual team of virtual office (Barry & Kane, 2023).

Communication, as an important link through the whole process of achieving organizational goals,

plays an important role in the whole process of organizational management. Whether an organization's communication over does smoothly or not is one of the important indicators of organizational culture, PO-fit, and employees' emotional labour. By synthesising scholars' research on communication management in virtual teams, two main conclusion arise: a) In virtual teams, virtual team leaders play more of a liaison and coordinator role. Therefore, the communication ability of virtual team leaders is required to be higher than that of localised teams; and b) Virtual teams are weaker than traditional localised teams in terms of team cohesion, communication satisfaction, and communication quality. Therefore, virtual teams should use multiple types of semantically rich communication channels to increase the interactions between members, such as video conferencing.

We therefore hypothesize that:

H6: Virtuality interacts with the sequential mediation from collectivism to emotional labour through relationship bonds and person organization fit in such a way that high virtuality decreases positive effects and increases the negative ones.

This hypothesis entails six sub-hypotheses concerning the specific indirect effects through financial, social, and structural bonds.

### 3. Conceptual model

The conceptual model is designed based on Lee et al. (2019) model that depicts a mediation performed by PO-fit between bonds and emotional labour, that also previews an interaction effect with collectivism. Adding to this model, we propose a general interaction effect of the virtuality, i.e. the degree in which employees are working remotely. Figure 1.1 shows the model.

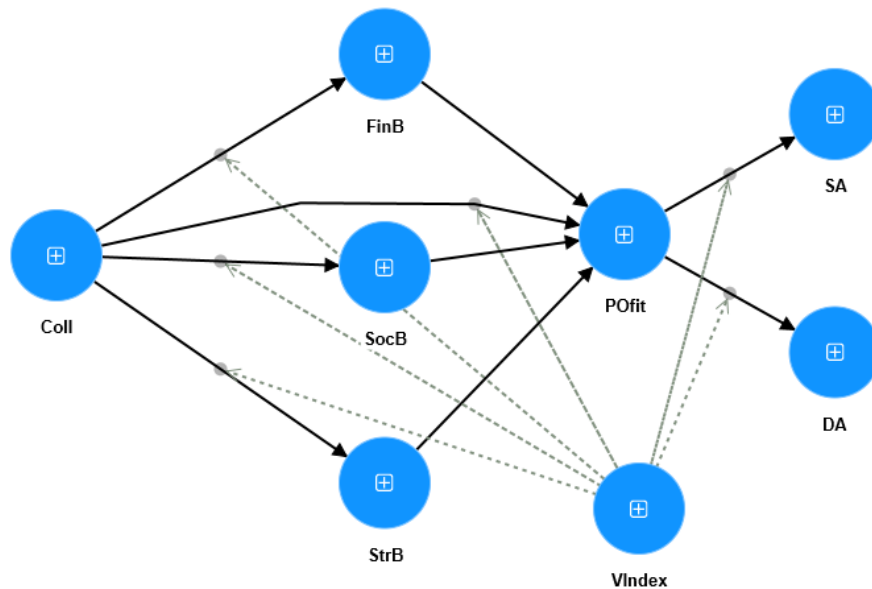


Figure 1.1 – Conceptual model graph

To clarify, the conceptual model integrates the following set of hypotheses and subhypotheses:

H1: Person-organization fit has a negative direct effect on emotional labour

H1a: Person-organization fit has a negative direct effect on surface acting

H1b: Personality-organization fit has a positive direct effect on deep acting

H2: Relationship bonds have a positive direct effect on person-organization fit

H2a: Structural bonds have a positive direct effect on person-organization fit

H2b: Social bonds have a positive direct effect on person-organization fit

H2c: Financial bonds have a positive direct effect on person-organization fit

H3: There is an indirect effect of relationship bond on emotional labor through person organization fit.

H3a: There is a negative indirect effect of relationship bond on surface acting through person organization fit.

H3b: There is a positive indirect effect of relationship bond on deep acting through person organization fit.

H4: Collectivism has a positive direct effect on relationship bonds.

H5: There is a sequential indirect negative effect of collectivism to emotional labour through relationship bonds and person organization fit.

H6: Virtuality interacts with the sequential mediation from collectivism to emotional labour through relationship bonds and person organization fit in such a way that high virtuality decreases positive effects and increases the negative ones.

H6a: Virtuality interacts with the sequential mediation from collectivism to surface acting through financial bonds and person organization fit in such a way that high virtuality decreases positive effects and increases the negative ones.

H6a': Virtuality interacts with the sequential mediation from collectivism to deep acting through financial bonds and person organization fit in such a way that high virtuality decreases positive effects and increases the negative ones.

H6b: Virtuality interacts with the sequential mediation from collectivism to surface acting through social bonds and person organization fit in such a way that high virtuality decreases positive effects and increases the negative ones.

H6b': Virtuality interacts with the sequential mediation from collectivism to deep acting through social bonds and person organization fit in such a way that high virtuality decreases positive effects and increases the negative ones.

H6c: Virtuality interacts with the sequential mediation from collectivism to surface acting through structural bonds and person organization fit in such a way that high virtuality decreases positive effects and increases the negative ones.

H6c': Virtuality interacts with the sequential mediation from collectivism to deep acting through structural bonds and person organization fit in such a way that high virtuality decreases positive effects and increases the negative ones.

## 4. Methods

### 4.1. Data analysis strategy

Due to the perceptive nature of scales, we started by conducting exploratory factor analysis (more precisely, principal component analysis, PCA) which offer clarity about the construct validity, i.e. how the items integrate to measure the construct we intend to measure. A PCA is considered valid when KMO reaches at least .500, the items communalities also reach .500 and MSAs do not have any item below .500. Additionally, Bartlett's sphericity test should present a  $X^2$  statistic that rejects the null hypothesis, i.e. with a p-value below .01. To reach a clear depiction of the factor loadings, whenever a solution has more than two components, we asked for Varimax rotation, that is suitable to obtain orthogonal components, i.e. that are independent of each other. A reasonable level of aggregation into principal components should account for at least 60% of total variance after rotation. Lastly, a given component will only be usable if its reliability is acceptable. This is measured with Cronbach's alpha which must achieve .70 to be considered good enough. Whenever a given measure is considered both valid and reliable, it can be used to test the hypotheses.

