

Effects of Emotional Dissonance and Display of Positive Emotions on Employees Intention to Quit: A Study of Indian Service Firms

Subhash C. Kundu*
Nidhi Gaba**
Neha Gahlawat***

Abstract

The expeditious growth in the services sector has made it mandatory to recognize the concept of 'emotional labor' in new light while exploring the field of work-related stress research. In today's highly competitive environment, the main challenge before the organizations is to retain the talented workforce. Considering this, the current study has found it relevant to investigate the effects of emotional dissonance and display of positive emotions among employees on their intention to quit the organizations. Using regression analysis on a sample of 346 respondents from service companies in India, the results have highlighted that both the emotional dissonance and display of positive emotions are positively related to the employees' intention to quit.

Keywords: Emotional Dissonance, Display of Positive Emotions, Intention to Quit, Service Sector, India.

Introduction

The frontline employees serving the customers perform a key linking role between the service organizations and the customers (Karatepe et al. 2005). Wirtz et al. (2008) also believe that employees are very crucial for service organizations as they facilitate excellent services. Undoubtedly, it is the performance of the frontline employees that leads to the ultimate success of service organizations. Low et al. (2001) have observed that with this high recognition of frontline employees, a major problem has emerged in service organizations and that is known

by the name employees' intentions to quit'. Intention to quit is defined as the point at which an employee wishes to terminate the association with his or her employer (Kim et al. 1996). So, it poses a challenge before managers to lower employees' intention to leave and find out the reasons behind the employee turnover (Kevin et al. 2004). Turnover intention of employees' has gained serious attention among the scholars and researchers of different areas (Lambert et al. 2001). Employee turnover not only retards the performance but at the same time hampers the growth of an organization. It puts a question before an organization about its survival in the era of globalization and growing complexity of business (Chen et al. 2010). So, it becomes essential to understand the factors that can assist in reducing the employees' intention to leave.

Now a days, the organizations are working in a rapidly changing environment facing complex and competitive business conditions (Cascio 1998). Service organizations have recognized that their human capital serve as competitive advantage and losing excellent employees will come up with critical consequences (Hong 2007). So, developing job performance and holding employees act as crucial aspect for success for the service organizations. It has been observed that

Subhash C. Kundu*

Professor, Haryana School of Business,
Guru Jambheshwar University of Science and
Technology, Hisar

Nidhi Gaba**

Research Scholar, Haryana School of Business,
Guru Jambheshwar University of Science and
Technology, Hisar

Neha Gahlawat***

Assistant Professor, Institute of Information
Technology and Management, Institutional Area,
Janakpuri, New Delhi

there is dearth of research studies in area of service sector focusing specifically on employees' intention to quit (Kundu and Gahlawat 2015). Batt (2002) has stated the findings of manufacturing industry cannot be applied to the service industry because of the different set of working conditions, demographic profile, work processes, technology, association among employees, professional groups and the customers. Bearing this in mind, we have particularly examined the 'intention to quit' among service sector employees.

'Emotional labor', popularly known as the control of feelings and demonstration at work (Grandey 2000), is a crucial part of various jobs that demand employees to communicate with clients, colleagues, and the society. Service organizations have clearly stated the need for emotional display in organizational settings (Zerbe 2000). To conform to these kinds of specifications, the employees are expected to control their emotions as well as their emotional display (Hochschild 1983). Several researchers have specified on this issue and provided empirical evidences that the emotional labor is an essential aspect of daily work life for a number of employees (e.g., Bolton 2005). In subsequence, emotional labor give rise to consequences which have negative effects on an organization's growth like increasing turnover intentions and turnover among the employees (Goodwin et al. 2011), declining productivity, and the substantial replacement costs (Jackson and Sirianni 2009). Chang and colleagues (2007) have claimed that emotional exhaustion has not received much attention even though it is a crucial part of the work organizations. Further, the scholars have paid less attention on burnout. Most of the existing studies on burnout have been conducted in the developed nations. Developing countries like India have been almost overlooked (Tourigny et al. 2013). With the growing importance of services sector in Indian economy (Mishra et al. 2012), it becomes utmost important to understand the emotional dissonance and display of positive emotions and its outcomes.

