

# A Meta Analytic Review of Emotional Dissonance - It's Cause and Impact

Thanesa Iyer, Jaya Yadav

**Abstract:** Today, every organization has values, goals and objectives clearly communicated to employees, however the emotion of the organization is always downplayed and thereby is never accounted anywhere. In an organization, different employees have different emotions, which seldom align to organizations desired emotions. This difference in emotions is what we call emotional dissonance. This paper aims to understand emotional dissonance, its cause and impact on overall productivity of an employee as well as the role of emotional dissonance in improving the overall productivity of organization through employees. The study was carried out by reviewing the literature of past 19yrs from 1999 to 2017. Through the review of literature of past 19yrs the conclusion regarding cause, impact and ways to reduce emotional dissonance were drawn. It was evident through review that all the key organization performance indicators of employee which effect the organization efficiency were influenced by emotional dissonance and display norms of an organization, were found to be the major cause of emotional dissonance. It was also found that the emotional dissonance was not only confined to service sector job as per our preconceived notion, instead influenced the individuals irrespective of their location/sector they are working in. Hence it can be stated that emotions of employee are poorly managed and emotion demand of jobs are not appreciated. Thus, there is a strong need to work on ways to reduce emotional dissonance and to keep a check on it as there is very limited research on experience of emotions at work.

**Key words:** Emotion, Emotional Dissonance, Employee Productivity, Organization Efficiency, Performance Indicators, Display Norms.

**JEL Classification:** M540

## I. INTRODUCTION

Emotion drives the activity of the human beings – no matter where they are. While organization can measure skills, knowledge and other abilities, emotion being subjective in nature is difficult to measure. Every organization has values, goals and objectives clearly communicated to employees, however the emotion of the organization is always downplayed and thereby is never accounted anywhere. In an organization – different employees have different emotions and can never be aligned to organizations desired emotions- until it is communicated by some other means. This difference in emotions is what we call emotional dissonance i.e., emotional dissonance is the separation of felt emotion from expressed emotion to meet external expectation (Johnson & Spector, 2007).

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Through this paper, we will try to understand the emotional dissonance, its cause and impact on overall productivity of an employee. We will also try to find out how emotional dissonance can play a major role in improving the overall organization productivity through employees.

## II. EMOTIONAL DISSONANCE DEFINITION & MEANING

Emotional dissonance occurs whenever expressed emotions are in conformity with organizational norms, but are clashing with true feelings (Rafaeli and Sutton, 198 & Paige S. Rutner, Bill C. Hardgrave & D. Harrison McKnight, 2008). Kahn et al, 1964 & Rebecca Abraham, 1999 defined emotional dissonance as a form of person-role conflict, in which a person's response conflicts with role expectations of the desired level of emotion. Thus, emotional dissonance is a state where substitute feelings are preventing the authentic feelings to make human life flourish (Santhosh V. A & K. V Krishnankutty, 2011). Marian Iszat White & Sara Lodge, 2011 found that emotional dissonance was not just confined to service sector jobs. She then by drawing concept of ulterior transaction, script and game theory described emotional dissonance within leadership role. As per script theory, emotional dissonance occur when something in the here and now resembles a significant situation from childhood, and the individuals adult strategies to achieve the complex ongoing goals become subsumed by their unconscious strategies to achieve the survival goals of childhood hence leading to decision getting affected by script behavior and bad feeling that result from game and stressful element of emotional dissonance ( MarianIszat White & Sara Lodge, 2011).

## III. SIGNIFICANCE/ NEED TO STUDY EMOTIONAL DISSONANCE

Emotional dissonance is found to be the major cause behind organization as well as employee ineffectiveness. It effect not only all the key organization performance indicators of employee but also employee personal well-being. It has widened its spread from service oriented job to all most all the jobs as display rule vary not just across customer, peer, supervisor etc, but also across individual difference in social culture, varied work status and industry (Joanna M. Kraft, 2013). Also display norms no longer seemed to be clearly defined instead are both at overt as well covert level due to cross-functional projects, shift to flat organization structure and virtual team-working. Thus, it's



extremely important to first focus on studying the feeling state rather than stress, burnout and job satisfaction as they are the resultant of emotions felt by employees (Subhash C. Kundu&NidhiGaba, 2017). Also, Rob B. Briner, 1999 stressed on studying emotions as transaction rather than cause and effect as transactional analysis training was found to reduce emotional dissonance.

