THE POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE ATTRIBUTES OF EMOTIONAL DISSONANCE AS THE PERCEIVED REGULATOR ON ATTRITION AMONG THE INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY WORKERS

Mr. K. Vijayaraj* and Dr. N. Sundaram**

Abstract: The emotional competence can be regarded as an important personal resource in service work because it moderates the relationships between work characteristics, emotional dissonance, and outcome variables like job satisfaction and Attrition. The objective of this research was to explore the antecedents and consequences of emotional dissonance - leading to attrition among the knowledge workers in the Business process outsourcing (BPO) companies of information technology enabled service sector (ITES sector). The antecedents were the positive and negative attributes of emotional dissonance. The consequences of emotional dissonance were job satisfaction, intention to quit and attrition. From the survey conducted it was found that the Emotional dissonance acts as regulator on the intention to quit and influences the decision leading to attrition as well as job performance.

Keywords: Emotional dissonance, Positive Affects, Negative Affects, Attrition, Emotional exhaustion, Burnout.

1. INTRODUCTION

Increasing turnover of frontline staff in business process outsourcing (BPO) sector is detrimental to the delivery of quality service to the customers. (Budhwar, et.al. 2009). For many IT service sector jobs, emotion work is an integral part of the task. Emotion work can be defined as the regulatory effort to express organizationally desired emotions (Grandey, 2000). There are very few studies that empirically connect the emotional abilities and emotion work specifically to service employees (Wegge. J, 2010) from a managerial context. Thus, to bridge this empirical gap, one of the goals is to analyse the emotional dissonance attributes that act as perceived regulator on the intention to quit leading to Attrition. This paper aims to shed additional light on the links by distinguishing two dimensions of emotional dissonance and predicting that its Positive Affects (PA) and Negative Affects (NA) attributes mediates its relationship with Attrition. Emotional labour can be described as the employee’s management of feelings to create an observable display that is consistent with situational demands. To adhere to the organization’s display rules, employees may engage in emotional labour by suppressing emotions or by displaying emotions that are different from their true emotions. (Zapf, 2003). Expressing emotions that

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one does not feel during service encounters can be extremely stressful for service
workers (Lovelock, 2001). DDA refers to the daily deliberate acting or suppression
of emotions to achieve one’s primary work goals. DDA is a more proactive and
conscious acting style. This is prevalent more among the knowledge workers in
the BPO sector of the Information Technology (IT) industry. Understanding the
attrition phenomenon may help personnel managers and manpower planners control
attrition and design effective retention strategies.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Hochschild (1983), Emotional dissonance is similar to cognitive
dissonance in that a person will experience discomfort when there is a mismatch
between actual felt emotion and displayed emotion and seek ways in which to
bring the discrepancy into balance. Two different avenues, employees use to reduce
emotional dissonance: surface acting and deep acting. Surface acting focuses on
outward behaviour. Surface acting is displaying appropriately but not feeling those
emotions internally. Deep acting has three different avenues. The first avenue in
deep acting involves a person directly willing the desired emotion. The second
avenue in deep acting involves a person using his imagination to create thoughts,
images, and personal memories to induce the required emotion. The first type of
individual would suffer from burnout, stress and depersonalization. The second type
of employee distinguishes themselves from the job itself. This type of behaviour
will reduce the burnout, it may make the employee feel phony because at any time
they may feel that they are either overacting or under acting. The third type of
employee is one who distinguishes themselves from the emotional display itself.
This type of employee realizes that the display is just an act. This type of employee
may suffer from estrangement and withdrawal behaviours. Morris and Feldman
(1996) acknowledged that frequency is an important indicator and dimension of
emotional labour. They put forth three additional dimensions of emotional labour:
attentiveness to required display rules, variety, and emotional dissonance. In 2000,
Grandey’s model also introduced moderators. These moderators are separated
as two different groups, one for individual factors and one for organization. The
model indicates that burn-out, job satisfaction, performance and withdrawal
behaviour are all potential consequences of emotional labour. Several research
scholars have analysed the consequences of emotional dissonance. Morries and
Feldman (1997) established a positive relationship between emotional dissonance
and emotional exhaustion. Rebecca Abraham (1998) also explored the link
between emotional dissonance and emotional exhaustion and job satisfaction.
Job satisfaction was negatively related to emotional dissonance and emotional
exhaustion is positively related with emotional dissonance. Glomb and Tews
(2004) found out that surface acting was positive related to emotional exhaustion,
and negatively related to organisation’s overall wellbeing. It can be observed that emotional dissonance has clearly shown negative effects on job satisfaction and job performance.

