Employee perceived meaning of work and service adaptive behavior: a psychological resourcefulness perspective

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Abstract
Using the concept of psychological resourcefulness, this study investigates the relationship of meaning of work and service adaptive behavior (SAB). An empirical study, with 269 online panel participants, showed that relationship orientation and extra-role performance mediate the effect of meaning of work on SAB, and that organizational identification positively moderates the effect of relationship orientation on SAB. Post hoc interviews were further conducted to understand why organizational identification negatively moderates the effect of extra-role performance on SAB. This study contributes to academic understanding of how psychological resources shape SAB, and to management practice of designing training programs to develop SAB.

Keywords Service adaptive behavior · Meaning of work · Extra-role job performance · Relationship orientation · Organizational identification

1 Introduction
Employee service quality is a vital determinant of the sustainable survival of an organization. To stay competitive, organizations must make substantial investments to shape employees’ customer-oriented behavior to promote service quality and customer satisfaction. However, due to escalating competition that is leading to ever-rising customer expectations for exceptional quality and customized service (e.g., Pasamehmetoglu et al. 2017), employees must face a diverse array of customer requests. Many of these are unexpected and require employees to go beyond their standard operational routines (Beatty et al. 2016). Customer-oriented...
behavior alone seems insufficient for employees to handle these requests, let alone allow them to produce better service quality that yields maximal long-term profits.

To address this, research has posited that employee service adaptive behavior (SAB) is an essential capability for dealing with diverse customer needs (Gwinner et al. 2005). Gwinner et al. (2005, p. 135) defined employee SAB as “the deliberate modification of the service offering in a situationally appropriate manner in response to meeting perceived consumer needs.” Employees who are capable of adapting their behavior in response to customer requests are able to effectively manage the varying demands and create customer satisfaction. The antecedents and consequences of employee SAB have been studied. Among such antecedents, supervisory leadership, customer knowledge and predisposition, and employee personality, work enjoyment, competence, autonomy, and motivation have been shown to affect SAB (e.g., Leischnig and Kasper-Brauer 2015; Li and Tong, 2021). Likewise, SAB may also predict sense of control, uncertainty reduction, service performance (Anh et al. 2016; Prentice and King 2013), service customization (Gwinner et al. 2005), and customer satisfaction (Anh et al. 2016). However, few studies have investigated the role of the perceived meaning of work, as a personal psychological resource, in employee SAB (Lussier and Hartmann 2017; Park and Park 2019; van den Heuvel et al. 2013). In particular, little is known about the effect of the meaning of work, as a motivational antecedent, on employee SAB in response to diverse market needs (Anh et al. 2016; Leischnig and Kasper-Brauer 2015; Park and Park 2019). This phenomenon is particularly significant in dynamic business environments (Mao et al., 2021). For example, as they deal with the COVID-19 pandemic, medical service providers must also cope with patients’ emergent needs by offering contingent and customized services, often by adapting their standard operating procedures to do so. Further, McKinsey research (Dhingra et al. 2022) found that almost two-thirds of US-based employees reported that COVID-19 has caused them to reflect on their purpose in life. Employers thus need to help meet this need, or they need to be prepared to lose talent employees.

In line with Lussier and Hartmann (2017) and Park and Park (2019), this study identifies employee perceived meaning of work as a crucial psychological resource for predicting SAB through the possible mediation of employee transaction/relationship orientation and in-role/extra-role job performance. Leveraging conservation of resources theory (COR), this study demonstrates that an employee’s perceived meaning of work improves the extra-role job performance and relationship orientation, which in turn impacts SAB. These improvements are further reinforced by employees’ organizational identification with the company. This study investigates these issues.

The remainder of this paper first describes the theoretical basis of the study, followed by the key research hypotheses, developed based on the theoretical background. Then, a description of the methods and results are presented. In response to the unexpected finding that organizational identification negatively impacts the relationship of extra-role job performance on SAB, a post hoc interview with frontline service employee managers was conducted to provide better insight into the
Theoretical background and research hypotheses

2.1 Psychological resourcefulness and employee perceived meaning of work

Psychological resourcefulness is here viewed through the lens of Conservation of Resources (COR; Hobfoll 1989). Resources are anything which individuals value that can help attain his or her goals. COR posits that individuals with more resources are better positioned for resource gains. When people are aware of their pool of available resources and can make use of them, they can be more strategic in dealing with stressful events with more adaptive behavior.

Hobfoll (1989) proposed four forms of resources—physical objects, personal characteristics (e.g., sense of self), conditions (e.g., marriage and tenure), and energies (e.g., time, money, and knowledge). van den Heuvel et al. (2013) identified two more forms of resources, namely, contextual and psychological resources. A contextual resource is related to process changes such as participation, transformational leadership, and interpersonal interaction, while psychological resources are personal resources, such as the making of the meaning of one’s job (van den Heuvel et al. 2013), optimism and resilience in the face of adversity, performing service innovative behavior (Kim et al. 2018), and efforts to seize opportunities (Lussier and Hartmann 2017; Youssef and Luthans 2007).

While much effort has been devoted to investigating the effects of contextual resources on employee adaptive behavior (e.g., Yang et al. 2019), little research has been done to understand the role of psychological resources, specifically the perceived meaning of work. Beyond employee SAB, research has investigated the role of the meaning of work in various aspects of employee behavior (Bailey et al. 2019). For instance, Cartwright and Holmes (2006) reported that people are increasingly seeking a greater sense of the meaning of work and looking for greater fulfillment in their careers. van den Heuvel et al. (2013) posited that job meaningfulness is a prominent psychological resource predicting employee behavior. The perceived meaning of work also indirectly affects volunteering behavior (Rodell 2013), task performance (Kahn 1990), citizenship behavior (Rodell 2013), customer engagement, and adaptability during times of organizational change (Jimmieson et al. 2004). However, to date, there has been little research on the effects of the perceived meaning of work on employee SAB.

Thus, this study investigates the perceived meaning of work as an essential element of the psychological resource that indirectly motivates employee SAB. The meaning of work corresponds to “an experience of coherence and balance between the features that the individual seeks in the work and those he or she actually finds in the work” (Arnoux-Nicolas et al., 2016). Work occupies a pivotal and fundamental place in a person’s life (Cartwright and Holmes 2006). In addition to its economic role, work has a compelling ability to fulfill individual needs, such as self-esteem, satisfaction, autonomy, learning, belongingness, social interaction, and
status. These psychological rewards are more salient than financial remuneration (Chalofsky 2003). Obstacles that prevent the perception of the meaning of work can cause stress (e.g., May et al. 2004). Recent research suggests that the perceived non-economic benefits of work have significant potential to drive employee value co-creation behavior within an organization (Grace and Lo Iacono 2015). Following prior research on the importance of the meaning of work as a critical psychological resource influencing employee behavior, this study suggests that such meaning is also a crucial psychological resource motivating SAB.