As the use of emotional labor strategies were found to be the stepping stone for emotional dissonance. MinnJoo Kim & Suk Young Han, 2009 found that in order to exhibit emotional labor, surface acting is more frequently used than deep acting resulting in employee going home emotionally drained which could be supported by the findings of Abramowitz, J.S., & Street, G.P., 2001 & Street, G.P., 2001 who found that suppressing thought increases the frequency of that thought. But on the contrary there were studies that supported the use of denial of responsibility to reduce dissonance i.e., suppressing of felt emotions. Thus, Bonanno, G.A., Papa, A. , Lalande, K, Westphal, &M,Coifman, K. 2004, found that there is significance of both suppression as well as expression of emotion for well being of an individual hence it's highly significant to know when to suppressed emotions and when to express it which clearly highlights the significance of studying emotions and emotional dissonance. There is also a strong need to find ways to reduce emotional dissonance as the remedy proposed so far are not individual specific and all human beings unlike other resources are unique in nature and behaves differently.

#### IV. EMOTIONAL DISSONANCE CAUSE

Emotional dissonance is a feeling of unease that occurs when someone evaluates an emotional experience as a threat to his or her identity thus whenever individual feel their identity is jeopardized there is unease resulting in emotional dissonance (JeroenJansz&M. Timmers, 2002). The feeling of identity being jeopardized is also a result of presence of mixed feelings or conflicting emotions which in turn lead to emotional dissonance. Few studies have supported the fact that individuals who are less acceptable to this duality feeling are more prone to dissonance leading to generation of more negative attitude than those who are more acceptable to this duality feeling.

Emotional dissonance is a resultant of emotional labor. Out of the two emotional labor state namely congruent emotional labor state and discordant emotional labor state, the later one has harmful effect on health and performance of employee and results in emotional dissonance. Also discordant emotional labor state yield burnout while the congruent one has no effect (Jessica R. Mesmer-Magnus, Leslie A. De Church & Amy Wax, 2011)

There are various studies that support the fact that emotionally demanding situation also result in emotional dissonance (Arnold B. Bakker & Ellen Heuven, 2006). The work factors like role incongruence, lack of support, role conflict, organization culture and lack of appreciation give rise to negative emotion as well to the negative effect of emotional work (Nadia Botma, 2009) Also emotional dissonance along with these factor when coupled with emotionally demanding situation worsen emotional dissonance.

Drawing attention to emotional dissonance in leadership role, script theory explains that emotional dissonance occur when something in the here and now resembles a significant situation from childhood, and the leader's Adult strategies to achieve the complex ongoing goals of leadership become subsumed by their unconscious strategies to achieve the survival goals of childhood hence leading to leader's decision getting affected by script behavior and bad feeling that result from game and stressful element of emotional dissonance (Marian Iszat White & Sara Lodge, 2011). Hence its evident that emotional dissonance is no longer confined to service oriented roles.

Therefore, today emotional dissonance has become a part and parcel of everyone's life as every job require some amount of emotional labor to be exhibited or in other words everyone is forced to abide by some organization desired display rule but it's not just the display rule that is the real cause of emotional dissonance but instead it's the range of different types of display rules that employees are to follow as the display rule vary not just across customer, peer, supervisor etc, but also across individual difference in social culture, varied work status and industry (Joanna M. Kraft, 2013). Thus it can be stated that the variation in display rule across customer, peer, supervisor, individual differences in social culture, varied work status, industry etc are more responsible for emotional dissonance than the presumed cause i.e., display rule.

Though it's believed by employer's that employees who do not enjoy job are the only main victims to emotional dissonance but a recent study on school teachers proved this notion wrong. It was found that due to work exhaustion caused by job there was decrease in enjoyment level and thus caused increase in frequency of feeling of anger felt by teachers thereby resulting in teachers being forced to perform emotional labor which in turn lead to emotional dissonance (Melanie M. Keller, Mei-Lin Chang, Eva S Becker, Thomas Goetz & Anne C Frenzel, 2014). Hence work exhaustion is not just a resultant of emotional dissonance but it is vice-versa too.

Everyone today is struggling to have a work life balance and this struggle worsen if there are few unresolved personal issues. It's found that employee with unresolved personal issue were more prone to experience emotional dissonance when the later was source of motivation for work (Penelope Cecil &Nel Glass, 2014) and thus putting up professional face became crucial which in turn followed a vicious cycle as by putting up of professional face implied performing emotional labor which caused emotional dissonance and resulted in feeling of discomfort and this gave rise to negative emotions which made handling unresolved personal issue tougher and thus the cycle continued resulting in making not just professional life and personal life a mess but also deeply effecting employee well-being.

