Culture Shock and Job Satisfaction among IT Employees: The Mediating Role of Emotional Labour

Dr. Elizabeth Paul Chakkachamparambil[1], Dr Josheena Jose[2]

[1]Assistant Professor, St. Joseph's College (Autonomous) Irinjalakuda

[2]Associate Professor, Christ College (Autonomous) Irinjalakuda

DOI: https://doi.org/10.51244/IJRSI.2026.13010030

Received: 04 January 2026; Accepted: 09 January 2026; Published: 24 January 2026

ABSTRACT

This study examines the impact of culture shock on job satisfaction among IT employees in South India and investigates the mediating role of emotional labour. The results indicate that culture shock has a positive influence on emotional labour and a negative impact on job satisfaction. Emotional labour also exerts a significant negative effect on job satisfaction. Mediation analysis confirmed that emotional labour partially mediates the relationship between culture shock and job satisfaction. The findings highlight that cultural dissonance directly diminishes employee satisfaction and indirectly erodes it through the demands of emotional regulation. The study emphasizes the significance of HR interventions, including structured onboarding, mentorship, resilience-building programs, and inclusive policies, in mitigating the negative effects of culture shock and enhancing employee satisfaction and retention in IT organizations. By shifting the focus from expatriates and international students to domestic IT professionals, this study extends existing culture shock literature and empirically validates emotional labour as a mediating mechanism in workplace adjustment within the Indian IT sector.

Keywords: Culture shock, Job satisfaction, Employee adjustment, Workplace well-being, Emotional labour

INTRODUCTION

The Information Technology (IT) and Information Technology Enabled Services (ITeS) sector has emerged as one of the fastest-growing industries in India, significantly contributing to economic growth and reshaping business practices. It encompasses software development, business process outsourcing (BPO), consultancy, and a range of digital services. Over the last three decades, India has positioned itself as a global hub for IT, with its software firms gaining international recognition and competing alongside global leaders (Times of India, 2021).

From modest beginnings in the early 1990s, with exports of approximately $100 million and a workforce of around 5,000, the industry has expanded into a powerhouse employing nearly 5.5 million professionals today. According to the World Trade Organisation, India's digitally delivered service exports reached $257 billion in 2023, reflecting a 17 percent increase from the previous year and ranking the country as the fourth-largest global exporter, behind only the United States, the United Kingdom, and Ireland (India Today, 2024). Despite challenges such as declining contracts and reduced IT spending worldwide, the Indian IT industry demonstrated resilience, projected to generate $9.3 billion in incremental revenue in 2024 with a growth rate of 3.8 percent (NASSCOM).

The sector's contribution to India's GDP is also noteworthy. Statista (2025) reports that IT accounted for 7 percent of GDP in 2024, with projections indicating a rise to 10 percent by 2025. National expenditure on IT is estimated to reach $44 billion in 2024, marking an 11 percent annual increase (IDC, 2024). Investments in advanced technologies, such as artificial intelligence, generative AI, and cloud services, have strengthened the competitive position of Indian firms. Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), Infosys, and HCL have consistently ranked among the world's top service providers (McKinsey, 2024).

Beyond macroeconomic contributions, the IT industry is a vital source of employment for young graduates. South Indian cities such as Bengaluru, Chennai, Hyderabad, and Kochi have become major IT hubs, attracting a diverse workforce from across the country. While offering career prospects, competitive salaries, and exposure to global projects, these workplaces also present challenges. Employees often confront issues such as language barriers, difficulties in interpersonal communication, and differences in personal outlook when navigating multicultural and high-pressure environments.

The rapid integration of global practices into Indian IT workplaces demands continuous adaptation. For many employees, particularly early-career professionals, this adjustment process can be stressful and overwhelming, leading to experiences of culture shock. Culture shock not only affects employees' psychological well-being but also influences workplace sentiments such as morale, emotional labour, job satisfaction, and turnover intention. Examining these dynamics is therefore essential for understanding how organisations can support employee adjustment and ensure long-term sustainability in this competitive industry.

Statement of the Problem

The IT sector in South India, while offering immense career opportunities, also exposes employees to significant challenges as they adapt to new organisational and cultural environments. Among the primary stressors are language barriers, difficulties in interpersonal communication, and variations in personal outlook. These factors influence how employees interact with colleagues, integrate into workplace culture, and align with organisational expectations.

Such experiences often manifest as culture shock, which directly shapes employee sentiments, particularly job satisfaction. When employees struggle with communication or feel socially and culturally disconnected, their capacity to derive satisfaction from work diminishes. Likewise, personal outlook, whether optimistic and adaptive or resistant to change, plays a critical role in shaping adjustment outcomes within multicultural workplaces.

Emotional labour adds a further layer of complexity to this process. Employees frequently regulate their emotions through surface or deep acting to conform to organisational norms and professional expectations. While this regulation may facilitate short-term adjustment, it often intensifies psychological strain and erodes long-term job satisfaction.

The central research problem, therefore, lies in examining how language barriers, interpersonal communication, and personal outlook contribute to culture shock, and how emotional labour mediates their relationship with job satisfaction among IT employees in South India. Understanding this dynamic is crucial to addressing employee well-being, mitigating turnover risks, and maintaining productivity in the highly competitive IT sector.

Research Questions

1. How do language barriers, interpersonal communication, and personal outlook contribute to culture shock among IT employees?
2. What is the effect of culture shock on job satisfaction among IT employees?
3. Does emotional labour mediate the relationship between culture shock and job satisfaction?