Research has suggested that ‘giving to colleagues’ may enhance one’s perceptions of meaningfulness (Grant, 2007, 2008a, b). Colbert et al (2016) further demonstrated a positive effect of giving to colleagues on an employee’s perception of work meaningfulness. From the view of positive psychology, employees’ experience of flourishing at work (i.e., perceived meaning of work) can drive them to include others and develop feelings of oneness with them (Waugh and Fredrickson, 2006). In their empirical study, Barrick et al (2015) showed that the meaning of work has a positive effect on collective organizational commitment and thus influences firm performance. As such, employees may provide adaptive services to customers that have benefits to the organizational collective good as a result of work meaningfulness. Consequently, we argue that service employee’s perception of the meaning of work may directly influence their SAB:

**H1** Service employee’s perceived of meaning of work has direct effect on their SAB.

Furthermore, it is also proposed that the meaning of work affects SAB through the mediation of two types of work mindsets: transaction/relationship orientation and extra-/in-role job performance. Moreover, it is also postulated that organizational identification would moderate the effects of these two work mindsets on SAB. The following sections discuss these constructs and develop hypotheses of their roles in mediating and moderating the effects of the meaning of work on SAB.

### 2.2 Transaction vs. relationship orientation

A transaction orientation is a short-term approach in which firms or salespeople focus solely on the immediate outcomes of their transactions (Baker et al. 1998), whereas a relationship orientation is a long-term approach in which firms or salespeople focus on building and maintaining customer relationships (Berry et al. 1983; Oviedo-García et al. 2015). This transaction vs. relationship dichotomy can be applied to service encounters. Payne et al. (1994) believed that the focus of the transaction orientation is different from that of the relationship orientation. Transactional selling focuses on acquiring new customers over a relatively short timescale, whereas relationship selling focuses on customer retention and building long-term profitable customer relations (Payne et al. 1994). In particular, relationship orientation has been considered more significant in the highly relational service (Mediano and Ruiz-Alba, 2019). While machines can be used to save labor costs for many service providers, machines may only serve in the
transactional way (Solnet et al., 2019). In contrast, service frontline employees can be more creative to perform many tasks that are innately human (Solnet et al., 2019). In highly relational services, service employee’s personality traits, as well as their approaches to serving customers, are critically important for building ongoing relationships with customers (Mediano and Ruiz-Alba, 2019; Solnet et al., 2019).

The meaning of work is proposed to affect the relationship orientation more than the transaction orientation on several grounds. First, the literature highlights the importance of the meaning of work in job commitment (Steger et al. 2012). For example, Geldenhuys et al. (2014) indicated that the psychological meaningfulness of work increases positive work commitment and reduces negative work commitment. Arnoux-Nicolas et al. (2016) showed that work meaningfulness reduces turnover intentions. In corporate governance research, commitment is usually associated with the development of long-term relationships rather than short-term transactions (Levillain et al. 2018). In other words, employees who perceive their work to be meaningful are more committed to a relationship orientation, building long-term relationships with their customers instead of a short-term transaction orientation.

In a study with nurses, Bjarnadottir (2011) found that when nurses perceive their nursing profession as meaningful, they are better in dealing with difficult challenges in the work environment. Also, nurses who evaluate their work as meaningful are less dependent on positive feedback regarding their work from patients or their relatives. Furthermore, the meaning of work is believed to go beyond work performance (Phaethayanan 2016). Rosso et al. (2010) suggested that employees with a strong sense of the meaning of work may not invest as much effort in financial rewards. In light of this argument, they might sacrifice short-term profitability for the promises of long-term relationship building. As the relationship orientation focuses on relationship building, and the transaction orientation is related to financial goals, it is predicted that the meaning of work is more strongly associated with the relationship orientation than with the transaction orientation:

H2 Service employee’s perceived meaning of work has a stronger positive effect on their relationship orientation than on their transaction orientation.

The relationship orientation is also hypothesized to enhance SAB on several grounds. First, it may promote SAB by building long-term relationships with customers (Mediano and Ruiz-Alba, 2019; Hong & Lee, 2018). Chen et al. (2020) found that customer relationship management can enhance employee SAB. Because SAB is a deliberate modification of the standard operating procedures for meeting customers’ idiosyncratic needs and solving their problems, it is related to long-term relationship building and maintenance motivation rather than short-term, sales-oriented transactions (Brennan and Turnbull 1999). Research has suggested that long-term business relationships involve complex mixes of exchange processes and adaptive behavior of firms (Proença and de Castro 2007). Thus,
the relationship orientation should promote SAB more than does the transaction orientation. Second, the transaction and relationship orientations differ in terms of employee response to customer requests. The philosophy of the former is reactive in nature, whereas that of the latter is proactive, emphasizing employee generative learning (Gonzalez et al. 2010). Employee SAB is a generative learning process that goes beyond sales performance and short-term goals (Staddon 2016). Thus, SAB should be more closely associated with the relationship orientation than the transaction orientation. Through both customer relationship building and generative learning, the relationship orientation is predicted to have a stronger effect on employee SAB than the transaction orientation:

H3 Compared to the transaction orientation, service employee’s relationship orientation has a stronger positive effect on their SAB.

Having established the hypothesized relationship between the meaning of work and the transaction/relationship orientation as well as SAB, the current research also postulates that the meaning of work would affect SAB through the mediation of extra-/in-role job performance. The next sections explore the extra/in-role job performance and how they might mediate the effect of the meaning of work on SAB.

2.3 Extra‑role vs. in‑role job performance

Extra-role job performance refers to activities that go beyond specific role prescriptions (Kim et al. 2011). In contrast, in-role job performance pertains to aspects of duties and formal tasks that are included in a job description (MacKenzie et al. 1998). These definitions allude to the idea that extra-role job performance relates more closely to sustainable relationships, while in-role job performance focuses more on employee’s standardized operation procedures and responsibilities ascribed in their job position (MacKenzie et al. 1998). Previous research has investigated the effect of customer-to-customer interactions on customer extra-role job performance (Jung & Yoo, 2017), and the indirect effects of job meaningfulness on employee job performance (e.g., Fürstenberg et al. 2020). A relationship has been found between job meaningfulness and in-role job performance. However, less research has been done on the effects of employee perceived meaning of work on their extra-role job performance.

