

## PERFORMING GENDER IN GLOBALIZED WORKSPACES: A CULTURAL READING OF *ONE NIGHT AT THE CALL CENTER*

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### ABSTRACT

This study investigates the dynamics of gender performance, negotiation, and challenge within the globalized work environment depicted in Chetan Bhagat's *'One Night at the Call Center'*. Set against the backdrop of a call centre characterized by Western corporate influences, technological reliance, and night shifts, the narrative creates a cultural hybrid where traditional Indian gender roles intersect with contemporary professional expectations. Drawing on theories of gender performativity and cultural analysis, the research delves into the experiences of female characters as they navigate issues of autonomy, emotional labour, workplace bias, and societal judgment, all while experiencing newfound economic and social mobility. Concurrently, male characters grapple with the demands of productivity, authority, and the preservation of traditional masculinity. The interactions among the employees illustrate both the subtle and overt reinforcement, negotiation, or resistance of gender norms within an ostensibly modern and equitable setting. The paper posits that Bhagat's work highlights the complexities introduced by globalization in gender performance, as it blurs the lines between public and private realms, shifts power relations, and transforms interpersonal dynamics. Ultimately, this analysis reveals that the novel not only mirrors the changing gender roles in contemporary Indian corporate culture but also emphasizes the broader cultural conflicts and identity challenges arising in rapidly evolving global workplaces.

**Key Words:** *Gender performance, negotiation, productivity, authority, masculinity.*

### INTRODUCTION

The novel's portrayal of gender performance in the context of globalized work, as found in India's call center sector, is explored in this paper, which investigates how both characters reenact and question what has been prescribed in accordance with pressures for cultural assimilation in this instance of the west and the demands of corporation. This analysis will examine how these characters gender in the context of a culturally positioned, fluid way—displacing traditional roles due to the transnational conditions of work (Castaing, 2013:19). This response accepts gender's mutability and its cultural particularity instead of aggression. This response recognizes the changes in gender rather than aggression itself and the cultural particularities of gender performance, especially when there is an overlap of expectations from people from different cultures (Castaing, 2013, p. 19). Moreover, this study seeks to problematize the concept of women's empowerment in this particular situation, to see if the concept of subversion of gender roles is really suggesting a degree of participation in and empowerment over women's identity or if it is a simple coping mechanism to the necessity of the globalized economy (Chakraborty; Adhikari, 2020 p. 1).

The novel also offers a critical insight into the complexities of cultural invasions and colonial legacies and their impact on the changing role of women in Indian society (A & Christopher 2024, p. 566). This analytical framework will explore the relationship between perceived empowerment of women in call centers and the incorporation of new aspects of labour exploitation and social stigma while at the same time providing economic independence (Dube

et al, 2012, p. 4). The focus of this exploration will therefore be on the existing scholarship of the role of constructions of gender in the formation and maintenance of national identity and the enforcement of social hierarchies, especially in South Asian contexts, where representational and material practices have been strictly established of what is 'feminine' and 'masculine' and how women are supposed to behave (Lazzari, 2020, p. 49). This paper will focus on how the characters in Chetan Bhagat's "One Night @ the Call Centre" deal with these signposts that exist in a pervasive environment that, at the same time, promises freedom and presents new signposts (Southmayd, 2013). The investigation will also explore the novel's exploration of the intricate links between individual agency and systemic pressures, as well as contestation of gendered expectations to characterise the female characters (Chakraborty & Adhikari, 2020, p. 2). The question of gender identity negotiation and refiguring within traditional modulations of Indian society in the background of globalization of call center work also gets addressed in this exploration (Chakraborty & Adhikari, 2020: p. 10; Matos, 2018: p. 3). By using an Indian philosophical approach, this analysis will shed light on the negotiation behaviours the characters engage in and how they can be explained by how cultural and gender aspects are intertwined in the employment relationship, thereby highlighting the inter-sectionality of each one of them (Christensen & Vendelø, 2021, p. 1413). This paper will show that, although there are some moments in the novel where women take control of themselves and revel in challenging patriarchal norms and structures in its context, these instances are inevitably shaped by the inherent power dynamics of both the call center and the larger society, providing a nuanced portrayal of empowerment within the framework of post-liberalization India (Chakraborty & Adhikari, 2020, p. 1; Rana & Rana, 2017, p. 547). This vital gaze also reflects scholarship that has suggested that there is doubt over whether more access to occupational achievement actually means more autonomy for women in themselves or more subtle rearticulation of female subordination (Chakraborty & Adhikari, 2020, p. 8).

