

Stress and Anxiety
Application to Life Span Development and
Health Promotion

Edited by

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Part One: Stress and Anxiety – Application to Life Span Development

The first part of the book will focus on stress and coping over the life span. This part is concerned with stressful person-environment interactions and the ways stress impacts upon individual and group functioning in different life phases. For example, many children or adolescents at certain times during their life are challenged by stress and anxiety. Sources of adolescents' stress might include school demands and frustrations due to sexuality and stress in the elderly might be caused by negative thoughts and feelings about physical deterioration and social isolation.

Part Two: Stress and Anxiety – Application to Health Promotion

The second part of this volume is dedicated to recent research on stress and emotions in the context of health promotion. Over time, stress and anxiety may lower resistance and make people more vulnerable to illness. In terms of antecedents, side effects or consequences, stress and emotions cause limitations in physical and psychological functioning, leading to a variety of serious health problems.

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Part One:
Stress and Anxiety –
Application to Life Span Development

CHAPTER ONE - LEADING ARTICLE

COPING AND EMOTIONAL LABOR: THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

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In recent years there has been growing interest in the psychological consequences of *emotion regulation*, which refers to the processes by which individuals influence, experience and express their emotions (Gross, 1998, 2002). There is general consensus that an incongruity between felt and displayed emotion is associated with psychological costs for the individual. In organizational psychology, the intentional manipulation of one's publicly observable emotions in exchange for a wage is called *emotional labor* (Hochschild, 1983). Employees, especially those in the service sector, are expected to suppress, enhance, or fake emotions. Such regulation of emotional expression is designed to satisfy the customer or client and, thereby, benefit the organization. At the same time, emotional labor requires effort as well as strategies to regulate one's emotions. This may result in psychological distress and a decrease in healthy functioning as a result.

In her study of flight attendants, Hochschild (1983) states that the company "lays claim not simply to her physical motions—how she handles food trays—but to her emotional actions and the way they show in the ease of a smile" (pp. 7-8). For the flight attendant, then, smiles are an integral part of her work, just as much as her other job-relevant tasks. According to Hochschild (1983), there are two major ways of managing emotions: deep acting and surface acting. Deep acting implies the conscious modification of one's feelings, while surface acting refers to regulation of one's emotional expression (i.e., facial, gestures, voice tone) without changing one's deeper or inner feelings. Surface acting is seen as leading to emotional dissonance, defined as the separation of felt emotion from feigned emotion expressed to meet organizational expectations. Moreover, research has shown that emotional dissonance is associated with stress (Grandey, 2003; Zapf & Holz, 2006), burnout (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Heuven & Bakker, 2003; Totterdell & Holman, 2003) and psychosomatics (Grebner et al., 2003). Other aversive consequences that have been identified in research include poor self-esteem, depression, cynicism, role alienation, self-alienation (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993;

Fineman, 1993), and emotional deviance and detachment (Fineman, 1993; Tolich, 1993). In addition, the discrepancy between felt and displayed emotion may impair cognitive performance (Gross, 2002).

Emotional dissonance was seen as problematic from the beginning (Hochschild, 1983). Not being able to experience what one should feel may cause the individual to believe he/she is false and hypocritical and, in the long run, may lead to alienation from one's own emotions, poor self-esteem, and depression. Frequently, individuals often may experience a discrepancy between the emotions they are required to display and their own private emotions. For example, the requisite display of emotions such as being friendly, cheerful, happy, are often opposite to those a person has which may be neutral or more often, negative and may include hostility, cynicism or anger. The discrepancy between the required display of emotions and the private emotions is called emotion labor.

Another research stream that can be identified in this general area focuses on display rules, defined by Ekman (1973) as norms and standards of behavior indicating which emotions are appropriate in a given situation and how these emotions should be publicly expressed. There is considerable research that focuses on rules governing the expression or display of positive emotions, generally in service-based occupations, such as convenience store clerks (Sutton & Rafaeli, 1988), flight attendants (Hochschild, 1983), food servers (Paules, 1991), those in fast food, insurance (Leidner, 1993), banking, and health industries (Wharton, 1993), litigators, paralegals (Pierce, 1995, 1999), and professors (Bellas, 1999). According to research, the display of organizationally desired emotions assumes an exchange value because it is construed as a form of labor that is performed in return for a wage (Domagalski, 1999). Some of the situations that give rise to emotional dissonance are, when a person may feel nothing when a certain emotion display is required; or, the display rule may require the suppression of undesired emotions and the expression of neutrality, or the expression of a positive emotion instead of a negative one.

