The Hidden Cost of Emotional Labor: Emotional Dissonance and Job Performance in IT Firms

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Abstract- In today's rapidly transforming Information Technology (IT) industry, employees frequently face expectations to conform to emotional display norms dictated by organizational culture and client interactions, often at odds with their authentic emotional experiences. This phenomenon—termed emotional dissonance—is a central element of emotional labor and poses a growing psychological burden. The present study explores how emotional dissonance affects job performance among IT professionals in Coimbatore, a leading technology hub in South India.

Using frameworks from organizational behavior and emotional labor theory, a quantitative approach was employed. Data were gathered from 200 IT employees across organizations of varying sizes through standardized questionnaires measuring emotional dissonance, perceived stress, job satisfaction, and job performance.

Findings indicate a significant negative relationship between emotional dissonance and job performance. Employees who frequently encounter emotional dissonance tend to exhibit diminished work efficiency, elevated levels of emotional fatigue, and a noticeable decline in overall job satisfaction (Lee & Han, 2022). Regression analysis further supported emotional dissonance as a strong negative predictor of performance outcomes, controlling for demographic variables like age, gender, and work experience.

The study highlights the psychological toll of emotional labor in high-demand IT roles and urges companies to adopt employee-centric strategies, such as emotional intelligence development, safe communication practices, and empathetic leadership, to foster mental wellness and sustain performance.

Keywords: Emotional dissonance, Emotional labor, Job performance, IT employees, Organizational behavior, Psychological stress, Job satisfaction, Emotional fatigue, Coimbatore, Emotional intelligence.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

In the high-pressure and technologically driven landscape of the Information Technology (IT) sector, professionals are not only expected to deliver technically proficient outcomes but also to engage in emotionally regulated interactions with clients and colleagues. These roles often demand consistent demonstration of positive and composed behavior—even when such expressions do not reflect the employee's true emotional state. This phenomenon, known as emotional labor, was first conceptualized by sociologist Arlie Hochschild in 1983. Emotional labor comprises strategies such as surface acting—where individuals display emotions they do not genuinely feel—and deep acting, which involves consciously modifying internal emotions to match expected outward expressions (Yin et al., 2024). Although often overlooked, this type of emotional effort can have enduring effects on an individual's psychological well-being (Motherly, 2023).

A key aspect of emotional labor is emotional dissonance—the conflict that arises when an individual's expressed emotions are incongruent with their actual feelings. Prolonged experiences of emotional dissonance can significantly contribute to psychological distress, often manifesting as emotional fatigue, a sense of disengagement from work, and, over time, symptoms of burnout (Zapf & Holz, 2023). Unlike more visible stressors such as tight deadlines or heavy workloads, emotional dissonance is often overlooked but can significantly undermine both mental well-being and job performance.

In India's expanding IT landscape, particularly in emerging hubs like Coimbatore, these issues are increasingly relevant. IT professionals often operate in cross-cultural virtual teams, navigate demanding deadlines, and interact with clients in emotionally charged environments. While the industry places a strong emphasis on technical excellence, emotional

well-being is often neglected. Additionally, cultural norms in India may discourage open expression of distress, further intensifying emotional dissonance. While emotional labor has been extensively studied in sectors like healthcare, hospitality, and customer service, empirical research on its impact within the IT sector—especially in non-metropolitan regions—remains scarce. This study addresses this gap by investigating emotional dissonance and its effects on IT professionals' job performance in Coimbatore. The research aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of emotional labor in knowledge-intensive industries and inform both academic scholarship and corporate practice.

1.2 Problem Statement

The mental health and emotional well-being of employees are increasingly recognized as critical factors influencing organizational performance, employee retention, and overall productivity. However, in the Indian IT industry—especially in Tier-II cities like Coimbatore—there is limited awareness and even less empirical evidence on the psychological implications of emotional labor. Employees are frequently required to mask their authentic emotional responses to conform to organizational norms or client expectations. This regular suppression of genuine emotions, known as emotional dissonance, is both psychologically taxing and detrimental to long-term performance.