Objectives

- To examine the factors of culture shock among IT employees.
- To analyse the effect of culture shock on the job satisfaction of IT employees.
- To investigate the mediating role of emotional labour in the relationship between culture shock and job satisfaction.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONSTRUCTION OF HYPOTHESES

Culture Shock

Culture shock refers to the difficulty of adapting to a new environment, marked by stress, disorientation, and unexpected challenges (Cupsa, 2018). Early studies defined it as the anxiety resulting from not knowing how to behave in a new culture (Furnham & Bochner, 1982). The intensity of culture shock is often linked to the cultural distance between the home and host environment, with greater differences creating stronger effects. While originally studied in migration and educational contexts, culture shock is also prominent in organizational settings, including the IT sector.

In IT workplaces, culture shock may arise even within the same country due to variations in leadership styles, organizational culture, communication practices, and work ethics. High-pressure environments, fast-paced technological change, and multicultural teams further contribute to its occurrence. Language barriers, interpersonal communication difficulties, and negative personal outlooks are among the most critical triggers. These factors can reduce employees' ability to integrate, lower morale, and hinder productivity (Takeuchi et al., 2005; Shaffer & Harrison, 2001).

The initial period of employment is particularly important, as employees form lasting impressions of the organization. Poor adjustment during this stage can lead to dissatisfaction and long-term disengagement (Watkins, 2013). Studies also show that cultural misalignment reduces employees' ability to derive meaning from work, resulting in lower commitment and satisfaction (Selmer, 2002). Miscommunication, unrealistic expectations, and lack of social support further intensify the experience of culture shock.

Work environment factors such as relationships with peers and supervisors, clarity of roles, and communication styles are central in shaping how employees experience culture shock. Proper onboarding, mentoring, and supportive organizational practices can ease the adjustment process, while the absence of these measures can deepen stress and isolation (Black & Gregersen, 1991; Singh, 2024). Psychological traits such as optimism, confidence, and adaptability also influence how individuals cope, with a positive personal outlook helping employees overcome challenges (Aronson et al., 2005).

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is one of the most extensively studied job attitudes in industrial and organizational psychology, referring to the degree to which employees feel positively or negatively about their work (Spector, 1997). It reflects an individual's emotional reaction to the work environment and has significant implications for both personal well-being and organizational outcomes (Faragher et al., 2005). High job satisfaction is consistently linked to greater engagement, motivation, and performance. Meta-analyses have confirmed a strong relationship between job satisfaction and performance across industries, demonstrating that satisfied employees align more effectively with organizational objectives and contribute to higher productivity (Judge et al., 2001; Locke, 1976).

Workplace factors, including organizational culture, management relationships, work-life balance, and managerial practices, all shape employee satisfaction (Feng, 2023). Conversely, a lack of satisfaction often results in apathy, reduced commitment, and a higher likelihood of turnover (Levinson, 1997; Moser, 1997). Studies consistently highlight that job satisfaction not only directly affects retention but also indirectly influences job performance through its role in shaping employee attitudes (Agada, 2013; Lal et al., 2015). Dissatisfaction, by contrast, has been identified as a predictor of turnover intention (Alexander et al., 1997; Jamal, 1997).

Research indicates that employees experiencing culture shock report lower levels of job satisfaction. Cultural misalignments and communication barriers can create awkward workplace situations, which reduce motivation and weaken employee satisfaction (Doerr, 2004). Culture shock in cross-cultural work settings is associated with emotional exhaustion, dissatisfaction, and ultimately increased

turnover intention (Lin & Huang, 2021).

Culture Shock and Stress in the IT Sector

The Indian IT sector, while a global leader and a key contributor to national growth, presents employees with significant levels of stress. New employees face additional pressure during their initial adjustment period, often leading to anxiety, confusion, and disorientation. Research highlights that software projects are prone to role conflict and ambiguity, which creates strain and intensifies culture shock among IT professionals (Windeler et al., 2017). Stressors such as role overload, lack of peer support, and unclear expectations further exacerbate this adjustment process, particularly for newcomers (Vanitha, 2017; Prathyusha et al., 2016).

The rapid pace of technological change in IT workplaces requires continuous skill development, which adds to the strain. Frequent job changes and mobility, a common feature in this sector, also mean that employees repeatedly confront new workplace cultures, amplifying the risk of culture shock (Forrest, 2018; Sharma et al., 2020). Frustration arises from heavy workloads, time pressures, inadequate resources, and organizational conflicts, which diminish employees' ability to integrate smoothly (Ford & Parnin, 2015).

The stress of adaptation is closely tied to communication and interpersonal relationships. Inefficient teamwork, unclear roles, and weak communication practices exacerbate anxiety and hinder cultural adjustment (Häusser et al., 2010). Proper onboarding and organizational socialisation practices have been emphasized as essential for reducing stress and ensuring employees' smooth transition into new work environments (Hall et al., 2008; Bauer, 2010).

Research Gap

Most prior research on culture shock has focused on expatriates, international students, and sojourners as they adapt to foreign environments. These studies have largely been conducted in international contexts, leaving limited exploration of culture shock within domestic organizational settings. In particular, the Indian IT sector, characterized by multicultural teams, high mobility, and hybrid work models, remains underexplored despite being one of the largest and most dynamic global industries.