Emotional dissonance may also originate from faking in good faith, when the employee accepts the underlying display rule. In a study by Nerdinger and Roper (1999), faking in good faith showed a positive correlation with personal accomplishment. But, when the display rule was not accepted by the employee, emotional dissonance did not show a positive correlation with personal accomplishment. When the display rule is accepted, being able to show the desired emotion may be interpreted as a sign of professionalism, contributing to feelings of personal accomplishment. Faking in good faith may be seen as providing external justification for an emotion given that the company imposes on employees a rule for displayed emotion which the employee accepts. Emotional dissonance may originate from faking in bad faith, when the display rule is not accepted by the employee. Various authors (e.g., Abraham, 1998; Adelman, 1995; Nerdinger & Roper, 1999) have proposed that faking in bad faith has the most negative consequences for the individual.

Cognitive Dissonance Theory

The idea of a discrepancy between cognitions or emotions can be found originally in cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957). A basic tenet of this theory is that the discrepancy between cognitions (which include cognitions about beliefs, emotions, intentions, and/or behaviors) causes a psychologically aversive state that motivates the individual to restore consistency (Festinger, 1957). The occurrence of psychological discomfort is termed *dissonance induction*, whereas the motivated effort to restore consonance is called *dissonance reduction*. According to Harmon-Jones (1999), individuals have a need for harmony among cognitions to ensure unfettered action. To the extent that cognitions are inconsistent with each other, two different ways of acting are made salient, so the individual experiences various degrees of discomfort and is motivated to restore consonance in order to reduce the distress and enable behavior. Festinger (1957) described three main modes of dissonance reduction: Modification of one or more dissonant elements, in particular, the initial attitude or the behavior; addition of new consonant elements; and minimization of the importance of one or more dissonant elements.

Role of Individual Differences and Cognitive Dissonance

According to theory, reduction of cognitive dissonance is related to personal variables and individual differences (Brehm, & Cohen, 1962). It is argued that some people are able to tolerate the aversive arousal associated with dissonance better than others (Steele, Spencer, & Lynch, 1993). Consistent with this view is the idea that cognitive dissonance and emotion labor do not always lead to distress. For example, Zapf (2002) provides data that when confronted with emotional labor, individuals with higher levels of social support report higher job satisfaction than those with less support. Zapf argues that when social support is higher, it may prevent emotional dissonance from interfering with job functioning, particularly, job satisfaction. Other data suggest that when individuals are able to cope with emotional dissonance, even though they may see it as a natural and unavoidable part of their job, which may be emotionally exhausting, they may feel that they can manage even difficult social interaction and this may even lead to increased feelings of personal accomplishment (Zapf, 2002).

The relationship between emotion work and personal accomplishment may indicate that difficult clients are not necessarily a pure stressor, as proposed in the burnout literature. Rather they may be perceived as a challenge depending on what the work task is and whether the level of difficulty is reasonable. For example, a student may be seen as “interesting” as opposed to “difficult” depending on the teacher’s appraisal. It is suggested here that possession of personal resources and individual differences may significantly affect how individuals appraise cognitive dissonance and emotion labor. If a person can cope with dissonance, he may feel he can manage even a difficult situation which may then lead to increased feelings of personal accomplishment on the job as well as greater job satisfaction. This may be due to two different factors:

1. Individuals who have better individual resources, such as effective coping skills and more social support, may experience less cognitive dissonance than their counterparts with less individual resources. And, with less dissonance, there may be fewer psychological symptoms.
2. It is also possible that the amount of dissonance may not differ significantly between those with resources and those without, but those with better resources may be able to deal with dissonance more effectively.

External Justification, Moral Disengagement and Cognitive Dissonance

Research shows that when there is external justification for a displayed emotion, there may be less dissonance. With more justification for the emotion to be displayed, the individual may also be better able to cope with emotional dissonance. For example, in the study by Festinger & Carlsmith (1959), when individuals were able to externally justify their self-discrepant behavior (i.e., acting against their beliefs for \$20 versus \$1) they demonstrated fewer dissonance-reducing behaviors. Thus, when there is external justification for the displayed emotion (i.e., receiving \$20 for acting against their beliefs), there may be less dissonance in the first place. With more justification for the emotion to be displayed, the individual may also be better able to cope with emotional dissonance.