In this regard, research has indicated that work meaningfulness enhances psychological empowerment (Jena et al. 2019), which in turn increases extra-role job performance (Raub and Robert 2010). Employees who believe their work to be meaningful are empowered to improve their job performance by performing service actions beyond the standard task requirements, that is, extra-role job performance. In addition, work also enhances employee organizational citizenship behavior, which is a form of extra-role behavior (Steger et al. 2012). Therefore, through both psychological empowerment and organizational citizenship behavior, work meaningfulness is predicted to motivate service employees to perform more extra-role than in-role behavior:
H4 Service employee’s perceived meaning of work has a stronger positive effect on their extra-role job performance than on their in-role job performance.

This study also predicts that extra-role job performance would have a stronger impact on SAB than in-role job performance. Because SAB often requires action beyond what is prescribed for the job itself, extra-role job performance should lead to more SAB than in-role job performance. Previous work has shown that extra-role job performance is significantly related to the perception of interpersonal relationships with coworkers (e.g., Rosso et al. 2010). Moreover, when employees experience strong social ties with coworkers, they are more likely to be adaptive in their jobs (Kim et al. 2018; Oreg et al. 2011). Research also showed that employee’s deep acting has positive impacts on their own innovation behavior (Phuoc et al. 2022). Chung et al. (2021) recently pointed out that role clarity would drive employees to perform deep acting (as opposed to surface acting) and attain better job satisfaction. It is therefore suggested that extra-role job performance may contribute to employee SAB through social relationships. Furthermore, extra-role knowledge sharing is related to employee extraversion (Panaccio et al. 2015). Given that extraverted people are more willing to adapt to changes, accept challenges, and take risks (Park and Park 2019), it seems reasonable to postulate that employees who tend to go beyond required in-role job descriptions would be more likely to perform SAB. Therefore, this study proposes that extra-role job performance should exercise more influence on SAB than in-role job performance:

H5 Service employee’s extra-role job performance has a stronger positive effect on SAB than their in-role job performance.

It is further postulated that organizational identification would moderate the effects of the transaction/relationship orientation as well as the extra-/in-role job performance on SAB. The following sections discuss the construct of organizational identification and develop the respective hypotheses.

2.4 Organizational identification

Organizational identification is “the degree to which a member defines him- or herself by the same attributes that he or she believes define the organization” (Dutton et al. 1994). Accordingly, when employees integrate organizational characteristics into their self-concepts, they become attached to the organization and orient their behavior in accordance with organizational values and norms. Jones and Volpe (2011) and others have explored the roles of organizational identification in employee behavior. For example, Scott and Lane (2000) suggested that organizational identification mediates how employees behave and feel in the organization, whereas Norman et al. (2010) reported that organizational identity moderates the relationship between an employee's psychological capital (i.e., self-efficacy, optimism, and hope) and organizational citizenship behavior. Bravo et al. (2016) studied how the dimensions of corporate identity management (CIM) affected
organizational identification. Finally, Kim et al. (2018) discussed how psychological contract breach might erode organizational identification.

This study suggests that organizational identification could moderate the relationship between the transaction/relationship orientation and SAB. That is, the relationship orientation is predicted to be more strongly associated with organizational identification than the transaction orientation in affecting SAB. This is because organizational identification enhances employee commitment to the organization (e.g., Stinglhamber et al. 2015). Identification is also a strong predictor of customer commitment to building a mutually beneficial relationship with a firm (Tung et al. 2014). To the extent that commitment is strongly related to relationship development (e.g., Levillain et al. 2018), organizational identification should be more closely associated with the relationship orientation than with the transaction orientation in affecting SAB. Therefore

H6 Organization identification is more strongly associated with service employee’s relationship orientation than with the transaction orientation in affecting SAB.

Organizational identification is also hypothesized to be more strongly associated with extra-role than with in-role job performance. Organizational identification enhances proactive work behavior (Etodike et al., 2020), interpersonal helping (Farooq et al. 2017), as well as citizenship behavior (Wu et al. 2016). Proactive employees exhibit behaviors that are beyond their technical responsibilities from their job descriptions and tend to support others in fulfilling additional tasks when needed (Grant 2008). Proactive individuals are likely to construe their roles more broadly (Parker et al. 1997) and to redefine their roles to encapsulate new tasks and goals (Frese and Fay 2001). Therefore, proactive work behavior is often considered extra-role in nature. In addition, the definition of organizational citizenship behavior is often operationalized with measures that are presumed to be extra-role (Podsakoff et al. 1990). Consequently, it is hypothesized that organizational identification is more strongly associated with extra-role job performance than with in-role job performance in affecting SAB.

H7 Organization identification is more strongly associated with service employee’s extra-role job performance than with in-role job performance in affecting SAB.

3 Method

3.1 Participants and Procedure

The survey was distributed online through Prolific Academic, an English-based online consumer panel company based in the United Kingdom. Participants residing in UK with work experience in service industries were recruited for the study. According to Zeithaml et al. (2013), Services are ‘deeds, processes, and performances provided or coproduced by one entity or person for another entity or
Person.’ Under this definition, service industries are ‘those industries or companies typically classified within the service sector where the core product is a service.’ (Zeithaml et al., 2013). Participants with working experiences in service industries that provide intangible services to customers were thus recruited.

Two selection criteria were adopted to ensure the validity and representativeness of the samples. The selection criteria were designed to ascertain that the research participants were exclusively adults from a single country (UK) with working experiences in service industries. The participants were first directed to the qualification check page after agreeing to accept the work on Prolific. An initial screening question asked whether they had at least 1 year of work experience in a service industry in the United Kingdom. Also, they had to be more than 18 years old at the time of data collection. Once the participants passed the two criteria, they were presented with the instructions for the main survey. After reading the instructions, the participants proceeded to the main survey that measured the key variables of the study. Three attention questions were inserted in the main survey (e.g., ‘For this question, please select strongly disagree”). If participants failed to pass these screening questions, their responses were considered invalid and excluded from further analyses. Active users were also removed from further analysis to ensure data quality. After excluding unqualified responses, the data from a total of 269 respondents were considered valid for the main analysis. Among those participants, 47% were male, and the average age was 36 years old; 40% of the participants held a bachelor’s degree. In terms of job positions, 54.6% were frontline employees, 45.4% were manager. The majority of the participants (36.4%) had more than 10 years of experience working in the service industry. The effects of occupation and services tenures were controlled in latter analysis. Table 1 presents the participants’ demographic data.

