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Emotional Dissonance and Exhaustion among Library Professionals during COVID-19

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic is having a dramatic impact on societies and economies around the world. The virus is affecting millions of lives worldwide, not only physically but also emotionally in the form of panic attacks, obsessional behavior, anxiety, stress and fear. Library professionals are also exposed to coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) and are facing high levels of stress and anxiety. The aim of this exploratory study was to analyze the association between emotional dissonance and emotional exhaustion among library professionals during COVID-19 and to study the impact of demographics on the variables under study. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The data for the study were collected through both the primary and secondary sources. Online questionnaires were used to gather the primary data. The measuring items used for the study were sourced from existing validated scales and literature. Descriptive statistics was employed to know the descriptive information across various demographic variables on a total sample of 143.The results revealed that the library professionals perceived their emotional dissonance and exhaustion at an above-average level in the present pandemic, that is, COVID-19. It was found that emotional dissonance was significantly related to emotional exhaustion. The results also revealed that the perception of the library professionals towards their emotional dissonance and emotional exhaustion when related with their demographic variables is more or less the same. Besides having theoretical implications that open pathways for conducting further research, the findings of the study may serve as a reference for service practitioners in designing strategies that will ensure superior performance of library professionals in different universities during the pandemic.

1. Introduction

Corona-virus appeared in Wuhan, China, at the beginning of December 2019. The World Health Organization (WHO) named the disease caused by the virus COVID-19, which references the type of virus and the year it emerged. The WHO has declared that the virus is a pandemic. In March 2020, a novel infective COVID-19 was first reported in Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), India after becoming a global health emergency. Series of restrictive measures were introduced by the administration, and one of them was the overall organization of work in the form of 'Work from Home'. The COVID-19 pandemic is having a dramatic impact on societies and economies around the world. The virus is affecting millions of lives worldwide, not only physically but also emotionally in the form of panic attacks, obsessional behavior, anxiety, stress and fear. COVID-19 spreads quickly, is highly contagious and can be fatal in severe cases and there are no specific medicines; it poses a huge threat to the life and has a large impact on the emotional responses of individuals (Huang, Xu, & Liu, 2020).

Library professionals are frequently exposed to working environment stressors that can influence their psychological, physical wellbeing. Frontline care workers against COVID-19 are considered particularly susceptible to developing psychiatric disorders (Lai et al., 2020). Library professionals have suffered an increase in mental pressure due to the heavy workloads they have taken, as well as being exposed to a deadly virus for extended periods. The way they adapt to pandemic decides not just their physical wellbeing, yet additionally their emotional wellness. Fear, anxiety, and depression are emotions that arise in response to stress. Different sources (for example, rules, organizational norms, national norms, superiors, colleagues, subordinates and personal experience) are used in varying degrees to manage stress (Waddar & Aminabhavi, 2012).

Occupations that require significant emotional labor are at risk of being psychologically demanding because of the emotionally charged interactions at work (e.g. colleagues); therefore, workers in high emotional labor occupations are likely to display emotions that may be in contrast with what they really feel (Castanheira & Chambel, 2013). Emotional labor refers to the management of emotions at work in order to meet the expectations of an organization irrespective of what one actually feels (Cheng et al., 2013). In this context, particular attention has been given to the concept of "emotional dissonance," which is a key component of emotional labor. Emotional dissonance is the conflict between emotion rules that employees are required to

show at work and emotions they actually feel (Holman et al., 2008). In other words, it is a state of tension that occurs when an individual perceives an internal role conflict and must display feelings that are discrepant from his/her actual emotions (Andela et al., 2015). Previous studies have shown that emotional dissonance has detrimental consequences for workers' mental health and organizational performance (Mroz & Kaleta, 2016), and it may enhance workers' burnout (Andela et al., 2015). Emotional dissonance is the structural discrepancy between felt emotions on the one hand and the emotional display that is required and appropriate in the working context on the other (Zapf et al., 1999). Thus, emotional dissonance is the discrepancy between authentic and displayed emotions as part of the job. On the other hand, Burnout is a typical syndrome of professionals working with suffering people, which is characterized by emotional exhaustion (feeling emotionally overloaded with work), depersonalization (the negative and callous attitude from the recipients) and inefficacy (decreased personal accomplishment) (Maslach & Leiter, 2008). Emotional exhaustion is the basic individual strain dimension of burnout, which is the most widely studied in scientific literature. It refers to the feeling that the job has drained the subject of all emotional and physical resources (Maslach & Leiter, 2008). Previous studies have revealed that the display of emotions that are not authentically felt by workers is a key antecedent of emotional exhaustion (Lewig & Dollard, 2003).