Theory and Hypotheses

Emotional Dissonance

In the words of Abraham (1999), emotional dissonance is one of the aspects of emotional labor.

Emotional dissonance is defined as "a state of discrepancy between public displays of emotions and internal experiences of emotions that often follows the process of emotion regulation" (Ashforth and Humphrey 1993; Grandey 2000). Emotional dissonance is a persistent problem faced by service organizations which is conceivably a crucial determinant of employees' intention to quit (Mishra and Bhatnagar 2010). The research related to emotional dissonance highlights that its existence is distressing and in turn, motivates the employees to eliminate themselves from the positions in which emotional dissonance emerges (Chau et al. 2009). Emotional dissonance has many negative consequences linked to it such as job dissatisfaction (Adelmann 1989), burnout (Schaible 2006), work-stress (Tewksbury and Higgins 2006), and employee turnover (Moore 2000). Abraham (1999) further highlights that the emotional dissonance can stimulate the employees' intentions' to quit. Through a study of frontline hotel employees in Northern Cyprus, Karatepe et al. (2009) have also explored the similar findings that there is a high impact of emotional dissonance on emotional exhaustion and intentions to quit. On the same line, Zerbe (2000) has also confirmed that emotional dissonance intensifies the intention to quit the organization among employees. So, the following hypothesis can be raised:

Hypothesis 1: Emotional dissonance is positively related to intention to quit.

Display of Positive Emotions

Besides the rising work load in the services sector (Peeters and Le Blanc 2001), the frontline employees are forced to express the socially required emotions as a job demand (Hochschild 1983). Display of employees' positive emotions is defined as "the extent to which employees show positive emotions in order to deliver quality experiences in service encounters" (Lam et al. 2010). The display of positive emotions has been found to be strongly related to customer satisfaction, loyalty, and customers' perception of services quality (Tsai and Huang 2002). According to Lam et al. (2010), burnout in the employees has a tendency to bring down the emotional efforts, and hence, the frontline employees initiate a fewer exertion in displaying the positive emotions. The employees

Table 1: Demographics and Sample Characteristics

Variables	Categories	Number	Percentage	Average
Gender	Male	272	78.6	
	Female	74	21.4	
	Total	346	100.0	
Work experience	In the corporate sector			8.99
	In the present company			6.73
Age	Below 25	94	27.2	
	26-30	123	35.5	
	31-40	67	19.4	
	41-50	20	5.8	
	51-60	39	11.3	
	Above 60 years	3	0.9	
	Total	346	100.0	
Industry	ITES	71	20.5	
	Banking	94	27.2	
	Insurance	30	8.7	
	Financial Services	49	14.2	
	Food and Beverages	20	5.7	
	Retailing	20	5.7	
	Others	62	18.0	
	Total	346	100.0	

working in the service organizations are insisted to display positive and pleasing emotions and suppress the negative emotions in order to attain customer satisfaction and loyalty. Though, the continuous control and display of positive emotional tone demands considerable emotional efforts (Rafaeli and Sutton 1987), which instigates the service employees to be sensitive to thoughts such as confused and exhausted due to their work (Wilk and Moynihan 2005). To a great extent the attention has been paid on the research exploring how and when about the emotional labor, for example, regularity in display of positive emotions and the increased levels of customer interaction result into emotional exhaustion (Morris and Feldman 1996). The amount of research which is primarily based on the conservation of resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll 1989) indicates that the emotionally exhausted employees are likely to preserve or increase their depleted resources either by reducing their efforts for displaying positive emotions or by quitting the workplace (Halbesleben 2006). Hence, the following hypothesis can be proposed:

Hypothesis 2: Display of positive emotions is positively related to intention to quit.

