

Culture Shock and Employee Morale: The Mediating Role of Emotional Labour in India's IT Sector

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impact of culture shock on employee morale in the Indian IT sector, with particular emphasis on the mediating role of emotional labour. While previous research has examined culture shock in relation to job satisfaction and performance, this paper highlights morale as a broader indicator of employee well-being. A descriptive-analytical design was adopted. Data were collected from 430 early-career IT employees across 57 NASSCOM-listed firms in South India. Validated scales measured organisational climate, self-efficacy, role ambiguity, emotional labour, and employee morale. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), and bootstrapping techniques were used to test the hypothesised direct and mediating effects. The results confirmed the reliability and validity of the constructs, with the CFA showing a good model fit. SEM revealed that organisational climate, self-efficacy, and role ambiguity significantly impacted morale, with role ambiguity being the strongest predictor. Mediation analysis showed emotional labour partially mediated these effects. All hypotheses were supported, confirming that culture shock influences morale directly and indirectly.

Keywords: Culture shock, Employee morale, Emotional labour, Organisational climate, Role ambiguity, Self-efficacy

INTRODUCTION

The rapid growth has created significant opportunities for employment, career development, and international collaboration. At the same time, it has also generated intense pressure on employees to adapt to fast-paced environments, manage client expectations, and align with the global standards of performance demanded by the industry.

Early-career employees, particularly fresh graduates entering the IT workforce, face the greatest challenges during this adjustment period. They are required to transition quickly from academic environments to complex corporate structures, navigate multicultural teams, and deliver outcomes under tight deadlines. With the post-pandemic adoption of hybrid work models, employees often face additional difficulties in accessing peer support, informal mentoring, and organisational cues that traditionally help newcomers integrate smoothly. These adjustment challenges are frequently described in organisational behaviour literature as forms of culture shock, a concept that captures the psychological disorientation, anxiety, and uncertainty employees experience when they encounter unfamiliar work climates, unclear role expectations, or diminished self-efficacy.

A critical outcome of culture shock is its influence on employee morale, which represents the overall level of enthusiasm, confidence, and satisfaction employees feel toward their work and organisation. High morale fosters productivity, cooperation, and organisational loyalty, while low morale results in disengagement, absenteeism, and attrition. In knowledge-driven industries such as IT, where human capital is the primary asset, morale functions as a barometer of organisational health. However, despite its importance, morale has often been overshadowed in research by constructs such as job satisfaction and performance. Existing studies largely

explore how culture shock affects satisfaction or efficiency, but relatively few examine morale as a holistic outcome that captures employees' collective confidence and spirit.

This paper addresses this gap by focusing on three key antecedents of culture shock, organisational climate, self-efficacy, and role ambiguity, and examining how they shape employee morale. The organisational climate reflects the fairness, clarity, and support that employees perceive in their work environment. Self-efficacy, or an employee's belief in their ability to succeed in their tasks, determines their resilience in the face of challenges. Role ambiguity, on the other hand, represents uncertainty about responsibilities and expectations, which often undermines confidence and motivation. Collectively, these dimensions constitute significant stressors that can heighten culture shock and reduce morale.

This paper positions emotional labour as a mediating factor in these relationships. Emotional labour, defined as the regulation of emotions to align with organisational display rules, has become increasingly relevant in IT workplaces where employees must manage both technical demands and interpersonal interactions. Employees may engage in surface acting, where emotions are outwardly displayed without internal alignment, or deep acting, where they attempt to feel the required emotions genuinely. Both forms of emotional labour influence how culture shock translates into morale outcomes.

By integrating culture shock dimensions, emotional labour, and employee morale into a single explanatory framework, this study makes both theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, it expands the scope of culture shock research by highlighting morale as a broader employee sentiment. Practically, it provides insights for IT organisations on how to design supportive climates, reduce role ambiguity, and build employees' coping mechanisms to maintain morale in hybrid work contexts.

Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

This section synthesizes prior research on culture shock, emotional labor, and employee morale, and integrates it into a theoretical framework that guides hypothesis development.