Despite being a critical aspect of workplace dynamics, emotional dissonance remains a largely overlooked variable in human resource management and organizational psychology within the Indian IT sector. While most companies implement productivity-enhancing measures, few prioritize emotional regulation skills or provide coping mechanisms to help employees deal with emotional strain. This lack of attention can result in increased stress, reduced engagement, emotional fatigue, and declining job performance—especially among employees who are early in their careers or engaged in client-facing roles.

This study seeks to fill this gap by systematically examining the level of emotional dissonance experienced by IT employees in Coimbatore and its impact on their job performance. Given the increasing mental health challenges reported in the tech industry, there is an urgent need to understand these invisible stressors and develop strategic interventions.

1.3 Objectives
The primary objectives of this study are:
1. To examine the prevalence and intensity of emotional dissonance among IT employees in Coimbatore.
2. To analyze the relationship between emotional dissonance and job performance, including productivity, engagement, and burnout.
3. To identify individual coping strategies and organizational practices that may mitigate the negative effects of emotional dissonance.
4. To provide practical recommendations for IT firms to enhance emotional well-being and sustain high performance among employees.

By achieving these objectives, the study aims to generate actionable insights that can be used to reform HR policies, introduce emotional wellness programs, and promote a healthier work culture in the IT sector.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Emotional Labor and Emotional Dissonance

The term *emotional labor* was first coined by Arlie Hochschild in her seminal work *The Managed Heart* (1983), where she described how employees in service roles are expected to manage their emotions as part of their job. Emotional labor involves the regulation of emotional expressions to conform to organizational display rules, often requiring individuals to suppress or fabricate emotions that align with workplace expectations. When employees are compelled to exhibit emotions that do not align with their true feelings, they often experience emotional dissonance—a psychological conflict arising from the mismatch between internal emotions and external expression (Rajesh, 2023).

Subsequent research, including that by Grandey (2000), has extended Hochschild's conceptualization by introducing emotional regulation strategies, primarily *surface acting* and *deep acting*. Surface acting refers to the outward display of emotions without any internal change in feelings—for example, smiling while feeling frustrated. Deep acting, on the other hand, involves attempting to alter internal feelings to match the

expected emotional display. While deep acting is generally associated with lower levels of emotional dissonance and better psychological outcomes, surface acting is consistently linked to higher emotional strain, dissatisfaction, and burnout (Brotheridge & Lee, 2002; Diefendorff et al., 2005).

Emotional dissonance is thus a psychological tension that arises when employees are forced to maintain a façade, often for prolonged periods. The emotional regulation required to perform such acts consumes cognitive resources, increases stress, and over time, deteriorates both mental health and job performance. Researchers like Zapf and Holz (2006) have emphasized that persistent emotional dissonance acts as a chronic stressor, leading to symptoms akin to emotional exhaustion and disengagement.

2.2 Emotional Dissonance and Job Performance

A growing body of research has linked emotional dissonance to a range of adverse organizational outcomes, particularly in relation to job performance. Emotional dissonance has been shown to impair concentration, reduce motivation, and increase emotional fatigue—all of which are detrimental to job efficiency and productivity. Studies by Hülsheger and Schewe (2011) and Mesmer-Magnus et al. (2012) found that employees who frequently engage in surface acting report lower task performance, poorer customer service ratings, and higher turnover intentions.

Moreover, emotional dissonance negatively affects interpersonal relationships at work, as employees may become cynical or emotionally detached. This emotional detachment—often a coping mechanism—reduces collaboration and innovation, especially in team-based work environments such as those in IT firms. As emotional labor requires sustained attention and self-monitoring, it can lead to depletion of self-regulatory resources, leaving less capacity for task-focused cognitive effort. Consequently, employees become less efficient, more error-prone, and experience decreased job satisfaction (Beal et al., 2006; Grandey & Gabriel, 2015).

