

Emotional Dissonance and Job Satisfaction: The Moderating Role of Organisational Commitment and Task Significance

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Abstract

Aim: Emotional dissonance resulting from nurse/patient interactions is usually considered to lead to negative outcomes, such as job dissatisfaction (Yang & Chang, 2008). Although there does exist some general support and acceptance of the positive link between emotional dissonance and job dissatisfaction, there are some inconsistencies in these findings (Pugh, Groth, & Hennig-Thurau, 2010). The aim of our study is to verify whether the relationship between emotional dissonance and job satisfaction can be influenced by organizational commitment and task significance. Method: A questionnaire was distributed to 222 nurses, working in two multidisciplinary hospitals in the Northwest region of Italy. Results and conclusion: Results provide support for the moderating role of organizational affective commitment and task significance. Organizational affective commitment and task significance can help nurses in moderating the detrimental effects of emotional dissonance on job satisfaction.

Keywords: emotional dissonance, job satisfaction, moderation effects, task significance, organizational affective commitment.

1. Introduction

Emotions are an integral part of adaptation to everyday work and employees should be able to recognize and manage their own emotional states, as well as those of others (Hunter & Smith, 2007). Recent theoretical and empirical work has been centred on how emotions are expressed in the workplace as well as on how they are experienced. These works have emphases on the concept of Emotional Labour (Ramachandran, Jordan, Throth & Lawrence, 2011). The concept of emotional labor originated with Hochschild (1983) who defines emotional labor as “the management of feelings to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display. Emotional labor can be defined as “the process of regulating both feelings and expressions for organizational goals” (Grandley, 2003). Emotional labor requires that one expresses or suppresses feelings that produce an appropriate state of mind, according to organizational feeling rules (Ashforth & Humphrey 1993). While the expression of these feeling rules is in most cases a spontaneous process of acceptance and effortless cooperation (Zapf & Holz, 2006), some situations call for the stimulation or the suppression of emotions that may enter in conflict with genuinely experienced emotions. This gap between experienced and required emotions has been referred to as emotional dissonance, which may be considered the central core of emotion labor (Zapf, Seifert, Schmutte, Mertini, & Holz, 2001).

Hochschild's original conceptualization, focused on the detrimental effects of emotional dissonance, has dominated the literature on emotional labor. Emotional dissonance was found to positive correlate to job dissatisfaction and increasing turn over intention (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002). Although there is a wide level of general support and acceptance for the positive link between emotional dissonance and work strain, there remain some inconsistencies in these findings (Pugh, Groth, & Hennig-Thurau, 2010). We need to consider moderators of these relationships. We propose that individual differences in affective organizational commitment and task significance is a fruitful direction. The aim of our study is to verify whether the relationship between emotional dissonance and job satisfaction can be influenced by organizational commitment and task significance

1.1 Emotional dissonance and job satisfaction

Job satisfaction is one of the most examined outcomes in the emotional labor literature and has been strictly linked to emotional dissonance (Abraham, 1998, Brotheridge & Lee, 1988, Grandey, 2003, Bono & Vey, 2005, Gursoy, Boylu, & Avci, 2011). Traditionally, job satisfaction has focused on all feelings that an individual has about his/her work (Lu, While, & Barriball, 2005) and has been defined as an evaluative judgment (Weiss, 2002).

The majority of researches that has examined the relationship between emotional dissonance and job satisfaction has identified job satisfaction as an outcome rather than an antecedent of emotional labour (Grandey, 2000). Nevertheless, the specific link between job satisfaction and emotional dissonance is still ambiguous. Emotional dissonance was included in the large arena of burn out (Abraham, 1998, Bakker, Heuven, Schaufeli & Huisman 2006) and the impact of such discrepancy was discovered to negatively correlate to employees' satisfaction (Heuven & Bakker, 2003, Zapf, 2002). A recent review shows that previous theoretical work on emotional dissonance suggested a negative relationship between emotional dissonance and job satisfaction (Hochschild, 1983; Yang & Chang, 2008; Talebpour, Mikaeli & Mousa Khedmatgozar, 2013). Emotional dissonance may cause faked emotional responses, cause internal tension, and thereby creating job dissatisfaction (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002). However, Wharton's (1993) examination of the emotional dissonance offered results that directly contradict earlier studies. Sampling employees from multiple job categories in a large bank and a teaching hospital, Wharton discovered that emotional dissonance is positively related to job satisfaction, a finding inconsistent with Hochschild (1983). Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) suggested that emotional dissonance actually might make interactions more predictable and help workers avoid embarrassing interpersonal problems. This should, in turn, help reducing stress and enhancing satisfaction.