**Gender Differences:** In service job, Women are expected to smile more than men. If the display rules are more extreme for women than for men and both men and women feel equally at odds with the given display, this would result in greater emotional dissonance for women.

**Emotional exhaustion:** Emotional dissonance is a form of person-role conflict (Rafaeli and Sutton, 1987). Morris and Feldman (1996) cited a case of debt collectors who felt the impact of dissonance when they felt sympathy for debtors while being constrained by their employers to be harsh and unmerciful.

**Attrition:** In a separate study of turnover, Cropanzano et al. (1989) found positive correlations between negative affectivity and intention to turnover. Judge (1993) found that negative affectivity moderated the job satisfaction-turnover relationship, with high negative affectivity individuals showing a reduced propensity to turnover as a result of dissatisfaction. Neuroticism was related to poor health habits, of which smoking, lack of exercise, overeating and sleep disturbances are noteworthy. Given that negative affectivity is innate and stable, the high negative affectivity individual may develop a rigid mental framework.

It is found that prior attempts to measure emotional dissonance are incomplete because such measures often does not focussed where emotions are actually exhibited or not shown (e.g. faked, suppressed, veiled) during work.

### 3. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The Positive Emotional Attractors (PEA): The positive attractors of emotional dissonance are the hopes, dreams, possibilities, strengths, optimism and self-directed learning goals that make up our ideal self (PEA) that pulls us toward intrinsic intentional change. The organizing power of PEA stems from positive emotions (and emotional appraisals) that are associated with and aroused by affirming thoughts, feelings, memories, meaning and self-worth that cohere in the ideal self (Boyatzis, 2004). This positive emotion encourages the employee towards organisational commitment thereby reducing their intention to quit.

The Negative Emotional Attractor (NEA): The Negative affectivity or neuroticism encompasses trait, anxiety, low self-esteem and depression. The present reality, fears, problems, shortfalls, pessimism and self-directed improvement goals that make up our real self are the negative emotional attractor. The organising power of the NEA stems from negative emotions that are associated with and aroused by the dissonant thoughts, feelings, memories, meaning and concerns about self-efficacy that comprise the real self (Boyatzis, 2002). The negative emotion issue stems from their central role in calling our attention to behaviours and events that
compromise our effectiveness, threaten our safety, drain our resources, increase our stress or require us to improve or protect ourselves. (Anita Howard, 2006).

4. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study investigates the personality of service employees – by analysing the influence of the positive and negative affectivity of emotional dissonance. According to the meta-analysis of Thoresen et al. (2003), individuals high on negative affectivity (NA) typically report lower job satisfaction – leading to attrition, whereas individuals high on positive affectivity (PA) are generally more satisfied thereby committing themselves to organizational growth. The major aim of the study is to analyse the role of emotional dissonance attributes (PA and NA) as perceived mediator in influencing the attrition of the knowledge workers. The impact of emotional dissonance attributes with respect to gender and job satisfaction was also analysed statically.

5. RESEARCH METHODS

The article has been processed based on the analysis of secondary sources, outcome synthesis and the evaluation of results of a questionnaire survey. Satisfaction with the nature of the work would then lead to two additional consequences: job performance (positively) and intention to quit (negatively). About 20 different types of health disorders were developed by Mohr (1986). Positive affectivity (PA) and Negative affectivity (NA) – were assessed with the PANAS questionnaire comprising 10 positive and 10 negative mood states (Watson et al., 1994).