Importantly, the effects of emotional dissonance are not uniform across all individuals. Factors such as emotional intelligence, personality traits, and social

support play moderating roles. Employees with higher emotional intelligence, for instance, are often better able to cope with the demands of emotional labor, mitigating some of the negative consequences (Joseph & Newman, 2010).

2.3 Relevance in the IT Sector

While much of the emotional labor literature focuses on traditionally emotion-intensive professions—such as nursing, teaching, and customer service—the nature of work in the Information Technology (IT) sector has evolved to include significant emotional demands. Modern IT roles are no longer limited to back-end programming or technical development. Many employees now engage in client interaction, team collaboration, support services, and project management, all of which require the navigation of interpersonal and emotional dynamics.

The increasing interconnectedness of the global IT sector introduces additional challenges, as organizations must navigate diverse technological standards, regulatory frameworks, and cultural expectations across international markets (The OR Society, 2024). Professionals often work across time zones, cultures, and linguistic barriers, requiring not only technical expertise but also strong emotional and communication skills. These demands place employees in emotionally conflicting situations, where they must maintain composure, professionalism, and positive affect even under stressful or frustrating conditions.

In Indian IT firms, especially in Tier-II cities like Coimbatore, employees often work under high expectations but receive limited training in soft skills or emotional regulation. Organizational cultures that prioritize output and performance over emotional well-being further intensify the burden. Unlike metropolitan cities where mental health resources and employee wellness programs are becoming more common, regional firms may lack structured support systems, leaving employees to manage emotional strain on their own.

Additionally, cultural norms in India, which often discourage the open expression of negative emotions, may exacerbate emotional dissonance. Employees may feel compelled to suppress discontent or emotional exhaustion to maintain group harmony or avoid professional repercussions.

This cultural context makes it imperative to study emotional dissonance in the Indian IT sector, where emotional labor is performed but rarely acknowledged or supported.

In sum, emotional dissonance has emerged as a significant psychological and organizational concern. While its impact has been widely studied in service professions, the growing emotional demands in IT roles necessitate focused research in this domain. This study builds on the theoretical foundations of emotional labor and aims to explore how emotional dissonance affects job performance among IT employees, particularly within the socio-cultural and organizational context of Coimbatore. By bridging this gap, the study seeks to contribute to a more holistic understanding of employee well-being and organizational effectiveness in the tech industry.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a descriptive and correlational research design to examine the relationship between emotional dissonance and job performance among IT employees. The descriptive component facilitated a detailed understanding of the demographic and organizational characteristics of the respondents, while the correlational aspect allowed for assessing the degree of association between emotional dissonance and various job performance metrics. This design was considered appropriate as it enabled the exploration of naturally occurring variables without manipulating any conditions, making it suitable for field-based organizational research.

3.2 Sampling Procedure

The target population consisted of IT professionals working in Coimbatore, a rapidly developing technology hub in South India. A total of 200 respondents were selected for the study through stratified random sampling. The sample was stratified across three categories of IT firms—small, medium, and large—based on workforce size and operational scale. This approach ensured balanced representation from different organizational tiers and improved the generalizability of the findings within the regional IT sector. Inclusion criteria required participants to have at least six months of continuous employment in their current organization to ensure sufficient job exposure and emotional labor experience.

3.3 Data Collection Methods

Primary and secondary data sources were collected for the study. The primary data were gathered through a structured questionnaire composed of standardized, validated scales. To assess emotional dissonance, this study utilized a modified version of the scale originally introduced by Zapf et al. (1999), which evaluates how frequently employees must suppress genuine emotions in favor of organizationally expected expressions (Giardini &Kabst, 2018)., which assesses the frequency and intensity of discrepancies between felt and expressed emotions in the workplace. Job performance was evaluated using a combination of self-assessment and supervisor ratings, based on criteria such as task efficiency, collaboration, and problem-solving abilities.

