

Workplace Emotions and Job Satisfaction

by

Andreea Fortuna Şchiopu

The Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Romania

andreeaschiopu@hotmail.com

Abstract. The emotions and their management in the workplace have become popular topics in the literature as a result of their effects in organizations. This article aims to review existing perspectives on workplace emotions, positive and negative, and to analyze the effects of the emotions felt by employees on job satisfaction. These clarifications are important as job satisfaction is an important organizational construct which speaks about the well-being of the employees, their behaviors in organization and the whole organizational functioning. The paper discusses the results of a survey which measured emotions felt by employees (positive and negative) and job satisfaction. The results indicate that employees experience more positive than negative emotions in the workplace. The emotions felt have a direct effect on employee job satisfaction and intention to work in the same company. The higher is the degree to which employees feel positive emotions in the organization, the higher the job satisfaction and their intention to work in the same company.

Key words: Positive and Negative Emotions, Job Satisfaction, Intention to Work in the Same Company

JEL classification: M10, M12, M54

1. Introduction

Most of early organizational theorists ignored emotions or assumed they played a negative role by biasing perceptions and interfering with administrative rationality (Gopinath, 2011, p. 4). Lately, there has been increasing interest in their role in applied and organizational settings. People and their emotions are inseparable, so employees take their emotions to work. It becomes clearer and clearer that „emotions are an integral an inseparable part of everyday organizational life” (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1995, p. 98). The display of appropriate emotions is vital to many jobs and plays an important part in how employees are perceived (Gopinath, 2011).

2. Conceptual background and hypotheses

2.1 Workplace emotions – positive and negative

Emotion is a complex feeling state accompanied by physiological stimulation and explicit behavior (Gopinath, 2011). In general, emotions are brought about by a certain cause or are focused on a specific target (Barsade and Gipson, 2007).

One of the main perspectives on emotions is proposed by Ekman (1992). He believes that evolution played an important role in shaping a number of emotions which differ one from another. Ekman (1992) argues that there are discrete, basic, universal emotions, such as fear, anger, and enjoyment, each having particular antecedents, appraisal, physiology, and behavioral responses. Among the discrete emotions, Ekman (1992) mentions anger, fear, sadness, enjoyment, disgust, surprise, contempt, shame, guilt, and embarrassment.

Barsade and Gipson (2007) use affect as an umbrella term to designate a wide range of feelings, from the short-lived emotions, diffuse moods to feeling traits which are stable tendencies of individuals that make them feel in a certain way.

Positive affect refers to the extent to which an individual feels enthusiastic, active and alert, high positive affect encompassing energy, concentration and engagement, whereas low positive affect comprises sadness and lethargy (Watson, Clark and Tellegen, 1988). The negative affect is a state of subjective anguish and un-agreeable engagement brought about by anger, contempt, disgust, guilt, fear, and

nervousness (Watson, Clark and Tellegen, 1988).

The emotions influence many organizational dimensions such as decision making, creativity, teamwork, negotiation, leadership, turnover, and job performance (Barsade and Gipson, 2007). Staw, Sutton and Pelled (1994) assume that positive emotions lead to favorable outcomes for employees; moreover, anticipation of success is likely to facilitate task activity and persistence.

Hypothesis 1a. In the workplace, positive emotions are felt to a higher degree than negative emotions.

2.2 Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction is an important organizational construct. It usually refers to “a positive (or negative) evaluative judgment one makes about one’s job or job situation” (Weiss, 2002, p. 175). Spector (1997, p.2) defines job satisfaction as “how people feel about their jobs and different aspects of their jobs”, an employee attitude very popular in industrial-organizational psychology and organizational behavior. Job satisfaction is the degree to which employees like (satisfaction) or dislike (dissatisfaction) what they do at work (Spector, 1997). It is an essential research variable in organizational studies.

The main reasons job satisfaction should be a concern for managers are: job satisfaction is to some extent a reflection of the good treatment; it can lead to different employee behaviors in organization and can be an expression of the organizational functioning (Spector, 1997). Many organizations now regularly use employee opinion surveys with measures of job satisfaction, organizational commitment or other areas of the employee’s well-being to support their development plans (Stride, Wall and Catley, 2007).

Even though sometimes job satisfaction is measured based on interviews, most research is done with questionnaires (Spector, 1997). Organizations use employee surveys to assess work morale and to diagnose potential problems

or make comparisons across different types of jobs (Watson, Thompson and Meade, 2007). The questionnaires can be designed to study many facets of this important organizational dimension.

Some of the key elements that influence job satisfaction are rewards, coworkers or managers, the nature of the work, the organization itself (Spector, 1997). But, in the organizational environment, emotions have an intrinsically motivational component (Izard, Stark, Trentacosta and Schultz, 2008). So, they might have an impact on job attitudes and, more precisely, on job satisfaction. The following hypotheses are proposed.

