

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

K. Vijayaraj* and 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.

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

* Assistant Professor (Senior) Commerce, School of Social sciences and Languages, VIT University, Vellore, Tamilnadu, India-632014. *Email: kvijayaraj@vit.ac.in*

** Professor and Head of Commerce, School of Social sciences and Languages, VIT University, Vellore, Tamilnadu, India-632014. *Email: nsundaram@vit.ac.in*

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.

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. Morris 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.

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).

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.

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).

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

scale Industries (SSI). 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 being surveyed is more heterogeneous than the categorized groups.

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.

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.

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 1: (A) RELIABILITY TEST

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.950	42

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

<i>Construct</i>	<i>Measurement Item</i>
V1-Positive Affects	Alert, Attentive, Excited, Enthusiastic, Inspired, Proud, Determined, Strong and Active.
V2-Negative Affects	Distressed, Upset, Guilty, Ashamed, Hostile, Irritable, Nervous, Jittery, Scared and Afraid.
V3-Attrition factors	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
Variable 4	Continue to work in present company
Variable 5	Level of job satisfaction
Variable 6	Gender

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^a

	<i>Positive Affects Total</i>	<i>Negative Affects Total</i>
<i>Mann-Whitney U Test</i>	12415.500	13475.000
<i>Wilcoxon W</i>	61243.500	62303.000
<i>Z</i>	-1.374	-0.267
<i>Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	0.169	0.790

Compileda. 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 α 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

	Gender	N	Mean Rank
<i>Positive Affects Total</i>	Male	312	196.29
	Female	88	215.41
	Total	400	
<i>Negative Affects Total</i>	Male	312	199.69
	Female	88	203.38
	Total	400	Mean Rank

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

Test			JS*	NA* Total
<i>Spearman's rho</i>	JS*	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	0.070
		Sig. (2-tailed)		0.162
		N	400	400
	NA* Total	Correlation Coefficient	0.070	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.162	
		N	400	400

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 α 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.

TABLE 4: CORRELATIONS – JOB SATISFACTION AND POSITIVE AFFECTS

<i>Test</i>			<i>JS*</i>	<i>PA* Total</i>
Spearman's rho	JS*	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-0.178**
		Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
		N	400	400
Positive Affects Total	Positive Affects Total	Correlation Coefficient	-0.178**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
		N	400	400

Compiled: **significant at the 0.01 level, *PA-Positive Affects, *JS-Job Satisfaction

The results from Table 4 shows that the p value of -0.178^{**} which is less than the α 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.

TABLE 5: TEST OF HOMOGENEITY OF VARIANCES–ATTRITION FACTORS TOTAL VERSUS EDUCATION LEVEL.

<i>Levene's Statistic</i>	<i>df1</i>	<i>df2</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
0.124	1	398	0.725

Compiled

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.

TABLE 6: REASONS FOR ATTRITION

<i>Friedman Test Statistics</i>	
N	393
Chi-Square	69.394
df	9
Asymp. Sig.	0.001*

Compiled: *significant at the 0.05 level

From Table 6, we can infer that the Friedman Test gives the p value of 0.001 which is less than α 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 7: ONE WAY ANOVA

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

*Compiled: *significant at the 0.05 level*

Table 7 clearly show that the p value for all the attrition factor is greater than α 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.

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

- Anita Howard, 2006. "Positive and negative emotional attractors and intentional change", *Journal of Management Development*, Vol. 25, Iss 7, 657 – 670.
- Boyatzis, R.E., Stubbs, E.C., and Taylor, S.N. 2002. "Learning cognitive and emotional intelligence competencies through graduate management education", *Academy of Management Journal on Learning and Education*, Vol. 1(2), 150-162.
- Budhwar, P.S., Luthar, H. K., Bhatnagar, J., (Summer) 2006. "The Dynamics of HRM Systems in Indian BPO Firms", *Journal of Labor Research*, Volume XXVII, 339-360.
- Cropanzano, R. and Folger, R., 1989. "Referent cognitions and task decision autonomy: Beyond equity theory", *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 74, 173-182.
- Glomb, T.M. & Tews, M.J., 2004. "Emotional labour: A conceptualization and scale development", *Journal of Vocational Behaviour*, Vol. 64, 1-23.
- Grandey, A.A., 2000. "Emotion regulation in the workplace: A new way to conceptualize emotional labour", *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, Vol. 5, 95-100.
- Hochschild, A., 1983. "The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling", University of California Press, Berkeley, CA.
- Iaffaldano, M.T. & Muchinsky, P.M., 1985. "Job satisfaction and job performance: A meta-analysis", *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol. 97, 251-273.
- Jürgen Wegge, Rolf Van Dick Christiane, von Bernstorff, 2010. "Emotional dissonance in call centre work", *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, Vol. 25, Iss. 6, 596 – 619.
- Krejcie, R.V., and Morgan, D.W., 1970. "Determining Sample Size for Research Activities", *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 1970
- Morris, A.J., and Feldman, D.C. 1997. "Managing emotions in the workplace", *Journal of Managerial Issues*, Vol. 9 No. 3, pp. 257-274.
- Morris, J.A. & Feldman, D.C., 1996. "The dimensions, antecedents, and consequences of emotional labour", *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 21, No.4 986-1010.
- Rafaeli, A., & Sutton, R. I., 1987. "Expression of emotion as part of the work role", *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 12: 23-37.
- Rebecca Abraham., 1998, "Emotional dissonance in organizations: a conceptualization of consequences, mediators and moderators", *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, Vol. 19, Iss 3, 137 – 146.

- Spector, P.E., 1997. "Job satisfaction: Application, assessment, causes, and consequences", Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc. US.
- Thoresen, G. J., Kaplan, S. A., Barsky, A. P., Chermont, K..de, and Warren, C. R., 2003, "The affective underpinnings of job perceptions and attitudes: A meta-analytic review and integration", *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol. 129, 914-945.
- Zapf, D., Isic, A., Bechtoldt, M., and Blau, P., 2003. "What is typical for call centre Jobs? Characteristics and service intentions in different call centers", *European Journal of work and organizational psychology*, Vol. 12 (4), 311-340.
- Watson, G. B., and Glaser, E. M., 1994. "Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal Manual – Form S. San Antonio: The Psychological Corporation", US.