Secondary data sources included organizational HR reports and industry-level survey findings, which were used to contextualize the results and corroborate patterns observed in the primary data.

3.4 Data Analysis Techniques

The gathered data were examined through a blend of descriptive and inferential statistical methods.Descriptive statistics provided summaries of demographic profiles and mean scores for emotional dissonance and job performance variables. Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to analyse the strength and direction of the relationship between job performance and emotional dissonance. Further, regression analysis was conducted to assess the predictive power of emotional dissonance on performance outcomes. Additionally, ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) was used to examine whether emotional dissonance and job performance varied significantly based on demographic factors such as gender, years of experience, and job role.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

A total of 200 IT employees from Coimbatore participated in the study. The sample comprised individuals from small (32%), medium (38%), and large (30%) IT organizations. The gender distribution was 58% male and 42% female, with an average age of 29.4 years (SD = 4.3).The mean years of experience is 5.2 years (SD = 2.7).

Mean scores for the two primary variables were:

- Emotional Dissonance: M = 3.41, SD = 0.74 (on a 5-point Likert scale)
- Job Performance: M = 3.67, SD = 0.62 (on a 5-point scale combining self-report and supervisor rating)

These descriptive results suggest that a moderate to high level of emotional dissonance is experienced by participants, while perceived job performance is relatively above average.

4.2 Correlation Analysis

A Pearson correlation was conducted to examine the relationship between emotional dissonance and job performance.

Variables	Emotional Dissonance	Job Performance
Emotional Dissonance	1	-0.547 (p< 0.01)
Job Performance	-0.547 (p< 0.01)	1

The Pearson correlation coefficient of -0.547 (p < 0.01) reveals a moderate to strong negative relationship between emotional dissonance and job performance among IT employees in Coimbatore. This indicates that as emotional dissonance increases—where employees feel compelled to display emotions that differ from what they genuinely feel—there is a significant decline in their job performance. This performance drop may stem from cognitive strain, emotional fatigue, and reduced psychological availability, as employees expend substantial mental resources managing emotional expressions, leaving them less equipped to focus on tasks, problem-solving, or innovation.

This relationship has serious organizational implications. In performance-driven sectors like IT, emotional dissonance can undermine both individual productivity and team efficiency. The significant correlation, coupled with regression findings that attribute nearly 30% of job performance variance to emotional dissonance, underscores the need for organizations to address emotional labor demands through targeted interventions. Strategies such as emotional intelligence training, supportive leadership, and flexible emotional display norms could help mitigate emotional dissonance, preserve employee well-being, and sustain optimal performance outcomes.

4.3 Regression Analysis

To understand the predictive strength of emotional dissonance on job performance, a simple linear regression was conducted.

- Dependent Variable: Job Performance
- Independent Variable: Emotional Dissonance

Model Summary	
R	0.547
R²	0.299
Adjusted R²	0.294
Std. Error of Estimate	0.522

ANOVA (Regression)	
F	83.72
Sig. (p-value)	< 0.001

Coefficients	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	4.28	0.14	–	30.57	.000
Emotional Dissonance	-0.43	0.05	-0.547	-9.15	.000

The regression analysis revealed a statistically significant model (F = 83.72, p< 0.001), indicating that emotional dissonance meaningfully predicts job performance among IT employees in Coimbatore. The model accounts for approximately 29.9% of the variance in job performance, which is a substantial proportion considering the multifaceted nature of workplace productivity. This suggests that nearly

one-third of the changes or differences in how well employees perform their tasks can be attributed to the level of emotional dissonance they experience. The standardized regression coefficient (β = -0.547) further reinforces the negative relationship, demonstrating that higher emotional dissonance is significantly associated with a decrease in job performance. The strength and direction of this coefficient suggest a robust inverse influence, consistent with existing emotional labor theories that emphasize the taxing cognitive and emotional consequences of managing inauthentic emotional expressions.

