

# **Effect of Emotional Labor on Job Stress Considering the Mediating Role of Employee Wellbeing**

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## **Abstract**

The current study investigates about the causal relationship between emotional labor and job stress considering employee wellbeing as mediating factor. This would analyze the association between the variables and role of mediating factor. Taking service sector as research area the study target 215 respondents from IT firms including coder, developer, team leader etc. A self-structured questionnaire based on three recognized scales viz. emotional labor, job stress and wellbeing have been used to record responses. Sampling is done using judgmental sampling technique and only eligible and reliable respondents were contacted. With the help of 'Structural Equation Modeling' direct and indirect effect is measured. The study found significant mediating effect of 'employee wellbeing' and signifies the variables' relationship. Findings advocate the collaborative impact of emotional labor and wellbeing on employees' job stress which means employees with high level of emotional labor and wellbeing tend to be calm and controlled thus doesn't feel stressed due to adverse working condition and culture. Such personalities easily handle situation and cope with changing environmental conditions.

**Keywords-** Employee Wellbeing, Emotional Labor, Job Stress, IT industry, Service Sector, BPO Firms, KPO firms etc.

## Introduction

Emotional labor is a well-researched term across different sectors and industry but researchers have given immense importance to it for service sector especially those wherein service executives are involved and play crucial role to ensure service quality and favorable customers' experience (Bhave & Glomb, 2016). Emotional labor is found to be a critical element for managing emotions at workplace and maintain service performance (Robin & James, 2005). Employees in service firms represent a strategic role in service delivery and ensuring customer satisfaction. Emotional labor refers to handling and managing emotions which helps to comfortably adjust someone in undesirable working environment or condition (Groves & Vance, 2009). Hence, for organization and individual success 'emotional labor' play vital role. Furthermore, researchers have identified other positive aspects of emotional labor like- it has positive effect on job stress, share close relationship with employee wellbeing, influence employees' satisfaction and minimize employee burnout situation (Chi & Grandey, 2019).

Kumar & Jin (2022) indicate that emotional labor shows positive relationship with job stress. Conducting a research on 'nurses' the authors established significant relationship between emotional labor and job stress. Poor emotional labor directly increases the level of stress because employees fail to cope with environmental changes at workplace due to their close nature. Nurses whose emotional labor score was high were found happy and motivated irrespective environmental challenges prevailing in and around their workplace (Liao, Yeh, Lin & Wang, 2020). However, many studies analyzed the relationship between emotional labor and employee wellbeing. The dynamic nature of emotional labor contributes to the high level of wellbeing with great emotional and physical health of employees.

Considering the above discussions, the current research is being conducted to investigate effect of emotional labor on job stress taking employee wellbeing as mediating factor. The outcome of this research shall present how employee wellbeing may contribute to manage job related stress while keeping high level of emotional labor. It would also help to understand whether such concept is applicable on service employees with special reference to IT firms.

## Literature Review

### *Emotional Labor and Job Stress*

Job demand produces stress if it is over states or employee don't found it reasonable to their expertise. Many times, work culture, environment and conditions goes adverse to employees' attitude or behavior, thus create work stress. Here, role of emotional labor comes in function which help them to manage work approach and

minimizes job stress (Chou, Hecker & Martin, 2012). Emotional labor may influence emotional exhaustion and vice versa which means employees' strong emotional labor can help them to handle work related stress. Emotional actions are important to perform given task especially in service industry therefore, emotional labor is well talked around the world (Hansen & Mendzheritskaya, 2017).

### *Emotional Labor and Employee Wellbeing*

Researchers have established so many evidence on the relationship between emotional labor and employee wellbeing. Emotional labor efficiently handles workplace motions to better fulfill job requirements and keep employees calm and happy (Hanudin, 2016). There is a strong association between these two concept and studies explained that emotional intelligence helps to maintain good mental health. Emotions' management contributes significantly to concretely defend physical and mental health from environmental stressors (Harari & Thompson, 2018). Emotionally strong employees usually stay away from emotional imbalances or disturbances that comes from work culture or environment (Hameed, 2016).

### **Research Question**

Job stress is a definite event which usually occurs from variety of factors and may affect performance, service quality or brand image. It is a biggest challenge for the employers as well as employees. Hence, the current study tries to investigate whether job stress can be minimized through good emotional labor? And if yes, then, together with 'employee wellbeing' its effectiveness can be increased?

### **Research Method**

Based on empirical research method the study tries to analyze primary data to know the level of emotional labor, employee wellbeing and job stress of employees working in IT firms. The study also investigates mediating effect of 'employee wellbeing' in the relationship between emotional labor and job stress. Primary data was collected from respondents with the help of structured questionnaire based on 5 point Likert's scale. Total 215 responses are collected and with the help of 'one sample test and SEM' technique data is analyzed. Sampling is done through convenient sampling technique. The questionnaire was circulated online using 'Google Docs'. Before proceeding with the questionnaire, validity was checked using 'Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient' test and the value was calculated .894 which is acceptable. It establishes the questionnaire's validity for data collection. Using structural equation modeling mediation is calculated.