Hypothesis 2a. Job satisfaction is positively associated with the positive emotions felt in the workplace.

Hypothesis 2b. Job satisfaction is negatively associated with negative emotions felt in the workplace.

Hypothesis 3a. Positive emotions have a positive effect on intention to work in the same company.

Hypothesis 3b. Negative emotions have a negative effect on intention to work in the same company.

2.3 Emotions and job satisfaction in tourism

Understanding service employees’ emotion is vital for understanding their attitudes and behaviors as emotions are at the core of human experiences (Lee *et al*, 2011). Lee *et al* (2011, p. 943) argue that the way a customer or an employee feels about the service or the job makes a big difference in terms of different elements, especially favorable outcomes to the organization such as customer loyalty, repurchase behavior, employee job performance, and employee cooperative behavior.

In order to perform the service as desired, the organization has either explicit or implicit emotional display rules (Van Dijk and Kirk, 2007). Many service organizations attempt to control employees’ positive expression of emotions such as smiling, eye contact, and

rhythmic vocal tone as well as their task-based skills for encounters with customers (Grandey *et al.*, 2005).

Within the service sector, tourism stands out because it involves a high degree of emotional labor. Hochschild (2003, p. 7) defines emotional labor as the „the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display”. Emotional labor may be helpful to the final results, but it may be detrimental to the employees (Grandey, 2000).

In Romania, tourism is a sector going through a series of changes triggered by economic, political and social factors which have adversely impacted the industry, factors such as the lack of investments and poor management thereof, limited turning to account of the tourism potential and inadequate personnel training (Pădurean, Nica and Nistoreanu, 2015). The inadequate training and the high personnel turnover may cause a lower job satisfaction than in other sectors, but we assume that the emotions influence the job satisfaction in the same way.

Hypothesis 4a. In tourism, job satisfaction is positively associated with the positive emotions felt by employees.

Hypothesis 4b. In tourism, job satisfaction is negatively associated with the negative emotions felt by employees.

3 Method

Participants: Employees from different enterprises.

Scale: The questionnaire contained measures of emotions felt by employees (positive and negative) and job satisfaction, along with demographic and control variables.

Positive emotions included enthusiasm, pride, serenity, surprise, curiosity, attachment, satisfaction, contentment, trust, and negative emotions referred to annoyance, boredom, fear, guilt, shame, loneliness, anxiety, and offense in the workplace.

The respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they experience the aforementioned emotions in their daily work

activities using the following scale: 1 = Hardly Ever, to 5 = Very Often.

Last but not least, respondents were asked to evaluate some statements about their satisfaction regarding their job and their intention to work in the same company. Responses were given on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

Data Analysis: The SPSS software was used to analyze the data using descriptive statistics and correlation analysis.

4 Data analysis and results

Of all respondents, 55.6% (n = 178) were female. The respondents had been working in the present organization for at least one year, the average tenure being 7 years. Most respondents (89.7%, n = 287) were full time employees. 35% of respondents (n = 112) were between 18 and 25 years old, and 20.0% were between 26 and 35 and 23.1% (n = 74) were between 36 and 45, and 18.8% between 46 and 55. Slightly over half of the respondents (n = 171) had a college degree. Of all the respondents, one third works in the tourism industry.

Table 1. Workplace Emotions

POSITIVE		NEGATIVE	
Enthusiasm	3.56	Irritation	2.02
Pride	3.33	Nervousness	2.16
Contentment	3.76	Annoyance	1.93
Serenity	3.02	Sadness	1.60
Relaxation	2.47	Boredom	1.89
Trust	3.81	Hostility	1.93
Curiosity	3.51	Fear	1.32
Happiness	3.43	Guilt	1.32
Affiliation	2.76	Shame	1.26
Satisfaction	3.72	Loneliness	1.53
Joy	3.47	Anxiety	1.50
Pleasant Surprise	3.02	Unpleasant Surprise	1.59
		Indifference	1.72
Positive Emotions Index	3.31	Negative Emotions Index	1.67

Regarding the workplace emotions, the results indicate that the most preeminent positive emotions felt by the employees are trust, contentment, enthusiasm and curiosity. These feelings may sustain employees in their daily endeavors and even help them successfully fulfill their task requirements. The positive emotion with the lowest score is relaxation. This may be detrimental to the employees, in the long run. But it is explainable, given the current working environment.

As regards to the negative emotions felt at work, nervousness, irritation, annoyance, hostility and boredom stand out with the highest scores, as seen in Table 1. These emotional states reveal a certain situation which may hinder the employees' ability to successfully work or collaborate with their coworkers. Guilt, fear and shame are rarely experienced by employees.

The Positive Emotions Index is higher than the Negative Emotions Index (3.31>1.67), so the first hypothesis (Hypothesis 1a) is accepted, concluding that, in the workplace, positive emotions are felt to a higher degree than negative emotions.

