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IMPACT

OF THE EMOTIONAL WAGE PROGRAM ON JOB SATISFACTION IN SERVICE COMPANIES

IMPACTO DEL PROGRAMA DE SALARIO EMOCIONAL EN LA SATISFACCIÓN LABORAL EN LAS EMPRESAS DE SERVICIOS

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ABSTRACT

Emotional pay can positively influence employee performance by increasing their motivation and, consequently, their job satisfaction; however, further research is needed to establish clear measurement guidelines. The objective was to analyze the impact of implementing an emotional salary program on job satisfaction in service companies; the study presents a quantitative methodology with a descriptive and causal-correlational approach, using a non-experimental cross-sectional design, through the administration of questionnaires to a sample of 260 workers in service companies; The results demonstrated that the association between the study variables shows that the highest observed value ($X^2 = 2059.176$) confirms a comprehensive and robust relationship between emotional salary and job satisfaction; it was concluded that there is solid empirical evidence of the positive impact of emotional salary on job satisfaction, which validates the effectiveness of these programs as human talent management tools.

Keywords:

Administration, business, personnel management, salary, job satisfaction.

RESUMEN

El salario emocional puede influir positivamente en el rendimiento de los trabajadores al aumentar su motivación y, por lo tanto, su satisfacción laboral; sin embargo, aún es necesario estudiarlo con mayor profundidad para establecer unas pautas de medición claras. Se tuvo como objetivo analizar el impacto de la implementación de un programa de salario emocional en la satisfacción laboral en empresas de servicios; presenta una metodología con enfoque cuantitativo, de nivel descriptivo y correlacional causal, con un diseño transversal no experimental, mediante la aplicación de cuestionarios a una muestra de 260 trabajadores de empresas de servicios; como resultados se demostró que la asociación entre las variables del estudio muestra que el valor más alto observado ($X^2=2059,176$) confirma una relación integral y sólida entre el salario emocional y la satisfacción laboral; se pudo concluir que existe evidencia empírica sólida del impacto positivo del salario emocional en la satisfacción laboral, lo que valida la eficacia de estos programas como herramientas de gestión del talento humano.

Palabras clave:

Administración, empresa, gestión de personal, salario, satisfacción laboral.

INTRODUCTION

In today's management environment, service providers face significant challenges related to employee job satisfaction. High turnover rates, demotivation, and absenteeism highlight the inadequacy of traditional incentives to ensure a sustainable and positive work environment. This situation is exacerbated by the growing demand for recognition, a sense of belonging, and flexibility from those who seek not only financial stability but also overall well-being in their work environment (Burgo-Bencomo et al., 2025).

Given this scenario, there is an initiative to implement innovative strategies such as emotional salary, which is aimed at satisfying intangible needs and promoting organizational commitment. However, there are still shortcomings and problems in measuring its true impact and effectiveness in employee satisfaction, which raises relevant questions for human talent management in service-providing companies.

For this reason, research related to variables in international contexts was identified, with Singapore being one of the main countries. The studies concluded that the need for proactive strategies in emotional labor management focuses on reactive measures. However, the implementation of these strategies, such as selecting workers based on emotional congruence and training them in regulations, could prevent emotional dissonance and, therefore, achieve job satisfaction (Lee, 2024). Furthermore, in Israel, it was found that employee wellness activities, such as fun activities and workplace socializing, have a positive relationship with job satisfaction. This shows that it is necessary to incorporate aspects related to recognition and teamwork (Shertzer et al., 2022). In Poland, it is worth mentioning that work commitment plays an extremely important role as a mediator in the relationship between well-being in the workplace and job satisfaction (Sypniewska et al., 2023).

In Malaysia, in order for workers to carry out their activities, continuous communication, free participation among employees, and teamwork for decision-making and active recognition must be encouraged, as these are fundamentally crucial for achieving satisfaction (Rafi'i et al., 2025).

In Portugal, it was found that the lack of empirical studies led to a failure to recognize the potential benefits required by workers, with a lack of positive effects for workers in terms of the implementation of emotional wage programs (Junça et al., 2024). Furthermore, in Vietnam, the lack of emotional support from bosses and supervisors and the absence of a work environment that fosters commitment led to a decrease in job satisfaction (Ngoc et al., 2024a).