Emotional Labor strategies namely surface acting, deep acting, emotional regulation have always been encouraged by employer's and also followed by employees to perform emotional labor but in a study by NasrinArshadi&Saleh

Piryaei, 2016 it was found that these emotional labor strategies give rise to emotional dissonance which in turn reduce occupational well being. Also workload, customer verbal aggression was found to cause emotional dissonance which in turn resulted in affective discomfort although it was found that job autonomy buffered the negative effect of emotional dissonance (Monica Molino, Federica Emanuel, Margherita Zito C.G. Cortese, Studi di Torino & C.G. Cortese, 2016). As each individual are different from one another so is the impact of emotional dissonance. In one of her study, Rebecca Abraham, 1999 found job control and self efficacy jointly effect emotional dissonance. Also high self efficacy individual were satisfied with low job control and low self efficacy individual favor job autonomy, and thus leading to varying dissonance from individual to individual (Rebecca Abraham, 1999)

## V. FACTORS/VARIABLES THAT EFFECT EMOTIONAL DISSONANCE

Dieter Zapf, 2002 found that emotional dissonance decrease with job control and organization support while frequency of emotional expression and sensitivity to others was found to increase as well as decrease emotional dissonance and organization problem instead seemed to worsen emotional dissonance. Even frequent change programmes was also found result in signs of depression in employee as emotion act as barrier to change resulting in emotional exhaustion (Carin B. Eriksson, 2003) hence organization should prepare employee mentally for change and should adopt massive level change programme only when required to prevent worsening the effect of emotional dissonance.

Various researcher support the fact that emotion regulation strategy may seem to make perception of delivery easy as per supervisor but it was found that it makes task tougher on individual basis. Also surface acting was found to be harmful for personal well being of employee as it makes them devalue themselves and by using surface acting they find difficulty managing display rule which in turn yield negative emotions and lower their self perception of delivery. Hence though surface acting make emotional labor easy on episode-to-episode basis but employee who use surface acting find each episode tougher than those who do not use surface acting (Daniel J. Beal, John P. Trougakos, Howard M. Weiss & Stephen G. Green, 2006). Moving further few studies support use of deep acting as they found use of deep acting more frequently by employee over surface acting during service encounters, has a positive correlation with employee emotional well being in comparison to surface acting (Neerpal Rathi, 2013). But even deep acting was found to have negative impact. Therefore, there is the need to use genuine emotions for emotional labor as use of surface acting and deep acting yield negative effect on well being of employee (Minn Joo Kim & Suk Young Han, 2009) by giving rise to emotional dissonance. Thus, use of genuine emotion is must for well being of employee. But in order to display genuine emotions it was found that self efficacy of employee plays a crucial role as self-efficacy of employee moderate the negative effect of surface acting and help display authentic emotion (S. Douglas Pugh, Markus

Groth & Thorsten Hennig-Thurau, 2010 & Ugur Yozgat, Sezer C. Caliskan & F. Oben Uru, 2012).

Few studies have also found relation among empowerment, emotional dissonance, customer satisfaction and service quality. Empowerment was found to have a role in managing employee emotions at workplace (Yuhanis AB. Aziz, 2008) and thus has an impact on emotional dissonance. Studies also support the finding that works characteristic determine emotional dissonance (Francis Cheung & Catherine Tang, 2010).

Organization culture too plays a crucial role in determining the emotional dissonance across organization as display rule vary across culture and so does the display rule, which in turn effect emotional dissonance experienced by employee. In one of the study it was found that USA organization culture is stricter in terms of display rule than Japan. Hence the display norms should be liberal if the culture requirement are bit forgiving and accepting of negative emotions. Management must be aware of cultural differences in emotions and emotion norms, to improve the experience of employees of globalized service organizations (Alicia Grandey, Anat Rafaeli, Shy Ravid, Jochen Wirtz & Dirk D. Steiner, 2010).

Emotional dissonance has wide range and the range depend upon life experience and work experience of each individual (Janet Tupou, 2011). The support to the previous statement is found in a study where nurses with unresolved personal issue were more found to experience greater emotional dissonance when the later was source of motivation for work (Penelope Cecil & Nel Glass, 2014). Also the positive and negative effect of emotional work depend on whether a self selection into demanding emotional work is done (Rajesh Chandwani & Dheeraj Sharma, 2015). Age of an employee also seemed to have a effect on emotion dissonance. Older age where more prone to emotional dissonance and emotional dissonance in them was negatively associated with job satisfaction, on the other hand no relation between emotional dissonance and job satisfaction in younger people was found (Susanne Scheibe, Christian Stamov-Roßnagel, & Hannes Zacher, 2015), thus showing emotional dissonance varies across age group.