Hypotheses testing was conducted with path analysis by using SMART-PLS software. Although this software is mostly used to run Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling, it has it is 4<sup>th</sup> version the feature of allowing path analysis with the advantage of working with conceptual models that most traditionally used software (e.g. PROCESS Macro, Hayes, 2018) does not. This software has an intuitive graphical interface and allows testing direct, indirect, interaction and conditional indirect effects simultaneously with one or more independent and dependent variables. We run the analyses with 5000 repetitions bootstrapping on a 95% confidence interval as recommended by Hayes (2018).

### 4.2. Procedure

This study was part of a larger research project, and the procedure has been designed to accommodate all requirements from studies. So, data collection took place online via WenJuanXing, the leading software for data collection with extensive use in published research in China (e.g. Chang et al., 2022) and the anonymous link spread across contacts via wechat. The targets are individuals with active working status that able to do telework. The questionnaire started by introducing the topic and invitation to participate while making explicit its anonymous and volunteer participation nature. The link to participate in the questionnaire was spread via wechat, a popular social network in China, and the targeted participants did not receive any reward from participating and were direct contacts of the researchers. Thus, the sampling method precludes any representativeness claims as it is a non-random procedure.

### 4.3. Sample

181 valid responses were collected from active employees, currently working, which were mostly women (71.8%), with high education level (70 % with a bachelor's degree), and young (52.5 % under 25 years of age; 84.5% under 31 years of age). Most of the participants worked in public institutions (43.6 %), private companies (30.9 %) or mixed institutions (25.4 %). Because of their young age, most participants had a short work tenure, with almost 75% reporting less than three years of work experience.

### 4.4. Measures

**Emotional labour** was measured Diefendorff et al. (2005) 8 item scale as adopted by Lee et al. (2019) study. These authors exclude three items from the surface acting subscale due to being unfitted to the Asian context. The used **surface acting** scale is (1. I put on an act in order to deal with customers in an appropriate way; 2. I fake a good mood when interacting with customers; 3. I put on a “mask” in order to display the emotions I need for the job; and 4) I fake the emotions I show when dealing with customers. The excluded items were: “I put on a “show” or “performance” when interacting with customers”; “I just pretend to have the emotions I need to display for my job”; “I show feelings to customers that are different from what I feel inside”. The subscale for **deep acting** also comprehends 4 items as follows: I try to actually experience the emotions that I must show to customers; I make an effort to actually feel the emotions that I need to display toward others; I work hard to feel the emotions that I need to show to customers; I work at developing the feelings inside of me that I need to show to customers. The Principal Components Analysis showed a valid solution ( $KMO=.877$ ,  $.856 < MSA < .897$ ; Bartlett's  $\chi^2(28)=1344.682$ ,  $p < .001$ ) comprehending both components as expected (Surface acting and Deep Acting) accounting for 83.6% of total variance after rotation (Varimax) with negligible cross loading. Both components have acceptable reliability as shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 – Factor solution for Emotional Labor

|                                          | Surface acting | Deep acting |
|------------------------------------------|----------------|-------------|
| SA3 put on a “mask”                      | <b>.883</b>    | .298        |
| SA2 fake a good mood                     | <b>.880</b>    | .220        |
| SA4 fake the emotions I show             | <b>.858</b>    | .318        |
| SA1 put on an act                        | <b>.857</b>    | .224        |
| DA4 developing the feelings inside of me | .126           | <b>.883</b> |
| DA3 work hard to feel the emotions       | .334           | <b>.880</b> |
| DA2 effort to feel the emotions          | .303           | <b>.870</b> |
| DA1 try to experience emotions           | .359           | <b>.849</b> |
| Cronbach alpha                           | .930           | .934        |

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

**PO-fit** was measured with Saks and Ashforth (2002) scale that comprises four items organized into a single dimension: To what extent are the values of the organization similar to your own values?; To what extent does your personality match the personality or image of the organization?; To what extent does the organization fulfil your needs?; To what extent is the organization a good match for you?. Respondents used a an adapted 5-point Likert scale identical to the one used by Saks and Ashforth (2002), namely (1- to a very little extent, to 5- to a very large extent) to state their answers. A Principal Components Analysis showed a valid single component solution (KMO=.832, .806<MSA<.850; Bartlett’s  $X^2(6)=528.419$ ,  $p<.001$ ) accounting for 80.3% of total variance. Table 4.2 shows the loadings as well as reliability indicator (Cronbach alpha=.917).

Table 4.2 – Factor solution for P-O Fit

|                    | P-O fit                       |
|--------------------|-------------------------------|
| PoFit4 Match       | .922                          |
| PoFit1 Values      | .902                          |
| PoFit2 Personality | .882                          |
| PoFit3 Needs       | .877                          |
| Cronbach alpha     | .917                          |
| Extraction Method: | Principal Component Analysis. |

**Relationship bonds** were measured with Wang (2014) scale that comprehends 10 items organized in three subscales: Financial bonds (3 items, “FinB1 My organization provides satisfactory total income”, “FinB2 My organization provides satisfactory monthly salary”, “FinB3 My organization provides anticipated wage”), social bonds (4 items, “SocB1 My organization supports me so that I communicate well with co-workers”, “SocB2 My organization supports me so that I maintain good relationships with co-workers”, “SocB3 My organization supports me so that I communicate well with my boss”, “SocB4 My organization supports me so that I maintain a good relationship with my boss”), and structural bonds (3 items, “StrcB1 My organization allows me to decide the amount of extra work”, “StrcB2 My organization allows me to freely adjust working hours”, “StrcB3 My organization allows me to flexibly manage work schedules”). The Principal Components Analysis showed a valid three-component solution (KMO=.840, .788<MSA<.941; Bartlett’s  $X^2(45)=1479.866$ ,  $p<.001$ ) that accounts for 82.8% total variance after rotation (Varimax). Table 4.3 shows the loadings as well as reliability indicators.

Table 4.3 - Factor solution for Relationship Bonds

|                                                                                       | Component    |                 |                  |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|-----------------|------------------|
|                                                                                       | Social bonds | Financial bonds | Structural Bonds |
| SB4 My organization supports me so that I maintain a good relationship with my boss   | <b>.901</b>  | .175            | .196             |
| SB3 My organization supports me so that I communicate well with my boss               | <b>.878</b>  | .135            | .239             |
| SB2 My organization supports me so that I maintain good relationships with co-workers | <b>.869</b>  | .158            | .248             |
| SB1 My organizat. supports me so that I communicate well with co-workers              | <b>.678</b>  | .293            | .393             |
| FB3 My organization provides anticipated wage                                         | .187         | <b>.912</b>     | .165             |
| FB1 My organization provides satisfactory total income                                | .235         | <b>.911</b>     | .160             |
| FB2 My organization provides satisfactory monthly salary                              | .124         | <b>.887</b>     | .244             |
| STB2 My organization allows me to freely adjust working hours                         | .201         | .265            | <b>.855</b>      |
| STB3 My organization allows me to flexibly manage work schedules                      | .308         | .164            | <b>.819</b>      |
| STB1 My organization allows me to decide the amount of extra work                     | .274         | .149            | <b>.783</b>      |
| Cronbach alpha                                                                        | .917         | .936            | .859             |

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. a. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.