The concept of external justification when applied to a displayed emotion raises the issue of moral disengagement, another strategy that has been identified to deal with discrepant cognitions. With moral disengagement, the individual shifts responsibility from the self to forces external to the self. This tendency to engage in justification processes that distance moral codes from self-discrepant behavior allows for avoidance of negative consequences for the self (Bandura, 1990, 1999). Moral disengagement implies several methods of ‘sanitizing’ a behavior that contradicts one’s own beliefs; these methods include ways in which people either rid themselves of responsibility (e.g., Bandura, , Underwood, & Fromson, 1975) or alter the perceived aversiveness of the consequences (e.g., Menisini et al., 2003). Thus, moral disengagement may be a cognitive tool that allows individuals to defend against feelings of cognitive dissonance (i.e., uncomfortable arousal caused by cognitive inconsistency). In relation to a personal desire for control, moral disengagement could play a significant role in feelings of responsibility. Individuals who characteristically seek out more control, and thereby feel more personally responsible for their actions, may engage in more self-justification in order to avoid aversive consequences associated with cognitive dissonance. Tsang (2002) suggests that even *anticipated* cognitive dissonance may initiate a process of moral rationalization. Also, evidence can be found in the tendency for individuals with a high desire for control to use external justification for failure (Burger, 1992) and to engage in more thorough attributional processes (Stadler & Baron, 1998). This tendency may be in the service of coping with dissonant cognitions.

In a recent study, Nash (2007) examined the relationship between desire for control, moral disengagement, and dissonance induction, i.e., the occurrence of psychological discomfort.

He reports that, among those who score higher on desire for control, persons also scoring high on moral disengagement, experience the lowest levels of cognitive dissonance, compared to those who score lower on moral disengagement. In moral disengagement, the individual shifts responsibility for moral behavior to external forces. There is a parallel between external justification for displaying an emotion and moral disengagement in that both processes seek to distance individuals from the consequences of their behavior. These findings suggest that there is an interaction between personality style and use of external justification for a displayed emotion such that cognitive dissonance is lowest in individuals high on both desire for control and moral disengagement.

Reducing Cognitive Dissonance: Interaction between Coping Style and External Justification

In the light of research evidence that cognitive dissonance has negative psychological consequences, there is general consensus that reducing cognitive dissonance is desirable. Present theoretical considerations serve to shed light on this process. For example, when there is external justification for the emotion that needs to be displayed, cognitive dissonance should be lower. *Faking in good faith*, when the employee accepts the underlying display rule may be seen as providing external justification for an emotion given that it is usually the organization that imposes the rule for displayed emotion that is accepted by the employee. Thus, faking in good faith should be associated with lowered levels of dissonance. As stated earlier, higher need for control interacts with external justification to produce less cognitive dissonance.

Another factor that may influence appraisal of emotional dissonance is that of an individual's coping style. To the extent that individuals employ coping styles that rely on control and autonomy, they may perceive dissonance more as a *challenge* and less as a stressor. And, previous research suggests that labelling an external demand as a stressor is associated with negative psychological effects whereas appraising the same demand as a challenge may be associated with more positive, approach behaviors (Greenglass, 2002; Schwarzer & Knoll, 2003). Further, research findings in a sample of 122 German musicians suggest that when individuals feel resigned in the face of threat, even a coping style involving control of the situation or one's reactions, is ineffective for reducing worries about a rehearsal or performance (Langendörfer, Hodapp, Kreutz, & Bongard, 2006). While control coping is generally seen as an effective strategy in dealing with stress (Carver 1997; Greenglass, 2002; Leiter, 1991), data presented here suggest that control coping is less likely to be effective when the situation is perceived as a threat rather than a challenge.

Positive correlations between proactive coping and measures of internal control emphasize further the role of taking control in the coping process (Greenglass, 2002). Proactive coping, a positive coping strategy, emphasizes an individual's taking the initiative rather than reacting to a stressor that has already occurred (Greenglass, 2002 ; Schwarzer & Taubert, 2002). The proactive coping subscale is one of six subscales of the Proactive Coping Inventory (PCI) that assesses various dimensions of proactive coping (Greenglass, Schwarzer, & Taubert, 1999). Extrapolating from our earlier discussion, it is expected that proactive coping, in combination

with faking in good faith, should lead to less emotional dissonance and thereby less negative psychological reactions.

Role of Arousal

Cognitive dissonance theory suggests that arousal is integral to cognitive dissonance processes. In line with this, several experiments have been conducted that support the proposition that dissonance has arousal properties (Croyle & Cooper, 1983; Zanna & Cooper, 1974; Kessler & Pallak, 1976). Further, the state of dissonance has been found to be related to increased autonomic activity (Harmon-Jones, Brehm, Greenberg, Simon, & Nelson, 1996) and heightened physiological arousal (Elkin and Leippe, 1986). According to Cooper and Fazio (1984), dissonance arousal is characterized as a state of undifferentiated physiological arousal that may be labeled positively or negatively. When labeled negatively and attributed internally (to one's having freely chosen to write a counter-attitudinal essay, for example), this dissonance arousal becomes dissonance motivation -- the psychological discomfort that motivates or drives the attitude change process. At the same time, data suggest that people who misattribute their arousal to an external source do not show evidence of dissonance arousal (Cooper, 1998; Zanna & Cooper, 1974). Therefore, cognitive dissonance may be weakened following misattribution. It is also possible that when an individual can ascribe their discomfort to external causes, cognitive discrepancy is psychologically less trying.