In Taiwan, it was found that emotional labor, especially in the service industry, leads to emotional dissonance and,

therefore, exhaustion, negatively affecting job satisfaction. This shows that proper management of these emotional demands is crucial to maintaining the health and well-being of workers (Chu et al., 2012). In India, staff face a variety of problems, one of the main limitations being emotional intelligence, which plays a mediating role in the relationship between emotional salary and, therefore, job satisfaction. Workers with high levels of emotional intelligence tend to experience higher levels of satisfaction, but this is not reflected in the country's companies (Chauhan et al., 2022; Samuel & Das, 2020).

Other research conducted in South Korea and Latvia on the effects of emotional exhaustion, exacerbated by a lack of organizational support and high emotional workload, significantly reduces job satisfaction and increases worker turnover rates (Opoku et al., 2021; Žizņevska & Kamola, 2023).

In Latin America, specifically in Mexico, one of the countries with the highest number of unemployed people, it has been shown that in the service sector there is a direct relationship between worker performance and satisfaction, depending on the behavior and professional development of each worker. However, employment limitations hinder this growth, coupled with the lack of motivation plans (Hernández et al., 2024). In the United States, despite cultural differences, emotional wage strategies underwent major changes for their implementation, which allowed for the consideration of aspects based on collectivist and individualist cultures (Humphrey, 2023). Another study conducted in the same country identified the implications for organizations where effective business communication is fundamentally crucial to achieving improved satisfaction and thus retaining staff (Tosto & Tcherni-Buzzeo, 2025).

Through an analysis of the research, it was determined that the lack of a comprehensive approach that includes emotional salary will result in high employee turnover, which would affect the quality of service and the reputation of the organization. This highlights the fundamental criteria for providing a detailed analysis that allows service providers to implement effective strategies to improve the well-being of their workers and enhance their performance.

Therefore, the research formulated the main question: What is the impact of implementing an emotional salary program on job satisfaction in service companies? Thus, the overall objective was to analyze the impact of implementing an emotional salary program on job satisfaction in service companies. The hypothesis was developed as follows: the implementation of an emotional salary program has a positive impact on job satisfaction in service providers.

In order to develop the theoretical and reference framework for the research, priority was given to the components of the variables where the emotional salary variable

could be conceptualized as the set of non-monetary benefits that a company offers its workers, which contribute to their emotional and, therefore, psychological well-being. Such benefits may include opportunities for professional and personal growth or development, recognition, positive work environments, work flexibility, emotional support from supervisors and other coworkers (Junça et al., 2024). In addition, emotional salary seeks to satisfy the intrinsic needs of employees by promoting commitment, motivation, and loyalty to the company, and is considered a key factor in retaining talent and improving the organizational climate (Nur et al., 2021).

The conceptualization of the job satisfaction variable is defined as the emotional and evaluative state that reflects the degree to which workers feel happy and fulfilled in their work. This variable can be measured through different dimensions, such as satisfaction with the tasks performed, interpersonal relationships in the work environment, working conditions, and compensation received (Ngoc et al., 2024). In addition, job satisfaction is influenced by various factors, including emotional salary, growth opportunities, organizational culture, and work-life balance. Therefore, a high level of job satisfaction is associated with higher performance, lower employee turnover, and a healthier work environment (Abdolshah et al., 2018).

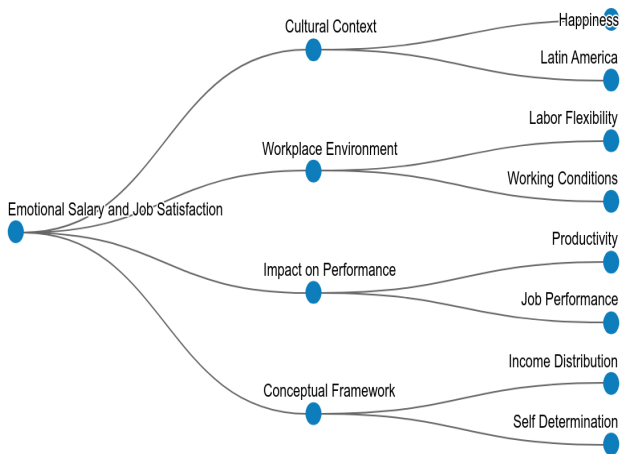


Figure 1. Concept map generated by SCOPUS AI.

