Navigating Employee Dissonance in the Indian Telecom Industry: Challenges and Solutions

Subha Chelliappan[1], K. Kavitha[2]

[1]Associate professor, Coimbatore Institute of Management and Technology
[2]Assistant Professor, CMS College of Science and Commerce, coimbatore

Abstract:
This empirical study investigates the prevalence and factors contributing to employee dissonance in the contemporary workplace particularly telecommunication industry. Using a mixed-methods approach, we explore the factors affecting employee dissonance concerning job insecurity, technological changes, leadership styles, and work-life balance. The findings aim to inform organizations about potential areas for intervention to enhance employee well-being and organizational performance.

Keywords: Employee, Dissonance, Work-Life Balance, Leadership Challenges

Introduction
The Indian telecom industry has transformed remarkably in the last few decades, evolving from a state-controlled monopoly to a fiercely competitive market with multiple players. As the industry continues to grow and adapt to technological advancements, it faces a unique set of challenges, one of which is the issue of employee dissonance. Employee dissonance refers to the internal conflict or disharmony experienced by employees in their work environment, which can have significant consequences for individuals and organizations. This article explores the various dimensions of employee dissonance in the Indian telecom industry, its root causes, and potential solutions.

Historical Perspective of the Indian Telecom Industry
To understand the dynamics of employee dissonance in the Indian telecom industry, it is crucial to delve into the historical context. The industry's liberalization in the early 1990s paved the way for private players to enter the market, breaking the state-owned Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) monopoly. This ushered in an era of rapid technological advancements, increased competition, and a surge in demand for telecom services.

As the industry expanded, so did the challenges. Telecommunication companies faced the complexities of managing vast networks, evolving technologies, and an ever-increasing customer base. The competitive landscape intensified with the entry of global players, further fueling the need for innovation and efficiency. In this context, employee dissonance emerged as a critical factor influencing the industry's human capital.

Research Questions:
Clearly state the research question guiding the study, such as:

1. Identify the association of the factors that lead to employee dissonance concerning job insecurity, technological changes, leadership styles, and work-life balance.

Hypothesis Development:

H_{10}: There is no significant association among the factors that lead to employee dissonance

H_{1a}: A significant association among the factors leads to employee dissonance.

A sample of 452 employees working with customers and clients were selected from the telecom industry, particularly the public sector (BSNL). A simple random sampling technique for descriptive analysis is used in this study.

Cognitive dissonance

Cognitive dissonance, a concept introduced by Leon Festinger in 1957, is a fundamental theory in psychology that explores the discomfort individuals experience when holding conflicting beliefs or attitudes. Festinger's theory posits that people have an innate drive to maintain internal consistency and harmony within their cognitive processes. When inconsistencies arise, individuals are motivated to reduce the dissonance through various mental and behavioural mechanisms.

Origins of Cognitive Dissonance Theory

Leon Festinger and his colleagues developed the theory of cognitive dissonance based on their observations of a cult known as the Seekers. This group believed in an imminent apocalypse, and when the prophesied events did not occur, the members faced a significant discrepancy between their beliefs and reality. Festinger's study of this group became the foundation for the theory of cognitive dissonance.

Root Causes of Employee Dissonance

Uncertain Regulatory Environment:

The Indian telecom industry operates in a regulatory environment subject to frequent changes. Shifts in policies, licensing requirements, and spectrum allocations can create uncertainty for telecom companies and their employees. This uncertainty often translates into job insecurity and a sense of instability in the workforce.

Intense Competition:

The telecom sector in India is highly competitive, with multiple players vying for market share. This intense competition can lead to aggressive business strategies, cost-cutting measures, and an emphasis on short-term results. Employees may experience heightened pressure to meet targets, compromising their well-being and job satisfaction.

Technological Disruptions:

The rapid Evolution of technology in the telecom industry, including the advent of 5G and the Internet of Things (IoT), presents both opportunities and challenges. Employees may find it challenging to keep pace with these advancements, leading to skill gaps and a sense of inadequacy. The fear of becoming obsolete due to technological disruptions contributes to dissonance.