Research Methodology

Sample

This study used a questionnaire survey method for collecting primary data from the respondents. Overall, 650 questionnaires were distributed and out of the sent questionnaires, 420 questionnaires were retrieved. After examining all the retrieved questionnaires, it was found that 346 questionnaires were valid and could be used for the analysis, thus, generated 53.23% response rate. This level of response rate is considered adequate for the social sciences research (Alreck and Settle 1995). The classification of the sample is displayed in Table 1.

Table 1 demonstrates that the sample comprised of 21.4% females and 78.6% of males. Average work experience of employees in the corporate sector was 8.9 years and average experience in the present company was 6.73 years. The sample covered employees belonging to different age groups who were

classified as follows: below 25 years(27.2%), 26-30 years (35.5%), 31-40 years (19.4%), 41-50 years (5.8%), 51-60 years (11.3%), and more than 60 years (0.9%).Further, employees belonging to different industries included: ITES (20.5%), Banking (27.2%), Insurance (8.7%), Financial services (14.2%), Food and Beverage (5.7%), Retailing (5.7%), and others (18%).

Measures

Emotional dissonance (independent variable)

Using a 5-point rating scale ranging from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always), emotional dissonance was measured with four items taken from the study of Zapf et al. (1999).An example of the items is ‘How often in your job do you have to display emotions that do not agree with your true feelings’. The value of Cronbach alpha for the scale was 0.848 (Hair et al. 1998).

Display of positive emotions (independent variable)

The display of positive emotions was measured using the eight-item scale given by Zapf et al. (1999). The items were measured on a 5-point scale ranging from 1(Never) to 5 (Always). An example of the items is ‘ How often in your job do you have to display, according to the situation, differing positive emotions towards clients (i.e. friendliness and enthusiasm and hope etc.)’. The Cronbach alpha for this scale was 0.833(Hair et al. 1998).

Intention to quit (dependent variable)

The intention to quit was measured on a five point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The items were adapted from (Kundu and Gahlawat 2015; Jenkins 1993; Kransz et al. 1995) study. An item for example is, ‘I often think about resigning’. The cronbach alpha measured for the scale was 0.895.

Statistical Methods

In this study, the statistical methods used for the analysis of primary data were factor analysis, correlations, and regression analysis. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was applied for the data reduction and obtaining the broader factors. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used for checking the convergent and discriminant validity of

the scales used. Correlations were used for examining the prelim relationships between the different variables and regression analysis was applied to determine the effects of emotional dissonance and display of positive emotions on intention to quit.

Results and Discussion

Exploratory and Confirmatory Factor Analysis

A two -staged technique was applied for analyzing the data at the initial stage. Primarily, all the underlying variables under investigation were subjected together for exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis for testing their validity and reliability. At the first stage of the analysis, all the 14 items were analyzed by way of exploratory factor analysis (EFA) for studying the pattern of loadings of all the items under investigation on their resultant constructs. The EFA results explained the 3 factors solution, maintaining the criterion that the factors exhibiting the eigen values larger than 1.00 would be kept. The cronbach’s alpha was measured for the scales for checking their internal reliability. The values lied between 0.833 and 0.895 clearly maintaining the adequate internal reliability (0.70) suggested by (Hair et al. 1998). Additionally, first order confirmatory factor analysis was applied using AMOS 18. Average variance extracted (AVE) and composite reliability (CR) were computed for checking the convergent and discriminant validity for the scales. All the 14 items (retained after EFA) were held on their expected latent constructs while allowing all the constructs to correlate. The CFA results illustrated that all the factor loadings were significant ($p \leq 0.001$) and greater than 0.50 (for details, refer to appendix 1). Though, one item showed a lower factor loading it was removed at this step (for removed item, see appendix 1).The values calculated for the CR estimates varied between 0.837 and 0.892, higher than the standard value of 0.70 (Hair et al. 2010).