3.2 Materials

An online survey was developed by adapting existing scales from the pertinent literature. A 10-item scale measuring employee perceived meaning of work was adapted from the Work and Meaning Inventory (Steger et al. 2012). In-role and extra-role job performance were measured using the nine-item scale from Bettencourt (1997). Five items measuring transaction orientation were adapted from Saxe and Weitz (1982), and six items measuring their relationship orientation were adapted from Ganesan (1994). Organizational identification was measured with a 12-item scale adapted from Miller et al. (2000). Finally, the six items measuring the SAB were drawn from the scale of service-offering adaptive behavior (Gwinner et al. 2005). All of the aforementioned items were measured using 5-point Likert scales (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). To ensure the face validity, the first draft of the survey was examined by three marketing scholars for their suitability in services industry and service employees’ common job functions, and then by three marketing practitioners for their expert feedback on the wording. Their feedback resulted in minor modifications. The final survey consisted of 59 items, including the screening items and items to collect subjects’ sociodemographic information.
4 Results

4.1 Common method bias and no-response bias

Harmon’s single-factor test was first conducted to assess common method variance (CMV) (Podsakoff et al. 2003). The single factor explained 26.8% of the total variance, well below the commonly acceptable threshold of 50%. In addition, a full collinearity-assessment approach was conducted using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) (Kock 2015). Variance inflation factors (VIFs) were computed and used as the main indicator for identifying collinearity and avoiding common method bias. Hair et al. (2019) and Kock (2015) suggested a stringent threshold value of 3.3 for this test. Table 2 shows that all items’ VIFs were below 3.3, indicating that common method bias was not a significant issue for the empirical data of this study.

Non-response bias was assessed by examining the responses from different parts of the survey. The first quarter and last quarter of the responses were selected to test for non-response bias (Armstrong and Overton 1977). None of the results of multivariate tests revealed a statistically significant difference between the two groups of responses (Pillai’s Trace: $F = 1.360, p = 0.118$; Wilks’ Lambda: $F = 1.360, p = 0.118$; Hotelling’s Trace: $F = 1.360, p = 0.118$; Roy’s Largest Root: $F = 1.360, p = 0.118$). Thus, the data were considered to be free from no-response bias.

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Table 1  Demographic profile

| Measure                | Items                      | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|------------------------|----------------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Gender                 | Male                       | 128       | 47.6        |
|                        | Female                     | 141       | 52.4        |
| Education level        | Less than high school      | 5         | 1.9         |
|                        | High school or equivalent  | 94        | 34.9        |
|                        | Associate                  | 21        | 7.8         |
|                        | Bachelor                   | 109       | 40.5        |
|                        | Master                     | 30        | 11.2        |
|                        | Doctorate                  | 8         | 3.0         |
|                        | Others                     | 2         | 0.7         |
| Age                    | 18–20                      | 18        | 6.7         |
|                        | 21–30                      | 85        | 31.6        |
|                        | 31–40                      | 75        | 27.9        |
|                        | 41–50                      | 46        | 17.1        |
|                        | 51–60                      | 38        | 14.1        |
|                        | > 61                       | 7         | 2.6         |
| Years in service industry | 1–3 years              | 93        | 34.6        |
|                        | 4–9 years                  | 57        | 29.0        |
|                        | > 10 years                 | 98        | 36.4        |
| Current position       | Frontline service employee | 147       | 54.6        |
|                        | Frontline service manager  | 122       | 45.4        |
Table 2  Variance inflation factor of all constructs

| Construct                      | Item                                                                 | VIF | Factor loading |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|---------------|
| Service adaptive behavior     | I usually adapt the type of service to meet the unique needs of each customer | 1.60 | 0.68         |
|                               | I use a wide variety of strategies in attempting to satisfy the customer | 1.79 | 0.73         |
|                               | I can easily suggest a wide variety of services to meet each customer’s needs | 1.77 | 0.79         |
|                               | I pride myself in customizing the service for the customer            | 1.73 | 0.79         |
|                               | I vary the actual service offering on a number of dimensions depending on the needs of the customer | 1.56 | 0.69         |
|                               | I believe that each customer requires a unique approach              | 1.49 | 0.67         |
| Meaning of work               | My work helps me better understand myself                            | 1.97 | 0.77         |
|                               | My work helps me make sense of the world around me                   | 2.00 | 0.75         |
|                               | My work really makes no difference to the world. (R)                | 1.86 | 0.76         |
|                               | I know my work makes a positive difference in the world              | 3.19 | 0.87         |
|                               | The work I do serves a greater purpose                               | 2.76 | 0.86         |
| Extra-role job performance    | I voluntarily assist customers even if it means going beyond job requirements | 2.41 | 0.81         |
|                               | I go out of my way to help a guest                                   | 2.94 | 0.87         |
|                               | I help customers with problems beyond what is expected or required   | 2.90 | 0.88         |
|                               | I often go above and beyond the call of duty when serving customers  | 2.85 | 0.87         |
|                               | I willingly go out of my way to make a guest satisfied               | 2.62 | 0.86         |
| In-role job performance       | I perform all those tasks for customers that are required of myself  | 1.55 | 0.77         |
|                               | I fulfill responsibilities to customers as specified in my job description | 1.91 | 0.87         |
|                               | I meet formal performance requirements when serving/assisting customers | 1.55 | 0.71         |
|                               | I adequately complete all expected customer service behaviors        | 1.55 | 0.75         |
| Transaction orientation       | I try to sell as much as I can rather than to satisfy a customer     | 1.80 | 0.72         |
|                               | If I am not sure a product is right for a customer, I will still apply pressure to make a sale | 1.77 | 0.85         |
|                               | I decide what products to offer on the basis of what I can convince customers to buy, not on what will satisfy them in the long run | 2.17 | 0.89         |
|                               | I spend more time trying to persuade a customer to buy than I do trying to discover his/her needs | 2.24 | 0.72         |
|                               | It is necessary to stretch the truth in describing a product to a customer | 1.59 | 0.74         |
| Construct               | Item                                                                 | VIF  | Factor loading |
|------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|------|----------------|
| Relationship orientation | I believe that over the long run my relationship with my customers will be profitable | 1.48 | 0.59           |
|                        | Maintaining a long-term relationship with my customers is important to me       | 2.89 | 0.85           |
|                        | I focus on long-term goals in this relationship                        | 2.45 | 0.84           |
|                        | I am willing to make sacrifices to help my customers from time to time    | 1.80 | 0.77           |
|                        | I share our company’s long-term goals with my customers                | 1.71 | 0.68           |
|                        | I want to develop a long-term relationship with my customers           | 1.52 | 0.82           |
| Organizational identification | I have warm feelings toward _____ as a place to work                  | 3.07 | 0.88           |
|                        | I would be willing to spend the rest of my career with _____           | 2.24 | 0.82           |
|                        | The record of _____ is an example of what dedicated people can achieve | 2.68 | 0.86           |
|                        | I would describe _____ as a large “family” in which most members feel a sense of belonging | 2.20 | 0.81           |
|                        | I am glad I chose to work for _____ rather than another company        | 2.63 | 0.83           |
|                        | I feel that _____ cares about me                                        | 2.27 | 0.84           |
4.2 Validation of the measurement model