**Collectivism** was measured with Wu (2006) 3-item scale (“Coll1 Group welfare is more important than individual rewards”, “Coll2 Group success is more important than individual success”, and “Coll3 Employees should pursue their goals after considering the welfare of the group”). The Principal Component Analysis showed a single-component valid solution (KMO=.711, .656<MSA<.794; Bartlett’s  $\chi^2(3)=294.074$ ,  $p<.001$ ) accounting for 80.1% total variance. Table 4.4 shows the loadings as well as reliability indicator (Cronbach alpha=.875).

Table 4.4 – Factor solution for Collectivism

|                                                                                      | Collectivism |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| Coll1 Group welfare is more important than individual rewards                        | .801         |
| Coll2 Group success is more important than individual success                        | .861         |
| Coll3 Employees should pursue their goals after considering the welfare of the group | .742         |
| Cronbach alpha                                                                       | .875         |

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

**Virtuality** was measured based on Jong et al. (2008) score which was based on Baltes et al. (2002) classification of communication media virtuality. Virtuality is then expressed as the product of lack of nonverbal and paraverbal communication times the degree of asynchrony. Instructions given are the following: “Your team members use different medium to communicate amongst each other. Think about all this internal team communication and state to what extent each of the following medium were used to communicate in your team. The cumulative total of all percentages should be 100%. Please fill in for each medium the percentage of use. (Notice: accumulating all the scores, the total extent of use must be 100 percent): (a) Face-to-face ...%, (b) E-mail ...%, (c) Chat ...%, (d) Teleconference (via audio connection; telephone) ...%, (e) Videoconference (via video + audio connection) ...%, (f) Other, namely \_\_\_\_\_ ...%”. The weights for each medium were: face-to-face (.14), Videoconference (.52), Teleconference (.41), chat (.85), and email (.96). The index has a formative nature.

**Sociodemographic variables**, for descriptive and control purposes, were collected. Namely: gender (1=male, 2=female), age (1=up to 25 years-old, 2=26-30, 3=31-35, 4= 36-40, 5=41-45, 6=46-50, 7=51-55, 8=56-60, and 9=61 or more), education (1=Up to 9 years schooling, 2=9 years schooling, 3=12 years schooling, 4=Bachelor degree, 5=Master, and 6=PhD), work experience (1=Less than 1 year, 2=1 to 3 years working, 3=4 to 6 years, 4=7 to 9 years, and 5=10 or more years working), organization nature (1=Private company, 2=Public Administration / State Owned Company, 3=NGO, 4=Other), organizational size (1=Small (1 to 99 workers), 2=Medium (100 to 249 workers), 3=Large (250 to 499), and 4=Very large (500 or more)).

## 5.RESULTS

### 5.1. Descriptive and bivariate statistics

Bonds are modestly reported in the cases of Financial Bonds ( $M=3.22$ ,  $SD=.83$ ) and Structural Bonds ( $M=3.24$ ,  $SD=.88$ ) but are stronger in social dimension ( $M=3.56$ ,  $SD=.70$ ). This exact same magnitude was found for person-organization fit ( $M=3.56$ ,  $SD=.77$ ) which is the highest mean found among the variables comprised in the conceptual model. Participants reported equivalent levels of emotional labour as surface ( $Mean=3.38$ ,  $SD=1.05$ ) and deep acting ( $Mean=3.41$ ,  $SD=.97$ ) as indicated by Wilcoxon test ( $Z=-.917$ ,  $p=.359$ ). The level of collectivism reported is modest ( $M=3.17$ ,  $SD=.89$ ) and the average virtuality index is 46.22 ( $SD=15.70$ ) which indicate there is a widespread use of digital channels in the sample ranging from 14 to 83.63 which suggests a varied experience with cases almost entirely communicating face-to-face and also cases where work is always done remotely with several communication channels.

Among the sociodemographic variables age and work experience show the highest number of cases correlated with variables in the conceptual model. Namely, negative correlations with both dimensions of emotional labour with the highest found for work experienced crossed with surface acting ( $r=-.337$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and the lowest between work experience and deep acting ( $r=-.160$ ,  $p<.05$ ). This is also found with virtuality index where two modest correlations were found respectively with age ( $r=-.156$ ,  $p<.05$ ) and work experience ( $r=-.187$ ,  $p<.05$ ). Positive correlations were also found between education and both emotional labor dimensions where the one with surface acting ( $r=.238$ ,  $p<.01$ ) is stronger than the one with deep acting ( $r=.166$ ,  $p<.05$ ). A single correlation was found with gender, where females tend to report higher levels of PO fit ( $r=.225$ ,  $p<.01$ ). No case of statistically significant correlation was found for work unit nature and organizational size.

Bivariate statistics show positive associations between the three dimensions of bonds and PO-fit with the highest found with social bonds ( $r=.536$ ,  $p<.01$ ). On its turn, PO fit is positively associated with deep acting ( $r=.333$ ,  $p<.01$ ) but it has no association with surface acting ( $r=.064$ ,  $p>.05$ ). This suggests bonds may be connected with deep acting via PO fit but not with surface acting which partially encourages the conceptual model. Collectivism is found to positively correlate with most of the conceptual model variables. It has positive correlations with bonds ( $r_{FinBonds}=.423$ ,  $p<.01$ ;  $r_{SocBonds}=.494$ ,  $p<.01$ ;  $r_{StrBonds}=.380$ ,  $p<.01$ ), as well as with PO fit ( $r=.314$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and deep acting ( $r=.232$ ,  $p<.01$ ). It has, however, no association with neither surface acting ( $r=-.019$ ,  $p>.05$ ) nor virtuality index ( $r=-.038$ ,  $p>.05$ ).