Table 2. Job satisfaction and intention to stay (all respondents)

I am satisfied with my job	3.66
I plan to work in the same organization	3.58

The respondents, employees from all sectors of the economy, indicated that they are fairly satisfied with their jobs. Most of them plan to work in the same organization. The results presented in table 2 point out that the Romanian employees are rather satisfied with their jobs and do not think about finding another job.

In order to see how positive and negative emotions influence the employee job satisfaction and their intention to stay in the same company, we tested the correlation among the aforementioned research variables, as seen in Table 3.

The first relation measured by Pearson correlation coefficient is between the Positive Emotions Index and job satisfaction score which describes the degree to which employees

are satisfied with their job. The Pearson correlation is .540, significant at the 0.01 level (significance .000 < .01). Based on these results, Hypothesis 2a is accepted. Job satisfaction is positively associated with the positive emotions felt in the workplace.

The positive emotions influence in the same direction the employees' intention to work in the same company, but to a lower degree, with a Pearson correlation of .377 (significance .000 < .01). The higher the degree to which employees feel positive emotions in the organization, the higher their intention to work in the same company. These results indicate that Hypothesis 3a should be accepted. Positive emotions have a positive effect on intention to work in the same company.

Table 3. Correlations between variables (all respondents)

Variables	Pearson Correlation	Signif.
Positive Emotions Index vs. Job satisfaction (I am satisfied with my job)	.540(**)	.000
Positive Emotions Index vs. Intention to work in the same organization (I plan to work in the same organization)	.377(**)	.000
Negative Emotions Index vs. Job Satisfaction (I am satisfied with my job)	-.241(**)	.000
Negative Emotions Index vs. Intention to work in the same organization (I plan to work in the same organization)	-.030	.000

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

Hypotheses 2b and 3b concern the effect of negative emotions on workers attitudes. The correlation between the Negative Emotion Index and job satisfaction score is (-.241), significant at .01 level. This result enables us to accept Hypothesis 2b. Job satisfaction is negatively associated with the negative emotions felt in the workplace. The higher is the degree to which the negative emotions are felt

in the organization, the lower the job satisfaction of its employees.

The Pearson correlation between the Negative Emotions Index and the employees' intention to work in the same organization is (-.030). This result is very close to zero, so we cannot conclude that negative emotions have a negative effect on intention to work in the same company, even though they definitely negatively impact job satisfaction. Therefore, Hypothesis 3b is rejected.

Table 4. Job satisfaction and intention to stay (employees from tourism)

I am satisfied with my job	3.61
I plan to work in the same organization	3.47

Based on Tables 4 and 2, the conclusion is that there is not a big difference between the general job satisfaction score and job satisfaction score in tourism ($3.66 \approx 3.61$). In tourism, job satisfaction is fairly the same as in other sectors of the economy.

Table 5. Correlations between variables (employees from tourism)

Variables	Pearson Correlation	Signif.
Positive Emotions Index vs. Job satisfaction (I am satisfied with my job)	.591(**)	.000
Negative Emotions Index vs. Job Satisfaction (I am satisfied with my job)	-.314(**)	.000

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

The Pearson correlation between Positive Emotions Index, Negative Emotions Index and Job satisfaction score for tourism are presented in Table 5. The Pearson correlation is .591, significant at the 0.01 level (significance $.000 < .01$). Based on these results, Hypothesis 4a is accepted. In tourism as well, job satisfaction is positively associated with the positive emotions felt by employees in the workplace.

The negative emotions influence in the opposite direction the employee job satisfaction. In tourism, job satisfaction is negatively associated with the negative emotions felt by employees,

with a Pearson correlation of (-.314), significant at .01 level. Therefore, Hypothesis 4b is accepted.

The number of participants acts as a limitation of the study. This may be the reason one of the hypothesis was rejected (Hypothesis 3b), even though there is sufficient evidence that the relationship between the variables exists as stated. So, the present research may be considered a pilot study and further measurements will be made to complete the analysis.

5 Conclusions

Based on the survey results, the conclusion is that we encounter more positive than negative emotions in the workplace. The employees feel to a higher degree trust, contentment, enthusiasm and curiosity. They rarely deal with shame, guilt or fear even though sometimes they experience nervousness, irritation, annoyance, hostility or boredom.

The emotions felt in the workplace have an effect on job satisfaction and intention to work in the same company. Significantly, the higher the degree to which employees feel positive emotions in the organization, the higher employee job satisfaction and their intention to work in the same company.

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Author description

Andreea Fortuna Schiopu, PhD, is Associate Professor in the Tourism and Geography Department of Bucharest University of Economic Studies. Her research interests include communication, tourism operations management, strategic and human resource management, emotions in the workplace, and emotional labor. She has participated in research projects and has published various articles in well-known international journals.