Furthermore, the research will evaluate the relationship between the gender in the novel and the general topic of national identity as well as the cultural effects of the economic globalization (Matos, 2018, p. 160).

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Scholarly discussions on gender, globalization, and workplace culture have expanded significantly with the rise of transnational labor spaces such as call centers. Researchers across disciplines have examined how globalization reshapes identities, particularly gender identities, by introducing new economic opportunities alongside subtle forms of control and exploitation. This section reviews key theoretical and literary studies relevant to gender performance, globalized workspaces, and Chetan Bhagat's *One Night at the Call Center*. Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity remains foundational to contemporary gender studies. In *Gender Trouble* (1990), Butler argues that gender is not a natural or fixed identity but a repeated performance shaped by cultural norms, social expectations, and power structures. This framework has been widely applied to workplace studies, where professional behaviour, communication styles, and emotional labor are understood as gendered performances rather than innate traits. Butler's concept enables scholars to analyse how corporate environments demand specific gendered behaviours, often reinforcing normative femininity and masculinity under the guise of professionalism.

Feminist scholars examining globalization argue that global capitalism restructures gender relations rather than dissolving them. Chakraborty and Adhikari (2020) observe that women's participation in globalized labor markets often produces a paradoxical condition: increased economic independence coexists with intensified surveillance, emotional labor, and social

stigma. Similarly, Dube et al. (2012) highlight how call centers in India provide employment opportunities for young women while simultaneously exposing them to moral policing and cultural anxiety rooted in patriarchal values. These studies emphasize that empowerment in globalized workspaces is frequently conditional and constrained. Postcolonial perspectives further enrich this discourse by situating globalized labor within histories of colonial power. Scholars such as Matos (2018) and Hegde (2019) argue that call centers function as postcolonial sites where Western norms of language, accent, and professionalism dominate. The requirement to adopt Western names and “neutral” accents reflects a continuation of colonial hierarchies, where cultural authenticity is subordinated to market demands. This linguistic and cultural adaptation becomes a form of identity performance that affects both gender and class positioning.

Literary critics have increasingly turned to Indian English fiction to explore these socio-economic transformations. Contemporary novels set in urban and corporate spaces reflect the anxieties and contradictions of post-liberalization India. Srinivasan (2018) and Vats (2023) note that such narratives foreground youth, employment, and globalization as central themes, highlighting how individuals negotiate traditional values within modern economic structures. These studies recognize literature as a critical medium that captures lived experiences often overlooked by purely sociological research. Chetan Bhagat’s *One Night at the Call Center* has attracted scholarly attention for its depiction of India’s outsourcing industry and its impact on identity. Mukherjee (2017) interprets the novel as a commentary on cultural alienation produced by global capitalism, emphasizing the emotional and psychological costs of call center work. Hegde (2019) similarly examines the novel’s portrayal of accent training, night shifts, and temporal dislocation, arguing that these elements symbolize deeper conflicts between local identities and global demands. Gender-focused readings of the novel emphasize the differentiated experiences of male and female characters. Chakraborty and Adhikari (2020) analyze how female characters in the novel appear empowered through financial independence but remain constrained by societal expectations regarding respectability and morality. Their study suggests that the workplace enables limited agency while reinforcing patriarchal surveillance. In contrast, male characters experience a crisis of masculinity, as their authority and traditional gender roles are destabilized by feminized service labor and corporate hierarchies.