The average variance extracted was measured for all the constructs and the value ranged from 0.585 to 0.633, greater than the recommended value of 0.50 (Hair et al. 2010), hence, confirming the convergent validity of the constructs (Zhao and Cavusgil 2006). For verifying the discriminant validity, the values of the average shared variance (ASV) and maximum shared variance (MSV) were computed for all the

Table 2: Correlations between Major Study Variables

Items	No. of item	Mean	SD	Gender	Average age	Emotional dissonance	Display of positive emotions	Intention to quit
Gender	-	0.79	0.411	-				
Average age	-	33.054	10.075	0.123*	-			
Emotional dissonance	4	2.882	0.989	0.015	-0.148**	-		
Display of positive emotions	3	3.498	1.009	-0.027	0.032	0.439**	-	
Intention to quit	6	2.800	.920	-0.003	-0.341**	0.434**	0.161**	-

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

constructs. The values of ASV and MSV both were smaller than the AVE for all the constructs, thus, proving the discriminant validity of the constructs under study (Alumran et al. 2014; Hair et al. 2010). Besides, we assessed a three-factor model for our study. The results for the CFA measuring the three-factor model were $\chi^2/df = 3.620$ showing a lesser value than the tolerable level of 5.0 (Harrison and Rainer 1996), Tucker Lewis index (TLI) = 0.917 larger than standard value of 0.90 (Hu and Bentler 1998), comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.936 higher than the allowable value of 0.90 (Hu and Bentler 1998), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.08 comparable to the maximum value of 0.08 (Garver and Mentzer 1999). Overall, these values recommended a good fit to the data.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 2, shows the descriptive statistics of the collected data. It includes means, standard deviations and bivariate correlations. The correlations amongst the emotional dissonance, display of positive emotions and intention to quit have confirmed the established hypotheses. We controlled for gender and age of the employees for checking their latent spurious effects (Zapf and Holz 2006).

Regression Analysis

For testing the stated hypotheses, the regression analysis was applied to check the effects of emotional

dissonance and display of positive emotions on employees' intention to quit. Table 3 highlights the regression analysis results. Model 1 was considered as a base model showing the effect of control variables. It was found to be statistically significant as per F statistics. Average age had shown significant effect on intention to quit ($\beta = -0.346$, $p \leq 0.001$). Other control variables included in the study did not explain any significant impact on intention to quit. Model 2 demonstrated the direct effect of emotional dissonance on intention to quit and were found statistically significant at $p \leq 0.001$ level (taking into consideration F statistics). Coefficient of emotional dissonance was found significant and positive for intention to quit ($\beta = 0.391$, $p \leq 0.001$). So, the results proved the hypothesis 1. Similar to our study results, Goldberg and Grandey (2007) have explored that the extended emotional dissonance drains service employees' inside resources, resulting into negative outcomes for the organization. Likewise, Abraham (1999) explored that the emotional dissonance leads to job dissatisfaction which further results into high intention to quit among employees. Model 3 demonstrated the direct effects of display of positive emotions on intention to quit and were found statistically significant at $p \leq 0.001$ level (taking into consideration F statistics). Coefficient of display of positive emotions was found significant and positive for intention to quit ($\beta = 0.174$, $p \leq 0.001$). Hence,

Table 3: Results of Regression Analyses Showing Effects of Emotional Dissonance and Display of Positive Emotions on Intention to Quit

Variable	Model 1	Intention to quit Model 2	Intention to quit Model 3
Gender	0.040	0.027	0.045
Average age	-0.346***	-0.286***	-0.352***
Emotional dissonance	-	0.391***	-
Display of positive emotions	-	-	0.174***
R2	0.118	0.267	0.148
Adjusted R2	0.113	0.261	0.140
F statistic	22.878***	41.546***	19.765***
N	346	346	346
Note: *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001			

the results confirmed the hypothesis 2. On the same line, Chau et al. (2009) have established that emotional labor has an effect on emotional exhaustion, intention to quit, and the actual turnover. In a study of call center employees, Goodwin et al. (2011) have also found that surface acting is directly associated with the emotional exhaustion and employees' turnover intentions. They have further explored that surface acting is directly and positively related to employee turnover and whereas no significant relationship is found between deep acting and employee turnover. In their opinion, carrying on positive emotional display rather than acting realistically is a stressful experience for employees and it further leads to quitting actions and behaviors.