5.1. Objective of the Study

This research aims to present the context for attrition among the knowledge workers (software professionals) in the BPO sector in the IT industry. The primary aim is to establish the relationship, that the emotional dissonance acts as the perceived mediator to influence the attrition among the knowledge workers.

Population: The BPO-call centre employees in Chennai constitute the population for this study. These BPO employees are assigned the title as ‘Knowledge workers’.

Sampling Design: The total sample size for the study was 400, conveniently selected from the population-BPO employees (Knowledge workers/software professional) working in various IT-BPO companies in Chennai. Because the population is indefinite, a formula for arriving at the sample size was used. (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). Stratified Convenience random sampling method was used for the survey. This is the method of choosing items arbitrarily and in an unstructured manner from the frame (Population). It’s stratified because the samples are from the total population which is divided into three major strata in the ITES Sector such as Large scale Enterprises (LSE), Medium scale Enterprises (MSE) and Small
The samples are drawn equally from the three strata. It involves categorizing the members of the population into mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive groups. An independent simple random sample is then drawn from each group. Stratified sampling techniques can provide more precise estimates if the population was being surveyed are more heterogeneous than the categorized groups.

5.2. Data Collection Sources and Tools

The data is collected through interview schedule. The questionnaire was used as the data collection instrument. The questionnaire included Likert scale type of questions. The procedure adopted for data collection was interview method with the sample employees being randomly selected from IT companies to the extent possible and also through mail. The views expressed by the respondents were recorded and analysed.

5.3. Data Analysis Techniques and Tools

A total of 400 completed questionnaires were the base for computing the results. Primary data thus gathered was subjected to frequency counts. These responses are quantified, statistically analysed and presented in tabular form. Percentages are used to compare the relative terms and the distribution of two or more series of data. SPSS tool is used for statistical analysis and interpret the findings.

6. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study have confirmed that there is a significant relationship between emotional dissonance, turnover intentions, absenteeism, performance and ultimately affecting attrition and the process of organisational development. This emotional dissonance act as the stress factor directing the service sector employees towards a feeling of estrangement from their work and moving them to search for a new job.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. (a) Reliability Test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reliability Statistics</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cronbach’s Alpha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.950</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Compiled

From Table 1(a), it is clear that the internal consistencies among the variables are measured and the Cronbach’s Alpha value is found to be 0.950. Various variables considered for analysis are as follows:
Table 1. (b) Variables used for analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Measurement Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>V1-Positive Affects</td>
<td>Alert, Attentive, Excited, Enthusiastic, Inspired, Proud, Determined, Strong and Active.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V2-Negative Affects</td>
<td>Distressed, Upset, Guilty, Ashamed, Hostile, Irritable, Nervous, Jittery, Scared and Afraid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V3-Attrition factors</td>
<td>Work environment; Career development, Social Recognition, Job not designed around your needs, Access to leading technologies, Salary and increment, Performance appraisal, Promotion opportunities, Being offered a job by another company, Training and development provision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variable 4</td>
<td>Continue to work in present company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variable 5</td>
<td>Level of job satisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variable 6</td>
<td>Gender</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Cronbach’s Alpha value is 0.950 for the above variables used for this study.

The influence of the positive and negative attributes of emotional dissonance on the male and female knowledge workers were statistically analysed using Mann-Whitney U Test. The results are presented below:

Hypothesis 1: \( H_0 \) – There is no significant relationship between positive attributes of emotional dissonance and gender distribution among the sample.

Hypothesis 2: \( H_0 \) – There is no significant relationship between negative affects of emotional dissonance and gender distribution among the sample.