Although existing studies acknowledge that culture shock impacts employee well-being and organizational outcomes, there is a lack of evidence on how culture shock specifically influences job satisfaction among IT employees in India. Furthermore, while emotional labour has been extensively studied as a workplace stressor, its mediating role in the relationship between culture shock and job satisfaction has not been empirically validated in this context.

This study addresses these gaps by focusing on South Indian IT employees and examining how key factors of culture shock, namely language barrier, interpersonal communication, and personal outlook, affect job satisfaction, with emotional labour as the mediating mechanism. By situating the analysis within a domestic IT context, the study extends current understanding of culture shock and provides insights into the psychological processes linking cultural stressors to employee outcomes.

Hypotheses Development

Culture shock has been identified as a significant stressor that disrupts employees' ability to adapt to organizational environments. It creates feelings of anxiety, frustration, and uncertainty, compelling individuals to adjust to new cultural norms and expectations. Within the IT sector, factors such as language barriers, interpersonal communication challenges, and negative personal outlooks intensify this adjustment process. These stressors often increase the emotional demands placed on employees, requiring them to engage in emotional labour to align their displayed behaviours with organizational expectations. Accordingly, it is hypothesised that culture shock has a positive relationship with emotional labour.

At the same time, culture shock has been consistently linked to lower levels of job satisfaction. Employees who face communication barriers or difficulties in adapting to new workplace cultures often experience diminished motivation and reduced comfort in their work environment. This dissonance leads to dissatisfaction, making it likely that culture shock exerts a direct negative effect on job satisfaction.

Emotional labour further compounds this relationship. When employees must regulate their emotions through surface or deep acting, psychological strain increases, which lowers overall job satisfaction. Emotional labour, therefore, serves as a critical psychological mechanism linking culture shock to job satisfaction. Based on this reasoning, emotional labour is expected to have a negative influence on job satisfaction and partially mediate the relationship between culture shock and job satisfaction.

Hypotheses

- **H1:** Culture shock has a positive effect on emotional labour.
- **H2:** Culture shock has a negative effect on job satisfaction.
- **H3:** Emotional labour has a negative effect on job satisfaction.
- **H4:** Emotional labour mediates the relationship between culture shock and job satisfaction.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework illustrates the theoretical structure of the study, clarifying the interconnection between culture shock, emotional labour, and job satisfaction. It provides the foundation for analysing the direct and indirect effects among the variables and offers a basis for empirical testing.

In this framework, culture shock serves as the independent variable. It is defined as the set of difficulties employees experience when adapting to new organisational and cultural environments, reflected in frustration, anxiety, and disorientation. For this study, culture shock is operationalised through three dimensions: language barrier, interpersonal communication, and personal outlook. These factors

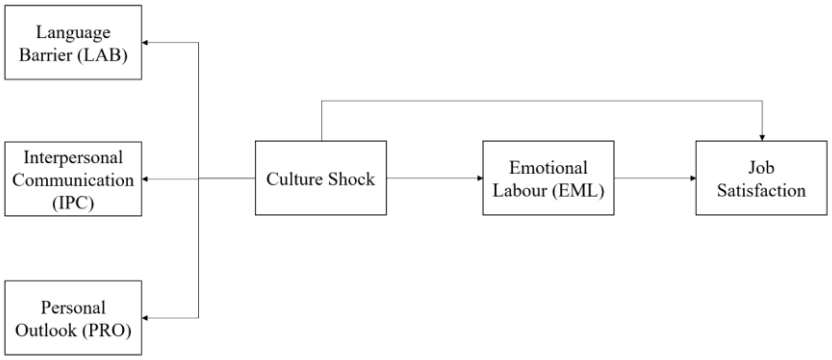
capture the practical and psychological challenges IT employees face when navigating diverse workplace environments.

Emotional labour is introduced as the mediating variable. Employees encountering culture shock are often required to regulate or suppress their true emotions to meet organisational norms. This regulation may involve surface acting or deep acting, both of which demand psychological resources. As employees engage in higher levels of emotional labour, the strain imposed by culture shock is expected to intensify, further influencing job-related attitudes.

Job satisfaction is positioned as the dependent variable. It represents employees' overall evaluation of their work environment and reflects their sense of fulfilment, comfort, and alignment with organisational expectations. Both culture shock and emotional labour are expected to reduce job satisfaction directly and indirectly.

Thus, the framework proposes that culture shock exerts a direct negative effect on job satisfaction and an indirect negative effect through emotional labour. Emotional labour serves as the psychological mechanism that explains how cultural adjustment challenges diminish satisfaction levels.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



Source: Developed by the researcher

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive and analytical research design, with data collected at a single point in time. This design was chosen to capture the characteristics of the IT workforce while simultaneously testing the hypothesised relationships among culture shock, emotional labour, and job satisfaction. It enables the analysis of both direct and mediating effects using robust statistical tools.

Sources of Data

The research employed both primary and secondary sources of data. Secondary data were obtained from journals, books, theses, industry reports (e.g., NASSCOM, IDC, McKinsey), and business dailies to provide contextual insights. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to IT employees, supplemented by discussions with professionals and sector representatives to validate the relevance.

Sample Design

The target population comprised IT employees working in NASSCOM-listed companies across South India, including Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Telangana, and Andhra Pradesh. The sampling frame was drawn from the official NASSCOM registry. To maintain relevance to early-career adaptation, only employees with two years or less of work experience were included. A multi-stage random sampling method was employed: first, companies were selected, and then employees were randomly chosen from the identified organisations. Out of the distributed questionnaires, 430 were found to be complete and valid, forming the basis for statistical analysis.