Table 5.1 – Descriptive and bivariate statistics

|                   | M       | SD    | 1      | 2       | 3       | 4      | 5      | 6     | 7      | 8      | 9      | 10     | 11     | 12     | 13    |
|-------------------|---------|-------|--------|---------|---------|--------|--------|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------|
| 1. Gender MF      | 71.8% F |       | - 1    |         |         |        |        |       |        |        |        |        |        |        |       |
| 2. Age            | 1.78    | 1.16  | -.095  | 1       |         |        |        |       |        |        |        |        |        |        |       |
| 3. WorkXp         | 2.06    | 1.36  | -.092  | .817**  | 1       |        |        |       |        |        |        |        |        |        |       |
| 4. Education      | 4.14    | .52   | .008   | -.112   | -.219** | 1      |        |       |        |        |        |        |        |        |       |
| 5. WorkUnitNature | 2.20    | 1.13  | .106   | .332**  | .371**  | .129   | 1      |       |        |        |        |        |        |        |       |
| 6. OrgSize        | 2.15    | 1.24  | -.073  | .072    | .047    | .221** | .333** | 1     |        |        |        |        |        |        |       |
| 7. FinBond        | 3.22    | .83   | -.011  | .131    | .057    | -.131  | .000   | .128  | 1      |        |        |        |        |        |       |
| 8. SocBond        | 3.56    | .70   | .059   | .079    | -.012   | .122   | .018   | .137  | .443** | 1      |        |        |        |        |       |
| 9. StrcBond       | 3.24    | .88   | -.070  | -.003   | -.030   | -.011  | .103   | .073  | .456** | .596** | 1      |        |        |        |       |
| 10. POfit         | 3.56    | .77   | .225** | .089    | .029    | .031   | .068   | .049  | .427** | .536** | .418** | 1      |        |        |       |
| 11. SA            | 3.38    | 1.05  | .003   | -.321** | -.337** | .238** | -.062  | .038  | .119   | .157*  | .069   | .064   | 1      |        |       |
| 12. DA            | 3.41    | .97   | .071   | -.200** | -.160*  | .166*  | -.059  | .065  | .184*  | .288** | .149*  | .333** | .568** | 1      |       |
| 13. Coll          | 3.17    | .89   | -.010  | .087    | .044    | -.109  | .057   | .008  | .423** | .494** | .380** | .314** | -.019  | .232** | 1     |
| 14. Virtual       | 46.22   | 15.70 | .127   | -.156*  | -.187*  | .074   | .142   | -.046 | -.051  | -.070  | .036   | -.005  | .049   | .113   | -.038 |

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$  For nominal variables, Phi coefficient and Cramer's V statistics are reported

## 5.2. Hypotheses testing

The first hypothesis concerns the direct effect between PO-fit and emotional labor, namely a negative direct effect with surface acting (H1a), and a positive direct effect with deep acting (H1b). Results show no significant association with surface acting but a positive association with deep acting, which rejects H1a and supports H1b (Table 4.1).

The second hypothesis established a positive direct effect between the three types of relationship bonds and PO-fit. Results show a positive coefficient for financial bonds ( $B=.201, p<.05$ ) which supports H2a; a positive coefficient for social bonds ( $B=.375, p<.01$ ) which supports H2b; and also a positive coefficient for structural bonds ( $B=.110, p<.05$ ) which supports H2c. Therefore, H2 is fully supported. The strongest association was found to occur with social bonds.

The third hypothesis connects the previous two by establishing an indirect effect flowing from relationship bonds to emotional labour via PO-fit. This entails six subhypotheses (3 bonds times 2 emotional labor strategies) as follows: H3a (financial bonds->POfit->Surface acting), H3b (social bonds->POfit->Surface acting), H3c (structural bonds->POfit->Surface acting), H3a' (financial bonds->POfit->Deep acting), H3b' (social bonds->POfit->Deep acting), H3c' (structural bonds->POfit->Deep acting). Significant p-values were found only for the indirect effect of financial bonds on deep acting via PO-fit (Coeff.=.092,  $p<.05$ ) as well as for the indirect effect of social bonds on deep acting via PO-fit (Coeff.=.171,  $p<.01$ ) which supports both H3a', and H3b'. None of the indirect effects towards surface acting were supported and the structural indirect effect on deep acting was also not sufficient strong to be deemed as significant (Coeff.=.050,  $p=.07$ ).

The fourth hypothesis concerns the direct positive effect that collectivism has on relationship bonds, thus comprehending three sub-hypotheses (towards financial bonds H4a, towards social bonds H4b, and towards structural bonds H4c). Findings support H4a ( $B=.396, p<.01$ ), H4b ( $B=.403, p<.01$ ) and H4c ( $B=.383, p<.01$ ) thus fully supporting H4.

Table 5.2 – Direct and indirect effects (H1, H2, H3)

|                         | Mediator: PO-fit |       |        |         | Surface Acting |       |        |           | Deep Acting |       |        |
|-------------------------|------------------|-------|--------|---------|----------------|-------|--------|-----------|-------------|-------|--------|
|                         | Coeff.           | t     | p-val. |         | Coeff.         | t     | p-val. |           | Coeff.      | t     | p-val. |
| <i>Direct effect</i>    |                  |       |        |         |                |       |        |           |             |       |        |
| Gender                  | .385             | 3.003 | .001   |         | -.157          | .998  | .159   |           | -.115       | .743  | .229   |
| Age                     | .047             | 1.228 | .110   |         | -.306          | 4.133 | .001   |           | -.197       | 2.764 | .003   |
| Educat                  | .046             | 0.588 | .278   |         | .376           | 3.067 | .001   |           | .202        | 1.578 | .057   |
| Org. Nature             | .049             | 1.241 | .107   |         | -.114          | 1.797 | .036   |           | -.115       | 2.077 | .019   |
| Collect.                | .001             | 0.018 | .493   |         |                |       |        |           |             |       |        |
| FinBonds                | .201             | 2.277 | .011   | H2a_sup |                |       |        |           |             |       |        |
| SocBonds                | .375             | 4.149 | .001   | H2b_sup |                |       |        |           |             |       |        |
| StrucBonds              | .110             | 1.708 | .044   | H2c_sup |                |       |        |           |             |       |        |
| POfit                   |                  |       |        |         | .123           | 1.03  | .152   | H1a_n.s.  | .457        | 4.302 | .001   |
| <i>Indirect effects</i> |                  |       |        |         |                |       |        |           |             |       |        |
| FB-POfit-SA             |                  |       |        |         | .025           | .801  | .211   | H3a_n.s.  |             |       |        |
| SB-POfit-SA             |                  |       |        |         | .046           | .965  | .167   | H3b_n.s.  |             |       |        |
| StB-POfit-SA            |                  |       |        |         | .014           | .843  | .200   | H3c_n.s.  |             |       |        |
| FB-POfit-DA             |                  |       |        |         | .092           | 1.913 | .028   | H3a'_sup  |             |       |        |
| SB-POfit-DA             |                  |       |        |         | .171           | 2.698 | .004   | H3b'_sup  |             |       |        |
| StB-POfit-DA            |                  |       |        |         | .050           | 1.479 | .070   | H3c'_n.s. |             |       |        |