Library professionals are required to express a wide variety of emotions during their interactions with students/faculty members/non-academic staff. They have to switch between keeping a certain emotional distance to secure a professional attitude on the one hand, and showing a caring, compassionate attitude on the other. This is also known as "detached concern" (Lief & Fox, 1963).

In this light, the present study investigates how the library professionals are using their emotional dissonance and exhaustion skills to overcome the various disorders associated with COVID-19. As far as researcher's knowledge is concerned, there has been no systematic assessment of the effects of COVID-19 on library professional's emotional dissonance and emotional exhaustion. Based on this, the purpose of this study was to explore the current status of emotional dissonance and emotional exhaustion of library professionals working in different universities of Jammu & Kashmir, India. The first section contains the literature review, identification of gaps and development of objectives. The methodology is discussed in the second section, including sample, instruments and data collection design. The third section

contains the analysis, conclusions and implications of the study. This study attempts to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What is the level of emotional dissonance and exhaustion among library professionals during COVID-19?

RQ2: What is the association between emotional dissonance and emotional exhaustion among library professionals during COVID-19?

RQ3: What is the impact of demographic variable on emotional dissonance and exhaustion during COVID-19?

2. Review of Literature

2.1. Emotional Dissonance

Emotional dissonance is the conflict that an individual experiences among expressed emotions and experienced emotions (Abraham, 1998). This conflict among the emotions arises when an employee shows emotions which abide by the organizational rules but do not comply with his actual feelings (Rafaeli & Sutton, 1987). It is the clash among emotions that a person feels and those that are supposed to be displayed according to the organizational norms (Ashfort and Humphrey, 1993). This difference between the felt and displayed emotions results in tension (Hoshchild, 1983). It also results in employee burnout and exhaustion (Abraham, 2000).

Organizations continuously control and direct employees as to how they should present themselves to others while on their job (Morris and Feldman, 1996). They also have high expectations and are very demanding as to how employees present themselves and how they perform emotionally. Emotional dissonance can be a cause of strain that impacts the well being of employees (Hoshchild, 1983). The requirement of displaying certain emotions at work irrespective of how one actually feels is called emotional labour or emotion work (Rafaeli and Sutton, 1987) e.g. Criminal investigators need to display negative emotions (Rafaeli and Sutton, 1987) and employees in the service sector need to display pleasant emotions. Employees mainly use two different strategies to show organizationally accepted emotions which are surface acting and deep acting (Pugh, Groth & Hennig-Thurau, 2011). Surface acting happens when a person hides felt emotions and displays required emotions while as deep acting happens when felt emotion is shifted to the required emotion which makes the required emotion authentic.

2.2. Emotional Exhaustion

Burnout has been defined as a specific kind of occupational stress reaction among human service professionals, resulting from demanding and emotionally charged interactions with recipients (Maslach, 1982; Maslach & Schaufeli, 1993). Although several recent studies have shown that burnout is not restricted to the service professions (Bakker, Demerouti & Schaufeli, 2002; Leiter & Schaufeli, 1996), the syndrome is most prevalent among human services providers (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998). Two core dimensions of burnout can be distinguished: emotional exhaustion and depersonalization (Maslach, 1982; Cordes & Dougherty, 1993). In response to the chronic emotional strain in daily interactions with recipients, human service providers may feel emotionally overextended and drained by their interactions with other people (Leiter & Maslach, 1988). Burnout is a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment occurring in people-oriented and service work (Mroz & Kaleta, 2016). Emotional exhaustion refers to feelings of being depleted of one's emotional resources. Depersonalization is a negative and cynical attitude and behavior toward clients. Reduced personal accomplishment is the self-perception of a decline in one's own competence and self-efficacy. Burnout has most often been studied in caregiving professionals, such as clinicians, psychologists, social workers, and nurses (Van Dijk & Brown, 2006). Indeed, several studies have directly measured the emotional aspects of job demands dealing either with emotion work (Gray, 2009) or burnout (Van Bogaert et al., 2009).   Most studies have found a positive relationship between emotion work and burnout, suggesting that emotional dissonance may predict emotional exhaustion and depersonalization (Aiken, 2002). Demerouti et al. (2001) argue that contribution of job demands and resources to explaining burnout may vary across occupations because these features differ across occupations. Burnout literature usually focuses on general variables that predict burnout and does not distinguish between predictors. The employees who experienced high workloads and reported that their job required them to work very fast were significantly more likely to report emotional exhaustion (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2008).