To answer these contradictory results, we propose a framework that depicts how the detrimental effects of emotional dissonance on job satisfaction can be attuned.

1.2 Organizational affective commitment as moderator of the relationship between emotional dissonance and job satisfaction

Affective commitment is defined as an "emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization" (Meyer & Allen, 1991, p. 67). Affective commitment focuses on members' positive feelings about their involvement in the organization as well as their expressed sentiment of loyalty and desire to help the organization be successful. Member's relationship to his or her organization is function of identification and attachment (Meyer & Allen, 1997; Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001). An employee, who is affectively committed, strongly identifies with the goals of the organization and desires to remain a part of the organization (Pohl, 2002). Varied research indicates that, employees who are fully identified with a higher organizational purpose have little trouble behaving in ways they would normally find unnatural or even abhorrent (Schaubroeck & Jones, 2000). Specifically, individuals who strongly identify with their organizations may more fully subscribe to the belief that they must often behave in an emotionally "inauthentic" fashion to serve the purposes of their roles. The organizational affective commitment may attenuate the negative consequences of emotional dissonance by providing justification of identification and appurtenance (Herrbach, 2006). In line with these results, we hypothesize that the negative effects of emotional dissonance on the employee's satisfaction are moderated by affective organisational commitment.

Hypothesis1: Organizational affective commitment moderates the relationship between emotional dissonance and job satisfaction.

1.3 Task significance as moderator of the relationship between emotional dissonance and job satisfaction

Task significance reflects the degree to which a job influences the lives or work of others, whether inside or outside the organization (Hackman & Oldham, 1980). It is well known that people with jobs that have a significant effect on the well being of others experience greater meaningfulness in the work (Hackman & Oldham, 1980, Morgeson & Humphrey, 2006). Task significance is thought to enhance intrinsic motivation (Hackman & Oldham, 1980; Grant & Sonnentag, 2010). If task significance is present in a job, employees will experience 'a positive, self generated affective kick when they perform well and this internal reinforcement serves as an incentive for continued good performance' (Hackman & Oldham, 1980, p 60). When intrinsically motivated, employees feel naturally drawn, or pulled, toward completing their work. The decision to expend effort is based on personal enjoyment and is thus fully volitional, self-determined and autonomous. When intrinsically motivated, employees are present- focused and they are concerned with the experience

of performing the work itself (Gagné & Deci, 2005). Individuals with high task significance are more likely to justify the effort of performing emotional dissonance because they are internally motivated to do it. Furthermore, task significance provides workers with opportunities to interact with and impact other employees on the job. Job allowing social interaction and impact on others seem to be more satisfying to workers than jobs allowing less social interaction (Warthon, 1999). We propose that task significance compensates the detrimental effects of emotional dissonance focusing attention on positive outcomes for others.

In line with these arguments, we hypothesize that task significance could moderate the relationship between emotional dissonance and employees' satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2. Task significance moderates the relationship between emotional dissonance and job satisfaction.

2. Method

2.1 Participants and Design

A paper questionnaire has been distributed to nurses who work in two hospitals in a Northern region of Italy. These two hospitals were selected due to their comparability in capacity, in organizational practices and additionally their similarity in location and surroundings. Of the 300 copies distributed, 222 were answered, equating to an overall response rate of 74%. Questionnaires were distributed to nurses through the nurse supervisor of each unit. Participants voluntarily completed the questionnaire during working hours. The survey was anonymous, but participants were asked to provide information on their gender, age, level of professional rank and service. The sample was 78.40% women and 21.60% men. The age mean is 38.44 years and that of professional tenure is 16.2 years.

2.2 Measures

Emotional dissonance: the subscale of Emotional Dissonance (ED) of the Frankfurt Emotional Work Scale was used (Zapf & Holz, 2006). The ED subscale was translated into Italian and then back-translated by bilingual researchers (Brislin, 1980). To ensure the accuracy of the translation a pre-test has been done to nursing students at the University of Verona. The original version contained five items each answered on a five-point Likert type scale (e.g.: How do you often have in your job to suppress an emotion to appear more neutral outside?).

Task significance: we use the Italian version of WDQ (Work Design Questionnaire), developed and validated by Morgeson and Humphrey (2006). The subscale used was translated and adapted to best fit the nursing sample (e.g.: My job is important and significant on its own).

Organizational affective commitment: we use the Italian version of the subscale of Organizational Commitment Scale (Allen & Meyer, 1990). This version has 10 items each answered on a five-point Likert type scale (e.g.: I feel emotionally attached to my colleagues).