Further analyses were conducted with PLS-SEM through SmartPLS 3.2.9 software (Ringle et al. 2015). This choice is justified given that PLE-SEM is suitable when measurement scales contain small numbers of items and have no restriction on data distribution (Barclay et al. 1995). Several indices were computed to ensure the reliability and validity of the measurement instrument. Items with item-to-total correlations of less than 0.40 were first removed from the instrument. The remaining items were examined using confirmatory factor analysis to remove items with factor loadings of less than 0.5. To assess the reliability of internal consistency, the Cronbach’s alpha values were computed, and all constructs exceeded the threshold value of 0.7. The composite reliabilities of all constructs were above the suggested level of 0.6. Taken together, these results indicate a robust level of reliability for the internal consistency of the measurement model (Table 3). Finally, the goodness-of-fit index of the measurement model was also computed using PLS-SEM. The SRMR of the model was 0.067, indicating a satisfactory level for model fit (Hu and Bentler 1999).

All average variance extracted (AVE) values of the constructs were greater than the cutoff level of 0.5 (See Table 3). The heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratios of the correlations proposed by Henseler et al. (2015) were also calculated to examine discriminant validity. The square roots of the AVE were all greater than the inter-correlations among constructs (Table 4), and the HTMT values of all constructs were below the stringent threshold of 0.85 (Table 5). Both results imply an appropriate level of discriminant validity. Also, Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values indicated the absence of collinearity problem among constructs (Table 2). Finally, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted. All factor loadings of the items exceeded the 0.5 criterion, supporting the robustness of the psychometric properties of the measurement (Table 2).

4.3 Hypothesis testing

The path coefficients of the theoretical model and the moderating effects were examined to test the study hypotheses through the bootstrapping method with a resampling of 2000. This level of bootstrapping provides satisfactory result
in standard error and t-statistic for evaluating the path coefficient significance (Henseler et al. 2009). Employees’ perceived meaning of work has a non-significant effect on SAB ($\beta = 0.034$, $t = 0.495$, $p = 0.621$). This result does not support H1. Employees’ perceived meaning of work had a positive and significant effect on their relationship orientation ($\beta = 0.435$, $t = 8.463$, $p = 0.000$) but a negative and non-significant effect on their transaction orientation ($\beta = -0.021$, $t = 0.258$, $p = 0.797$). This result supports H2. Relationship orientation had a positive and significant effect on SAB ($\beta = 0.237$, $t = 3.969$, $p = 0.001$), but the transaction orientation had a negative and non-significant effect on SAB ($\beta = -0.020$, $t = 0.365$, $p = 0.715$), supporting H3. Employees’ perceived meaning of work also had a positive and significant effect on in-role job performance ($\beta = 0.136$, $t = 2.092$, $p = 0.037$) as well as on extra-role job performance ($\beta = 0.242$, $t = 3.823$, $p = 0.001$). Given that the $\beta$- and $t$-values of the meaning of work for the extra-role job performance were statistically greater than those for the in-role job performance, this result supports H4. Similarly, extra-role job performance had a positive and significant effect on SAB ($\beta = 0.412$, $t = 5.302$, $p = 0.000$), and in-role

### Table 4 Discriminant validity:

|       | SAB  | MW  | ERP  | IRP  | STO  | LTO  | OI   |
|-------|------|-----|------|------|------|------|------|
| SAB   | 0.73 |     |      |      |      |      |      |
| MW    | 0.18 | 0.80|      |      |      |      |      |
| ERP   | 0.58 | 0.24| 0.86 |      |      |      |      |
| IRP   | 0.39 | 0.14| 0.58 | 0.78 |      |      |      |
| STO   | −0.20| −0.02|−0.23|−0.34| 0.79 |      |      |
| LTO   | 0.38 | 0.49| 0.43 | 0.31 |−0.12| 0.76 |      |
| OI    | 0.18 | 0.63| 0.33 | 0.19 | 0.01 | 0.53 | 0.084|

SAB Service adaptive behavior, MW Meaning of work, ERP Extra-role performance, IRP In-role performance, TO Transaction orientation, RO Relationship orientation, OI Organizational identification, Diagonals (bold) are squared root of the AVE

### Table 5 Discriminant validity-Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT)

|       | SAB  | MW  | ERP  | IRP  | STO  | LTO  | OI   |
|-------|------|-----|------|------|------|------|------|
| SAB   | 0.20 |     |      |      |      |      |      |
| MW    | 0.64 | 0.27|      |      |      |      |      |
| ERP   | 0.46 | 0.17| 0.68 |      |      |      |      |
| IRP   | 0.21 | 0.15| 0.24 | 0.40 |      |      |      |
| STO   | 0.43 | 0.49| 0.48 | 0.37 | 0.17 |      |      |
| LTO   | 0.20 | 0.71| 0.33 | 0.22 | 0.08 | 0.59 |      |

SAB Service adaptive behavior, MW Meaning of work, ERP Extra-role performance, IRP In-role performance, TO Transaction orientation, RO Relationship orientation, OI Organizational identification, Diagonals (bold) are squared root of the AVE
job performance had a positive but non-significant effect on SAB ($\beta=0.080$, $t=1.110$, $p=0.267$). This result supports H5.

The moderating effect of organizational identification on the respective paths of the relationship/transaction orientation to SAB (H5) and the extra-role/in-role job performance for SAB (H6) were further examined by adding interaction terms in the PLS-SEM analysis. Organizational identification had a positive and significant moderating effect on the path of relationship orientation to SAB ($\beta=0.164$, $t=2.636$, $p=0.009$) but no moderating effect on the path of the transaction orientation to SAB ($\beta=0.003$, $t=0.456$, $p=0.963$). This supports H6. Finally, organizational identification had a negative and significant moderation effect on the path of extra-role job performance to SAB ($\beta=0.208$, $t=2.713$, $p=0.007$) but no significant moderating effect on the path of in-role job performance to SAB ($\beta=0.085$, $t=1.406$, $p=0.160$). Although significant, the direction of the result was opposite to the predicted direction. Thus, H7 is not supported. The next section further explores the possible interpretation of this surprising result. Table 6 summarizes these results. Figure 1 is also given as a graphic representation of the structural relationships of the research model.