Table 2. (a) Test Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Positive Affects</th>
<th>Negative Affects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mann-Whitney U Test</td>
<td>12415.500</td>
<td>13475.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilcoxon W</td>
<td>61243.500</td>
<td>62303.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z</td>
<td>-1.374</td>
<td>-0.267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>0.169</td>
<td>0.790</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Compiled. Grouping Variable: Gender *significant at the 0.05 level

From Table 2(a), the p-values of Positive and Negative Affects are 0.169 and 0.790 respectively which is greater than \( \alpha \) value of 0.05. Hence \( H_0 \) is accepted, which means that – There is no significant relationship between Gender and Positive attributes of emotional dissonance of Emotional dissonance. Similarly for the negative attributes of emotional dissonance we can conclude that - There is no significant relationship between Gender and Negative attributes of Emotional dissonance.
Table 2. (b) Rank: PANA* and Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive Affects Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>196.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>215.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>400</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Affects Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>199.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>203.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>400</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Compiled: *PA–Positive Affect; NA–Negative Affects

Also from the Rank Table 2(b), it is clear that, among the gender group the mean rank value for the female worker is greater than the male group. This confirms that the positive and negative attributes of emotional dissonance affects the female workers more than the male workers. In other words the women knowledge workers in the IT companies are more susceptible to the emotional dissonance attributes (both positive and negative).

Hypothesis 3: $H_0$ – There is no significant relationship between job satisfaction and negative affects of emotional dissonance.

Table 3. Correlations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test</th>
<th>JS*</th>
<th>NA* Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spearman’s rho</td>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>0.162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Compiled: *significant at the 0.05 level, *NA-Negative Affects, *job satisfaction

The variables - job satisfaction and negative affects were statically tested using Spearman’s rho rank correlation. Table 3 shows the results of the analysis. We can infer that, since the p value 0.162 being greater than $\alpha$ value of 0.05, $H_0$ is accepted. There is no significant relationship between job satisfaction and negative affects of emotional dissonance among the knowledge workers of IT companies.

Hypothesis 4: $H_0$ – There is no significant relationship between job satisfaction and negative affects of emotional dissonance.
The results from Table 4 shows that the \( p \) value of \( -0.178^{**} \) which is less than the \( \alpha \) value of 0.01. We can interpret that there is significant relationship between job satisfaction and positive affects of emotional dissonance among the knowledge workers of IT companies.

Hypothesis 5: \( (H_0) \) – There is no significant relationship between Attrition Factors Total and education level. To analyse this hypothesis, one-way ANOVA was applied.

Using Levene’s Test of Homogeneity of Variances, it was found that the significance value is 0.725 which is greater than 0.05. Hence the selected variables meet the eligibility criteria of applying One-way ANOVA. The selected variable Attrition causes has 20 factors which are totalled and assigned as new variable “Attrition Factors Total”. The other variable chosen was education level, where the option UG was assigned 1, PG - 2 and Diploma as 3 during the data entry analysis. Using Friedman’s test, the 20 factors were narrowed down to top 10 factors.
From Table 6, we can infer that the Friedman Test gives the $p$ value of 0.001 which is less than $\alpha$ value. Hence there is significant relationship among the top ten variables of ‘reason for attrition’. ($h_0$ is rejected). These 10 variables of attrition causes were statically analysed using one way ANOVA, to establish the relationship between Attrition causes and education level (UG/PG/Diploma). Most of the respondents educational level fall under the three category – Post Graduate, Under Graduate and Diploma holders. The educational level of the employee is one of the major causes for the attrition. Most of the polytechnique diploma holders are specialised in computer science, whereas the Under Graduate and Post Graduates were specialised in commerce, business management and other humanities courses. There is too much of demand for these young graduates in the BPO sector and parallel to this, a very high supply of arts, science and engineering graduates were taking place every year. This fuels the already burning problem of attrition in the call centres. (NASSCOM Report, 2015)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attrition Factors</th>
<th>$F$</th>
<th>Sig.*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Challenging work environment</td>
<td>0.517</td>
<td>0.597</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career development opportunities</td>
<td>0.186</td>
<td>0.830</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company reputation/ Social Recognition</td>
<td>1.006</td>
<td>0.367</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job not designed around your needs</td>
<td>1.412</td>
<td>0.245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to leading technologies</td>
<td>2.096</td>
<td>0.124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salary, increment and bonus</td>
<td>0.170</td>
<td>0.844</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance appraisal process</td>
<td>2.476</td>
<td>0.085</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotion opportunities</td>
<td>1.291</td>
<td>0.276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being offered a job by another company</td>
<td>2.206</td>
<td>0.111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training and development provision</td>
<td>2.449</td>
<td>0.088</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Compiled: *significant at the 0.05 level