Table 5.3 – Direct effects (H4)

|                      | Mediator:<br>Financial Bonds |       |        |     | Mediator:<br>Social Bonds |       |        |     | Mediator:<br>Structural Bonds |       |        |     |
|----------------------|------------------------------|-------|--------|-----|---------------------------|-------|--------|-----|-------------------------------|-------|--------|-----|
| <i>Direct effect</i> | Coeff.                       | t     | p-val. |     | Coeff.                    | t     | p-val. |     | Coeff.                        | t     | p-val. |     |
| Gender               | .007                         | .056  | .478   |     | .121                      | 1.197 | .116   |     | -.142                         | 1.027 | .152   |     |
| Age                  | .06                          | 1.376 | .084   |     | .036                      | 1.042 | .149   |     | -.015                         | .276  | .391   |     |
| Educat               | .007                         | .056  | .478   |     | .265                      | 3.164 | .001   |     | .066                          | .561  | .288   |     |
| Org. Nature          | -.022                        | .449  | .327   |     | .015                      | .39   | .348   |     | .053                          | 1.061 | .144   |     |
| Collect.             | .396                         | 5.153 | .001   | H4a | .403                      | 5.53  | .001   | H4b | .383                          | 4.316 | .001   | H4c |
| adjR <sup>2</sup>    | adjR <sup>2</sup> =17.5%     |       |        |     | adjR <sup>2</sup> =23.5%  |       |        |     | adjR <sup>2</sup> =13.3%      |       |        |     |

The fifth hypothesis joins the mediational effect previewed in the third hypothesis with the direct effects of collectivism previewed in the fourth hypothesis, thus proposing a sequential indirect negative effect of collectivism on emotional labour through relationship bonds and person organization fit, respectively.

Just like the third hypothesis, H5 comprises six sub-hypotheses (H5a, collectivism->Financial Bonds->POfit->Surface acting), (H5b, collectivism->Social Bonds->POfit->Surface acting), (H5c, H5a, collectivism->Structural Bonds->POfit->Surface acting), (H5a', collectivism->Financial Bonds->POfit->Deep acting), (H5b', collectivism->Social Bonds->POfit-> Deep acting), (H5c', H5a, collectivism->Structural Bonds->POfit-> Deep acting). As expectable, none of the indirect effects towards surface acting has been found to be significant thus rejecting H5a, H5b and H5c. Just as found in H3, findings show a significant effect of Collectivism on Deep acting via Financial Bonds and PO-fit (Coeff.=.036,  $p<.05$ ) as well as via Social Bonds (Coeff.=.069,  $p<.05$ ) thus supporting H5a', and H5b'. H5c' was not supported (Coeff.=.019,  $p=.091$ ).

The sixth hypothesis brings into the equation the possible interaction between virtuality and the sequential mediation established in the previous hypothesis (H5). Although the specific interaction in the PO-fit - surface acting path is significant (coeff.=.012,  $p=.044$ ) none of the specific sequential indirect interactions were significant thus rejecting H6a, H6b and H6c. Likewise, although the specific interaction effect in PO-fit – Deep acting path is non-significant (coeff.=.004,  $p=.288$ ) the specific sequential indirect interaction in Collect->FinBonds->PO-fit->DA is significant as evidenced by high vs. low moderator values found. Namely, when virtuality is high the coefficient between PO-fit and Deep acting is .055 ( $p=.035$ ) while it is .021 ( $p=.124$ ). This supports H6a'. For the remaining sub-hypotheses (H6b' and H6c') the paths do not substantially change according to the levels of virtuality, thus rejecting them.

Although not previewed in the hypotheses, the specific interaction between PO-fit and Surface Acting does suggest that, although the sequential indirect conditional effect magnitude is not sufficient to achieve significant level, the specific direct effect is indeed clearly sensible to the level of virtuality. In this case, as a complementary information, when virtuality is high the effect of positive and when virtuality is low the effect becomes negative.