Culture Shock and Its Dimensions

The concept of culture shock was first introduced by Oberg (1960), who described it as a state of disorientation, anxiety, and uncertainty that individuals experience when confronted with unfamiliar social and organisational environments. While the term was initially applied to cross-cultural relocation, subsequent research extended the concept to domestic and workplace contexts (Pedersen, 1995; Furnham, 2011). Within organisations, culture shock arises when established routines, norms, or expectations are disrupted, leaving employees uncertain about appropriate behaviours and responses.

In the IT sector, culture shock is particularly relevant for early-career employees who transition from academic settings to fast-paced corporate environments. New entrants must quickly adapt to performance metrics, client-facing roles, multicultural teams, and hybrid work arrangements. These adjustment demands often produce stress, burnout, and diminished engagement (Siswanto & Miranda, 2020). Scholars emphasise that workplace culture shock is multidimensional, and this study focuses on three critical aspects: organisational climate, self-efficacy, and role ambiguity.

Organisational Climate: Organisational climate refers to employees' shared perceptions of fairness, clarity, and support in their workplace (Schneider et al., 2013). A positive climate provides structure and psychological safety, whereas a negative climate fosters uncertainty and stress. Prior studies have shown that climate has a strong influence on adjustment, satisfaction, and commitment (Doerr, 2004; Milliman et al., 2002). Within the context of culture shock, an unsupportive climate heightens disorientation and erodes morale.

Self-Efficacy: Self-efficacy, defined as the belief in one's ability to perform tasks effectively (Bandura, 1997), is a central resource for coping with culture shock. Employees with high self-efficacy approach challenges with confidence, while those with low self-efficacy experience anxiety and reduced adaptability. Research has

demonstrated that self-efficacy is negatively associated with stress and positively linked to resilience, performance, and morale (Luszczynska et al., 2005).

Role Ambiguity: Role ambiguity occurs when employees lack clarity about their responsibilities, performance expectations, or reporting relationships. High levels of ambiguity create stress and confusion, impeding adjustment and reducing morale. Empirical evidence suggests that role ambiguity is associated with job dissatisfaction, turnover intention, and emotional exhaustion (Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman, 1970). Within the IT sector, where project roles and deliverables often shift rapidly, role ambiguity is a significant contributor to culture shock.

Emotional Labour

Emotional labour refers to the regulation of emotions to align with organisational display rules and expectations (Hochschild, 1983). It encompasses two key strategies: surface acting, where individuals modify their external expressions without altering their internal feelings, and deep acting, where they genuinely attempt to experience the required emotions. Emotional labour is particularly salient in the IT sector, where employees must manage interactions with clients, collaborate across teams, and maintain professional composure in high-pressure contexts.

Theories such as Affective Events Theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) highlight how workplace events trigger affective responses, which in turn influence attitudes and behaviors. Emotional labour mediates this process by shaping how employees cope with stressors such as culture shock. Although emotional regulation can enable smoother interactions and protect organisational functioning, it also imposes psychological strain, leading to fatigue and reduced morale when overused (Grandey, 2000).

Prior studies confirm the mediating role of emotional labour in linking workplace stressors to employee outcomes. For instance, emotional labour explains how customer demands translate into burnout among service workers (Brotheridge & Lee, 2003) and how role stressors impact job satisfaction (Lewig & Dollard, 2003). In IT settings, emotional labour becomes a coping mechanism through which employees manage disorientation caused by culture shock. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Employee Morale

Employee morale represents the collective degree of enthusiasm, confidence, and satisfaction employees feel toward their organisation and their work (Guion, 1958). Unlike job satisfaction, which reflects an individual's evaluation of their role, morale captures a broader and more collective sentiment that influences cooperation, motivation, and organisational stability. High morale is associated with improved productivity, stronger teamwork, and greater retention (Vroom, 1964; Locke, 1976). Conversely, low morale leads to disengagement, absenteeism, and turnover (Pizam & Ellis, 1999).

In knowledge-intensive sectors such as IT, morale is especially critical because human capital is the primary driver of organisational success. The dynamic and project-driven nature of IT work requires employees to sustain motivation and adaptability. Studies suggest that morale is sensitive to organisational support, role clarity, and peer relations (Lu et al., 2012). By examining morale as the outcome variable, this study contributes to organisational behaviour literature by expanding the focus beyond job satisfaction and performance to a more holistic indicator of workforce well-being.