Instrument Development and Data Collection

The questionnaire was designed based on an extensive review of literature and validated by a panel of experts to ensure content accuracy. A pilot study was conducted to refine the instrument prior to full-scale administration. The final instrument consisted of three sections:

1. Demographic information of respondents.
2. Scale items measuring the study constructs, namely culture shock, emotional labour, and job satisfaction.
3. Contextual information relevant to workplace adaptation.

Statistical Tools

Data analysis was performed using IBM SPSS and AMOS. Reliability was assessed through Cronbach's alpha, while Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) validated the measurement model. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was used to test the hypothesised direct and mediated relationships. Mediation analysis was conducted through the bootstrapping method with 5,000 samples, ensuring robust estimation of indirect effects.

Table 1: Constructs, Dimensions, and Sources of Measurement

Construct	Dimension	No. of Items	Source of Scale / Adaptation
Culture Shock (IV)	Language Barrier (LAB)	5	Adapted from Furnham & Bochner (1986); Alsahafi & Shin (2019)
	Interpersonal Communication (IPC)	3	Adapted from Paul (1988); Wilson et al. (2013)
	Personal Outlook (PRO)	5	Adapted from Aronson et al. (2005); Carley (2006)
Emotional Labour (MV)	—	4	Brotheridge & Lee (2003); Grandey (2000)
Job Satisfaction (DV)	—	4	Spector (1997); Judge et al. (2001)

Note: All items were measured on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

Reliability and Validity

To ensure the accuracy and consistency of the measurement instruments, both reliability and validity analyses were conducted.

Reliability. Internal consistency of the constructs was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. All constructs exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994), indicating strong reliability. The factors of culture shock (Language Barrier, Interpersonal Communication, and Personal Outlook), along with Emotional Labour and Job Satisfaction, all demonstrated satisfactory alpha values, confirming that the items within each construct measured the same underlying dimension.

Construct validity. The validity of the measurement model was examined through Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) using AMOS. Factor loadings for all items were above the minimum acceptable level of 0.60, ensuring indicator reliability. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for each construct were greater than 0.50, and the Composite Reliability (CR) values were above 0.70, confirming convergent validity (Hair et al., 2019).

Table 2: Socio-demographic profile of respondents (N = 430)

Factor	Classification	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	247	57%
	Female	183	43%
Marital Status	Unmarried	309	72%
	Married	121	28%
Educational Qualification	Graduate	211	49%
	Postgraduate	219	51%
Age Group	20–25 years	154	36%
	26–30 years	155	36%
	31 years and above	121	28%
Domicile	Rural	161	38%
	Semi-urban	151	35%
	Urban	118	27%

The socio-demographic profile highlights key patterns within the IT workforce in South India. The majority of respondents were male (57%), unmarried (72%), and under 30 years of age (72%), reflecting the relatively young and early-career nature of this workforce. Educational qualifications were evenly split between graduates (49%) and postgraduates (51%), indicating a high level of formal education across the sample. Respondents also represented diverse domiciles, with origins in rural areas (38%), semi-urban areas (35%), and urban areas (27%). These demographic patterns are important as they suggest variability in how employees may experience and respond to culture shock, which will be further examined in subsequent analyses.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics and One-Sample t-Test for Factors Leading to Culture Shock

SI. No.	Constructs	Mean	SD	MD	t-value	p-value	Rank (Mean)
1	Language Barrier (LAB)	4.35	0.62	1.35	44.64	<0.001**	IV
2	Interpersonal Communication (IPC)	4.31	0.61	1.31	44.17	<0.001**	VI
3	Personal Outlook (PRO)	4.25	0.63	1.25	40.88	<0.001**	VIII

Note: ** Significant at the 1% level

Among the factors of culture shock relevant to this study, **Language Barrier (M = 4.35)** emerged as the strongest contributor, closely followed by **Interpersonal Communication (M = 4.31)** and **Personal Outlook (M = 4.25)**. All three constructs recorded high mean scores above 4.20 and were statistically significant at the 1% level ($p < 0.001$). This indicate that employees often face challenges in communication, language adaptability, and outlook during the workplace adjustment process. The consistently high t-values further confirm that these factors significantly contribute to the culture shock experience of IT employees.

Table 4: Confirmatory Factor Analysis for Constructs

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	AVE	Composite Reliability	Factor Loading Range
Language Barrier (LAB)	0.89	0.67	0.91	0.77 – 0.84
Interpersonal Communication (IPC)	0.77	0.55	0.78	0.57 – 0.85
Personal Outlook (PRO)	0.85	0.59	0.88	0.69 – 0.85
Emotional Labour (EML)	0.90	0.72	0.91	0.81 – 0.90
Job Satisfaction (JS)	0.81	0.57	0.84	0.71 – 0.80

The CFA results confirm strong psychometric properties for all constructs in this study. Cronbach's alpha values ranged between 0.77 and 0.90, exceeding the 0.70 benchmark for internal consistency. Composite reliability (0.78–0.91) was above the recommended 0.70, and AVE values (0.55–0.72) surpassed the 0.50 threshold, confirming convergent validity. Factor loadings for items were well within acceptable ranges (>0.57), establishing that each indicator strongly represents its respective construct. These findings validate that Language Barrier, Interpersonal Communication, Personal Outlook, Emotional Labour, and Job Satisfaction are reliable and valid measures for further analysis.

