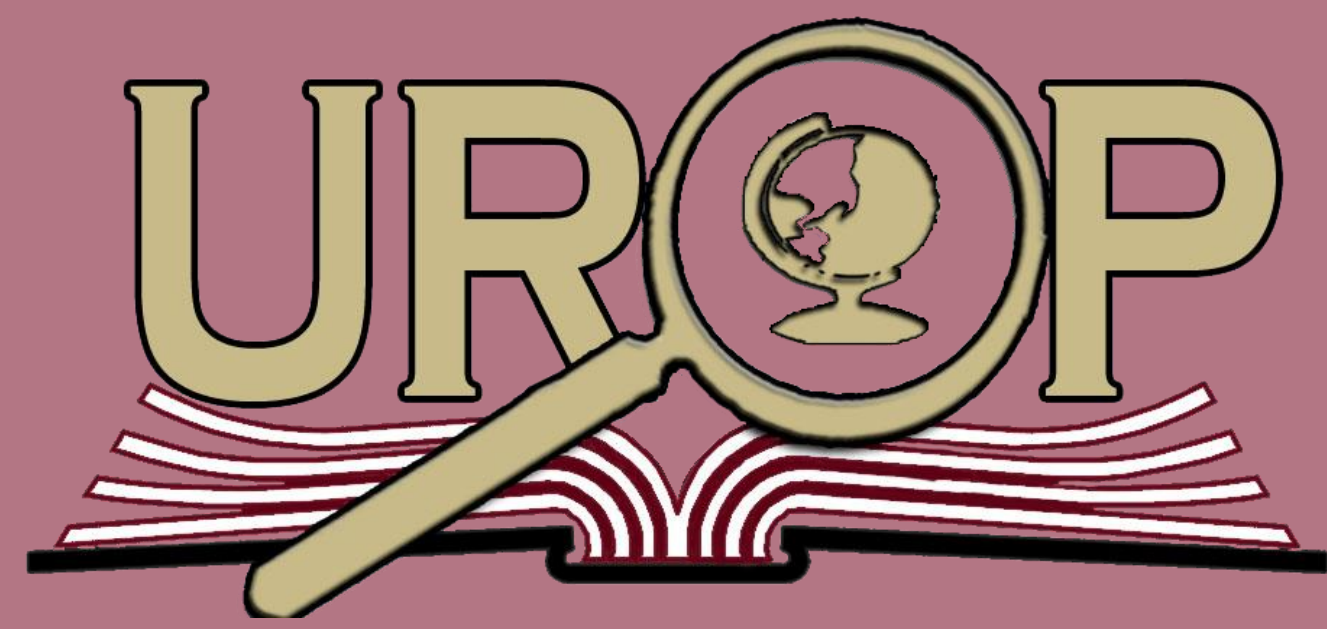


# Faithfulness Can't Guarantee Retention: Studying Emotional Labor

## Effects on Religious Leader's Turnover Intention

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### Introduction

While religious nonprofit workers often report high job satisfaction and a strong sense of purpose, driven by their faith and service to others (Ghazzawi, 2016), the specific challenges they face in managing emotional labor remain underexplored. Emotional labor, as defined by Grandey (2000), is the process of managing feelings and expressions to fulfill the emotional requirements of a job. In the context of pastors, this may involve suppressing negative emotions or expressing positive emotions even when not genuinely felt, to meet the expectations of their congregations and communities. This research delves into this understudied area, investigating how emotional labor interacts with religious motivations and organizational practices to influence turnover intentions among pastors in religious nonprofits.

**Research Question:** How do emotional labor, religious motivations, and organizational practices influence turnover intentions in pastors working for religious nonprofits?

### Methods

This study employs a **mixed-method approach** to gain a holistic understanding of the complex relationship between emotional labor, religious motivations, organizational practices, and turnover intentions in pastors.

#### Quantitative data

- **Surveys:** Distributed to a representative sample of pastors in religious nonprofits, gathering data on:
  - Emotional labor experiences (e.g., deep acting, surface acting)
  - Religious motivations (e.g., calling, sense of purpose)
  - Organizational practices (e.g., job autonomy, supervisor support)
  - Turnover intentions

#### Qualitative data:

- **Semi-structured interviews:** Conducted with a smaller group of pastors, allowing for deeper exploration of:
  - Personal experiences with emotional labor challenges and rewards
  - The influence of faith and organizational factors on their work
  - Strategies they utilize for coping and thriving

### Theoretical Framework

This study draws upon three established organizational behavior theories to understand the interplay of emotional labor, religious motivations, and organizational practices in influencing pastors' turnover intentions:

1. **Job Demands-Resources (JDR) Model:** Developed by Demerouti et al. (2001), this model proposes that job demands (e.g., emotional labor) and job resources (e.g., religious motivations, organizational support) interact to influence employee well-being and ultimately, turnover intentions. We examine how emotional labor, a significant demand, interacts with the unique resources of faith and organizational support in the context of pastors' work.

**Hypothesis 1:** Emotional labor positively relates to turnover intentions among pastors in religious nonprofits.

2. **Social Identity Theory (SIT):** Proposed by Tajfel and Turner (1979), this theory emphasizes how individuals derive meaning and self-esteem from their identification with groups. We explore how pastors' identification with their faith community and religious organization shapes their experiences of emotional labor and influences their decisions to stay or leave.