### 4.4 Multigroup analysis for potential job position and work experience bias

In order to ensure that the results are not biased by the different job positions (i.e., frontline service employee or frontline service manager in the organization) and their work experience in this industry (i.e., 1–3 years, 4–9 years, and 10 years and above.), multigroup analysis was further conducted via SmartPLS3 (Henseler et al.

| Hypotheses | Hypothesized relationship path | Path coefficient $\beta$ | $t$ | $P$ | Result |
|-------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|-----|-----|--------|
| H1          | MW-> SAB                        | 0.034                    | 0.4947 | 0.621 | Not supported |
| H2          | MW-> RO                         | 0.435                    | 8.463*** | 0.000 | Supported |
| H3          | RO-> SAB                        | 0.237                    | 3.969*** | 0.001 | Supported |
| H4          | MW-> ERP                        | 0.242                    | 3.823** | 0.001 | Supported |
| H5          | ERP-> SAB                       | 0.412                    | 5.302*** | 0.000 | Supported |
| H6          | Interaction: Org*RO-> SAB       | 0.164                    | 2.636** | 0.009 | Supported |
|             | Interaction: Org*TO-> SAB       | 0.003                    | 0.456 | 0.963 | |
| H7          | Interaction: Org*ERP-> SAB      | −0.208                   | 2.713** | 0.007 | Not supported |
|             | Interaction: Org*IRP-> SAB      | 0.085                    | 1.406 | 0.160 | |
The result indicated that there was no significant difference in any paths between the two different job position groups (i.e., The group of employees vs. the group of managers. All multigroup comparison \( p \) values > 0.10). In terms of work experience, all but one path reveal no significant difference among the three work experience groups (i.e., 1–3 years, 4–9 years, and 10 years and above. All \( p \) values > 0.10). For the one path that shows a significant difference, the effect of the transactional orientation on SAB is marginally stronger \((p = 0.048)\) in the senior group (10 years and above of work experience; \( \beta = 0.2065 \)) than in the junior group (1–3 years of work experience; \( \beta = -0.1265 \)). Therefore, in general, the potential bias arising from the job background within current sample does not seem to be at issue.

### 4.5 Post hoc study: additional data collection and analysis for H7

The surprising negative effect of the interaction between employee extra-role job performance and organizational identification on SAB implicitly suggests that strong organizational identification could dampen the effects of extra-role job performance on SAB. This finding is somewhat counterintuitive and warrants further exploration. It is conjectured that excessive demands from consumers may lead extra-role job performance to damage the interests of the organization. Existing literature shows
that organizational identification can have detrimental consequences for organizational members and/or the organization itself. These consequences include hindering organizational change process (e.g., Conroy et al., 2017) and lower performance (e.g., Hekman et al., 2016), among others. For example, Tangirala and Ramanujam (2008) found that when nurses have a high level of organizational identification but low level of personal control, they may lack motivations to communicate problems. In light of the pertinent literature, it is conjectured that organizational identification may lead employees to restrain themselves from performing extra-role behavior. To validate this interpretation, both quantitative and qualitative data were collected and further analyzed. First, the quantitative analysis with a different statistical approach classified organizational identification and extra-role job performance into high vs. low groups via median split. Then, a two-way ANOVA with two independent variables (i.e., organizational identification and extra-role job performance) and one dependent variable (i.e., SAB) was conducted. The result showed a significant two-way interaction between organizational identification and extra-role job performance ($F(1, 265) = 8.153, p = 0.005$). Given high organizational identification, the effect of high extra-role job performance on SAB was 4.35 ($SD = 0.43$), whereas the effect of low extra-role job performance on SAB was 4.12 ($SD = 0.50$). The difference between high and low extra-role job performance was 0.23. In contrast, when given low organizational identification, the effect of high extra-role job performance on SAB was 4.44 ($SD = 0.48$), whereas the effect of low extra-role job performance on SAB was 3.83 ($SD = 0.59$). The difference between high and low extra-role job performance was 0.61. The effects of extra-role job performance on SAB are weaker with high than low organizational identification (Planned contrast $F(3,265) = 19.731, p < 0.001$). Thus, organizational identification indeed seems to negatively moderate the effect of extra-role job performance on SAB.

Second, this study took a mixed method approach in which post hoc in-depth interviews were conducted to collect qualitative data. The mixed method approach (Creswell and Clark, 2017; Malina et al. 2011) combines different research methodologies to attain different research objectives. It has been employed in studies of brand love (Langner et al. 2015), brand personality (Arora & Stoner, 2009), brand-consumer interactions in social media (Rohm et al. 2013), values of social media data (Chan et al. 2016), among many others. This study employed the mixed method in which a survey was coupled with a post hoc interview. Post hoc interview is an interpretative approach that allows researchers to triangulate the findings from the survey and offers deeper insights into the observed behaviors (Creswell and Clark, 2017; Malina et al. 2011). According to Patton (2015), sample size for qualitative studies is more likely to be small and purposive. For the purpose of the qualitative study, three service managers and three service frontline employees from both experiential and credence service industries were recruited via snowball sampling. The six informants were a medical technology service manager (Informant A, 53 years), a five-star hotel service manager (Informant B, 30 years), a bar service manager (Informant C, 35 years), two medical nurses (Informant D, 44 years and Informant E, 48 years), and a masseuse (Informant F, 40 years). All three manager informants have extensive experience (more than 10 years) in managing frontline employees in the service industry and
handling customer service deliveries and complaints. And all three service front-line employees have more than 3 years of working experience in providing front-line services to customers. The qualitative interviews are thus conducted with these six interviewees to demonstrate the prevalence of the phenomenon at issue.

Informants are approached based on their experience and qualification to provide insights into the phenomenon of interest (Patton, 2015). The use of multiple informants permits the possibility to cross-validate information provided by different sources. The interview data were audio recorded, transcribed into verbatim, and analyzed using both inductive and deductive thematic analysis based on the pre-determined prior ideas (i.e., organizational identification and SAB). Themes would then emerge from the data based on inductive coding that allows the researcher to identify meanings in relation to these ideas (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006).

The informants were asked about their experiences struggling with performing extra-role behavior that influences SAB, given the considerations of organizational identification, and their answers were probed in detail. Informant A discussed how an ambitious salesperson exaggerated the company’s ability to deliver services to achieve sales goals, and how this could result in negative consequences for the company:

For example, they (sales personnel) may purposely not inform customers of the fact that not 100% of the stem cells can be successfully preserved.... So when customers find out their expectations cannot be met, they file a complaint, or even file a lawsuit. This can result in our company’s reputation being harmed. (Informant A)

Informant B shared a similar view in the example of how a junior frontline employee felt pressured by a very needy and annoying customer’s request for a 50% discount. The employee ended up giving the discount to the customer, which in turn harmed the hotel’s profitability. This interview shows that a lack of organizational identification can lead an employee to perform certain forms of SAB that can sometimes harm the profitability or the reputation of the company:

The customer kept arguing that he was a very loyal customer and should have a fifty percent discount. Our frontline salesperson felt pressured by the customer’s request. On one hand, he wanted to make the customer satisfied; on the other hand, he suspected that this special offer conflicted with his job goals. Although he had no one to consult with, he agreed to offer him a fifty percent discount. This is not a desirable adaptive behavior. Rather it harms our hotel’s profitability... What if we have many of these kinds of needy customers asking for the same favor? (Informant B)

At the same time, an employee’s organizational identification and career self-identity as part of the organization may keep him/her from performing excess SAB. Informant A discussed how frontline employees develop organizational identification to a somewhat adequate degree that prevents them from performing ill-suited SAB:
Supervisors and senior sales are the best counselors for newbies to deliver company value and help them identify with the company. If newbies get support from their seniors/supervisors, they will be more cautious about what service they can offer and what they cannot. (Informant A)

Informant C also mentioned that the actions of managers and senior colleagues can foster a sense of belonging in junior employees and provide them with on-the-job training in terms of adequately performing SAB. Informant C also acknowledged the challenges of handling varying customer requests:

*Bar customers… When they get drunk and want to be annoying… They ask for our female service employees’ telephone numbers or try to date them after work. Often, our junior female colleagues might feel pressured to provide their phone numbers to customers to achieve customer satisfaction. In these situations, managers or senior colleagues should prevent junior staff from being harassed or making wrong decisions (in essence, not to give phone numbers or date customers)… Even more so, when faced with a very annoying customer, our senior colleagues will protect their juniors, who might not know what to say or do. They tell the customer that our company policy does not allow an employee to go out with customers after work, or they will give the customer a business card with the company phone number and tell them to call the company phone number if needed… Many female colleagues have told us that they feel safe and secure working in our company… We do not just ask them to serve customers and do whatever the customers want… They feel that we care about their safety… Nowadays we are facing more and more difficulties in handling customer requests, and we are now attempting to pair up junior employees and senior employees to work at the same shift so as to provide on-job training and advice to junior employees… It would not be realistic to fulfill all customer requests… If their requests are too much, we say no to protect our company’s interest and reputation. (Informant C)*

All three Informants D, E, and F implicitly echo the importance of organizational identification in terms of harnessing the power of extra-role job performance on SAB. Informants D and E discussed the experiences when patient’s requests could possibly harm the clinic’s reputation which will prevent doctors and themselves from providing extra-role job performance toward patients. Informant F on the other hand indirectly pointed out that because her shift is at different stores, she would recommend her loyal customers to only use her massage services when she works at one of the stores. This implicitly shows the unimportance of organizational identification to her:

*Some of our patients are not very reasonable… For example, there was an old gentleman who wanted to have second-time X-ray within 3 months and the doctor refused it. This is because our national healthcare insurance will not reimburse this cost… But he wanted us to conduct a second-time X-ray for him without charging him… He had a big fight with the doctor and all...*
of us in the clinic can hear they had a quarrel... The doctor did nothing wrong, even though we can provide an extra service to patients. We cannot run the risk to violate the government regulations. It would harm our clinic’s reputation if National Health Insurance Administration found out... We would have gotten a big fine and everyone in the society will know we violated the regulations... Not only the fine... The fact is what are we going to do if every patient asked for this kind of service?! (Informant E)

There was an old patient who lives on his own... While he frequently visits our clinic, we have become friends... He is just like my grandpa... Everytime he visits our clinic I often provide him with lots of consulting services and medical advices that I normally do not do for other patients... However, there was one time he asked me if I can stay over at his home to take care of him, just in case he may have some unexpected syndromes at night time... I had to refuse him because as a registered nurse and work at our clinic, I cannot provide my services outside the clinic, because if something goes wrong, my nurse license will be revoked and the clinic will be fined. (Informant D)

I often change my approach to ensure that my customers feel relaxed during and after my massage... not every masseuse does the same thing...you know...they do not observe customers’ responses when providing a massage service. If customers mention some parts are too painful when they do the massage, they will simply place less stress to those parts. But this won’t help customers to really recover from fatigue; rather customers may feel their skill is not proficient and never come back to their service... As for me, I will utilize different massage skills to ensure that my customers will fully recover from their tiredness and are satisfied with my services. (Informant F)

I work at two different massage stores... Depending on my shift, I would sometimes ask customers to use my service at different stores... Sometimes I will provide extra services to my customers, for example, I will use my own massage oil (I have prepared my own, not from the stores) ... To ensure that my customer gets better... Although, they only have to pay for the non-oil massage service, which is cheaper...I will even provide my massage services at a customers’ home if they request... I will earn more from providing services at a customers’ home.... You know, the store often charges us quite a lot. (Informant F)

Taken together, the interviews echo our survey results, showing that employees’ organizational identification indeed can possibly moderate the effects of employee extra-role job performance on SAB in the negative direction, particularly when the excess extra-role behavior might hurt the organization. Our interviews also show evidence that not all extra-role job performances and SAB positively affect organizations. This finding is particularly salient, given that previously published studies mainly advocate their positive effects on organizational performance. Rather, service managers are faced with a diverse array of customer requests that require them to try and find a balance between customer satisfaction and interests of the company.
5 Discussion and conclusion

Based on COR, this study demonstrates that the meaning of work promotes SAB through the mediation of the relationship orientation and extra-role job performance. Moreover, organizational identification positively moderates the effects of relationship orientation on SAB. Nonetheless, organizational identification negatively moderates the effects of extra-role job performance on SAB. This research complements prior work that highlights the role of psychological resourcefulness in employees' SAB.

5.1 Theoretical contributions

This study contributes to the pertinent literature in three key aspects. First and foremost, it highlights the role of employees’ psychological resources (i.e., perceived meaning of work) and its relation to employees’ relationship orientation and extra-role job performance, which in turn influence employees’ SAB. Although studies of employees’ SAB have identified an array of motivation and personality antecedents, less attention has been paid to the role that personal psychological resources play (Park and Park 2019). Recently, one of the psychological resources, that is, employees’ perceived meaning of work has been widely discussed in the pertinent literature (e.g., Rosso et al. 2010). The pertinent studies concern the direct effect of meaning of work on employees’ job performance for better human resource management (e.g., Etodike et al., 2020; Farooq et al. 2017; Wu et al. 2016). By focusing on service industry, this study, however, sheds light on the relationship between the meaning of work and SAB by simultaneously examining the mediating roles of relationship orientation, transaction orientation, and extra- and in-role job performance on SAB. This study shows that employees’ SAB may not be directly driven by employees’ perceived meaning of work. Rather, meaning of work drives employee’s internal psychological responses including relationship orientation and extra-role job performance, which in turn propel SAB in response to diverse market needs.