Studies on emotional labor further illuminate gender performance in call centers. Scholars such as Cameron (2008) and Matos (2018) argue that communication skills, politeness, and empathy—often coded as feminine—are central to call center work. This feminization of labor devalues emotional skills while simultaneously exploiting them for profit. Such analyses are particularly relevant to Bhagat’s novel, where both male and female characters must perform scripted emotions to satisfy customers and management. Despite the growing body of scholarship on globalization and gender, limited studies focus on literary representations of gender performativity within Indian call centers using an integrated feminist and postcolonial framework. Most existing research either prioritizes sociological data or offers general thematic readings of globalization. This gap highlights the need for a focused literary analysis that examines how gender is performed, negotiated, and contested within fictional representations of globalized workplaces. The present study contributes to this scholarly conversation by applying gender performativity theory to *One Night at the Call Center*, situating the novel within feminist and postcolonial context debates on globalisation. By foregrounding both male and female experiences, this research seeks to demonstrate how globalized corporate spaces simultaneously enable and restrict gendered identities, thereby offering a nuanced understanding of empowerment, identity, and cultural conflict in contemporary Indian English fiction.

## AIM AND OBJECTIVES

### Aim:

To study gender as performance in a globalized workspace

### Objectives:

- To analyze male and female identity negotiation
- To examine globalization's impact on gender roles
- To question empowerment versus control

## DISCUSSION

### Theoretical Frameworks: Gender, Performance, and Globalization

This section outlines the theoretical underpinnings guiding the analysis, focusing on Butler's concept of gender as a performative act and its relevance to understanding identity construction within globalized workplaces (Schwarzkopf et al., 2021, p. 872). This framework will also incorporate theories of postcolonialism to analyze how historical power imbalances and colonial legacies continue to shape gendered experiences within the Indian call center industry. It will also draw upon feminist critiques of globalization, examining how the transnational flow of capital and culture impacts local gender dynamics and the formation of new forms of subjectivity (K, 2024, p. 15). The study will also integrate postcolonial feminism to illuminate the often-overlooked challenges faced by marginalized women in postcolonial nations, particularly within the context of globalized labor (J & Alan, 2024, p. 122). Furthermore, the analysis will consider how these theoretical lenses provide a robust framework for understanding the complexities of gender performance as a response to both local and global pressures (D'Enbeau et al., 2015; Just & Muhr, 2021, p. 689). Specifically, it will explore how the concept of "speaking voices" for the silent Orient, as identified in postcolonial discourse, manifests in the call center context, questioning whether the required Westernized voice represents genuine Indian agency or a new form of silencing (Gardner, 2012). This nuanced perspective is particularly relevant when considering the "third world feminist scholarship," which seeks to move beyond commodity-centered, patriarchal approaches to embrace a more gender-neutral, "mental-metric view" of individual potential (Chakraborty & Adhikari, 2020, p. 2).

This approach acknowledges the fragmented developments in social mobility for women in post-national eras, aiming to decipher how female characters navigate and, at times, diverge from prescribed social reforms (Chakraborty & Adhikari, 2020, p. 2). This analytical lens allows for a comprehensive examination of how individual performances of gender within the call center environment are intertwined with larger societal structures and postcolonial transformations (A & Christopher, 2024, p. 568; Aroopala, 2016). By extending Butler's theoretical root in poststructuralist feminism, this study also adopts a post-structuralism research lens, which emerged from the decolonization process and critically examined Western-centric discourses (Liu et al., 2020, p. 104136). This perspective allows for a deconstruction of how dominant narratives around globalization and gender are constructed and perpetuated, especially concerning the agency and representation of women in postcolonial settings (Grosser & Moon, 2017, p. 335).

Moreover, a transnational feminist perspective will be employed to dissect the power asymmetries inherent in globalization processes and the enduring influence of colonial discourses on the experiences of marginalized women, particularly in the Global South (Lee, 2024, p. 9). This approach underscores the importance of amplifying diverse voices and acknowledging the particularities of their historical trajectories and cultural frameworks within

the broader context of digital inequalities and the challenges faced by women in engaging with the AI economy (Digital Divide, Artificial Intelligence, and Women's Labour Inequality in India: Evidence from PLFS Data, n.d., p. 2; Gendered Racism: Definition, Origin, and Development, 2025, p. 26; Zhao, 2024). This research will further explore how digital technologies, particularly in the call center industry, contribute to the commodification of gendered labor, often through the managed manipulation of voices (Matos, 2018, p. 4). This analysis will specifically investigate how these manipulated vocal performances contribute to the construction of "digital flesh," a concept highlighting the ontological structure of digital organizations and their embedded gender biases (Guschke, 2021, p. 278). This includes an examination of how toxic masculinity can be embedded in the development and implementation processes of digital interfaces, potentially leading to the de/sexualization of gendered labor (Pors, 2021, p. 270). This approach acknowledges the intersectionality of gender, technology, and power, providing a framework to analyze how women in globalized workspaces negotiate their identities amidst these complex forces (Bagdogan, 2021, p. 429; Liu et al., 2020, p. 104137).