Conclusions

Considering the current scenario of uncertainty and the heightened competition in the service sector, the employee turnover is one of the key challenges faced by HR managers. Considering the lack of empirical studies highlighting the various consequences of display of positive emotions and emotional dissonance, the present study has explored the effects of emotional dissonance and display of positive emotions on employees' intention to quit within the Indian framework. The current study adds to the theory as well as to the management practice. Theoretically, the findings of our study confirm the negative impact of emotional dissonance and display

of positive emotions on the workforce and their organizations. In light of these findings, the HR managers are advised to develop the HR policies so as to manage the emotional dissonance and emotional display among employees. This will definitely be helpful in reducing the turnover intentions among the employees which is of prime concern in today's scenario. In all, by focusing on the consequences of emotional dissonance and display of positive emotions, the study has effectively drawn the attention of the HR managers back on the most significant resource of the organizations i.e. the employees.

The study also has certain limitations and therefore, recommends certain guidelines for the future research. The first limitation of the study is that it is based on a single technique, i.e. survey questionnaire method has been used for gathering data from the employees working in different organizations. There are chances that the results might be affected by common method variance. The future researches can be conducted by gathering data at distinct time period. The other limitation of the study is that it is based on service companies operating within India. In future, the comparative study can be conducted to see the differences across the cultures. The other limitation is that we have considered only two control variables in our study i.e. age and gender. Future researches can be carried out by considering some other control variables like total work experience, education, etc.

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Appendix 1: Measurement variables with EFA and CFA loadings, validity and reliability values

Factors and measurement items	Factor loadings EFA	Factor loadings CFA	Cronbach alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted	Maximum shared variance	Average shared variance
Emotional dissonance			0.848	0.854	0.597	0.213	0.200
How often in your job do you have to display emotions that do not agree with your true feelings?	0.898	0.852					
How often in your job do you have to display emotions that do not agree with your actual feelings towards the clients?	0.845	0.843					
How often in your job do you have to suppress emotions in order to appear “neutral” on the outside?	0.540	0.634					
How often in your job do you have to display pleasant emotions (i.e. friendliness) or unpleasant emotions (i.e. strictness) on the outside while actually feeling indifferent inside?	0.768	0.741					
Display of positive emotions			0.833	0.837	0.633	0.186	0.105
How often in your job do you have to display, according to the situation, differing positive emotions towards clients (i.e. friendliness and enthusiasm and hope etc.)?	0.770	0.725					
How often in your job do you have to put clients in a positive mood (i.e. pleasing somebody)?	0.863	0.869					
How often do you yourself have to come across as being in a positive mood when dealing with clients (i.e. cheerful)?	0.885	0.796					
Intention to quit			0.895	0.892	0.585	0.213	0.119
I often think about resigning.	0.807	0.801					
It would not take much to make me resign from this organization.	0.737	0.701					
I will probably be looking for another job soon.	0.849	0.883					
I intend to leave the organization in the near future.	0.800	0.827					
I do not enjoy this job and have been searching for other positions.	0.822	0.783					
People often get fired from this organization without good reason.	0.701	0.546					
I may not have a good future if I stay with this organization.	0.790	*					

Notes: 1. The three latent variables explained 69.392% of the variance because of exploratory factor analysis. 2. All the factor loadings related to confirmatory factor analysis were significant at 0.001 level. Model fit statistics: $\chi^2/df=3.620$; CFI = 0.936 ; TLI = 0.917 ; GFI= 0.915; RMSEA = 0.08. 3. Item * got deleted during CFA