In general, increased dissonance arousal precedes negative affect. Further, lower levels of negative affect are associated with low dissonance situations (Harmon-Jones, 2001). Following the Schachter and Singer (1962) theory of emotion, whereby individuals interpret their level of arousal against personal or situational variables, Nash (2007) suggests that self-directed negative affect may be the label ascribed to the experience of physically aversive feelings of dissonance. Moreover, it may be these negative feelings (i.e. guilt, shame, self-reproach) that impel the individual towards cognitive consistency. On the other hand, if individuals can re-label their arousal so that it is ascribed to external sources, then self-directed negative affect and defensive behavior may be lowered or even avoided.

In light of the above considerations, proactive coping may similarly affect the perception of 'uncomfortable' arousal. An important component of proactive coping is the tendency to perceive demands as an opportunity rather than a threat (Greenglass, 2002). Additionally, proactive coping increases the perception of the availability of resources to assist in managing demands. Thus, proactive coping may incline an individual towards the perception that discomfort, caused by dissonance, is controllable, less aversive, and due to external causes. Faced with cognitive inconsistency, an individual using proactive coping may also manifest greater resilience in the face of demands.

Considering the above interpretation of emotional dissonance as cognitive dissonance, it is suggested here that if discomfort due to emotional dissonance can be ascribed to controllable, external sources, psychological distress may be lower than when individuals perceive themselves as the source of their discomfort. It is suggested further that proactive coping may ori-

ent individuals towards resilience to emotional labor. These are theoretical propositions that can be tested empirically.

Role of Psychological Resources

The role of psychological resources in alleviating stress is discussed extensively in the literature (i.e., Greenglass, 2002; Hobfoll, 1989; Schwarzer, 2000). Psychological resources are generally seen as referring to perceived availability of social support and coping strategies. Research has demonstrated that individuals who engage in proactive coping are better able to use personal and psychological resources to deal with future stressors (Greenglass, 2002). Feelings of self-efficacy, social support, and other social resources contribute to proactive coping. During a stressful time, proactive coping may enable individuals to draw upon personal resources (i.e. social support) rendering the event less threatening or less salient. It is likely, then, that emotional dissonance may be reduced or less aversive for individuals who employ proactive coping. Cognitive dissonance literature informs that the above line of reasoning is similar to a rationale outlined by self-affirmation theory (Steele, Spencer, & Lynch, 1993) that states that individuals, when faced with a threat to their self-worth, often reduce the resulting negative affect by focusing on unrelated resources. This can result in dissonant thoughts becoming less threatening, in a reduction of negative affect, or it can distract the individual from the threatening information. Additionally, it has been found that those who possess greater feelings of self-worth are less likely to behave defensively following counter-attitudinal behavior (Sherman & Cohen, 2006). Research reports that proactive coping correlates positively with self-efficacy (Greenglass, Schwarzer, Jakubiec, Fiksenbaum, & Taubert, 1999) As such, it may be that individuals who employ proactive coping may be better able to self-affirm and thus defend against dissonance.

Proactive Coping, Social Support, and Emotional Dissonance

Cognitive dissonance theory states that a discrepancy between cognitions causes a psychologically aversive state that motivates the individual to restore consistency. Emotional labor, the discrepancy between the required display of emotions and private emotions, can be interpreted as cognitive dissonance. Considering the role of psychological resources in reducing emotional dissonance, including social support and proactive coping, we offer the following interpretation:

1. Proactive coping and environmental conditions: Proactive coping, in combination with external justification, may reduce emotional dissonance and the negative affect associated with dissonance.
2. Cognitive mindset: When individuals employ proactive coping, they are more likely to interpret events as a challenge (rather than a threat) and this may result in lower emotional dissonance and lower negative emotional affect.
3. Psychological resources: With social support or proactive coping, individuals have better access to psychological and personal resources, thus interpreting cognitive dissonance as less salient and less threatening. In the last point it is suggested that greater access to psy-

chological resources, i.e, social support and coping, contributes to increased feelings of self-esteem and self efficacy that help the individual face challenges more positively and less defensively. Rather than avoiding the dissonance, the individual acts in a positive and active manner in keeping with an approach strategy. We hypothesize that this strategy would correlate highly with feelings of self-efficacy.