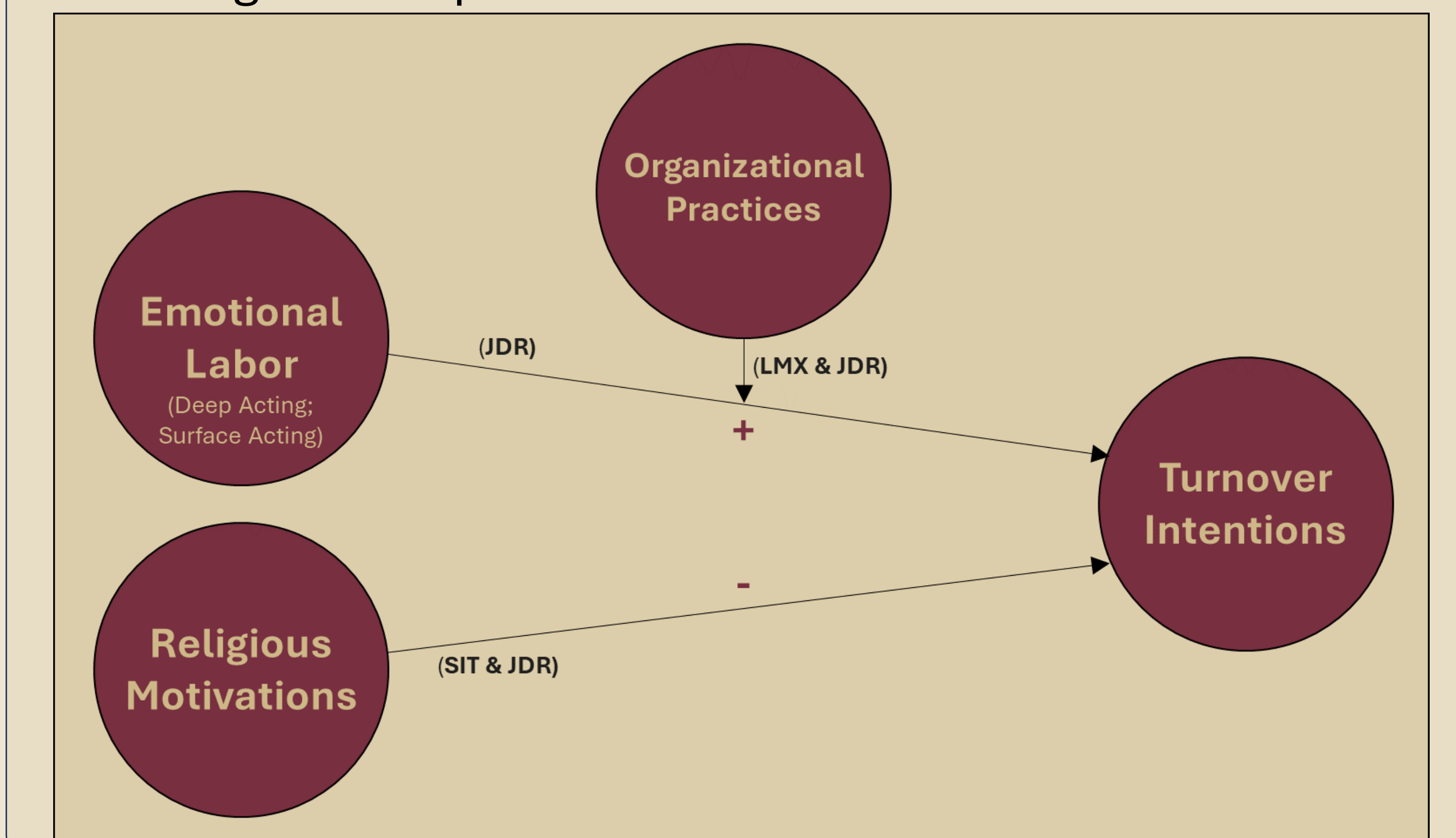
**Hypothesis 2:** Religious motivations negatively relate to turnover intentions among pastors in religious nonprofits.

3. **Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory:** Introduced by Graen (1995), this theory focuses on the quality of relationships between leaders (supervisors) and employees (pastors). We investigate how supportive leadership, characterized by trust and respect, can mitigate the negative effects of emotional labor and contribute to pastors' well-being and retention.

**Hypothesis 3:** Organizational practices moderate the relationship between emotional labor and turnover intentions. Specifically, supportive organizational practices are expected to weaken the positive relationship between emotional labor and turnover intentions.

### Conceptual Model

- Emotional labor to be associated with increased turnover intentions. Pastors experiencing high emotional labor demands may be more likely to consider leaving their positions.
- Strong religious motivations to act as a buffer against the negative effects of emotional labor, potentially decreasing turnover intentions. Pastors with a strong sense of calling and purpose may be more resilient to the challenges of emotional labor.
- Supportive organizational practices to moderate the relationship between emotional labor and turnover intentions. Religious nonprofits that offer autonomy, supervisor support, and other resources may help mitigate the negative impact of emotional labor and retain their



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