Table 5: Discriminant Validity among Constructs

Constructs	LAB	IPC	PRO	EML	JS
LAB	**0.82**				
IPC	0.37	**0.74**			
PRO	0.37	0.37	**0.77**		
EML	0.41	0.43	0.40	**0.85**	
JS	0.17	0.29	0.31	0.38	**0.75**

Note: Square root of AVE values is shown on the diagonal (in bold)

Discriminant validity was confirmed through the Fornell–Larcker criterion, as the square root of AVE values (shown diagonally) exceeded the inter-construct correlations. For example, the square root of AVE for **Language Barrier (0.82)** is greater than its correlations with IPC (0.37) and PRO (0.37). Similarly, **Emotional Labour (0.85)** and **Job Satisfaction (0.75)** demonstrate stronger internal consistency than their associations with other constructs. This confirms that each construct is conceptually distinct and measures a unique dimension, thereby establishing a valid measurement structure for the study.

Table 6: Model Fit Indices for CFA

Attribute	Study Model	Recommended Value	Literature Support
CMIN/DF	4.374	1 – 5 (Acceptable fit)	Hair et al. (1998)
p-value	0.000	> 0.05	Barrett (2007)
GFI	0.979	> 0.90	Hair et al. (2006)
AGFI	0.951	> 0.90	Hair et al. (2006)
CFI	0.910	> 0.90	Hair et al. (2006)
RMSEA	0.070	< 0.08	Hu & Bentler (1999)

The model fit indices confirm that the CFA model demonstrates an acceptable fit to the data. The **CMIN/DF ratio of 4.374** lies within the recommended range of 1–5, while the **GFI (0.979), AGFI (0.951), and CFI (0.910)** all exceed the 0.90 benchmark, indicating strong model adequacy. The **RMSEA value of 0.070** is below the maximum acceptable cutoff of 0.08, further confirming good model fit. Although the chi-square test was significant (p = 0.000), this outcome is expected in large samples and does not undermine the overall fit. Thus, the CFA model is validated for subsequent structural analysis.

Structural Equation Modelling (SEM)

Model Fit Indices

The SEM model achieved an acceptable fit, confirming the adequacy of the hypothesised framework. The chi-square/df ratio (CMIN/DF = 4.514) lies comfortably within the recommended range of 1–5, demonstrating that the discrepancy between observed and estimated covariance matrices is at an acceptable level. Goodness-of-fit measures further support this conclusion, with the Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI = 0.918), Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index (AGFI = 0.902), and Comparative Fit Index (CFI = 0.951) all surpassing the 0.90 benchmark. The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA = 0.069) is below the critical threshold of 0.08, suggesting only a small degree of approximation error. While the chi-square test yielded significance (p = 0.000), this is not uncommon in large samples and should not be viewed as evidence against model adequacy. Overall, the indices validate the model's suitability for further analysis.

Table 7: Model Fit Indices for SEM

Model	CMIN/DF	P-Value	GFI	AGFI	CFI	RMSEA
Study Model	4.514	0.000	0.918	0.902	0.951	0.069
Recommended	1–5	>0.05	>0.90	>0.90	>0.90	<0.08

Path Analysis

The structural paths between the constructs were significant and aligned with the hypothesised relationships (see Table 8).

Table 8: Path Analysis Results

Path	β	R^2	C.R.	P-value	Result
Culture Shock → Emotional Labour	0.35	0.12	5.17	<0.001**	Supported
Culture Shock → Job Satisfaction	–0.56	0.32	8.47	<0.001**	Supported
Emotional Labour → Job Satisfaction	–0.41	–	6.22	<0.001**	Supported

Culture Shock → Emotional Labour. Culture shock exhibited a significant positive relationship with emotional labour ($\beta = 0.35$, $p < 0.001$), confirming that higher levels of culture shock increase the need for emotional regulation. Employees facing language barriers, interpersonal communication difficulties, or negative personal outlooks are compelled to engage in surface or deep acting to align with organisational expectations. However, culture shock accounted for only 12% of the variance in emotional labour ($R^2 = 0.12$), indicating that while it is an important factor, other contextual and psychological elements also shape emotional regulation (Grandey, 2000; Brotheridge & Lee, 2003).

Culture Shock → Job Satisfaction. The analysis revealed a strong negative correlation between culture shock and job satisfaction ($\beta = –0.56$, $p < 0.001$). Employees who encounter cultural misalignment and workplace adjustment challenges report lower satisfaction, supporting prior findings that unresolved cultural adaptation erodes workplace attitudes and organisational commitment (Black & Gregersen, 1991; Selmer, 2002). The variance explained was substantial ($R^2 = 0.32$), suggesting that culture shock is a major determinant of employee satisfaction in IT workplaces.

Emotional Labour → Job Satisfaction. Emotional labour negatively influenced job satisfaction ($\beta = –0.41$, $p < 0.001$), consistent with prior evidence that emotional regulation consumes psychological resources and leads to emotional exhaustion, ultimately lowering satisfaction levels (Lee & Ashforth, 1996; Brotheridge & Lee, 2003). For IT employees, the requirement to repeatedly regulate emotions in multicultural and high-pressure environments contributes to strain and diminishes workplace well-being.