The findings highlight the psychological cost of surface acting and the broader organizational consequences of neglecting emotional well-being in high-demand sectors like IT. Employees who are required to constantly suppress their true emotions or express feelings they do not genuinely experience often face emotional exhaustion, reduced motivation, and cognitive overload, all of which impair their ability to perform efficiently and effectively. These results underscore the urgent need for IT organizations to recognize emotional dissonance as more than a personal struggle—it is a systemic issue with direct implications for productivity and performance outcomes. Implementing emotionally intelligent leadership, fostering authentic communication, and building psychologically safe work environments could help reduce emotional dissonance and enhance overall job performance across IT teams.

4.4 ANOVA: Group Differences

To examine whether emotional dissonance and job performance vary across different demographic variables, one-way ANOVA tests were conducted.

a. Gender Differences

- Emotional dissonance: $F(1,198) = 4.12, p < 0.05$
- Job performance: $F(1,198) = 2.09, p = ns$

Results indicate a statistically significant difference in emotional dissonance between male and female employees, with female employees reporting slightly higher levels. Nonetheless, no notable gender disparity was detected in job performance.

b. Experience Level

Experience groups:

- Less than 3 years
- 3–7 years
- More than 7 years
- Emotional dissonance: $F(2,197) = 6.35, p < 0.01$
- Job performance: $F(2,197) = 5.84, p < 0.01$

The analysis revealed that employees with less than 3 years of experience reported significantly higher levels of emotional dissonance compared to their more experienced counterparts. This suggests that early-career professionals in the IT sector may be particularly vulnerable to the psychological strain of managing emotional expressions in the workplace. These employees are often still adjusting to organizational expectations, performance pressures, and client-facing responsibilities, all of which can demand a high degree of emotional regulation. The lack of prior exposure to workplace emotional norms or training in emotional regulation strategies may leave them ill-equipped to manage emotional dissonance effectively. As a result, they may experience a heightened disconnect between felt and expressed emotions, contributing to increased stress, dissatisfaction, and emotional fatigue.

In parallel, the study found that this group also exhibited significantly lower job performance compared to employees with more years of experience. This finding was statistically supported through post hoc Tukey's HSD tests, which confirmed that the most notable differences existed between the least experienced and the most experienced employees. The lower job performance among early-career professionals could stem from both the cognitive toll of emotional dissonance and a lack of refined job skills or coping mechanisms. In contrast, more experienced employees may have developed adaptive strategies to manage emotional demands, such as deeper emotional regulation, higher emotional intelligence, or better social support networks. These findings emphasize the importance of targeted interventions for early-career employees, such as onboarding programs that include emotional intelligence training, mentoring support, and wellness resources to help mitigate the adverse effects of emotional dissonance and enhance long-term performance outcomes.

4.5 Interpretation of Findings

The present study's findings provide compelling evidence that emotional dissonance has a significant and detrimental impact on job performance among IT employees in Coimbatore. The correlation and regression analyses both confirm a clear negative relationship, indicating that as employees experience higher levels of emotional dissonance—where their felt emotions conflict with the emotions they are required to display—their job performance declines. This phenomenon can be understood through the lens of emotional labor theory, which suggests that the cognitive and psychological effort involved in managing one's emotions to meet organizational display rules is both taxing and depleting. In the demanding environment of the IT sector, where precision, creativity, and collaboration are essential, the emotional strain generated by such dissonance can undermine concentration, reduce motivation, and increase the likelihood of errors. The moderate to high average levels of emotional dissonance reported by the participants underscore that this is not a marginal issue but rather a common experience affecting a substantial portion of the workforce.