Table 7 clearly show that the $p$ value for all the attrition factor is greater than $\alpha$ value. Hence we can infer that there is no significant relationship between attrition factors and education level. ($h_0$ is accepted). From the analysis we can interpret that the education level, whether UG, PG or Diploma does not act as a major cause for attrition among the employees ( knowledge workers) in the call centers of the BPO sector. At present, medium and small scale companies do not possess any personnel or financial reserves to stop this. Service firms understand that their human resources represent an important competitive advantage, and losing good performers will have serious repercussions. Personal satisfaction by improving job performance is one of the main conditions for work satisfaction. These employees show better performance despite worst organizational conditions. It is possible to
conclude that the competitive advantage of organizations currently lies in particular
in how employees apply their knowledge, experience and skills that are essential for
ensuring the continuity of an organizational activities. The key point for reducing
turnover is to change human resource management process in compliance with the
trend of employee development, encouraging independence, career planning, open
communication and sharing information. The needs that are often overlooked and
problematic are the needs of solidarity, friendship, safety and security, fulfilment,
recognition by a team. In order to eliminate dissatisfaction, affectivity, alienation
and frequent resignations of employees, it is necessary to monitor the approach to
employees in relation to the following factors: organizational culture, employee
recognition and remuneration. It is obvious that employees who are not encouraged
do not have enough information and on the top of that are criticised, are almost sure
to leave the organization. Employees might be trained to use mood management
tactics (Wegge, J., 2010) to diffuse the negative feelings and psychological drain
associated with surface acting. Service managers should identify employees who
intend to quitting, might think about improvements to the service delivery processes
or changes to the services cape (e.g. music, colours) to create a mood-enhancing
environment.

Employees with low NA show a good person-job fit as these individuals report
significantly less emotional dissonance. In call centre work, the expression of
positive emotion is desired and the expression of negative emotions is typically not
tolerated (Zapf et al., 2003). Therefore, individuals who are predisposed to be in a
bad mood have more problems in this kind of work. Whereas the positive relation
between NA and emotional dissonance obtained in our study is perhaps not really
surprising, the negative relation between PA and emotional dissonance deserves
attention. Consistent with the study of (Zellars et al. 2006) who found positive
effects of PA on strain; our results show that PA can be considered as a personal
resource protecting individuals from experiencing stress.

7. CONCLUSION

Understanding the emotions of the employees is very crucial for a healthy and
effective work environment in an organization. The emotional dissonance has a
very powerful effect on employee’s turnover intentions, absenteeism, retentions and
organizational quality of work life along with its overall growth and development in
the long run. On the basis of the survey it is possible to say that in relation to ensuring
knowledge continuity there is a positive impact of the factors at the individual level
(internal drain associated with surface acting. Service managers should identify
employees who intend to pre-empt quitting might think about improvements to
the service delivery processes or changes to the services cape (e.g. music, yoga)
to create a mood-enhancing environment motivation, previous experience with
knowledge sharing and trust). It is also possible to say that in relation to ensuring knowledge continuity there is a positive impact of the factors at the organizational level - climate in the organization, stimulation, remuneration system, communication process, willingness to invest in employee education. Organizations may take the opportunity of development and growth from a small to a large organization by enabling the introduction of projects and independent work of employees, listening to proposals and their implementation in practice. For theoretical and empirical reasons PA and NA should be largely independent from each other (Thoresen et al., 2003). This finding was once again corroborated in this study and, therefore, it can be concluded that considering both affective dispositions in personnel selection of knowledge workers are fruitful.

Reference