METHODOLOGY

The study addressed methodological components that respond to data behavior, specifying a basic, quantitative,

non-experimental, cross-sectional, and causal correlational type. Questionnaires were administered to workers. There was a population of 796 workers and a sample of 260 using the formula for finite populations with a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 5% (Hernández-Sampieri & Mendoza-Torres, 2018). The questionnaires were selected from the Google Scholar database, where a scientific publication on the emotional salary variable was found and selected. This variable is structured into four dimensions: D1 standard remuneration (access to loans, support in the event of unforeseen circumstances, economic growth, personal growth), D2 remuneration for social benefits (respect for workers' rights, worker comfort, work tools, acceptance of emotional salary), D3 work-life balance compensation (incentives and motivation for workers, stability and strength, staff induction), and D4 emotional compensation (vacation enjoyment, career plan, family integration), consisting of 14 questions (4 questions for standard remuneration, 4 questions for remuneration for social benefits, 3 questions for work-life balance remuneration, and 3 questions for emotional remuneration; presenting a variable reliability of 0.912 using Cronbach's alpha, which is highly reliable).

For the job satisfaction variable, Herzberg's two-factor theory was used, which is measured in terms of extrinsic satisfaction and intrinsic satisfaction, arguing the two-dimensionality of the variable, presenting a robust reliability estimated for extrinsic satisfaction of 0.8497 and for intrinsic satisfaction of 0.8302 and for the variable in general of 0.9134, showing a very good level validated through the confirmatory factor analysis model. This questionnaire consisted of 17 questions (7 questions for intrinsic satisfaction and 8 questions for extrinsic satisfaction (Ucedo & Cambillo, 2021).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the study variables, showing a total of 260 valid cases with no missing data, which ensures the consistency of the analysis. The minimum and maximum values indicate that responses span the full range for each dimension. Additionally, the 30th and 70th percentiles reveal a concentration of data toward higher values, suggesting a general tendency among participants to report elevated levels in both emotional salary dimensions and job satisfaction.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for scoring.

		Standard Compensation	Remuneration for Social Benefits	Work-Life Balance Compensation	Emotional Compensation	Emotional Salary	Intrinsic Satisfaction	Extrinsic Satisfaction	Job Satisfaction
N	Valid	260	260	260	260	260	260	260	260
	Lost	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Minimum		8	8	6	6	28	14	16	30
Maximum		16	16	12	12	56	28	32	60
Percentiles	30	15	15	11	11	52	27	30	56
	70	16	16	12	12	56	28	32	60

Table 2 displays the frequency distribution of emotional salary and its dimensions. A clear predominance of the high level is observed across all categories, with percentages ranging from 74.2% to 75.0% in specific dimensions, and 63.5% in overall emotional salary. In contrast, the medium level shows low representation, while the low level, although less frequent, reaches its highest value in overall emotional salary (31.9%). These findings indicate that most participants perceive the components of emotional salary positively, particularly in terms of standard compensation, social benefits, and work-life balance.

Table 2. Frequency level of emotional salary and its dimensions.

		Standard remuneration	Remuneration for social benefits	Work-life balance compensation	Emotional compensation	Emotional salary
N	Low	15.0	15.8	10.0	11.2	31.9
	Medium	10.8	9.6	15.0	14.6	4.6
	High	74.2	74.6	75.0	74.2	63.5

Table 3 presents the frequency distribution of job satisfaction and its dimensions. Similarly, a predominance of the high level is identified, with intrinsic satisfaction reaching 71.5%, extrinsic satisfaction 65.8%, and overall job satisfaction 63.1%. However, a notable proportion of participants falls within the low level, especially in overall job satisfaction (33.5%), suggesting the coexistence of generally positive perceptions alongside certain levels of dissatisfaction within the sample.

Table 3. Frequency level of job satisfaction and its dimensions.

		Intrinsic satisfaction	Extrinsic satisfaction	Job satisfaction
N	Low	23.1	26.5	33.5
	Medium	5.4	7.7	3.5
	High	71.5	65.8	63.1

Regarding the inferential analysis, Table 4 shows the results of the chi-square test between the dimensions of emotional salary and job satisfaction. In all cases, Pearson's chi-square values are high and the asymptotic significance levels are below 0.001 ($p = .000$), indicating statistically significant relationships between the variables. This finding supports the conclusion that the different dimensions of emotional salary are associated with job satisfaction, demonstrating that improvements in these dimensions are related to higher levels of satisfaction at work.

Table 4. Chi-square test between the dimensions of emotional salary and job satisfaction.