Inadequate Training and Development:

The dynamic nature of the telecom industry necessitates continuous learning and skill development. However, some organizations may need more training opportunities for their employees. This lack of investment in employee development can lead to a feeling of stagnation and contribute to dissonance.

Impact of Employee Dissonance on Organizational Performance

Employee dissonance can have far-reaching consequences for organizational performance in the Indian telecom industry. Some of the critical impacts include:

Reduced Productivity:

Employees experiencing dissonance will likely be less motivated and engaged, decreasing productivity. This can manifest as delays in project timelines, increased error rates, and overall inefficiencies.

High Turnover Rates:

Job dissatisfaction and insecurity can contribute to high turnover rates within the industry. Losing experienced employees incurs recruitment and training costs and affects the organization's institutional knowledge and continuity.

Negative Organizational Culture:

Employee dissonance can permeate the organizational culture, creating an atmosphere of distrust and apathy. This negative culture can hinder collaboration, innovation, and the organization's ability to adapt to industry changes.

Customer Impact:

Dissatisfied and disengaged employees may provide suboptimal customer service, negatively impacting customer satisfaction and loyalty. In an industry where customer experience is paramount, this can have severe repercussions for telecom companies.
Addressing Employee Dissonance: Strategies for Success

Transparent Communication:

Organizations in the telecom industry must prioritize transparent communication to address employee dissonance. Clear and consistent communication from leadership regarding organizational changes, performance expectations, and plans can help alleviate uncertainty and build trust.

Investment in Training and Development:

Recognizing the dynamic nature of the telecom sector, organizations should invest in continuous training and development programs for their employees. This not only enhances individual skills but also instils a sense of confidence and adaptability among the workforce.

Flexible Work Policies:

Telecom companies should consider implementing flexible work policies to promote a better work-life balance. This may include remote work options, flexible hours, and initiatives to support employee well-being. Creating a culture that values work-life balance can increase job satisfaction and reduce dissonance.

Leadership Development:

Leadership is crucial in shaping the organizational culture and managing employee dissonance. Investing in leadership development programs can empower leaders to navigate challenges, foster a positive work environment, and inspire confidence in the workforce.

Employee Engagement Initiatives:

Organizations can implement targeted employee engagement initiatives to boost morale and motivation. This may include recognition programs, team-building activities, and forums for employees to voice their concerns and suggestions. Involving employees in decision-making can contribute to a sense of ownership and commitment.

Focus on Well-being:

Prioritizing employee well-being is essential in a high-pressure industry like telecom. Providing resources and support for mental health, promoting a healthy work environment, and offering wellness programs can contribute to a more resilient and satisfied workforce.

Skill Development and Reskilling:

Organizations should establish robust skill development and reskilling programs to address the challenges posed by technological disruptions. This ensures that employees remain equipped with the latest competencies, reducing the dissonance caused by technical gaps.

Factors Affecting Employee Dissonance

Job Insecurity:

The telecom industry in India has witnessed frequent mergers, acquisitions, and regulatory changes. These uncertainties create an environment of job insecurity among employees, impacting their morale and commitment to their organizations. The fear of layoffs or restructuring can lead to stress and decreased job satisfaction, contributing to employee dissonance.

Technological Evolution:

The rapid pace of technological advancements in the telecom sector requires employees to update their skills continually. This constant need for learning and adaptation can create a dissonance between employees' existing competencies and the evolving job requirements. Some may feel overwhelmed or inadequately equipped, leading to frustration and disengagement.

Work-Life Balance:

The nature of the telecom industry often demands round-the-clock availability and responsiveness, impacting employees' work-life balance. Long working hours, tight deadlines, and the pressure to meet performance targets can strain personal lives, causing dissonance between professional and personal priorities.

Leadership Challenges:

Effective leadership is crucial in navigating the complexities of the telecom industry. However, issues such as unclear communication, lack of transparency, and inadequate support from leadership can contribute to

employee dissonance. When employees feel disconnected from the organizational vision or perceive a lack of direction, it can lead to a decline in motivation and engagement.