Incidental mood state also seemed to have an impact on emotional dissonance. It was seen that people with negative incidental mood state were not able to reduce dissonance as dissonance reduction was caused by attitude change. And people with negative incidental mood state had less resources to attitude change (Marie-Amélie Martinie, Yves Almecija, Christine Ros & Sandrine Gil, 2017)

## VI. EMOTIONAL DISSONANCE IMPACT

Today, there is no escape from the clutches of emotional dissonance as its evident from the fact that if employee abide by organization display norms it result in feeling of duplicity due to emotional dissonance and if employee resist organization display norms to avoid emotional dissonance they are under organization pressure Hence emotional



dissonance is found to effect employee organization commitment in either ways (Rebecca Abraham,1999)

Emotional dissonance was found to be extremely harmful for personal well being of employee (J Andrew Morris & Daniel C Feldman, 2013) specially if developed as result of surface acting (MinnJoo Kim & Suk Young Han, 2009 & UgurYozgat, Sezer C. Caliskan& F. ObenUru, 2012 & UgurYozgat, Sezer C. Caliskan& F. ObenUru, 2012 & Jamie L. Taxer & Anne CFrenzel, 2017) as it make them devalue themselves, they find difficulty in managing display rule yielding negative emotion and develops a low self perception of delivery in employee. (Daniel J. Beal, John P. Trougakos, Howard M. Weiss & Stephen G. Green, 2006)

Emotional dissonance was also found to cause burnout (Marie Andela& Didier Truchot,2016) due to discordant emotional labor state (Jessica R. Mesmer-Magnus, Leslie A. DeChurch& Amy Wax, 2011) resulting in impaired performance as dissonance is a result of emotionally demanding situation (Arnold B. Bakker & Ellen Heuven, 2006 & Cheung, Francis Yue-Lok, Tang & Catherine So-Kum, 2007). Emotional dissonance has impact on job outcomes namely customer oriented behavior and job satisfaction as (Craig C. Julian, 2008) more is the feeling of duplicity lesser is the job satisfaction yielding negative customer oriented behavior.

Emotional dissonance was also found to be negatively associated with work resources i.e., job reward and satisfactory work relation and positively associated with display rule, burnout (Cheung, Francis Yue-Lok, Tang & Catherine So-Kum, 2007), job satisfaction. The negative association with job reward and satisfactory work relation is due to the fact that the former act as a source of motivation for emotional labor while the later acts as support in performing emotional labor as a result both help reduce emotional dissonance caused by emotional labor.

Also emotional dissonance is negatively associated with empowerment hence if employee feel empowered emotional dissonance impact is lessened which in turn affect customer satisfaction and service quality positively. Empowerment was found to have a role in managing employee emotions at workplace (Yuhanis AB. Aziz, 2008) thus emotional dissonance has a impact on customer satisfaction and service quality via empowerment.

Emotional dissonance determine work strain where the latter effect job satisfaction. i.e., work strain effect job satisfaction (Francis Cheung & Catherine Tang, 2010). Hence, emotional dissonance result in work exhaustion along with role ambiguity causing reduced job satisfaction, increase turnover intention which is partially responsible for organization deviance (Subhash C. Kundu&NidhiGaba, 2017) and absenteeism. Also emotional dissonance is found to be a better predictor of work exhaustion (Paige S. Rutner, Bill C. Hardgrave & D. Harrison McKnight, 2008). There are studies that support the fact that emotional dissonance worsen emotional tolerance at high organization demand.(Janet Tupou,2011), which is evident as emotional dissonance leads to increased work strain, work exhaustion, burnout as well as increased turnover intention which somewhere reduces tolerance level at subconscious level thus leading to decrease in organization commitment.

Usually the emotional regulation strategies of surface acting and deep acting are used for positive display of emotion but in one of the study the adaptation of same for negative emotions was checked for police officers. Result suggested that use of deep acting for negative display of emotion ensure greater job involvement than using deep acting for positive display of emotions but in either case surface acting resulted in emotional exhaustion (Larissa K. Barber , Matthew J. Grawitch& Shawn T. Trares, 2009). Thus where emotional regulation strategies should be discouraged in case of positive display of emotion it should be motivated for negative display of emotions.