	Standard compensation and job satisfaction		Remuneration for social benefits and job satisfaction		Work-life balance compensation and job satisfaction		Emotional compensation and job satisfaction	
	Value	Asymptotic significance (bilateral)	Value	Asymptotic significance (bilateral)	Value	Asymptotic significance (two-tailed)	Value	Asymptotic significance (two-tailed)
Pearson's chi-square	1437.333a	,000	1,441,235a	,000	1,272,909a	,000	1,198,778a	,000
Reasonableness ratio	507,232	,000	572,155	,000	558,627	,000	510,896	,000
Linear association by linear	236,971	,000	246,457	,000	242,519	,000	232,334	,000
Number of valid cases	260		260		260		260	

Similarly, Table 5 examines the relationship between the dimensions of job satisfaction (intrinsic and extrinsic) and emotional salary. The results again show high chi-square values and statistically significant levels ($p = .000$) in both cases, confirming that emotional salary influences both internal factors, such as motivation and personal fulfillment, and external factors related to working conditions.

Table 5. Chi-square test between job satisfaction dimensions and emotional salary.

	Intrinsic satisfaction and emotional salary		Extrinsic satisfaction and emotional salary	
	Value	Asymptotic significance (two-tailed)	Value	Asymptotic significance (bilateral)
Pearson's chi-square	2295.230a	,000	2638.341a	,000
Likelihood ratio	652,480	,000	718,289	,000
Linear association by linear	246,019	,000	252,254	,000
Number of valid cases	260		260	

Finally, Table 6 presents the overall analysis between emotional salary and job satisfaction, yielding a chi-square value of 4059.176 with a significance level of $p = .000$. This result strongly confirms the existence of a highly significant relationship between both variables. Overall, the findings demonstrate that emotional salary is a key determinant of job satisfaction, highlighting the importance of implementing organizational strategies focused on strengthening non-monetary benefits and the overall well-being of employees.

Table 6. Chi-square test between emotional salary and job satisfaction.

	Emotional salary and job satisfaction	
	Value	Asymptotic significance (two-tailed)
Pearson's chi-square	4059.176a	,000
Likelihood ratio	860.099	,000
Linear association by linear	258,233	,000
Number of valid cases	260	

The descriptive results show a heterogeneous distribution in the perception of the emotional salary variable and its constituent dimensions. The statistics show that the minimum and maximum scores for each dimension of the emotional salary variable have wide ranges, suggesting considerable variability in each of the perceptions of service company

employees regarding the non-monetary benefits provided by their companies.

Particularly noteworthy is the concentration of data in the upper percentiles, where both the 70th percentile and the maximum values show a tendency to coincide in several dimensions, demonstrating a possible tendency toward saturation in the highest scores. This asymmetric distribution reflects a polarization in workers' job experiences.

Analysis of the frequencies of the emotional salary variable reveals very significant patterns in workers' perceptions. The four dimensions evaluated consistently show high levels of positive perception, with nearly three-quarters of participants (74.2% to 75.0%) reporting high levels of standard compensation, social benefits, work-life balance, and emotional compensation specifically.

It is particularly relevant that the emotional salary variable shows 63.5% of cases at the high level, but paradoxically, the highest percentage of cases is at the low level (31.9%). This apparent contradiction suggests that, although the individual dimensions are perceived favorably, the holistic integration of the definition of emotional salary is more complex in its evaluation by workers.

Therefore, it should be noted that the consistently low average levels in all dimensions (4.6% and 15.0%) show a bipolar trend in perceptions, where workers tend to evaluate emotional benefits as either clearly satisfactory or unsatisfactory.

On the other hand, the job satisfaction variable shows a similar pattern, but with differentiating variations. Intrinsic satisfaction shows the highest level of positive perception (71.5%), followed by the extrinsic satisfaction dimension (65.8%) and, overall, the job satisfaction variable (63.1%). This descending order suggests that the intrinsic aspects of work, which are related to content, autonomy, and professional and personal development, are perceived more favorably than extrinsic aspects such as working conditions, interpersonal relationships, and organizational policies. Extrinsic satisfaction shows a higher percentage of low-level cases (26.5%), which would indicate deficiencies in the environmental and contextual conditions of the work that require specific organizational attention.

In the association analysis, the results of the chi-square tests show statistically significant and considerable associations between all the dimensions analyzed. The chi-square values range from 1198.778 to 4059.176, all with significance levels of $p < .0001$, which shows robust and reliable relationships.

The most relevant associations are observed between compensation for social benefits and job satisfaction ($X^2=1441.235$), followed by standard compensation ($X^2=1437.333$). These findings suggest that tangible aspects of emotional salary, such as access to loans,

respect for workers' rights, and support at events, have a significant influence on job satisfaction. On the other hand, work-life balance compensation ($X^2=1272.909$) and emotional compensation ($X^2=1198.778$), although also significant, show relatively weaker associations, which would indicate that the more subjective aspects of emotional salary have a differentiated impact on job satisfaction.