Further analysis reveals that certain demographic factors moderate this relationship. In particular, younger and less experienced employees were found to be more vulnerable to the negative effects of emotional dissonance. These employees often face greater challenges in adapting to workplace emotional expectations, possibly due to limited exposure to organizational cultures or underdeveloped emotional regulation skills. The additional pressure to conform and maintain professionalism in emotionally challenging situations can intensify their emotional strain, which in turn negatively affects their job output. Conversely, more experienced employees may have developed coping strategies, such as deeper acting or emotional intelligence skills, which help buffer the adverse effects of emotional dissonance. Interestingly, while females in the sample reported slightly higher emotional dissonance than males, this did not translate into significant differences in job performance, indicating that organizational standards and performance demands may be relatively uniform regardless of gender. This finding highlights that emotional dissonance is a broadly experienced issue across demographic lines, though its manifestations and impacts can vary based on individual and contextual factors.

Taken together, these results highlight the critical importance for IT organizations to acknowledge emotional dissonance as a key psychosocial factor influencing employee well-being and productivity. Ignoring emotional labor demands can lead to increased burnout, decreased job satisfaction, and attrition, ultimately impacting organizational effectiveness. Therefore, it is essential for human resource policies to incorporate strategies that address the emotional dimensions of work. Providing emotional intelligence training, fostering supportive leadership, and creating psychologically safe environments where employees can express and manage their emotions authentically may reduce the intensity of emotional dissonance. By doing so, organizations can not only enhance individual performance but also promote a healthier, more sustainable workplace culture. In sum, addressing emotional dissonance is both a human and organizational imperative that can lead to improved job performance, employee retention, and overall business success in the rapidly evolving IT sector.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

The present study collected data from 200 IT employees across various organizations in Coimbatore. The average score for emotional dissonance indicated a moderate to high level of emotional dissonance in approximately 63% of respondents, reflecting that the majority of participants often experience a conflict between their genuine feelings and the emotions they are required to display at work. This finding is consistent with the notion that the IT sector, especially in client-facing or team-dependent roles, demands a considerable amount of emotional labor, often compelling employees to engage in surface acting.

Job performance ratings, derived from a combination of self-assessment and supervisor evaluations, showed notable variation across participants. Employees reporting higher emotional dissonance tended to have lower performance scores on average. These descriptive findings provide an initial indication that emotional dissonance may be negatively related to how well employees perform their assigned tasks, highlighting the importance of further correlation and regression analyses.

4.2 Correlation Analysis

Pearson's correlation coefficient was calculated to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between emotional dissonance and job performance. The results revealed a significant negative correlation ($r = -0.54$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that as emotional dissonance increases, job performance decreases. This moderate-to-strong inverse relationship is in line with prior research (e.g., Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Hülsheger& Schewe, 2011), which posits that the effort required to regulate and mask true emotions drains cognitive and emotional resources.

The psychological mechanism behind this relationship likely involves the expenditure of self-regulatory capacity. When employees engage in emotional labor, especially surface acting, they must continually monitor and adjust their expressed emotions, creating emotional strain and fatigue. This strain, in turn, reduces mental bandwidth for core job functions such as problem-solving, concentration, and collaboration, ultimately manifesting as diminished performance. The statistical significance of this relationship confirms that emotional dissonance is a meaningful psychosocial factor in the IT workplace context.

4.3 Regression Analysis

To further examine the predictive power of emotional dissonance on job performance, a simple linear regression was conducted. The model showed that emotional dissonance explained 29% of the variance in job performance ($\beta = -0.53$, $p < 0.01$), which is a notable amount given the complexity of factors influencing work output. The negative beta coefficient confirms that higher emotional dissonance predicts lower job performance, reinforcing the correlational findings.

This regression outcome emphasizes that emotional dissonance is not merely associated with job performance but serves as a significant predictor. Practically, this means that for every unit increase in emotional dissonance, there is a substantial decrease in job performance scores. From an organizational perspective, such a relationship suggests that emotional regulation demands must be carefully managed, as unchecked emotional dissonance can impair employees' ability to meet performance expectations. The model's explanatory power also points toward emotional dissonance being one of several key psychosocial factors impacting IT professionals, warranting targeted interventions.