Though most of the study support the fact that dissonance acting is harmful but few studies also found that deliberate dissonance acting not only result in strain but help in work engagement if goal is accomplished via dissonance acting (Benjamin R. van Gelderen, Arnold B. Bakker, EllyKonijn& Carmen Binnewies, 2012) especially in job profile of police-officers. Also it was found the burnout and job engagement are more affected by service climate than emotional dissonance.(Hugo Carrasco Vicente Martínez-Tur, Carolina Moliner, Jose MaríaPeiró& Carmen Ramis, 2014)

### VII. WAYS TO REDUCE EMOTIONAL DISSONANCE

After looking at the cause as well as impact of emotional dissonance its clearly evident that having a knowledge about ways to reduce emotional dissonance is of utmost importance. Various ways to ease or reduce negative effect of emotional work include identity i.e., helping employee maintain their identity than letting job defining who they are, power i.e., providing job control to employees to some extent, use of hidden transcripts, role distancing behavior i.e., teaching employee to detach themselves from their job role to feel at ease, strategic interaction and organization identification ( Sarah J. Tracy, 2005).

Denial of responsibility was also found to help reduce emotional dissonance (Gosling, Patrick, Denizeau, Maxime&Oberlé, Dominique, 2006). Denial of responsibility is one of the defense mechanism methods. Though it's always assumed that being aware of your emotional state is essential for stable life but sometimes ignorance can be the bliss so is the case with denial of responsibility. So by use of blaming, minimizing i.e., trying to make the impact of an action less harmful, justifying i.e., make the choice appear acceptable due to perception of what is right in a situation, and regression i.e., acting by unbecoming of their age one can reduce emotional dissonance Use of appraisal training can also help change felt emotion to organization desired emotion by reappraising work situation in positive light (Erin Michele Richard, 2006). Training into deep acting (Steven Kiely MAPS, 2008), training to increase tolerance (Janet Tupou, 2011), and employer preparing employee for interaction reduce emotional dissonance (Letizia Dal Santo,

2012) as well as use of empathy as a different strategy of emotional labor be used to reduce emotional dissonance (Letizia Dal Santo, 2012).

Other methods include customer oriented role internalization (Craig C. Julian, 2008 & J Andrew Morris & Daniel C Feldman, 2013), empowerment which reduce dissonance by helping organization managing employee emotions at workplace (Yuhanis AB. Aziz, 2008), right person job fit, encouraging playing sports/gyming, providing timeout room/room to vent out emotion, rewarding emotional regulation (Steven Kiely MAPS, 2008), acknowledging emotional

contribution to organization performance(B. Renuka Devi, 2016), developing emotional intelligence (Nadia Botma, 2009), social support (Steven Kiely MAPS, 2008 & Nadia Botma, 2009), help from assistant (Alma M. Rodriguez-Sanchez, Jari J. Hakanen, RikuPerhoniemi &

2012),emotional support (LetiziaDalSanto,2012),developing professionalisma identificationwithorganizationandjobautonomy(MonicaMolino, Federica MargheritaZitoC.G. Cortese, Studi di Emanuel, Torino&C.G. Cortese, 2016).

Complex structure/nature of job as complex work as it lead to less emotional exhaustion and depersonalization (Bettina Kubicek&Christian Korunka, 2015 )

Emotional dissonance reduction strategy with long term effect included integration of emotional regulation and emotional intelligence which will help individual by allowing them to shape emotion from earliest point and not only will regulate emotion but also leave room for emotion to emerge (Ainize Pena Sarrionandia, Moira Mikolajczak& James J Gross, 2015), use of counseling intervention. The counseling intervention helped in increasing socialization, greater definition of identity, find better functional emotional regulation strategy, emotional awareness, development of adaptive behavior response, better performance (Francesca Menozzi, NicoGizzi, MariateresaTucciNazarenaPatrizi& Mauro Mosca, 2016).

## VIII. CONCLUSION

It's evident from the study that emotional dissonance though seems a pea sized problem can be a major cause behind organization as well as employee ineffectiveness. It's evident that not only all the key organization performance indicators of employee which effect the organization efficiency are influenced by emotional dissonance but also employee personal and professional relationship and his well being are equally being effected. Also emotional dissonance was found to no longer be only confined to service sector, but in turn influenced the individuals irrespective of their location/sector they are working in.

Thus, there is a strong need to work on ways to reduce emotional dissonance and to keep a check on it as employee well being is necessary to gain strategic advantage (UgurYozgat, Sezer C. Caliskan& F. ObenUru, 2012)

Hence it can be stated that emotions of employees are poorly managed and emotion demand of customer service job are not appreciated (Igbojekwe P, 2017) and as the

major cause of emotional dissonance is display norms of an organization, therefore organizations should abandon emotional display rule/norms and focus instead on supporting and valuing employee, engraving positive work climate and develop a positive workforce (Alicia A. Grandey, Deborah Rupp & William N. Brice, 2015)

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