### **Theories of Gender as Performance**

Drawing upon Judith Butler's seminal work on gender performativity, this section will delve into how gender is not an inherent attribute but rather a stylized repetition of acts, gestures, and discourse that coalesce to form the illusion of a stable gendered self (Sandberg et al., 2021, p. 232). This theoretical lens is particularly pertinent for understanding how individuals within the call center environment are compelled to perform specific gendered roles, often aligning with Westernized expectations of professionalism and communication, which can paradoxically perpetuate existing inequalities (Foka, 2024, p. 3). This performance extends to the concept of "Digital Flesh," where the digital organizations themselves, through male-biased data and gender performativity, contribute to the de/sexualization of labor, particularly impacting women (Just & Muhr, 2021, p. 257). This study further examines how these digitally mediated performances not only shape individual identity but also reflect and reinforce broader societal norms and power structures, often to the detriment of marginalized groups (Schwarzkopf et al., 2021, p. 826). This theoretical grounding enables an exploration of how the prescriptive gendered scripts within call centers, informed by globalized economic demands, necessitate specific vocal performances that may compromise authentic self-expression (Matos, 2018, p. 161).

The examination of "voice attractiveness" in this context is crucial, as it reveals how neoliberal market expectations intersect with cultural dynamics to encourage the self-commodification of vocal sexualization, reflecting both macro-level financial pressures and micro-level psychological drivers where vocal attractiveness is perceived as a form of power (Chen & Chen, 2025). Consequently, this research aims to unpack the ways in which these performative aspects of gender within the call center industry contribute to the formation of "gender capital," a concept that illustrates how workers strategically deploy gendered attributes to navigate their occupational roles and challenge or reinforce existing power dynamics (Matos, 2018, p. 167). This "gender capital" often materializes within the labor process itself, embedding production tasks and valorization devices within asymmetrical conceptions of masculinity and femininity (Matos, 2018, p. 160).

### **Globalization and the Transformation of Work**

The emergence of globalized workplaces, particularly in the call center industry, has profoundly reshaped traditional notions of labor, creating new avenues for economic participation while simultaneously introducing novel forms of exploitation and gendered stratification (Ge, 2025). These transformations are often characterized by the institutionalization

of gendered skill redefinitions, which are grounded in a cultural grammar that subordinated women and femininity while valorizing masculine superiority (Matos, 2018, p. 11). This redefinition often manifests as the commodification of gender, where the gendering of work products becomes deeply intertwined with local gender ideologies and neoliberal socioeconomic shifts, impacting the reconfiguration of social classes and employment within the European economic context (Matos, 2014). This dynamic illustrates how call centers, as sites of intense globalization, become crucibles where gender is actively performed and negotiated, often under the duress of economic precarity (Matos, 2018, p. 168). Specifically, the pervasive tendency within this industry is for language commodification to be overtly shaped by a strong feminization of the discursive frameworks governing telephonic interaction (Matos, 2018, p. 163). This feminization often involves the linguistic regulation of agents' speech, enforcing specific rules for language use that can significantly influence their interactional styles and self-presentation (Cameron, 2008).

This linguistic regulation, while often framed as a means of ensuring customer satisfaction and brand consistency, can also be interpreted as a mechanism for reinforcing existing gendered power structures within the workplace, potentially contributing to the feminization and devaluation of call center labor for male operators (Matos, 2018, p. 160). Moreover, this systematic feminization extends beyond linguistic prescription to the broader organizational practices, where the feminized skills are devalued, while masculinized skills are valorized, enabling a strategic commodification of feminine subordination and masculine authority within the call center's value extraction regime (Matos, 2018a, p. 3, 2018b, p. 163). This process results in a complex interplay where gendered labor is both performed and strategically deployed to meet the demands of a globalized service economy (Matos, 2018, p. 168).