Explanations of R^2 Values

The R^2 values offer insight into the model's predictive power. Culture shock explained 12% of the variance in emotional labour, reflecting its role as a significant but not exclusive determinant of emotional regulation. Together, culture shock and emotional labour explained 32% of the variance in job satisfaction, indicating a moderate predictive strength. These results suggest that while culture shock is a major factor, other organisational and psychological variables also influence employee satisfaction levels.

Mediation analysis

The mediating role of emotional labour in the relationship between culture shock and job satisfaction was tested using the bootstrapping method with 5,000 samples.

Table 9: Mediation Analysis Results

Independent Construct	Mediation Construct	Dependent Construct	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect (Mediation)	Result
Culture Shock	Emotional Labour	Job Satisfaction	–0.56	–0.14**	Partial Mediation

Note: ** indicates significance at the 1% level.

The mediating role of emotional labour was assessed using bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples.

Direct Effect. Culture shock exerted a strong negative direct effect on job satisfaction ($\beta = –0.56$, $p < 0.001$). This confirms that higher levels of culture shock independently reduce employees' satisfaction with their jobs, likely by creating frustration, anxiety, and reduced adaptability.

Indirect Effect. Emotional labour was found to significantly mediate the relationship between culture shock and job satisfaction, with an indirect effect of –0.14 ($p < 0.01$). This suggests that culture shock not only lowers job satisfaction directly but also indirectly intensifies emotional regulation demands, which further undermines satisfaction levels. Employees experiencing culture shock are thus doubly disadvantaged: they feel disconnected from their organisational environment and simultaneously expend additional psychological resources to manage their emotional expressions.

Partial Mediation. Since both the direct and indirect effects were significant, the results support **partial mediation**. Emotional labour explains part of the pathway between culture shock and job satisfaction, but does not account for the entire relationship. This highlights the multifaceted nature of cultural adjustment, where both direct stressors and emotional regulation requirements jointly contribute to reduced employee satisfaction.

Summary of Hypotheses Testing

Table 10: Summary of Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis	Path	Standardized Coefficient (β)	P-value	Result
H1	Culture Shock → Emotional Labour	0.35	<0.001**	Supported
H2	Culture Shock → Job Satisfaction	–0.56	<0.001**	Supported
H3	Emotional Labour → Job Satisfaction	–0.41	<0.001**	Supported
H4	Culture Shock → Emotional Labour → Job Satisfaction (Mediation)	Direct = –0.56, Indirect = –0.14**	<0.001**	Supported

Note: ** indicates significance at the 1% level

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

H1: Culture shock has a positive effect on emotional labour.

The analysis confirmed that culture shock significantly increases emotional labour ($\beta = 0.35$, $p < 0.001$). This finding aligns with earlier research which emphasized that unfamiliar cultural environments demand greater emotional regulation from employees to meet organisational expectations (Grandey, 2000; Sánchez et al., 2000). IT professionals experiencing culture shock must consciously regulate their expressions and emotions to adapt to new communication styles, leadership norms, and workplace expectations. This additional emotional demand contributes to stress and affects their overall workplace experience, highlighting the strain culture shock places on employees' psychological resources.

H2: Culture shock has a negative effect on job satisfaction.

Culture shock was also found to significantly reduce job satisfaction ($\beta = –0.56$, $p < 0.001$). This outcome resonates with findings by Black and Gregersen (1991) and Selmer (2002), who observed that unresolved cultural adjustment issues lower employees' ability to derive meaning and satisfaction from their work. In the IT sector, where employees frequently encounter multicultural teams, high workload, and rapid changes, culture shock can undermine workplace comfort, reduce motivation, and ultimately weaken job satisfaction. This highlights the direct detrimental impact of cultural dissonance on employees' sense of belonging and contentment in the workplace.

H3: Emotional labour has a negative effect on job satisfaction.

The results further indicate that emotional labour negatively affects job satisfaction ($\beta = –0.41$, $p < 0.001$). This aligns with the work of Brotheridge and Lee (2003) and Lee and Ashforth (1996), who found that sustained emotional regulation leads to emotional exhaustion, which in turn reduces employees' satisfaction levels. For IT employees, the necessity to constantly regulate emotions when interacting with peers and supervisors, often across cultural and linguistic boundaries, increases psychological strain. This finding highlights the impact of emotional labour on employee well-being, demonstrating that it erodes satisfaction even when employees successfully meet professional expectations.

H4: Emotional labour mediates the relationship between culture shock and job satisfaction.

The mediation analysis confirmed partial mediation, with culture shock reducing job satisfaction both directly (–0.56) and indirectly through emotional labour (–0.14, $p < 0.01$). This demonstrates that the negative influence of culture shock on satisfaction is amplified by the emotional burden employees bear while adapting to new cultural norms. The partial nature of the mediation suggests that while emotional labour explains part of the relationship, other factors may also contribute to the decline in satisfaction. This finding adds to existing literature by providing empirical evidence from the Indian IT sector context, where hybrid and multicultural work environments intensify the interplay between cultural stressors and emotional demands.

IMPLICATIONS

Theoretical Implications

This study makes several theoretical contributions by extending the understanding of culture shock in organisational settings. While much of the earlier literature examined culture shock among students, expatriates, and sojourners, the present research situates the phenomenon within the Indian IT sector, which is characterised by hybrid work models and multicultural team structures. The findings confirm that culture shock not only has direct consequences for job satisfaction but also operates indirectly through emotional labour, thereby highlighting the psychological mechanisms underlying workplace adjustment. The confirmation of partial mediation supports stress-based models of employee adaptation and broadens existing frameworks by showing how emotional regulation functions as a key explanatory pathway. By empirically validating these relationships, the study advances the theoretical discourse on employee sentiments and provides evidence that cultural stressors are integral to understanding job attitudes in knowledge-intensive industries.