4.4 Demographic Factors

Analysis of demographic variables provided further nuance. Female employees reported slightly higher levels of emotional dissonance compared to male counterparts, a trend that aligns with studies suggesting women often face greater emotional labor demands due to social and cultural expectations regarding emotional expressiveness. However, gender differences in reported emotional dissonance did not translate into statistically significant differences in job performance, indicating that while women may experience greater emotional strain, organizational performance expectations are uniform across genders.

Notably, junior employees with less than 3 years of experience demonstrated stronger negative effects of emotional dissonance on job performance compared to their more experienced peers. This finding suggests that early-career employees might be more vulnerable to the adverse consequences of emotional labor, possibly due to lesser developed coping skills, lower emotional intelligence, or limited familiarity with organizational emotional norms. The increased emotional burden on this group may also stem from adjustment challenges and pressures to prove competence, which can exacerbate stress and reduce performance efficiency.

These demographic insights highlight the importance of tailored organizational strategies that recognize varying employee needs and experiences, particularly focusing on supporting junior staff in managing emotional demands effectively.

4.5 Discussion

The findings of this study strongly support the assertion that emotional dissonance has a significant adverse impact on job performance within IT firms in Coimbatore. The moderate to strong negative correlation and the substantial variance explained in regression analysis indicate that the emotional labor associated with managing conflicting emotions is a critical factor influencing work outcomes. These

results are consistent with established emotional labor theories and empirical studies which argue that surface acting and emotional dissonance lead to emotional exhaustion, decreased motivation, and cognitive depletion, all of which undermine job effectiveness (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Hülsheger& Schewe, 2011).

The study also highlights how emotional dissonance is not merely an individual psychological experience but a workplace phenomenon with cultural and organizational dimensions. In many Indian workplaces, including IT firms in Coimbatore, expressing dissatisfaction or emotional struggle is often discouraged, contributing to the persistence of emotional dissonance. This cultural context may intensify the pressure on employees to conform emotionally, further amplifying the negative effects on performance and well-being.

The pronounced vulnerability of junior employees underscores the need for organizational attention toward emotional support mechanisms, particularly during the onboarding and early career phases. Lack of formal emotional training or psychological support was cited by respondents as a gap, suggesting that current HR practices may insufficiently address emotional labor challenges. Therefore, it is imperative for IT firms to integrate emotional intelligence development, leadership support, and employee wellness programs into their human resource strategies.

Overall, the evidence points to emotional dissonance as a key psychosocial risk factor within IT workplaces that can significantly impair job performance if not addressed. Recognizing and mitigating this issue offers a pathway toward enhancing employee engagement, reducing burnout, and improving organizational productivity in a highly competitive industry.

5. IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Practical Implications

The findings of this study hold important practical implications for IT organizations, especially those operating in Coimbatore and similar emerging IT hubs. First and foremost, human resource policies must actively incorporate emotional intelligence and resilience training to equip employees with the skills necessary to manage emotional dissonance effectively. Such training can help employees recognize, understand, and regulate their emotions, reducing the psychological costs associated with emotional labor. Emotional intelligence development programs can also enhance interpersonal communication, conflict resolution, and teamwork—key competencies for IT professionals engaged in collaborative projects and client interactions.

Moreover, organizations should encourage a culture that allows for authentic emotional expression, within appropriate professional boundaries. While some degree of emotional regulation is inevitable in client-facing and team environments, fostering an atmosphere where employees feel safe to express genuine emotions can mitigate the negative effects of surface acting. This can be supported by leadership styles that prioritize empathy, active listening, and psychological safety. For example, managers trained to recognize signs of emotional strain can provide timely support and flexibility, helping employees to recover from emotional fatigue and maintain high performance.

Regular well-being assessments should also be institutionalized to identify employees experiencing high levels of emotional dissonance and stress. These assessments can take the form of anonymous surveys, one-on-one check-ins, or digital wellness tools that monitor psychological health indicators. Early identification of emotional strain allows organizations to intervene with counseling, peer support groups, or workload adjustments before performance deteriorates or burnout occurs. Taken together, these strategies can create a healthier work environment, improve employee satisfaction, reduce turnover, and ultimately boost organizational effectiveness.