## Research Objectives

- To measure the level of emotional labor of employees working in IT firms.
- To measure the level of job stress of employees working in IT firms.
- To analyze the mediating effect of employee wellbeing in the relationship between emotional labor and job stress.

## Hypotheses

H<sub>01</sub>: Level of emotional labor of employees working in IT firms is significantly low.

H<sub>02</sub>: Level of job stress of employees working in IT firms is significantly low.

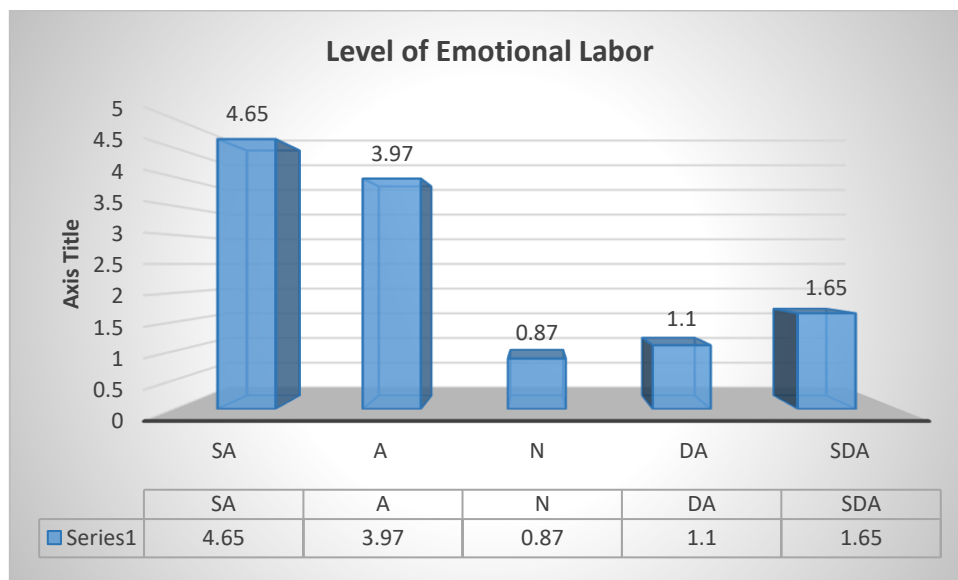
H<sub>03</sub>: Employee wellbeing do not mediate the relationship between emotional labor and job stress.

## Analysis

### Objective 1- To measure the level of emotional labor of employees working in IT firms.

H<sub>01</sub>: Level of emotional labor of employees working in IT firms is significantly low.

Graph 1- Level of Emotional Labor



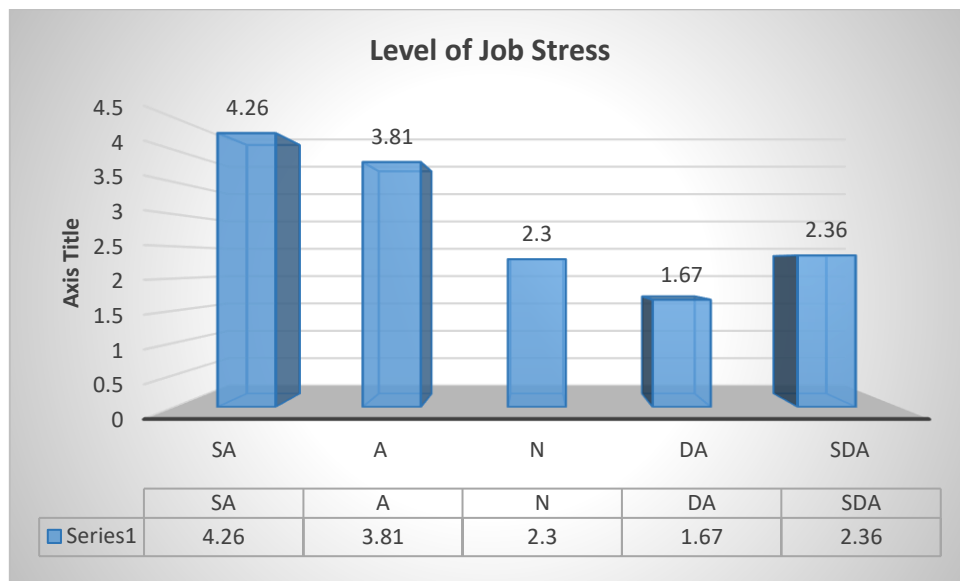
H<sub>01</sub> is observed rejected with mean score  $M = 4.65 > M = 3$  (3 is the mean of 5 point Likert's scale) for 'strongly agree' which is at higher side that strongly reject the assumption that the level of emotional labor is significantly low. The score of SA and A are found quite high that indicate respondents are emotionally strong and stable to meet job related requirements. Rejection of H<sub>01</sub> reflect that, emotional labor is presence and

employees are emotionally intelligent which is good for service related quality and consistent delivery. Also, improves communication with clients.