2.3. COVID-19

The virus originated in bats and was transmitted to humans through yet unknown intermediary animals in Wuhan, Hubei province, China, in December 2019. In December 2019, adults in Wuhan, capital city of Hubei province and a major transportation hub of China, started presenting to local hospitals with severe pneumonia of unknown cause. Many of the initial cases had a common exposure to the Huanan wholesale seafood market that also traded live animals. The surveillance system (put into place after the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) outbreak) was activated, and respiratory samples of patients were sent to reference labs for etiologic investigations. On 31 December 2019, China notified the outbreak to the WHO, and on 1 January, the Huanan seafood market was closed. On 7 January, the virus was identified as a coronavirus that had >95% homology with the bat coronavirus and >70% similarity with the SARS-CoV (severe acute respiratory syndrome– related coronavirus). Environmental samples from the Huanan seafood market also tested positive, signifying that the virus originated from there (Xinhua, 2020). The number of cases started increasing exponentially, some of which did not have exposure to the live animal market, suggestive of the fact that human-to-human transmission was occurring (Huang et al., 2020). Older people, and those with underlying medical problems like cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, and cancer are more likely to develop serious illness. The best way to prevent and slow down transmission is be well informed about the COVID-19 virus, the disease it causes and how it spreads. The COVID-19 virus spreads primarily through droplets of saliva or discharge from the nose when an infected person coughs or sneezes. At this time, there are no specific vaccines or treatments for COVID-19. However, there are many ongoing clinical trials evaluating potential treatments.

3. Rationale

The study is significant in the field of emotional dissonance and emotional exhaustion and is expected to add new knowledge in the relationship between emotional dissonance and emotional exhaustion during COVID-19. The study will assist in design and development of emotional dissonance programmes and will also help in managing emotional exhaustion particularly in the education sector of India. The study will also help library professionals in using their emotional dissonance skills while interacting with students/faculty members/non-academic staff/colleagues.

4. Research Methodology

The present study is exploratory-cum-descriptive in nature, and the sample comprised of library professionals. The library professionals comprised of library staff from different universities of Jammu and Kashmir, India. The study has been conducted in the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir, India. The sample size was calculated according to the number of items in the study. Every item requires minimum 5 respondents and maximum 10 respondents for the determination of the representative sample size (Hair et al., 1998). Keeping in view the sampling error, it was proposed to take the sample of 200. In return, 143 questionnaires were received. The data for the study were collected through both the primary and secondary sources. Online questionnaires were used to gather the primary data because of COVID-19. Data was collected between June 20 and July 5, 2020. Library professionals agreeing to participate were asked to complete the questionnaire through mail and social media (WhatsApp, Twitter and Facebook). The measuring items used for the study were sourced from existing validated scales and literature. The questionnaire consisted of two sections. Section 'A' included demographic information of respondents, while Section 'B' included statements of emotional dissonance and exhaustion. The demographic characteristics were gender and contact with COVID patients.   A 3-item scale was used to measure workers' emotional dissonance. The scale was derived from the Emotional Dissonance subscale of the Frankfurt Emotional Work Scale (Zapf, 1999; Zapf & Holz, 2006). The workers' perception of their emotional exhaustion at work was measured with a 5-item scale based on Schaufeli's scale (Schaufeli, 1996). The notion of emotional dissonance and exhaustion was captured by administering questionnaire with modifications keeping in view COVID-19 and library professionals (table 1 and table 2).

Table 1: Modifications in Emotional Dissonance scale

Original item	Revised item
During your work, how often do you have to suppress your own feelings	During COVID-19 period , how often do you have to suppress your own feelings while dealing with students/faculty members/non-academic staff at your workplace

Source: The Author

Table 2: Modifications in Exhaustion scale

Original item	Revised item
I feel emotionally drained from my work	I feel emotionally drained from my work while dealing with students/faculty members/non-academic staff in library during COVID-19.

Source: The Author

The respondents were briefly instructed as to the purpose of the study, and consent was taken from the respondents after mentioning the study objectives, methods, risks and benefits associated with the research. It was also ensured that confidentiality and independent responding were maintained. Participation was anonymous and treated according to American Psychological Association ethical guidelines in conformance with the guidelines in the Declaration of Helsinki. To capture the responses of the sample elements, a 5-point Likert-type scale (ranging from 1 = *never* to 5 = *always*) was used throughout the study. All the items were framed keeping in view the context of the study. The library professionals included from universities were governed by the principle of simple random sampling. It was an endeavor of the scholar that each possible category, that is, gender and contact with COVID patients, would represent the final sample. Reliability of the questionnaire during pilot study was assessed by overall Cronbach's alpha. The overall 'Cronbach Alpha' calculated using SPSS is .732, which is much higher than the acceptable level in social science research (Hair et al., 1998).