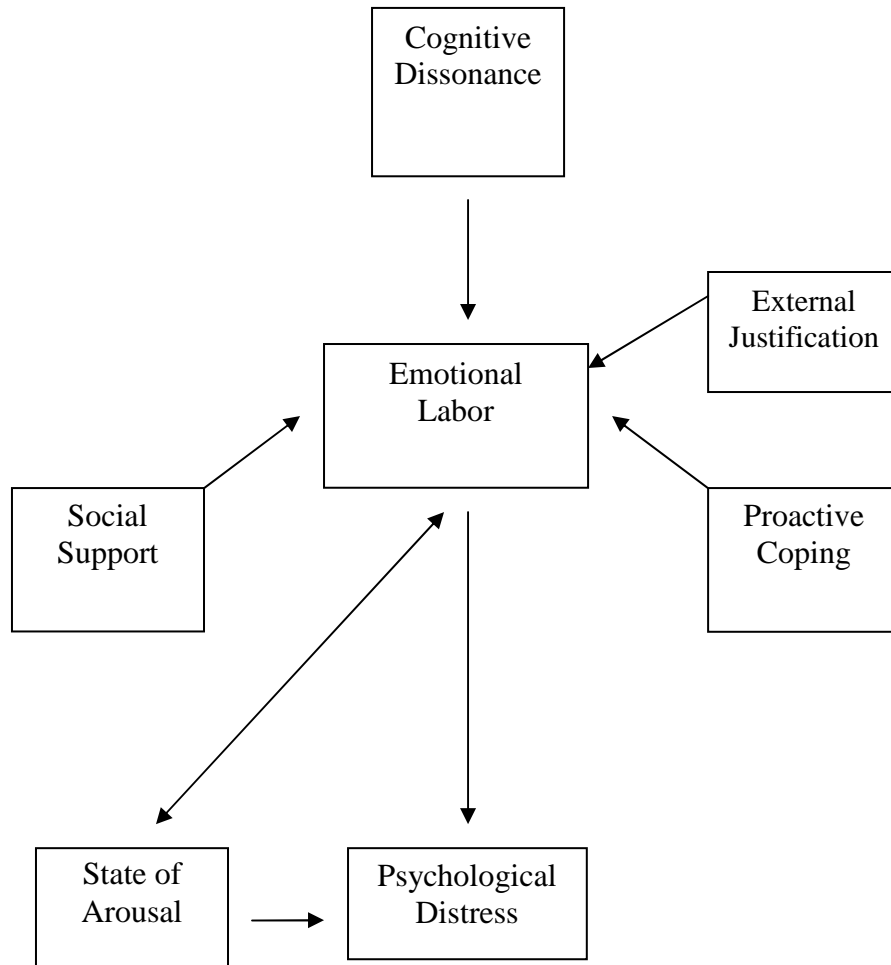


Figure 1-1. Schematic Representation of the Relationship between Emotional Labor, Psychological Resources and Distress

These relationships are presented schematically in Figure 1-1. It begins with cognitive dissonance which contributes to the experience of emotional labor -- the result of the discrepancy between displayed emotions and felt private emotion. Emotional labor leads to psychological distress. Emotional labor and distress are diminished through resources such as proactive coping and social support. Further, external justification for a displayed emotion in combination with proactive coping should lead to lower emotional labor and lower distress. Emotional la-

bor is seen as associated with a state of arousal which leads to the experience of psychological distress.

Conclusions

The interpretation of emotional labor as a form of cognitive dissonance has provided the opportunity for greater understanding of the psychological dynamics of emotional labor. It is argued here that through resources such as social support and coping, individuals are better to deal with the distress associated with dissonance. Implications are that individuals would benefit from learning how to incorporate a proactive approach into their coping strategies including planning, goal setting, and utilization of resources, for example. The interpretation of emotional labor as cognitive dissonance has provided several theoretical implications which can be tested in future empirical research. As such, the concepts discussed here and their hypothesized relationships to each other should serve as further impetus to utilize highly tested and informative social psychological theory for continued research in the area of emotional labor. Moreover, the conceptual analysis put forth here highlights the importance of incorporating variables associated with the organization and social cognition variables to develop a comprehensive theoretical understanding of the dynamics of emotional labor. Knowledge of the psychological processes of emotional labor can be increased through a social cognitive approach that theoretically links these variables in a meaningful way.

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