### **Cultural Studies Approaches to Literature and Society**

In examining the novel *"One Night at the Call Center,"* a cultural studies framework allows for an interrogation of how literary texts reflect and actively construct understandings of gender, work, and globalization within contemporary Indian society. This approach enables an analysis of how fictional narratives, such as this novel, illuminate the intricate power geometries of time-space compression and the distinct relationships different social groups and individuals have with global flows and interconnections (Hegde, 2019, p. 249). This analytical lens is crucial for deciphering how the novel portrays the complexities of identity formation and the negotiation of cultural anxieties amidst India's rapid integration into the global capitalist system (Srinivasan, 2018). By focusing on the lived experiences of call center agents, the novel provides a nuanced perspective on how individuals navigate the demands of a globalized service economy while confronting shifting national narratives and a complex symbolic economy (*"A Nation on the Line: Call Centers as Postcolonial Predicaments in the Philippines,"* 2018, p. 200).

### ***One Night at the Call Center: A Synopsis and Context***

*One Night at the Call Center* thus serves as a compelling narrative through which to explore the intricate interplay between individual agency and systemic pressures in the context of globalized labor (Vats, 2023). The narrative offers a critical insight into the often-gendered and racialized global processes that shape perceptions of skill and value, consequently influencing the social construction of class identities both locally and transnationally (Ale.rta, 2023, p. 5). The novel thereby functions as a lens through which to examine how individuals grapple with the commodification of their labor and the imposition of a "neutral accent," which often masks underlying cultural tensions and power differentials inherent in transnational work (Hegde, 2019, p. 251). This enforced linguistic conformity, as explored in scholarly works, frequently underscores broader arguments concerning global transformations and the disruption of

conventional understandings of inclusion and exclusion in outsourced labor contexts (Hegde, 2019, p. 250). This often creates a temporal oscillation, where workers' lifestyles are misaligned with their circadian rhythms, further complicating their experiences within these evolving global workplaces (Hegde, 2019, p. 249). This temporal inversion, alongside the adoption of Anglicized names and accents, further highlights the complex identity negotiations undertaken by call center employees as they mediate between their indigenous cultural identities and the demands of their globalized roles (Hegde, 2019, p. 250).

### **Plot Summary and Character Introduction**

Chethan Bhagat's *"One Night at the Call Center"* centers on six employees—Shyam, Priyanka, Vroom, Radhika, Military Uncle, and Esha—working the night shift at Connections, a call center in Gurgaon, India, providing technical support for a U.S. appliance company. This setting immediately establishes a transnational dynamic, where the characters' daily lives are dictated by the demands of a Western clientele and corporate structure, highlighting the spatial and temporal dislocations inherent in such outsourced labor models (Lardinous, 2021, p. 9). The narrative unfolds over the course of a single night, during which a series of personal crises and professional pressures converge, culminating in a mysterious phone call from God that prompts the characters to re-evaluate their lives and choices (Vimal & R, 2024, p. 220). This divine intervention serves as a literary device to explore themes of identity, alienation, and the search for meaning within the often-dehumanizing environment of the call center (Alearta, 2023, p. 6). The novel, a prominent work set in Gurgaon, meticulously details the emergence of this burgeoning urban landscape, which has been described as a futuristic space birthed by global capitalism (Hillion, 2021, p. 58). In this specific context, the novel provides a vivid portrayal of the sociocultural dimensions of metropolitan youth culture, illustrating how characters grapple with academic pressures and societal expectations within India's evolving educational and economic landscape (Vimal & R, 2024, p. 1299).