Job satisfaction: the adapted Italian version of the Index of Work Satisfaction (Stamps, 1998, Cortese, 2007) has been used. It is a self-report scale with 22 items that investigate different elements of nurses' job satisfaction, such as content and relationships with colleagues and supervisors. Each item is answered on a five-point scale (e.g.: I'm satisfied for the sense of fulfillment generated in my job).

2.3 Ethical considerations

The study was approved by the ethical committee of the University of Brussels, in accordance with the Code of Ethics of the World Medical Association (Declaration of Helsinki). The participants were informed that their anonymity was assured. Informed consent to participate was assumed when the nurses returned a completed questionnaire.

3. Results

3.1 Summary of hypotheses testing

Table 1 presents correlations and descriptive results. Emotional dissonance is negatively correlated to job satisfaction. The link is weak, nevertheless, and this result confirms previous observations of the inconsistencies between emotional dissonance and job satisfaction.

Table 1: Means, Standard Deviations and Correlations (Cronbach's alphas are shown in italics).

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Age	38,47	8,13						
2. Tenure	15,85	8,85	.91**					
3. ED	2,99	0,86	-.10	-.10	.80			
4. AC	3,43	0,80	-.03	-.01	-.05	.82		
5. TS	3,21	0,86	-.09	-.06	.07	.37**	.75	
6. JS	3,55	0,60	.02	-.02	-.16*	.53**	.40**	.90

Note: N=222 * $p < .05$ (two tailed) ** $p < .01$ (two tailed). ED : emotional dissonance; AC : Affective commitment; TS: Task significance; JS : Job satisfaction.

Table 2 shows hierarchical regression analyses with centered variables (Aiken & West, 1991). Age and tenure were entered as control variables (block 1). These variables were related to emotional labor in prior research (Simpson & Stroh, 2004). The independent variables were centered on their respective means to reduce the multi-collinearity between main effects and the interaction term and to increase the interpretability of the beta-weights for interaction terms (Cohen & Cohen, 1983). Apparently, such a linear transformation has no effect on the multiple *R* coefficients or the beta-weights for the main effects. Organizational affective commitment and work significance were introduced in block 2. Interaction terms (emotional dissonance X affective commitment and emotional dissonance X task significance) were entered in block 3. As shown in Table 2, the addition of the interaction terms results are significant for emotional dissonance X affective commitment and emotional dissonance X work significance.

Table 2: Hierarchical Regression Summary

Predictors	Job satisfaction		
	<i>R</i> ²	<i>B</i>	sig
Block 1: control variables	.00		
Age		.11	.51
Tenure		-.12	.47
Block 2: independent variables	.05		
Emotional dissonance		-.16	.01
Affective Commitment		.53	.00
Task Significance		.52	.00
Block 3: interactions	.03		
Emotional dissonance X Affective Commitment		.38	.04
Emotional dissonance X Task Significance		.38	.02

To test hypotheses 1 and 2, we plotted the interactions with the procedures outlined by Aiken and West (1991), using the values of plus and minus one standard deviation on the moderator variable. Figure 1 shows that the form of the interaction was in the expected direction. A decrease in job satisfaction was associated with high emotional dissonance and this relationship was attenuated by high affective commitment. Hypothesis 1 can be accepted. Relative to the second regression analysis, figure 2 confirms that the negative relationship between emotional dissonance and job satisfaction was lessened by high task significance. Hypothesis 2 can be supported.

Figure 1: Two-way interaction effect of emotional dissonance and affective commitment on job satisfaction



Figure 2 : Two-way interaction effect of emotional dissonance and perceived work significance on job satisfaction



4. Discussion

The goal of the present study was to enhance our understanding of how emotional dissonance is associated with job satisfaction. Our results confirm that the negative effects of emotional dissonance on job satisfaction can be lessened by a moderating factor.

Affective commitment plays a fundamental role in the nursing context. Affective commitment refers to the sense of appurtenance to the work group and nursing is a team work. Results indicate that organizational affective commitment moderates the negative effects of emotional dissonance on job satisfaction. Affective commitment provides a sense of appurtenance, belonging and identification with the goals and the values of the organization. Emotional dissonance provides an opportunity to act out one's identification and express one's fidelity to emotional organisational display (Ashfort, & Humphrey, 1993). The sense of belonging and the identification to the organization can justify the efforts to perform emotional dissonance.