5. Analysis

5.1. Sample Characteristics of the Respondents

Descriptive statistics was employed to know the descriptive information across various demographic variables on a total sample of 143. The various demographic variables which were considered for the study were gender and contact with COVID patients. The analysis of the sample revealed the characteristics as indicated in the table 3.

Table 3: Sample Characteristics

Demographic Variable	Overall		
	Particulars	**Frequency**	**%age**
Gender	Male	95	66.43%
	Female	48	33.57%
Contact with COVID patients	Yes	13	9.10
	No	130	90.90

Source: The Author

5.2. Level of Emotional Dissonance and Emotional Exhaustion during COVID-19

The perception of library professionals about their emotional dissonance and emotional exhaustion during COVID-19 is provided in table 4. A mean score of 4.45 or percentage score of 89 % indicates that an above average level of emotional dissonance is perceived by library professionals during COVID-19. The standard deviation of 0.778 also supports that the results are reasonably trustworthy. Further, the perception of library professionals about their emotional exhaustion during COVID-19 is also more than the above average level. A mean score of 4.53 or percentage score of 90.6% indicates that an above average level of emotional exhaustion is also perceived by library professionals during COVID-19. The standard deviation of 0.649 supports that the results are reasonably trustworthy.

Table 4: Emotional Dissonance and Emotional Exhaustion during COVID-19

S.No.	Dimension	Mean score	Percentage of Mean score	Standard Deviation
1.	ED	4.45	89.0%	.778
2.	EE	4.53	90.6%	.649

Source: The Author

Note: COVID-19: Coronavirus disease 2019; ED: Emotional Dissonance; EE: Emotional Exhaustion

5.3. Cause and Effect Relationships

Due to a dearth of research evidence in the literature to establish the causal relationships between emotional dissonance and emotional exhaustion, the present study is aimed to examine the nature of causal linkages (if any) that exist among the two variables. Relationship has been tested by adopting structural modeling technique using AMOS. The results of structural equation modeling for hypothesised relationship is presented in figure 1.
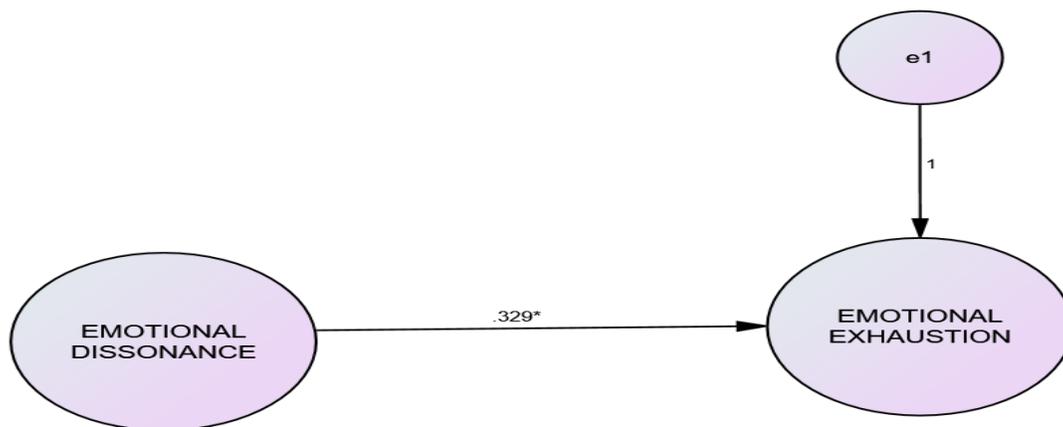

Figure 1. Cause and Effect Relationships among Variables under Study
Source: The Author.
Note: *p*<.05; e1: error term.

The results indicate that the emotional dissonance is positively and significantly related to emotional exhaustion ($\beta = 0.329$; $p < 0.05$) (figure 1). The model fit indices of the model are within the acceptable range (CMIN/DF= 1.285; GFI = 0.914; AGFI = 0.907; CFI = 0.915; RMR = 0.036; RMSEA = 0.037). Descriptive measures of model fit are also presented in table 5 along with the acceptable model fit as given by Chau (1997). The fit measures indicate that the model is accepted with good model fit measures.

Table 5: Descriptive measures of model fit

Measures	Acceptable model fit	Research model
CMIN/DF	<5	1.285
Goodness of Fit Index(GFI)	>.90	0.914
Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI)	>.90	0.907
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	>.90	0.915
Root Mean Square Residual (RMR)	<0.10	0.036
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)	<0.10	0.037

Source: The Author

5.4. Perceptual Gap

The differences in the perception of library professionals related to the variables that have been examined in this study are considered quite relevant irrespective of their statistical significance. Thus, the following section inspects the differences in perceptions of library professionals during COVID-19 about the variables under study. Gender variable has been only considered to study the perceptual gap.