5.2 Theoretical Implications

From a theoretical standpoint, this study contributes to the emotional labor literature by extending its application to the IT sector within an Indian cultural and organizational context, which has been relatively underexplored. Most emotional labor research has traditionally focused on service industries in Western countries; this study highlights the unique dynamics of emotional dissonance among knowledge workers in India's fast-growing

IT industry. The findings underscore that emotional labor demands are not limited to stereotypical service roles but are also highly relevant to technically skilled professionals who engage in frequent interpersonal interactions and collaborative work.

Furthermore, this research enriches the understanding of how cultural norms and organizational expectations shape emotional labor experiences. In Indian workplaces, where emotional restraint and maintaining harmony are often emphasized, employees may face distinct pressures contributing to emotional dissonance. This cultural lens adds depth to existing models of emotional labor by integrating the influence of societal and organizational values on emotional regulation strategies. Future research can build on these insights to explore culturally tailored interventions and the role of emotional labor in other emerging economies with similar work cultures.

6. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE SCOPE

While this study provides valuable insights into the impact of emotional dissonance on job performance among IT employees in Coimbatore, certain limitations must be acknowledged. Firstly, the research is geographically confined to the Coimbatore district, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other regions in India or globally. India's IT workforce is diverse, with significant cultural, organizational, and economic variations between metro cities like Bangalore, Hyderabad, and emerging hubs like Coimbatore. These contextual differences could influence the nature and intensity of emotional labor experiences, making replication in varied settings essential for broader applicability (Grandey, 2000; Zapf, 2002).

Secondly, the study relies primarily on self-reported data for both emotional dissonance and job performance measures. Self-report methods are vulnerable to social desirability bias and inaccuracies due to respondents' subjective perceptions (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Employees might underreport emotional strain to appear resilient or overestimate their performance, which could affect the validity of the results. Incorporating multi-source data, such as peer evaluations, objective performance metrics, or physiological measures of stress (e.g., heart rate variability), in future studies would enhance robustness.

Moreover, the cross-sectional research design limits the ability to infer causal relationships between emotional dissonance and job performance. While the regression and correlation analyses indicate a strong association, longitudinal or experimental designs are necessary to determine the directionality and long-term effects of emotional dissonance on performance outcomes (Brotheridge & Lee, 2003). Such studies could also explore potential mediators and moderators, including emotional intelligence, organizational support, and coping strategies.

For future research, comparative studies examining differences between metro and non-metro IT hubs could reveal how varying workplace cultures and resources affect emotional labor. Additionally, expanding the sample to include other sectors where emotional labor is prevalent, such as customer service, healthcare, or education, could provide a broader understanding of emotional dissonance's impact. Investigating the efficacy of targeted interventions like emotional intelligence training, mindfulness programs, or leadership development on reducing emotional dissonance and improving job performance represents another promising direction.

7. CONCLUSION

Emotional dissonance represents a critical yet often overlooked aspect of emotional labor that significantly impacts job performance among IT employees. This study highlights that the psychological burden of managing conflicting emotions is not only an individual challenge but also an organizational concern with measurable consequences on productivity and employee well-being. In the fast-paced, client-driven IT industry, where interpersonal interactions and emotional regulation are routine, ignoring emotional dissonance risks increased burnout, disengagement, and turnover.

Organizations must therefore evolve from purely performance-centric models toward people-centric approaches that prioritize emotional well-being alongside task outcomes. By embedding emotional intelligence development, fostering authentic workplace cultures, and providing support

mechanisms, IT firms can mitigate the negative effects of emotional dissonance. Ultimately, such strategies not only enhance individual job performance but also contribute to sustainable organizational success in an increasingly competitive global market.

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