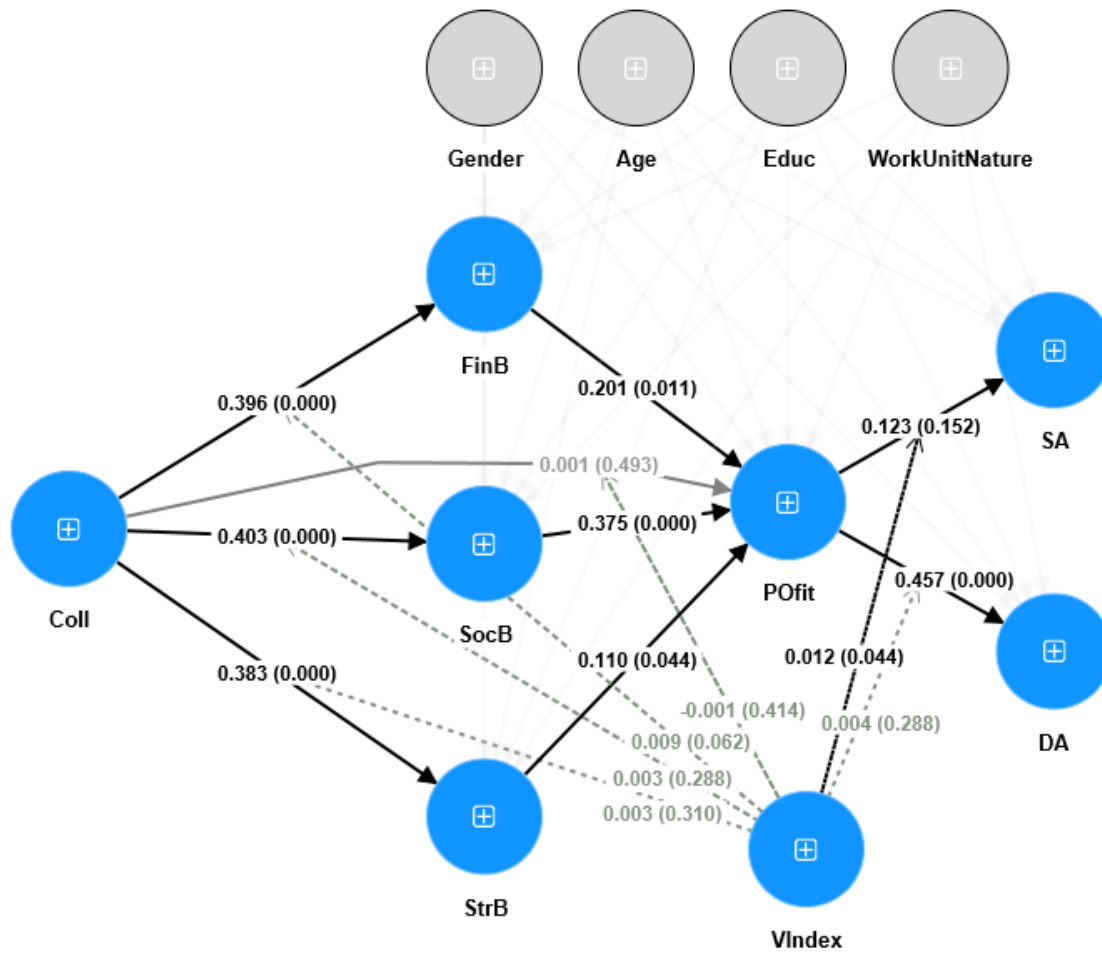


Figure 5.1 – Conceptual model coefficients

Table 5.4 – Sequential and conditional effects (H5 and H6)

| Direct effect                                   | Surface Acting |       |        | Deep Acting |       |        |           |           |
|-------------------------------------------------|----------------|-------|--------|-------------|-------|--------|-----------|-----------|
|                                                 | Coeff.         | t     | p-val. | Coef        | t     | p-val. |           |           |
| Sequential indirect effects                     |                |       |        |             |       |        |           |           |
| Col-FB-POfit-SA                                 | .010           | .760  | .224   | H5a n.s.    |       |        |           |           |
| Col-SB-POfit-SA                                 | .019           | .899  | .184   | H5b n.s.    |       |        |           |           |
| Col-StB-POf-SA                                  | .005           | .757  | .225   | H5c n.s.    |       |        |           |           |
| Col-FB-POf-DA                                   |                |       |        | .036*       | 1.767 | .039   | H5a' sup. |           |
| Col-SB-POf-DA                                   |                |       |        | .069*       | 2.333 | .010   | H5b' sup. |           |
| Col-StB-POf-DA                                  |                |       |        | .019        | 1.333 | .091   | H5c' n.s. |           |
| Conditional direct effects <sup>a</sup>         |                |       |        |             |       |        |           |           |
| POfit -> SA/DA conditional on VIndex at +1 SD   | .316*          | 1.866 | .031   | .515**      | 3.732 | .001   |           |           |
| POfit -> SA/DA conditional on VIndex at Mean    | .123           | 1.030 | .152   | .457**      | 4.302 | .001   |           |           |
| POfit -> SA/DA conditional on VIndex at -1 SD   | -.071          | 0.448 | .327   | .400**      | 2.556 | .001   |           |           |
| Conditional indirect effects <sup>a</sup>       |                |       |        |             |       |        |           |           |
| Coll->FB->POfit -> SA/DA cond. VIndex at +1 SD  | .034           | 1.098 | .136   | H6a n.s.    | .055* | 1.807  | .035      | H6a' sup. |
| Coll->FB->POfit -> SA/DA cond. VIndex at Mean   | .001           | .760  | .224   |             | .036* | 1.767  | .039      |           |
| Coll->FB->POfit -> SA/DA cond. VIndex at -1 SD  | -.004          | 0.390 | .348   |             | .021  | 1.157  | .124      |           |
| Coll->SB->POfit -> SA/DA cond. VIndex at +1 SD  | .053           | 1.290 | .098   | H6b n.s.    | .086* | 1.862  | .031      | H6b' n.s. |
| Coll->SB->POfit -> SA/DA cond. VIndex at Mean   | .019           | 0.899 | .184   |             | .069* | 2.333  | .010      |           |
| Coll->SB->POfit -> SA/DA cond. VIndex at -1 SD  | -.010          | 0.429 | .334   |             | .054* | 1.828  | .034      |           |
| Coll->StB->POfit -> SA/DA cond. VIndex at +1 SD | .015           | 1.065 | .143   | H6c n.s.    | .024  | 1.218  | .112      | H6c' n.s. |
| Coll->StB->POfit -> SA/DA cond. VIndex at Mean  | .005           | 0.757 | .225   |             | .019  | 1.333  | .091      |           |
| Coll->StB->POfit -> SA/DA cond. VIndex at -1 SD | -.003          | 0.366 | .357   |             | .015  | 1.095  | .137      |           |

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$

Due to the large number of hypotheses and sub-hypotheses we produced a summary table of findings as follows (Table 5.5).

Table 5.5 – Hypotheses findings

| HH   | Path                                         |      | HH   | Path                                          |      |
|------|----------------------------------------------|------|------|-----------------------------------------------|------|
| H1a  | PO-fit->Surface acting                       | n.s. | H2a  | PO-fit->Financial bonds                       | sup. |
| H1b  | PO-fit->Deep acting                          | sup. | H2b  | PO-fit->social bonds                          | sup. |
|      |                                              |      | H2c  | PO-fit->Structural bonds                      | sup. |
| H3a  | Financial bonds->PO-fit->Surf. acting        | n.s. | H4a  | Collectivism->Financial bonds                 | sup. |
| H3b  | Social bonds->PO-fit-> Surf. acting          | n.s. | H4b  | Collectivism->Social bonds                    | sup. |
| H3c  | Structural bonds->PO-fit-> Surf. acting      | n.s. | H4c  | Collectivism->Structural bonds                | sup. |
| H3a' | Financial bonds->PO-fit->Deep acting         | sup. |      |                                               |      |
| H3b' | Social bonds->PO-fit->Deep acting            | sup. |      |                                               |      |
| H3c' | Struct. bonds->PO-fit->Deep acting           | n.s. |      |                                               |      |
| H5a  | Collect.->Fin.bonds->PO-fit-> Surf. acting   | n.s. | H6a  | Virt*Collect.->Fin.bonds->PO-fit-> Surf.act.  | n.s. |
| H5b  | Collect.-> Soc.bonds ->PO-fit-> Surf. acting | n.s. | H6b  | Virt*Collect.->Soc.bonds->PO-fit-> Surf.act.  | n.s. |
| H5c  | Collect.->Structbonds->PO-fit-> Surf. acting | n.s. | H6c  | Virt*Collect.->Structbonds->PO-fit->Surf.act. | n.s. |
| H5a' | Collect.->Fin.bonds ->PO-fit->Deep acting    | sup. | H6a' | Virt*Collect.->Fin.bonds->PO-fit-> DeepAct    | sup. |
| H5b' | Collect.->Soc.bonds->PO-fit->DeepAct         | sup. | H6b' | Virt*Collect.->Soc.bonds->PO-fit-> DeepAct    | n.s. |
| H5c' | Collect.->Structbonds->PO-fit->Deep acting   | n.s. | H6c' | Virt*Collect.->Structbonds->PO-fit-> DeepAct  | n.s. |