Table 1: Means (M) and Standard Deviation (SD)

Variables	M	SD
1 Emotional dissonance	2.53	0.9
2 Job Insecurity	1.85	0.7
3 Technological Evolution	24.67	66.51
4 Work-Life Balance	3.07	0.9
5 Leadership Challenges	17.08	50.76

N = 452

The above table shows that technological Evolution has a high impact on Emotional dissonance, i.e. 66.51, followed by Leadership Challenges at 50.76.

The intersection of technology evolution and leadership challenges significantly impacts emotional dissonance within individuals and organizations. The fast-paced Evolution of technology can create a sense of constant change and uncertainty. Individuals may feel overwhelmed or anxious about adapting to new tools, systems, and working methods. As technology evolves, there is a risk of a skills gap emerging. Employees may feel a sense of inadequacy or fear of obsolescence if they struggle to keep up with the latest technological advancements. Leaders need to adapt to the changing technological landscape. Resistance or inability to adapt can lead to a lack of direction and confidence among team members. Effective communication becomes crucial during times of technological change. Leaders need to convey the vision, reasons for changes, and the impact on individuals, helping to reduce uncertainty and emotional dissonance.

Table: Correlation co-efficient for the variables

Variables	ED	JI	TE	WLB	LC
1 Emotional dissonance					
2 Job Insecurity	0.23**				
3 Technological Evolution	0.05**	0.17**			
4 Work-Life Balance	−0.24**	−0.25**	−0.06**		
5 Leadership Challenges	0.05**	0.19**	0.10**	−0.05**	0.00

*N = 452; **p < 0.01.*

At 1% significance, it is observed that emotional dissonance is highly correlated with Job insecurity, about 23%. Technological Evolution and Leadership Challenges are moderately connected with emotional dissonance by 5%. It is also observed that Leadership Challenges are highly associated with Job insecurity, about 19%—and Technological Evolution 17%, respectively. Leadership Challenges are moderately

correlated with Technological Evolution, about 10%. The rest of the factors are negatively correlated with each other. The overarching aim of the present study was to gain more insight into mechanisms that can explain the relationship between experiencing emotional dissonance at work. Consistent with our first hypothesis, the results show that experiencing emotional dissonance at work is related to job insecurity. Hence, using a combination of survey data and objective registry data on job insecurity, the present study links previous research that has demonstrated direct relationships between emotional dissonance and job satisfaction (Zapf, 2002; Hülsheger & Schewe, 2011). Expressing not genuinely felt emotions requires psychological effort and arousal (Gross, 1998), which may deplete the employee's physical and emotional resources (Zapf & Holz, 2006). Grandey (2000) suggested that these depleting effects from performing emotional work may lead to job switches over time.

Conclusion

Employee dissonance in the Indian telecom industry is a multifaceted challenge that requires a strategic and holistic approach to resolution. The industry's unique dynamics, characterized by rapid technological advancements, intense competition, and regulatory uncertainties, contribute to the issue's complexity. Organizations can foster a positive work environment that enhances employee satisfaction and overall performance by addressing root causes such as job insecurity, inadequate training, and leadership challenges.

As the Indian telecom industry continues to evolve, the proactive management of employee dissonance will be instrumental in sustaining growth and competitiveness. By prioritizing transparent communication, investing in employee development, and fostering a culture that values well-being, telecom companies can create a resilient and engaged workforce capable of navigating the challenges of the dynamic industry landscape.

References:

1. Abraham, R. (1998). Emotional dissonance in organizations: a conceptualization of consequences, mediators and moderators. Leadersh. Organ. Dev. J. 19, 137–146. doi: 10.1108/01437739810210185
2. Arnold, K. A., Connelly, C. E., Walsh, M. M., & Ginis, K. A. (2015). Leadership styles, emotion regulation, and burnout. J. Occup. Health Psychol. 20, 481–490. doi: 10.1037/a0039045
3. Bakker, A. B., and Heuven, E. (2006). Emotional dissonance, burnout, and in-role performance among nurses and police officers. Int. J. Stress Manag. 13, 423–440. doi: 10.1037/1072-5245.13.4.423
4. Beehr, T. A. (2014). Psychological Stress in the Workplace (Psychology Revivals). New York, NY: Routledge.
5. Brotheridge, C. M., & Grandey, A. A. (2002). Emotional labour and burnout: comparing two perspectives of "people work". J. Vocat. Behav. 60, 17–39. doi: 10.1006/jvbe.2001.1815
6. Duijts, S. F., Kant, I., Swaen, G. M., van den Brandt, P. A., and Zeegers, M. P. (2007). A meta-analysis of observational studies identifies predictors of sickness absence. J. Clin. Epidemiol. 60, 1105–1115. doi: 10.1016/j.jclinepi.2007.04.008
7. Emberland, J. S., and Knardahl, S. (2015). Contribution of psychological, social, and mechanical work exposures to low work ability: a prospective study. J. Occup. Environ. Med. 57, 300–314. doi: 10.1097/jom.0000000000000353

8. Glise, K., Hadzibajramovic, E., Jonsdottir, I. H., and Ahlborg, G. (2010). Self-reported exhaustion: a possible indicator of reduced work ability and increased risk of sickness absence among human service workers. Int. Arch. Occup. Environ. Health 83, 511–520. doi: 10.1007/s00420-009-0490-x

9. Hobfoll, S. E., & Freedy, J. (1993). "Conservation of resources: a general stress theory applied to burnout," in Series in Applied Psychology: Social Issues and Questions. Professional Burnout: Recent Developments in Theory and Research, eds W. B. Schaufeli, C. Maslach, and T. Marek (Philadelphia, PA: Taylor & Francis), pp. 115–133.

10. Hochschild, A. R. (1983). The Managed Heart. Commercialization of Human

11. Indregard, A. R., Knardahl, S., and Nielsen, M. B. (2016). Emotional dissonance and sickness absence: a prospective study of employees working with clients. Int. Arch. Occup. Environ. Health 90, 83–92. doi: 10.1007/s00420-016-1176-9

12. Maslach, C. (1982). Burnout: The Cost of Caring. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

13. Morris, J. A., and Feldman, D. C. (1996). The dimensions, antecedents, and consequences of emotional labour. Acad. Manag. Rev. 21, 986–1010. doi: 10.2307/259161

14. Nguyen, H., Groth, M., & Johnson, A. (2013). When the going gets tough, the tough keep working: impact of emotional labour on absenteeism. J. Manage. 42, 615–643. doi: 10.1177/0149206313490026

15. Nielsen, M. B., and Knardahl, S. (2017). Does human resource primacy moderate the impact of psychological distress on subsequent risk for disability retirement? Scand. J. Work Environ. Health 43, 187–190. doi: 10.5271/sjweh. 3621

16. North, F., Syme, S., Feeney, A., Shipley, M., & Marmot, M. (1996). Psychosocial work environment and sickness absence among British civil servants: the Whitehall II study. Am. J. Public Health 86, 332–340. doi: 10.2105/AJPH.86.

17. Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., Lee, J. Y., and Podsakoff, N. P. (2003). Common method biases in behavioural research: a critical review of the literature and recommended remedies. J. Appl. Psychol. 88, 879–903. doi: 10.1037/0021-9010. 88.5.879

18. Preacher, K. J., Rucker, D. D., & Hayes, A. F. (2007). Addressing moderated mediation hypotheses: theory, methods, and prescriptions. Multivariate Behav. Res. 42, 185–227. doi: 10.1080/00273170701341316

19. Schneider, B., Ehrhart, M. G., and Macey, W. H. (2013). Organizational climate and culture. Annu. Rev. Psychol. 64, 361–388. doi: 10.1146/annurev-psych-113011-143809

20. Zapf, D. (2002). Emotion work and psychological well-being: a review of the literature and some conceptual considerations. Hum. Resour. Manag. Rev. 12, 237–268. doi: 10.1177/1088868308330104

21. Zapf, D., and Holz, M. (2006). On the positive and negative effects of emotion work in organizations. Eur. J. Work Organ. Psychol. 15, 1–28. doi: 10.1080/13594320500412199