Practical Implications

From a practical standpoint, the findings carry significant relevance for managers and HR practitioners in the IT sector. The strong negative effect of culture shock on job satisfaction underscores the need for structured onboarding and cultural integration initiatives that facilitate employees' more effective adjustment to new environments. Since emotional labour was found to partially mediate this

relationship, organisations should recognise the hidden emotional costs employees incur in meeting workplace expectations under cultural stress. Interventions such as resilience-building workshops, mentorship programs, and open communication channels can help alleviate this burden and enhance job satisfaction. Furthermore, by identifying groups more vulnerable to cultural dissonance, such as younger employees or those from rural backgrounds, organisations can design targeted support systems. These findings also suggest that promoting inclusive organisational climates and providing psychological safety can enhance employee well-being and retention, particularly in high-pressure IT workplaces.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the impact of culture shock on employee outcomes in the Indian IT sector, focusing specifically on its direct and indirect effects on job satisfaction through emotional labour. The findings confirm that culture shock significantly increases employees' emotional labour while simultaneously reducing their job satisfaction. Moreover, emotional labour was found to partially mediate this relationship, highlighting the psychological costs employees bear in regulating emotions to adapt to new cultural and organisational norms.

The key contribution of this research lies in shifting the focus of culture shock studies from expatriates and international students to domestic IT professionals, who encounter similar challenges within hybrid and multicultural organisational contexts. By validating the proposed model, the study advances theoretical understanding of workplace adjustment and provides practical insights for enhancing employee well-being in knowledge-intensive industries.

Despite these contributions, the study is subject to limitations. The data were collected from employees in South India's IT sector, which may limit the generalizability of the findings across industries and regions. Future research could adopt longitudinal designs, incorporate comparative analyses across sectors, or investigate additional mediators such as organisational support, resilience, or leadership style. Such efforts would enrich understanding of how culture shock shapes employee outcomes and provide more comprehensive strategies for managing cultural adjustment in dynamic work environments.

REFERENCES

1. Agada, A. (2013). Job Satisfaction and Employee Performance in Organisations. *International Journal of Management Research*, 3(2), 45–58.
2. Alexander, J. A., Lichtenstein, R., & D'Aunno, T. (1997). Leadership and governance in health care organizations. *Health Care Management Review*, 22(1), 21–36.
3. Alsahafi, N., & Shin, S. C. (2019). Factors affecting academic and sociocultural transition of international students in Saudi Arabia. *Journal of International Students*, 9(3), 999–1015. https://doi.org/10.32674/jis.v9i3.673
4. Aronson, E., Wilson, T. D., & Akert, R. M. (2005). *Social psychology* (5th ed.). Pearson.
5. Barrett, P. (2007). Structural equation modelling: Adjudging model fit. Personality and Individual Differences, 42(5), 815–824. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2006.09.018
6. Bauer, T. N. (2010). Onboarding new employees: Maximizing success. *SHRM Foundation's Effective Practice Guidelines Series*.
7. Black, J. S., & Gregersen, H. B. (1991). The other half of the picture: Antecedents of Spouse Cross-Cultural Adjustment. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 22(3), 461–477. https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.jibs.8490301
8. Brotheridge, C. M., & Lee, R. T. (2003). Development and validation of the Emotional Labour Scale. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 76(3), 365–379. https://doi.org/10.1348/096317903769647229
9. Carley, K. M. (2006). A dynamic network approach to the study of culture in organizations. *Journal of Mathematical Sociology*, 12(2), 115–132.
10. Cupsa, M. (2018). Culture shock: Causes, consequences and management. *Romanian Journal of Communication and Public Relations*, 20(3), 45–53.
11. Doerr, J. (2004). The Role of Communication in Expatriate Adjustment *International Journal of Cross Cultural Management*, 4(3), 289–303.
12. Faragher, E. B., Cass, M., & Cooper, C. L. (2005). The relationship between job satisfaction and health: A meta-analysis. *Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, 62(2), 105–112. https://doi.org/10.1136/oem.2002.006734
13. Feng, X. (2023). Job satisfaction and employee turnover in knowledge-intensive industries. *Journal of Human Resource Management Research*, 12(1), 1–13.
14. Ford, D., & Parnin, C. (2015). Exploring causes of frustration for software developers. *Proceedings of the 8th International Workshop on Cooperative and Human Aspects of Software Engineering* (pp. 115–116). IEEE.
15. Forrest, C. (2018). The Challenges of Mobility in IT Careers: Implications for Employee Retention. *Journal of Information Technology Management*, 29(1), 14–25.
16. Furnham, A., & Bochner, S. (1982). *Social difficulty in a foreign culture: An empirical analysis of culture shock*. Academic Press.
17. Grandey, A. A. (2000). Emotion regulation in the workplace: A new way to conceptualize emotional labour. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 5(1), 95–110. https://doi.org/10.1037/1076-8998.5.1.95
18. Hair, J. F., Anderson, R. E., Tatham, R. L., & Black, W. C. (1998). Multivariate data analysis (5th ed.). Prentice Hall.
19. Hair, J. F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., & Anderson, R. E. (2019). *Multivariate data analysis* (8th ed.). Cengage.
20. Hair, J. F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., Anderson, R. E., & Tatham, R. L. (2006). Multivariate data analysis (6th ed.). Pearson.
21. Hall, D. T., Zhu, G., & Yan, A. (2008). Career creativity as protean identity transformation. *Career Development International*, 13(3), 211–231.
22. Häusser, J. A., Mojzisch, A., Niesel, M., & Schulz-Hardt, S. (2010). Ten years on: A review of recent research on the Job Demand–Control (-Support) model and psychological well-being. *Work & Stress*, 24(1), 1–35. https://doi.org/10.1080/02678371003683747
23. Hu, L. T., & Bentler, P. M. (1999). Cutoff criteria for fit indexes in covariance structure analysis: Conventional criteria versus new alternatives. Structural Equation Modeling, 6(1), 1–55. https://doi.org/10.1080/10705519909540118