The narrative further emphasizes the profound impact of globalization on local contexts, particularly through the "reversed temporalities of work" experienced by these agents, who must align their schedules with Western time zones, thus disrupting their social integration and personal lives (Anesh, 2009, p. 364). This temporal dissonance often necessitates a transformation of identity, as agents adopt new names and accents to better serve their clientele, reflecting a complex form of cultural mimicry (Alearta, 2023, p. 6). This adoption of a hybrid identity, marked by both assimilation and resistance, underscores the intricate negotiation of selfhood in a globalized workforce (Hegde, 2019, p. 250). The novel thus offers a critical examination of how individuals navigate the complexities of their assigned roles, often adopting Americanized names and accents to cater to their clientele, which inevitably leads to a sense of detachment from their authentic selves (Mukherjee, 2017, p. 187). This performative aspect of call center work, characterized by the adoption of alternative personae and the suppression of genuine cultural expressions, illuminates the broader phenomenon of cultural commodification within the global service industry (Mukherjee, 2011).

### **The Indian Call Center Industry: A Globalized Landscape**

This industry rapidly expanding in countries like India represents a significant facet of contemporary globalization transforming local economies and individual lives through the integration of distant labor markets. The rise of the call center industry especially in India exemplifies the profound shifts in post-millennium literature where authors increasingly explore the intersections of individuality culture and society within the context of globalized labor (Sujantha et al 2024). This literary trend captures the evolving dynamics of identity formation and cultural adaptation in response to the pervasive influence of transnational capitalism (Iyer 2024

p 229; Vats 2023). It further highlights how Indian English literature has evolved to represent complex cultural interactions and cross-cultural engagements influenced by globalization moving beyond mere reflection to active participation in these global dialogues (Vats 2023). The industry's growth is often driven by cost efficiencies with Indian companies offering services at significantly reduced rates compared to Western counterparts (Mukherjee 2017 p 189).

### **Performing Gender in the Call Center: Analysis of Characters and Narratives**

This section will delve into how gender is constructed performed and challenged by the characters within the confines of the call center exploring the nuanced ways in which employees navigate gendered expectations and power dynamics in their professional and personal lives. Specifically it will examine how the demands of customer service particularly the need to adopt neutral accents and personas intersect with and sometimes exacerbate existing gender roles and stereotypes (Hegde 2019 p 251). The pressure to conform to Western customer expectations including linguistic and cultural norms often forces individuals to suppress their authentic gendered expressions leading to a complex interplay between performativity and personal identity within the workplace (POSTER 2007). Moreover this analysis will explore how call center employees particularly women navigate the micropolitical dynamics and power imbalances inherent in these transnational work environments often reflecting broader societal prejudices and challenging unfulfilled promises of globalization (Medhavi 2024 p 1). This examination reveals how the globalization of labor while purporting to offer economic advancement frequently introduces new forms of social and gendered subjugation that necessitate complex adaptations from the workforce (Doğangün 2023 p 7).

The critical lens applied here aims to unravel these layers of performance revealing the strategies employed by characters to negotiate their identities amidst the dual pressures of globalized corporate culture and indigenous societal norms (Rajendran & Patel 2024 p 1538). This includes an investigation into how the workplace redefines masculinity and femininity often through subtle pressures to conform to idealized customer service archetypes that may conflict with traditional gender roles (K 2024 p 13). Such performative adaptations while enabling economic participation frequently generate internal conflicts for employees who must reconcile their prescribed professional identities with their personal understanding of gender and self (Mankekar & Gupta 2016). The adaptations are further complicated by the increasing prevalence of work-from-home setups which while offering flexibility can paradoxically reinforce traditional gendered expectations particularly for women by blurring the lines between professional and domestic responsibilities (Braun & Clarke 2006).

### **Masculinities in Crisis and Adaptation**

The male characters in the novel navigate a complex terrain where traditional notions of masculinity are challenged by the feminized labor of call center work and the often-devalued nature of the service industry (Matos, 2018, p. 11). This section will explore how they reconcile their aspirations for upward mobility with the perceived emasculating aspects of their jobs, often through compensatory behaviors or the adoption of new identities. These adaptations can manifest as a struggle to assert dominance in interpersonal relationships or a strategic embrace of hybrid identities that allow them to navigate the ambiguities of their professional roles (Dapis, 2025). This tension often results in a redefinition of masculine identity within the call center setting, where traditional patriarchal structures clash with the demands of a globalized service economy that prioritizes emotional labor and client satisfaction over conventional displays of power (Djaković, 2019, p. 485). For example, male call center operators may leverage their technical expertise to signify social mobility, especially when their work is perceived by family members as not "real work" (Matos, 2018, p. 165). Conversely, some male employees strategically

cultivate relationships with superiors to access higher-status positions outside the call center, thereby transforming their workplace experiences into a form of cultural capital (Matos, 2018, p. 9).