**Objective 2- To measure the level of job stress of employees working in IT firms.**

H<sub>02</sub>: Level of job stress of employees working in IT firms is significantly low.

Graph 2- Level of Job Stress

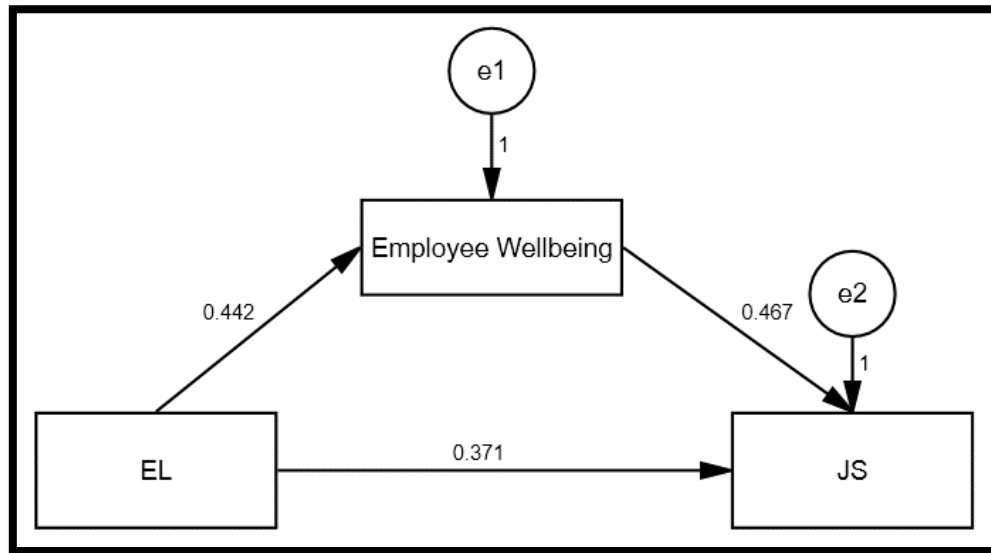


H<sub>02</sub> is observed rejected with mean score  $M = 4.26 > M = 3$  (3 is the mean of 5 point Likert's scale) for 'strongly agree' which is at higher side that strongly reject the assumption that the level of job stress is significantly low. The score of Strongly Agree and Agree are found quite high that indicate respondents are stressed at workplace. Here, higher score of 'strongly agree and agree' indicate that respondents have given higher rating to job stress items which reveal their actual situation in the organization. The analysis clearly shows that employees level of stress is significantly high.

**Objective 3-** To analyze the mediating effect of employee wellbeing in the relationship between emotional labor and job stress.

*H<sub>03</sub>: Employee wellbeing do not mediate the relationship between emotional labor and job stress.*

**Fig 3- Mediating Effect Analysis**



Hypothesis	Relationship	Direct Effect $\beta$	Indirect Effect $\beta$	Total Effect	Sig.	Result
<b>H03</b>	<b>EL → EW → JS</b>	<b>0. 371</b>	<b>0. 467</b>	<b>0.838</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>Significant</b>

H03 is observed rejected with sig. value  $0.000 < 0.05$  which reveal that the test is found significant at 95% level of confidence. Employees wellbeing is found to be perfect in mediating the relationship of emotional labor and job stress in IT firms. Which means, if employees level of emotional labor is high and their wellbeing is also good than they tend to be less stressed and vice versa. Here, the indirect effect score i.e.  $R = 0.467$  greater than the direct effect i.e.  $R = 0.371$  indicate that job stress can be efficiently handled with high emotional labor and wellbeing.

## Findings

Emotional labor of IT employees is found high which means they are emotionally stable and strong to handle work related requirements. Their work efficiency may also be high due to their high emotional labor score. It also reflects that; employees are well organized to behave professionally with colleagues. Furthermore, their level of job stress is at higher side which means they are stressed due to some factors. Despite, higher emotional labor work related stress is presence. However, they are efficiently managing their stress but still, it is presence. Job stress is negative to the organization and reveal that several factors are not appropriate for employees. It may be anything, hence, it is suggested that, organizations must ensure favorable work culture, environment and facilities through well-defined policies and procedures. Mediating role of employee wellbeing indicate that, level of stress can be minimizing through collaborative approach of emotional labor and wellbeing. Employees having good emotional labor along with mental, psychological and physical health can handle job stress more efficiently than a normal employee.

## Conclusion

IT firms must focus upon potential stressors that may have significant effect on employees' interpersonal skills, behavior, work related emotions etc. Also, investigate and measure the level of job stress amongst the employees and arrange efficient programs to reduce them. IT sector is an emerging area across the world and client's requirements are gradually increasing, in such situation employees' motivation and enthusiasm must be high. Work stress put negative impact on their performance and hinder service quality.

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