Hypotheses Development

The literature reviewed above highlights the complex interplay between workplace culture shock, emotional labour, and employee morale. Prior studies consistently demonstrate that organisational climate, self-efficacy, and role ambiguity are among the most significant antecedents of employee adjustment in IT and service industries. These factors operate as sources of stress and uncertainty, contributing to psychological disorientation that diminishes morale.

The organisational climate is particularly influential, as perceptions of fairness, clarity, and managerial support directly shape employees' experiences during the adjustment process. A climate characterised by ambiguity and lack of transparency amplifies culture shock and erodes morale. Conversely, supportive climates reduce uncertainty, thereby preserving employees' confidence and enthusiasm. This leads to the expectation that organisational climate will be negatively associated with morale through the process of culture shock.

Similarly, self-efficacy plays a pivotal role in how employees manage stressors. Employees with low self-efficacy are less confident in their ability to adapt to new environments, making them more susceptible to anxiety and disengagement. High self-efficacy can buffer the effects of culture shock, but when it is lacking, morale is likely to deteriorate. This suggests a negative link between self-efficacy and morale under conditions of culture shock.

Role ambiguity further compounds the adjustment challenge. When employees are unclear about their responsibilities or performance expectations, confusion and stress escalate. Role ambiguity undermines employees' confidence, decreases motivation, and contributes to a sense of disorientation characteristic of culture shock. Consequently, role ambiguity is also expected to have a negative effect on morale.

In addition, the role of emotional labour provides a critical explanatory mechanism. Employees often manage the emotional dissonance caused by culture shock by regulating their outward emotional expressions. While this helps them maintain professional interactions and organisational functioning, it also shapes how culture shock translates into morale outcomes. By acting as an intermediary, emotional labour explains the process through which culture shock affects morale, functioning as a mediating variable.

Based on these arguments, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Organisational climate negatively influences employee morale through culture shock.

H2: Self-efficacy negatively influences employee morale through culture shock.

H3: Role ambiguity negatively influences employee morale through culture shock.

H4: Emotional labour mediates the relationship between culture shock and employee morale.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study employed a descriptive–analytical research design, which is appropriate for examining relationships among workplace constructs and testing hypothesized structural models (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). The descriptive element enabled the systematic documentation of employees' demographic characteristics and perceptions, while the analytical component facilitated the testing of causal pathways through advanced statistical techniques. This design has been widely adopted in organisational behaviour studies investigating employee adjustment and psychological outcomes in dynamic work environments.

Sample and Participants

The study focused on early-career IT employees in South India, a region that has emerged as a major hub for the IT and IT-enabled services sector. Data were collected from 430 respondents working across 57 NASSCOM-listed firms, located in states such as Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, and Telangana. To ensure that the participants were in the critical adjustment phase, eligibility was restricted to employees with less than two years of work experience. This focus captures the group most vulnerable to culture shock due to their transition from academic to professional environments.

A multi-stage sampling approach was employed. In the first stage, NASSCOM-listed firms were identified and grouped by state. In the second stage, firms were selected proportionately to their presence in the IT sector. In

the final stage, employees within those firms were chosen using stratified random sampling, ensuring adequate representation across gender, organisation size, and job roles. This procedure enhanced both the representativeness and generalisability of the findings.

Measures

Validated instruments were used to operationalise all constructs in the model. All items were measured on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Culture Shock Dimensions: Three dimensions were used to measure workplace culture shock:

Organisational Climate: Items assessed employees' perceptions of fairness, clarity, and support within their workplace.

Self-Efficacy: Items captured employees' belief in their ability to perform job tasks (Bandura, 1997) successfully.

Role Ambiguity: Items measured the extent to which employees lacked clarity regarding their responsibilities and expectations (Rizzo et al., 1970).

Emotional Labour: Emotional labour was measured using items adapted from Hochschild (1983) and refined by Grandey (2000). The items assessed both surface acting (faking or suppressing emotions) and deep acting (genuine alignment with required emotions).

Employee Morale: Morale was assessed using a scale originally conceptualised by Guion (1958) and further developed in organisational psychology research. Items reflected employees' levels of enthusiasm, confidence, and satisfaction with their work and organisation.

The instruments were pre-tested to ensure clarity and contextual suitability. Cronbach's alpha values obtained during pilot testing exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994), confirming acceptable internal consistency.