### **Feminine Identities: Negotiation and Resistance**

This section explores the multifaceted ways in which female characters negotiate and resist prevailing gender norms within the demanding environment of the call center, often through both subtle and overt acts of agency. These negotiations often involve a careful balance between conforming to customer service expectations and asserting personal autonomy, leading to innovative expressions of identity that challenge both corporate and societal gender constructs. The novel examines how women construct differing, even conflicting, forms of identity in the workplace (Pujolar, 2001, p. 55). This can involve deploying femininity as a form of cultural or symbolic capital to enhance their professional standing (Matos, 2018, p. 166). Alternatively, their resistance may manifest as a refusal to be recognized in ways that reinforce their perceived lower class or feminized status, particularly when confronted with familial or societal expectations (Matos, 2018, p. 166). This negotiation is particularly salient given the cultural context of many call centers, where traditional gender roles often intersect with the demands of a Western-centric service industry, creating unique pressures and opportunities for women to redefine their positions ("A Nation on the Line Call Centers as Postcolonial Predicaments in the Philippines," 2018, p. 45).

### **The Role of Language and Accent in Gender Performance**

This section will analyze how the prescribed linguistic practices and accent neutralization within call centers contribute to the performance and perception of gender among employees. Specifically, it will investigate how the adoption of standardized accents, often modeled on Western English dialects, impacts the vocal performance of gender, potentially masking or reifying existing stereotypes (Hultgren, 2017). This linguistic conformity not only influences how gender is expressed but also how it is perceived by callers, frequently leading to an internalization of these linguistic norms that subtly reshapes employees' self-perception of their gendered identities (Pinkevičienė, 2022, p. 41). Furthermore, this linguistic assimilation can position workers in states of conflict regarding regional and cultural authenticity, thereby contributing to an ideologically constructed hierarchical order of both accents and languages (Harrington, 2018, p. 199).

This linguistic re-education thus becomes a critical site for the performance of a globalized gender identity, often at the expense of an individual's native linguistic and cultural heritage. This further extends to how linguistic prowess, particularly in English, can become a significant form of cultural capital, allowing individuals to navigate and even redefine their social standing within globalized workplaces and beyond (Chen & Chen, 2021, p. 163). This capital, however, is often intertwined with complex power dynamics, as workers frequently encounter colonial power dynamics in their efforts to make sense of the offshore informatics industry ("A Nation on the Line Call Centers as Postcolonial Predicaments in the Philippines," 2018, p. 46). The commodification of language within this context is particularly shaped by a feminization of communication styles, where preferred ways of speaking are symbolically coded as feminine, even for male employees (Matos, 2018, p. 6). This dynamic underscores how language, far from being a neutral tool, becomes a crucial arena for the performance and negotiation of gender, profoundly influencing workplace identities and opportunities (Wang et al., 2014, p. 36).

### **CONCLUSION**

This concluding section synthesizes the preceding analyses, reiterating how the novel

powerfully illustrates the intricate interplay between global economic forces and localized gender performances. It underscores the ways in which individuals in globalized workplaces actively construct and negotiate their gendered identities, often challenging and reshaping traditional norms in response to the unique pressures of their professional environments (Bora & Kumar, 2025; Gonibeed & Saqib, 2022, p. 1243). The study thus contributes to a broader understanding of how gender is performed and reconfigured within the transnational flows of capital and culture, particularly within the burgeoning service economies of the Global South. Future research could further explore the intersection of gender performance and socioeconomic mobility within these contexts, especially considering the differing power dynamics between local and international corporate trainers ("A Nation on the Line Call Centers as Postcolonial Predicaments in the Philippines," 2018, p. 46). Additionally, investigating how gendered emotional labor is explicitly taught and internalized by new recruits, particularly concerning the performance of empathy and resilience under duress, would provide deeper insights into the subtle mechanisms of control exerted by these transnational corporations.

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