The associations reflected in the chi-square tests between the dimensions of job satisfaction and emotional salary reveal that extrinsic satisfaction shows a more relevant association ($X^2=2638.341$) compared to intrinsic satisfaction ($X^2=2295.230$) due to consistent conceptual findings, where emotional labor, by its very nature, is oriented toward improving extrinsic working conditions.

Therefore, based on the research, the association between the study variables shows that the highest value observed ($X^2=2059.176$) confirms a comprehensive and robust relationship between emotional salary and job satisfaction. This validates the research hypothesis and suggests that emotional salary programs are a highly effective business strategy for increasing worker satisfaction.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study provide robust empirical evidence supporting the positive and statistically significant relationship between emotional salary and job satisfaction. The results not only confirm the proposed hypothesis but also reinforce the theoretical assumption that non-monetary benefits play a critical role in shaping employees' perceptions, attitudes, and overall well-being within organizational contexts. In line with previous research, emotional salary emerges as a multidimensional construct that directly contributes to both intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of job satisfaction, thereby strengthening its relevance in contemporary human resource management strategies.

From a descriptive perspective, the predominance of high levels in both emotional salary and job satisfaction indicates that employees generally perceive their work environment positively. However, the coexistence of a considerable proportion of low-level responses, particularly in overall emotional salary and job satisfaction, reveals an underlying heterogeneity in employee experiences. This dual pattern suggests that while many organizations may be implementing effective emotional salary practices, these efforts are not uniformly perceived or distributed among all employees. Consequently, organizations should consider more inclusive and tailored approaches to ensure equitable access to emotional benefits.

A key contribution of this study lies in the identification of differential impacts among the dimensions of emotional salary. The results demonstrate that dimensions associated with more tangible and structured benefits, such as standard compensation and social benefits, show

stronger associations with job satisfaction compared to more subjective dimensions such as emotional compensation and work-life balance. This finding suggests that, although intangible benefits are essential, employees may prioritize those elements that directly influence their security, stability, and working conditions. Therefore, organizations should adopt a balanced strategy that integrates both tangible and intangible components of emotional salary to maximize their impact.

Furthermore, the analysis of job satisfaction dimensions reveals that intrinsic satisfaction is perceived at higher levels than extrinsic satisfaction. This indicates that employees tend to value aspects related to personal growth, autonomy, and fulfillment more positively than external conditions such as organizational policies or work environment. However, the stronger statistical association found between emotional salary and extrinsic satisfaction suggests that emotional salary initiatives are particularly effective in improving contextual and environmental aspects of work. This highlights an important managerial implication: emotional salary programs can serve as strategic tools to address deficiencies in organizational conditions and enhance employees' external work experiences.

The inferential analysis, particularly the chi-square tests, confirms the existence of highly significant relationships across all variables, with exceptionally high values indicating strong associations. The global relationship between emotional salary and job satisfaction stands out as especially robust, reinforcing the idea that emotional salary should not be treated as a complementary or secondary strategy, but rather as a central pillar of organizational development. These results align with contemporary perspectives that emphasize employee well-being as a driver of productivity, engagement, and organizational sustainability.

In practical terms, the study suggests that service companies should design and implement comprehensive emotional salary programs that address multiple dimensions simultaneously. Such programs should include not only economic support mechanisms and social benefits but also initiatives that promote work-life balance, recognition, professional development, and emotional support. Additionally, organizations should continuously evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies to ensure that they respond to the evolving needs and expectations of employees.

Finally, this research contributes to the existing literature by providing empirical evidence from a service sector context, highlighting the importance of emotional salary in environments characterized by high interpersonal interaction and emotional demands. The findings underscore that neglecting emotional salary may lead to negative outcomes

such as decreased satisfaction, increased turnover, and reduced organizational performance. Therefore, future research should explore longitudinal designs and additional mediating variables, such as organizational commitment or emotional intelligence, to further understand the mechanisms through which emotional salary influences job satisfaction.

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Conflicts of Interest:

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Author Contributions:

Cristina Patricia Acha-Ruiz, José Fernando Escobedo-Gálvez, Bettina Theresa Bernard-Tiravanti: Conceptualization, data curation, formal analysis, investigation, methodology, supervision, validation, visualization, original draft writing, and writing, review, and editing.

Ethical statement:

The study was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles of scientific research. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all participants. Confidentiality, anonymity, and respect for the rights of populations considered vulnerable were ensured.