Task significance reflects the degree to which a job influences the lives or work of others, whether inside or outside the organization (Hackman & Oldham, 1980). It is well-known that nurses' works have a significant effect on the well-being of others and could experience greater meaningfulness in their work. Task significance is also a moderator of detrimental effects of emotional dissonance on job satisfaction. We suggest that this effect is due to the motivational element of such a task characteristic. Task significance is connected to meaningfulness (Morgeson & Humphrey, 2006). This psychological perception may mitigate the induced hypocrisy of emotional dissonance. If a nurse can feel his/her practice is more meaningful, he/she may integrate the negative aspects of emotional dissonance, considering them an intrinsic part of this work. Task significance lessens the negative effects of emotional dissonance on job satisfaction by giving meaning to the dissonance spread (Grant & Sonnentag, 2010). As Aronson (1969, p.5) remarks of cognitive dissonance "... Dissonance arises in situations that create an inconsistency between the self-concept and the behavior...". Similarly, he proposes that the negative effects of dissonance come from attitudes that threaten one's moral sense and integrity. We adopt this perspective to explain how one can better cope with the effort of managing emotions in interaction with patients, if one can perceive a meaning in doing it. We assume that task significance mitigates the mechanical and inducted adherence of emotional dissonance by presenting a scope in doing it that is coherent to the role and personal and professional ethos. Emotions in helpful jobs are displayed to influence patient's wellbeing.

These results shows that an employee can better bear to be dissonant if he/she can justify the effort of expressing emotions in according to display rules. Emotional dissonance can be attuned when employees adjust, motivate and increase the subjective value of the goal of emotional dissonance (Fointiat, 2008). When employees believe that their acting is helpful to their organization, they fake in "good faith" (Zerbe, 2002: 191) by putting effort to display desired emotions.

These evidences have some relevant practical implications that might be underscored. Organizational affective commitment can help nurses in moderating the detrimental effects of emotional dissonance on job satisfaction. This result shows the importance of developing organizational management practices that are necessary to implement nurses' commitment and strategies that facilitate the satisfaction of nurses' needs by promoting both high-quality nurse-supervisor and nurse-organization relationships, activating significant experiences of belonging. Task significance was also found to moderate the negative effects of emotional dissonance on job satisfaction. This result calls for the need of supervisor's feedback on the meaningfulness of nurses' work. Managers may draw on these findings to tailor selection and socialization practices toward intrinsic motivations. From a socialization standpoint, managers may design work

contexts to cultivate intrinsic motivations and fulfill affiliate needs. Similarly, empowerment interventions are thought to increase intrinsic motivation, because they provide employees with expanded opportunities to contribute and have an impact (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990).

This study has several limitations, which might be addressed through further research. First, the use of self-reporting measures without the integration of objective ones could raise doubts about the validity of the obtained data (Goffin & Gellatly, 2001). Future research should consider the assessment in others points of view (supervisors, patients, etc. ...) to avoid potential problems related to common method bias. Secondly, the impossibility of comparing measures analyzed with data obtained from different organizational environments and with different types of employees also reduces the external validity of the research. To obtain greater support for the model, it might be necessary to enlarge the study with different populations of workers. Another limitation is the lack of experimental and longitudinal design. Future studies necessarily should consider such a method, and test long-term effects on the relationships examined in the present study and the outcomes. Finally, we only focused on job satisfaction as an outcome variable of positive experience in nursing. It has been frequently examined in prior emotional labor studies (Grandey, 2003, Judge, 2009) and it is relevant for the purposes of this study, but further analyses are needed to examine other key employee and organizational outcomes.

Future research should attempt to replicate our findings to better investigate and or replicate this missing information. Other individual differences that were not addressed in this paper may play a significant role in influencing the detrimental effects of emotional dissonance. Future studies have also to examine the role of coherence (Robert, 2007), because employees who experience emotional dissonance as an integral part of their role may be more likely to justify it as worthwhile. In addition, future research should better test the interplay of individual and organizational values in predicting the effects of emotional dissonance on employee outcomes. For example a study of the nature of the organizational display rules may further the understanding of the outcomes of surface acting (Diefendorff, Richard, & Yang 2008). Moreover, it seems important to test how supervisor and organization may support nurses in handling emotional workload. It was indeed observed that supervisor and organizational support play an important role in taking into account nurses' work-related needs and helping them to perform better in their own work. A high or low level of support alters the strength of the relationship between care adequacy in the nurses' own unit and job satisfaction (Galletta, Portoghese, Penna, Battistelli, & Saiani, 2011). Organizational support enhances the managing of negative emotions such as anger and supervisor's helpful guidance has positive consequences on job satisfaction in spite of stressful emotional demands.

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