## 6. Discussion of findings and Conclusion

There has been plenty of research on emotional labour ever since it was proposed by Hochschild (1979) and this is an important phenomena whose predictors have been continuously modelled in hundreds of scientific publications. Among these predictors some are well established, namely person-organization fit (Schneider, 1987) but some others are not so well known and seem to be more context dependent such as collectivism. Likewise, a wide range of dimensions that bond the individuals to their employers have been converging under the name of “relationship bonds” that comprise financial bonds (based on monetary benefits), social bonds (based on interpersonal ties and friendship), and structural bonds (based on autonomy at work). These largely correspond to the primary needs as established by the self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2008) and seemingly play an important role in explaining why individuals opt to bond with their organization. Therefore, by integrating these factors into a single model, a better understanding of the process conducive from collectivism to emotional labour can be depicted. As an emergent reality may affect the assumptions upon which this process model operates, the rising use of digital communication means at work create a sense of virtuality that have the potential to modulate the bonds, and how they work in this process model. Thus, to bring novelty to this literature, collectivism (as more in tune with Chinese cultural tradition, Earley, 1994; Jin et al., 2003) and relationship bonds are brought into the equation as predictors of PO-fit together with the interaction effect of virtuality (as expressing the degree with which employees communicate among themselves and to their supervisors with digital means).

In line with this, this study conducts empirical research on top of what previous scholars have produced to find many relevant relations among the variables as hypothesized. The *first hypothesis* pertains to the relationship between emotional labour and PO-fit. This hypothesis was not supported as regards surface acting, although it was supported for deep acting. The absence of the expected negative effect of PO-fit upon surface acting goes counter to previous findings in literature (e.g. Ertas et al., 2019; Lam et al., 2018). This can originate from the sample’s young age because as visible in the bivariate table, the older people in the sample show less surface acting and likewise, the more educated show more surface acting. Because our sample is leaning towards more younger and educated we have convergence of factors that increase the mean surface acting reported which can create a certain level of consistency that makes it more difficult to find associations. As regards deep acting, the sample still shows the same pattern of associations with age and education, but the strength of these associations is considerably

weaker. This may offer better likelihood that by controlling the effects from these variables, we find significant relations between the predictor (PO-fit) and the dependent variable (Deep acting). Still, the direction of the coefficient is in line with findings reported by the two cited papers above. This suggests that those employees that possess a high level of deep acting ability experience higher levels of positive emotions while at work. When individuals engage in deep acting to a greater extent, they are likely to contribute and benefit more at work than other employees.

As regards the **second hypothesis**, that establishes positive direct effects between the three types of relationship bonds towards PO-fit, findings did support all of them (H2a, H2b, and H2c). This goes in line with Saether (2019) and Greguras and Diefendorff (2009), confirming the positive role relationship bonds play in fostering a stronger sense of PO-fit. These findings strengthen the line of studies that show that organizations that invest in practices that favor stronger financial bonds (e.g. better employee compensation, benefits, promotion or training opportunities), stronger social bonds (e.g. more smoothly communication with employees, also between colleagues, supervisors, customers), and stronger structural bonds (degree of autonomy in working for the organization) will be those that have more employees that report they feel they fit in well with the organization.

This results in a greater sense of belonging to the organization, and increased alignment of personal goals, values, and organizational goals and values, resulting in a greater willingness to engage in the job and ultimately enhancing job performance. Numerous studies have shown that when employees have adequate psychological support to cope with and overcome the demands of their jobs, they are more likely to generate positive emotions, enabling them to overcome challenging situations (Johnson et al., 2010). The alignment between individual and organizational fit drives harmonious enthusiasm, which improves service behaviours both within and outside of the role. Subjective evaluations are excluded in this analysis.

The **third hypothesis** is but the joining of the first couple hypotheses to establish a indirect effect of relationship bonds on emotional labour via PO-fit. Findings pertaining to the three sub-hypotheses (H3a, H3b, and H3c, respectively for financial, social, and structural bonds) indicate that there is no mediation towards surface acting. This may be due to the absence of a significant direct effect on surface acting. So, mathematically the indirect effect would not be feasible, and the explanations advanced in accounting for hypothesis 1a apply also here. Conversely, the mediation effect was found towards deep acting departing from both financial bonds and social bonds, but not from structural bonds. The bivariate correlation do not truly offer a clear motive for the absence of the indirect effect in the case of structural fit. However, because structural fit is expressing the degree of autonomy given at work and the sample is very young

with a the most frequent tenure below 3 years, it is reasonable to expect autonomy is still gaining momentum because low tenure implies stronger supervision and support from supervisors and colleagues. So, a younger, less experienced sample might not have yet enough clear autonomy and discretion (as expressed in the mean of 3.24 out of a maximum of five points) to enact a stronger indirect effect on deep acting. This does not hamper the possibility that individuals understand that not being given too much autonomy is also a way the organization has to protect them in a phase where they are improving their personal growth and skill level which makes Eisenberger et al. (1986) thesis on organizational support applicable in this case.

When collectivism was brought to the model as a primary predictor in the fourth hypothesis, findings unequivocally supported its positive role in promoting all relationship bonds, both financial, social, and structural. One needs to keep in mind that the sample is composed of Chinese individuals and it has been well noted that in China, where collectivism is widespread, the group is seen as an extension of the self (Liu et al., 2010), indicating that collectivism cultivates a stronger relationship between the individual and the group than individualism does. In a collectivist organisational culture, employees are likely to feel closely linked to the organisational goals, leading them to contribute both emotionally and intellectually. This finding aligns with Clugston et al.'s (2000) findings, which proposed that individuals with collectivist tendencies are more apt to identify with their team and display a greater level of emotional commitment to the organisation, due to their emotional reliance on the team. Moreover, collectivist cultures encourage interaction and collaboration among team members. Team collectivism promotes information exchange among team members. This culture encourages familiarity and mutual understanding, leading to a better division of labour within the team (Randall, 2011). Therefore, it is quite understandable that collectivism in our sample is strongly associated with relationship bonds.