Data Collection Procedure

Structured questionnaires were distributed both electronically and in hard copy to employees in the selected firms. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were assured of anonymity and confidentiality to reduce social desirability bias. Ethical clearance was obtained from the affiliated institution prior to the commencement of data collection. A total of 500 questionnaires were distributed, from which 430 usable responses were obtained, resulting in a response rate of 86%.

Data Analysis Tools

The data analysis followed a two-stage approach. First, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted to validate the measurement models, ensuring reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Reliability was assessed through Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR), while validity was established using Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and the Fornell–Larcker criterion.

Second, Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was employed to test the hypothesised relationships among constructs. SEM allowed for simultaneous estimation of direct and indirect effects, providing a robust test of the proposed mediation model. Bootstrapping procedures were used to assess the significance of mediation effects. At the same time, model fit was evaluated using indices such as the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), the Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI), the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), and the χ^2/df ratio (Hair et al., 2019). All analyses were conducted using AMOS software.

RESULTS

Table 1: The reliability and validity results for the constructs

| Construct | Cronbach's α | AVE | CR |
|------------------------|---------------------|------|------|
| Organisational Climate | 0.80 | 0.73 | 0.89 |
| Self-Efficacy | 0.82 | 0.57 | 0.84 |
| Role Ambiguity | 0.84 | 0.54 | 0.85 |
| Employee Morale | 0.86 | 0.61 | 0.87 |

Cronbach's alpha values for all four constructs exceed the threshold of 0.70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994), ranging from 0.80 for Organisational Climate to 0.86 for Employee Morale. This indicates a high level of internal consistency across all measurement items. Composite Reliability (CR) values are also above the recommended level of 0.80 (Hair et al., 2019), confirming stability and measurement precision. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for all constructs surpass the minimum acceptable criterion of 0.50, with Organisational Climate recording the highest AVE (0.73) and Role Ambiguity recording 0.54, both of which are sufficient for convergent validity. Collectively, these results establish that the measurement model is both reliable and valid, justifying further structural analysis.

Table 2: CFA model fit indices

| Index | Value | Threshold |
|-------------|-------|---------------------|
| χ^2/df | 4.947 | ≤ 5 acceptable |
| GFI | 0.901 | > 0.90 |
| AGFI | 0.911 | > 0.90 |
| CFI | 0.941 | > 0.90 |
| RMSEA | 0.078 | < 0.08 acceptable |

The χ^2/df ratio of 4.947 falls within the acceptable range of 1 to 5, indicating a reasonable fit (Hair et al., 1998). The Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI = 0.901) and Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index (AGFI = 0.911) both exceed the recommended threshold of 0.90, indicating that the model adequately represents the observed data. The Comparative Fit Index (CFI = 0.941) further confirms strong model fit, as it surpasses the conventional cut-off of 0.90. The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA = 0.078) is below the critical value of 0.08, signifying an acceptable error of approximation. Together, these indices indicate that the measurement model demonstrates a good overall fit, thereby validating the structural paths tested in subsequent SEM analysis.

Table 3: SEM path coefficients and R² values

| Path | Coefficient (β) | p-value |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|----------|
| OC \rightarrow Morale | -0.32 | < 0.01 |
| SE \rightarrow Morale | -0.28 | < 0.05 |

| | | |
|-------------|-------|-------|
| RA → Morale | -0.35 | <0.01 |
|-------------|-------|-------|

Organisational Climate shows a significant negative effect on morale ($\beta = -0.32, p < 0.01$), indicating that unsupportive climates substantially reduce employees' confidence and enthusiasm. Self-efficacy also negatively influences morale ($\beta = -0.28, p < 0.05$), suggesting that lower self-belief diminishes resilience and engagement. Role Ambiguity emerges as the strongest predictor ($\beta = -0.35, p < 0.01$), underscoring the importance of role clarity in sustaining morale. The model explains 47 percent of the variance ($R^2 = 0.47$) in employee morale, representing a moderate to strong explanatory power in behavioural research (Cohen, 1988). These results provide robust evidence that culture shock dimensions are significant determinants of morale.