Second, this study empirically demonstrates that relationship orientation is a stronger predictor of SAB than transaction orientation. With a few exceptions, most past studies have examined the relationship and transaction orientations separately (e.g., Chen et al. 2020; Staddon, 2016). This study simultaneously compared the relative strengths of these two orientations in mediating the effects of the meaning of work on SAB. To respond to the varying demands in the marketplace, this study shows that employee’s relationship orientation is much more critical than transactional orientation to drive SAB. This means that service employees should not focus on one-time transaction as it may prohibit their adaptive behavior from meeting customer needs. Furthermore, this study also compares the relative strengths of the mediating effects of extra-role and in-role job performance on SAB. When the pertinent studies focused on the antecedent effects on extra- and in-role job performance (Raub and Robert 2010), this study suggests that extra- and in-role job performance can be mediators to affect SAB. In particular, extra-role job performance...
has a stronger effect on SAB than in-role job performance. In sum, demonstrating the mediating effects of both relationship orientation and extra-role job performance are real contributions to the current literature.

Finally, this study explores the boundary conditions under which the influence of the mediators on SAB varies. Research has shown that organizational identification is a prevailing predictor of employees’ customer orientation (e.g., Anaza and Rutherford, 2012). Our results further this understanding by showing that organizational identification also moderates the effects of relationship orientation and extra-role job performance on employee SAB. Together with the perceived meaning of work, organizational identification can improve employee SAB by moderating the effects of relationship orientation on SAB. However, the surprising result that organizational identification negatively moderates the effects of extra-role job performance on SAB is found. This means that a strong sense of organizational identification could weaken the effects of extra-role job performance on SAB. A possible explanation may be derived from the idea that although certain types of extra-role job performance can positively satisfy customers, others could be detrimental to an organization (Leo and Russell-Bennett 2012). For example, an employee may refer customers to a competitor’s products to respond to their needs. Although this form of extra-role behavior may be highly appreciated by customers and may in turn enhance the interpersonal relationship between customers and employees (Leo and Russell-Bennett 2012), it can have a negative impact on the organizational image, brand equity, and profitability of the company in the long term. Thus, when employees possess a strong sense of organizational identification, they may intuitively gravitate away from performing certain kinds of extra-role behavior that would be harmful to the organization. As a result, their SAB in response to customer needs may be reduced.

5.2 Managerial implications

This study also has implications for managing frontline service employees for quality service delivery. First, our results clearly support the contention that frontline service employee perceived meaning of work can drive SAB. Consequently, infusing purpose and meaning into daily work is of the utmost importance. This may be realized by permeating jobs with values beyond technical requirements of daily tasks at hand. Although service managers make efforts to ensure that service delivery meets the standard operating procedures, service is heterogeneous in nature, particularly for frontline service delivery process (Wirtz et al. 2017). Because every customer’s needs are different and diverse, frontline service employee’s SAB becomes essentially significant in promoting customer satisfaction and delight (Anh et al. 2016). One way of doing this is through nurturing frontline employee work values with the organizational culture and servant leadership that infuse meanings and purposes into daily work. For example, a service organization could have an intranet featuring an online community that encourages inclusive discussions about topics of interest to employees related to their careers and personal lives, thereby fostering a sense of belongingness to a group with shared values.
Second, this study shows that frontline service employee’s SAB can be activated through relationship orientation and extra-role job performance. For this purpose, management should concentrate on nurturing and fostering frontline service employee’s relationship orientation and extra-role job performance. For example, service managers can design on-job training programs to highlight the importance of building long-term relationships with customers as well as creating customer satisfaction through extra-role job performance. At the core of the customer service processes, a frontline employee plays a critical role in responding to customers’ needs. An instinctive frontline response that puts the customer’s emotional needs first should go ahead of the company’s and the employee’s agendas. Consequently, frontline employee’s behavioral responses such as extra-role job performance and relationship orientation become essential and should be nurtured to help them handle diverse customer needs promptly. Third, this study finds that organizational identification improves the effects of relationship orientation on frontline service employee’s SAB. Thus, service managers should concentrate on nurturing organizational identification among frontline employees. This study recommends that managers integrate organizational identification measures into their regular training activities. Frequent and regular training programs can provide a foundation for developing SAB. Furthermore, our interview data analysis suggests that not all extra-role job performances would positively affect organizations, a finding that is different from the existing findings. To maintain a balance between customer satisfaction and the interests of organization for long-term customer loyalty, service managers should define identification goals and develop strategies and actions to enhance it among frontline service employees. In addition, a balance between excess extra-role behavior and organizational identification should be sought not only to deliver satisfying customer service but also to protect the interests of the organization. Last but not least, these managerial implications are important to both service industry managers and employees, for managers can design the training programs to promote employee SAB, and employees can benefit from these training programs in terms of their career development and personal growth. These managerial implications are buttressed by the empirical results obtained from the current study that recruited service providers as research participants.

5.3 Limitations and future research directions

This study has several limitations. First, although a good generalizability of the theoretical model is a desirable ideal (Gundlach & Cannon, 2010), gaps do exist between ideal and reality. In reality, this study is limited in its scope to cover a full range of contextual and/or background variables that may influence the variables of focal interest in this study. Although the design of this study has addressed part of the concern, it is far from complete. For instance, recruiting UK-only participants and comparisons of job background that revealed no significant differences have relieved part of the concern. In addition, adopting screening criteria and removing non-naive samples to improve the sampling quality (Newman et al. 2021) may also help to some extent. However, more background and contextual factors especially
in the sample structure need to be considered. Background factors such as types of service industries, job nature, job type, job scope, work design, organizational cultures, and management support would also possibly influence the relationships of the key variables in this study. Future research should consider addressing the issues of the impacts of these factors in sampling structures for a better generalizability of the findings of this study. Second, service employee adaptivity is classified into two dimensions, namely, interpersonal adaptive behavior and service-offering adaptive behavior (Gwinner et al. 2005). This study only covers the latter, which may render it difficult to explain the relationship between perceived personal tangible and intangible resources and work performance of employees. Future studies may consider examining the two dimensions simultaneously for better understanding of SAB. Third, the surprising finding that organizational identification negatively moderates the relationship of extra-role behavior and SAB raises an important issue of employees’ need to balance between customer needs and organizational interests. It is sometimes a conundrum for employees to act to satisfy both customer goals and company goals at the same time. A managerial issue arises in which how employee training could mitigate the challenge. Management should consider developing training programs to help employees deal with the dilemma. For academic research, it is advised that future studies may consider designing supervisory support and the on-job training as moderators that may have critical effect on extra-role job performance and SAB. Finally, our study shows that organizational identification negatively moderates the effects of extra-role job performance on SAB. Future research may further explore the conditions under which employee organizational identification can better harness the effects of employee extra-role behavior on SAB.

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