5.4.1. Emotional Dissonance and Gender

The table 6 shows a comparison of male and female group of respondents. Z-test was used because it compares emotional dissonance variable as a whole between the male and female respondents. It becomes clear from the table that the overall mean score of male respondents was high as compared to female respondents. Overall, the mean score observed from emotional dissonance as a whole from the male respondents is 4.53 and from female respondents is 4.37.

Further, Z-test was utilized to ascertain whether the difference in the mean scores of the respondent male and the female library professionals with respect to their perception about their emotional dissonance is statistically significant or merely an outcome of a random variation. The results indicate that the perceptual differences of library professionals are statistically significant when the differences are evaluated on the basis of gender as the *p* value is less than .05 as a whole indicating that the male library professionals are showing more emotional dissonance during COVID-19 as compared to the female library professionals. (table 6).

Table 6: Emotional Dissonance and Gender

Group Statistics (N=143); Male=95, Female=48						
Variables	**Gender**	**Mean**	**Overall Mean score**	**Std. Deviation**	**Z-value**	**Sig.***
EMOTIONAL DISSONANCE	Male	4.53	4.45	.615	2.335	.003
	Female	4.37		.713		

Source: The Author
Note:*p<.05*

5.4.2. Emotional Exhaustion and Gender

The table 7 shows a comparison of male and female group of respondents. It becomes clear from the table 7 that the overall mean score of male respondents was high as compared to female respondents. Overall, the mean score observed from emotional dissonance as a whole from the male respondents is 4.67 and from female respondents is 4.39. Z-test was utilized to ascertain whether the difference in the mean scores of the respondent male and the female library professionals with respect to their perception about their emotional exhaustion is statistically significant or merely an outcome of a random variation. The results indicate that the perceptual differences of library professionals are statistically significant when the differences are evaluated on the basis of gender as the *p* value is less than .05 as a whole indicating that the male library professionals are showing more emotional exhaustion during COVID-19 as compared to the female library professionals.

Table 7: Emotional Exhaustion and Gender

Group Statistics (N=143); Male=95, Female=48						
Variables	**Gender**	**Mean**	**Overall Mean score**	**Std. Deviation**	**Z-value**	**Sig.***
EMOTIONAL EXHAUSTION	Male	4.67	4.53	.545	2.875	.002
	Female	4.39		.641		

Source: The Author
Note:*p<.05*

6. Discussion, Conclusion and Implications

The results revealed that an above average level of emotional dissonance is perceived by library professionals during COVID-19. Further, the perception of library professionals about their emotional exhaustion during COVID-19 is also more than the above average level. The results indicate that the emotional dissonance is positively and significantly related to emotional exhaustion. These results confirmed that emotional dissonance was a significant precursor to emotional exhaustion among library professionals. The discrepancy between the emotions actually felt and those required to be displayed, i.e., emotional dissonance (Holman et al., 2008), produces a state of unpleasant tension which, in turn, may be emotionally exhausting in the long run. The results indicate that the perceptual differences of library professionals are statistically significant when the differences are evaluated on the basis of gender indicating that the male library professionals are showing more emotional dissonance during COVID-19 as compared to the female library professionals.

Also, the results indicate that the perceptual differences of library professionals regarding exhaustion are statistically significant when the differences are evaluated on the basis of gender indicating that the male library professionals are showing more emotional exhaustion during COVID-19 as compared to the female library professionals. The present study underscores the role of emotion work and its predictive impact on emotional exhaustion in a library setting during COVID-19 pandemic. Intervention aimed at involving emotional regulation in the burnout process may be effective in reducing the exhaustion.

The results obtained from the present study have certain significant implications. First, it contributes to the body of existing literature as the variable emotional dissonance and emotional exhaustion have not been studied in relation to COVID-19. Second, if the authorities want to take overall control of the crisis, attention must also be given in developing programs for emotional management of different professionals.

Limitations

One of the limitations is that the research was conducted through an online questionnaire. It was cross-sectional and could not be pursued longitudinally due to the social isolation rules. Another limitation of the present research is that the study was carried out in Jammu & Kashmir only. Including other states will help us in generalizing the results. The study focused on education

sector (library professionals of universities only). The scope of the research could be widened by conducting the study in other sectors as well. Larger sample size is also needed to verify the results.

Declaration

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