24. India Today. (2024, March 15). India's IT exports grow 17% to $257 billion, says WTO report. India Today. https://www.indiatoday.in
25. International Data Corporation (IDC). (2024). India IT spending forecast, 2024–2028. IDC Research.
26. Jamal, M. (1997). Job stress, satisfaction, and mental health: An empirical examination of self-employed and non-self-employed Canadians. *Journal of Small Business Management*, 35(4), 48–57.
27. Judge, T. A., Thoresen, C. J., Bono, J. E., & Patton, G. K. (2001). The job satisfaction–job performance relationship: A qualitative and quantitative review. *Psychological Bulletin*, 127(3), 376–407. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.127.3.376
28. Lal, R., Pathak, R. D., & Nair, S. R. (2015). Determinants of job satisfaction among IT professionals. *Journal of Organizational Behaviour*, 14(2), 45–59.
29. Lee, R. T., & Ashforth, B. E. (1996). A meta-analytic examination of the correlates of the three dimensions of job burnout. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 81(2), 123–133. https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.81.2.123
30. Levinson, H. (1997). Job satisfaction and morale: A reassessment. *Personnel Psychology*, 50(1), 1–23.
31. Lin, Y., & Huang, Y. (2021). Culture Shock and Turnover Intention in Cross-Cultural Workplaces: The Mediating Role of Job Dissatisfaction. *International Journal of Human Resource Studies*, 11(2), 100–116.
32. Locke, E. A. (1976). The nature and causes of job satisfaction. In M. D. Dunnette (Ed.), *Handbook of industrial and organizational psychology* (pp. 1297–1349). Rand McNally.
33. McKinsey. (2024). *The state of India's IT services sector*. McKinsey & Company.
34. Moser, K. (1997). Commitment in organizations. *Psychological Reports*, 80(1), 327–338.
35. NASSCOM. (2024). *Strategic review of the Indian IT industry*. NASSCOM.
36. Paul, J. (1988). Communication patterns and cultural adaptation. *Cross-Cultural Communication Journal*, 7(1), 15–28.
37. Prathyusha, K., Reddy, V., & Ramesh, G. (2016). Stress factors in software professionals: An empirical study. *International Journal of Computer Applications*, 140(12), 22–27.
38. Sánchez, J. I., Spector, P. E., & Cooper, C. L. (2000). Adapting to a boundaryless world: Work stress, coping, and well-being in cross-national managers. Journal of Organizational Behavior, 21(6), 665–687.
39. Selmer, J. (2002). Coping strategies applied by Western vs overseas Chinese business expatriates in China. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 13(1), 19–34. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585190110092802
40. Shaffer, M. A., & Harrison, D. A. (2001). Forgotten partners of international assignments: Development and test of a model of spouse adjustment. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 86(2), 238–254. https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.86.2.238
41. Sharma, R., Gupta, S., & Singh, M. (2020). Employee Turnover in IT Companies: Causes and Retention Strategies. *International Journal of Human Capital and Information Technology Professionals*, 11(2), 56–70.
42. Singh, A. (2024). Organizational Culture and Employee Adjustment in Indian IT Firms. *Asian Journal of Management Studies*, 15(1), 101–118.
43. Spector, P. E. (1997). *Job satisfaction: Application, assessment, causes, and consequences*. Sage.
44. Statista. (2025). Contribution of IT sector to India's GDP. Statista Research Department.
45. Takeuchi, R., Yun, S., & Russell, J. E. A. (2005). Antecedents and consequences of the perceived adjustment of Japanese expatriates in the USA. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 16(7), 1224–1244. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585190500143889
46. Times of India. (2021, June 21). India's IT sector: Global recognition and challenges. *The Times of India*.
47. Vanitha, S. (2017). Stress management practices of IT employees: A study in Bangalore. *International Journal of Business and Administration Research Review*, 18(2), 99–104.
48. Watkins, M. (2013). *The first 90 days: Proven strategies for getting up to speed faster and smarter*. Harvard Business Review Press.
49. Wilson, J., Ward, C., & Fischer, R. (2013). Beyond culture learning theory: What can personality tell us about cultural competence? *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 44(6), 900–927. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022022113492889
50. Windeler, J. B., Chudoba, K. M., & Sundrup, R. Z. (2017). Getting away from them all: Managing exhaustion from social interaction with telework. *Journal of Organizational Behaviour*, 38(7), 977–995. https://doi.org/10.1002/job.2176
51. World Trade Organisation. (2023). *World trade report: Digitally delivered services*. WTO.