The ***fifth hypothesis*** fuses the third and the fourth hypotheses into a three-step sequential mediation. Basically, this hypothesis is instrumental to understand to which extent collectivism has ripple effects on individuals' behavior at work to be able to affect their emotional labor. As expectable from the previous findings, no effect on surface acting was found which is explainable based on the same explanation for hypothesis 1 and 3. Conversely, consistent with the outcomes of H3, the findings demonstrate that collectivism has a noteworthy impact on deep acting through financial bonds and PO-fit as well as social bonds, supporting H5a' and H5b'. The explanation advanced for the previous fourth hypothesis that highlighted the low work experience of the sample is also applicable here. Still, it is noteworthy to highlight the persistence of the sequential indirect effect via financial and social bonds. This means that these bonds are so important in daily work life that the effect of collectivism reverberate throughout the entire model

to account for how likely employees will deploy deep acting strategies to cope with strains. Because of the cultural alignment that collectivism has in Chinese context, not only will relationship bonds be stronger (especially felt in financial and social bonds in a young working population) as it will increase their sense of fitting well in the organization. Participants most likely strive to comprehend the significance of their work and their work mission to foster integration of their body, mind, and spirit with their work, which enhances their self-worth in the workplace (Zou et al., 2015). To explain and communicate the meaning of their work and work mission, organisational leaders must strive to improve employee PO-fit and bridge the psychological gap between organisations and individuals to the greatest extent feasible which in our case is advised to reinforce collectivism and relationship bonds. This investment does bring good returns to organizations in China. As argued by Zou and Dahling (2017), adopting deep acting techniques in China can enhance employees' sense of well-being. Altering emotions to maintain group harmony is a collectivist approach that is widely recognized and appreciated in society. Such recognition can help replenish the resources that are expended during the process of regulating emotions. However, according to these same authors deep acting may not be as effective in the United States, where individualism is celebrated, and a similar perception is not likely to be generated.

The *last hypothesis* explored the potential moderator role of virtuality in this whole process. Its partial support is informative. Firstly, the fact that virtuality does not change the indirect effects reported to the exception of a single one (H6a') means that the psychological rules upon which relations at work are based remain valid for both in-person communication and digital-only communication as far as collectivism is taken as a predictor. The only case of a significant interact occurred in the indirect sequential effect from collectivism to deep acting via financial bonds and PO-fit. The exact direct effect suggests that the indirect effect is occurring mostly in digital settings. In places where participants use less digital communication means to communicate among themselves and with the supervisors, there is no indirect effect. This can be explained because in a virtual setting the absence of direct contact makes individuals need to rely more on factors that foster convergence between employees. Collectivism, as a social norm and cultural value, does perform this role (Ozedmire & Hewett, 2010). In a face-to-face situation there can be behavioural exchanges that are more closely related to interpersonal patterns of relationship that makes social norms not so central to guarantee mutual alignment. Collectivism is then more important as regards the ability financial bonds must foster deep acting when individuals have less direct personal contact among themselves.

### **6.1. Contribution for theory and business administration**

The theoretical contribution of this model can be found in the indirect sequential mediation proposed but

also on the moderator effect (albeit minimal) on one of these effects. This model is more integrative and despite the limitations posed by the sample and other methodological options that we will discuss below, it suggests new venues for more integrative research on relationship bonds. Still, its applied contribution can be inferred from the findings.

A prime example lies in the service industry, where emotional labor is a prevalent issue (Lee & Madera, 2019). It is known from literature that managers benefit from enhancing staff training in this area to improve emotional interactions, resulting in an overall improvement in service quality. Surface acting is known to be a suboptimal coping strategy which should give place to deep acting. However, in our younger, more educated sample there seems to be other factors that could help managing surface acting that are not so visible. Collectivism and relationship bonds do foster PO-fit but it seems that PO-fit is only instrumental to favor deep acting. The fact that PO-fit is a positive predictor of deep acting but not a significant predictor of surface acting may give it a special status and a good objective for managers especially when one considers the strong positive correlation in this sample between surface and deep acting. The differential effects of PO-fit may be beneficial for the objective of fostering the best emotional labor strategy in this sort of employee. As usual in China this can be achieved by using WeChat platforms and WeChat groups, training programs to foster collectivism, a strong implementation of practices that reinforce social bonds, and attention to the financial and monetary conditions of younger, more qualified workers.

Managers may also pay attention to the level of collectivism values job candidates have so to give preference to those that are more collectivistic which may make them more aligned with the organizational values and teamwork culture. Alongside these practices and policies, it goes without saying that one of the best ways to avoid surface acting is to create the most positive constructive emotional environment. However, this ideal may be easier stated than done because all the individuals, especially in the growing phase and adaptation to work world, as younger workers are, will have different expectations, different skills and relationship styles that must be adjusted to the possibilities that real world offer. Therefore, the lack of emotional strain or stress at work is most likely a very exceptional situation that a rule an organization can achieve.

## **6.2. Limitations and future research**

There are limitations to this study stemming from various conditions. The first limitation pertains to the sampling method that is non-random. This precludes any possibility of generalizing findings to the population and future research may benefit from deploying random data collection. Likewise, the sample size is limited especially when considering the complexity of the model. With such small samples (N=181)

there is a stronger likelihood that interaction effects are not found. So, we assume that a larger sample may bring out relations that were not reported here which could be also a recommendation for future research. Additionally, the sample is greatly biased towards younger, female and highly educated profile. This means that especially regarding low work experience, there may be variables in the model that have not yet reached maturity stage in the sample, e.g. structural bonds. So, future research could benefit from targeting a more diverse array of workers that incorporate also senior workers, and diversity as regards education level and a more balanced proportion of males and females. As a synthetic index, virtuality is a mathematical production based on previous findings that are not entirely replicated yet in literature. Therefore, the adoption of virtuality index as a moderator does have the advantage of offering a better view on the uses of virtual communication but it can also dilute the specific effects of using some communication channels e.g. emails compared to videoconference. So, there is plenty opportunities to further validate and challenge this virtuality index in future research.

In line with cross-cultural research, it is challenging to explore how collectivism as a predictor (not as a contextual boundary) can be more universal than currently thought because all societies entail social bonds and the need to compromise individual will with the social good. In its less extreme expressions, collectivism may be more fundamental than currently thought of and researches may explore how this goes in line with an alleged rising in individualism in younger generations.

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