Table 4: Mediation results using bootstrapping

| Path | Direct Effect | Indirect Effect | Result |
|------------------|---------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| OC → EL → Morale | -0.18 | -0.14 | Partial Mediation |
| SE → EL → Morale | -0.12 | -0.10 | Partial Mediation |
| RA → EL → Morale | -0.20 | -0.16 | Partial Mediation |

Emotional labour partially mediates the relationships between all three dimensions of culture shock and employee morale. Specifically, the indirect effect of Organisational Climate on morale through emotional labour is significant (direct effect = -0.18, indirect effect = -0.14), suggesting that employees regulate their emotions when confronted with unsupportive climates, which in turn impacts morale. Similarly, Self-Efficacy influences morale indirectly through emotional labour (direct effect = -0.12, indirect effect = -0.10), highlighting the role of confidence in shaping how employees emotionally adjust to stressors. Role Ambiguity demonstrates the strongest mediation (direct effect = -0.20, indirect effect = -0.16), emphasising that unclear responsibilities not only directly reduce morale but also require emotional regulation, thereby compounding the negative impact. The presence of both significant direct and indirect effects indicates partial mediation, meaning that emotional labour explains part, but not all, of the relationship between culture shock and morale.

Table 5: Hypothesis testing results

| Hypothesis | Statement | Result |
|------------|--|-----------|
| H1 | OC negatively influences morale | Supported |
| H2 | SE negatively influences morale | Supported |
| H3 | RA negatively influences morale | Supported |
| H4 | EL mediates the relationship between CS and morale | Supported |

H1 predicted that organisational climate would negatively influence employee morale through culture shock. This finding was supported by results showing a significant negative path coefficient ($\beta = -0.32, p < 0.01$). The finding indicates that unsupportive or unclear organisational climates erode employees' enthusiasm and confidence, thereby lowering morale.

H2 proposed that self-efficacy would negatively influence morale under conditions of culture shock. This hypothesis was also supported ($\beta = -0.28, p < 0.05$), demonstrating that employees with low confidence in their abilities are more vulnerable to reduced morale when faced with adjustment challenges.

H3 argued that role ambiguity would negatively affect morale. The results strongly supported this hypothesis ($\beta = -0.35, p < 0.01$), highlighting role ambiguity as the most influential predictor among the three culture shock dimensions. Employees lacking clarity about their responsibilities experience heightened stress, which directly diminishes morale.

H4 tested the mediating role of emotional labour. The mediation analysis confirmed partial mediation across all three dimensions, indicating that employees employ emotional regulation strategies (surface or deep acting) to cope with stressors, which in turn influence their morale. This underscores the dual pathway through which culture shock affects outcomes: directly by lowering morale and indirectly by forcing employees to expend emotional resources.

FINDINGS

The study confirmed that the constructs employed were both reliable and valid, establishing confidence in the measures used to capture organisational climate, self-efficacy, role ambiguity, emotional labour, and employee morale. The measurement model demonstrated acceptable levels of consistency, showing that the chosen scales accurately reflected the intended concepts.

The confirmatory factor analysis further indicated that the model fit was satisfactory, suggesting that the relationships between the constructs were well aligned with the theoretical expectations. This ensures that the framework is suitable for analyzing the impact of culture shock on employee morale.

The results of the structural equation modelling revealed that organisational climate, self-efficacy, and role ambiguity each had a significant influence on employee morale. These findings highlight that the work environment, individual confidence levels, and clarity of roles all play a crucial part in shaping how employees experience and sustain morale within the IT sector. Among the three, role ambiguity emerged as especially important, emphasising that uncertainty in responsibilities can erode morale more strongly than other factors.

The mediation analysis demonstrated that emotional labour partially mediated the relationships between culture shock dimensions and morale. This indicates that employees are not only directly affected by culture shock but also indirectly influenced through the emotional regulation required to manage its impact. Emotional labour, therefore, acts as a channel through which culture shock exerts additional pressure on morale.

Culture shock exerts a significant negative influence on employee morale within the Indian IT sector. When employees encounter unsupportive organisational climates, reduced confidence in their abilities, or unclear role expectations, their levels of enthusiasm, confidence, and satisfaction decline. This highlights that morale, as a broader collective sentiment, is highly sensitive to the disorientation caused by culture shock.

Among the predictors examined, organisational climate and role ambiguity emerged as particularly strong determinants of morale. This suggests that a workplace environment characterised by fairness, transparency, and managerial support plays a crucial role in sustaining employee morale. Similarly, the clarity of job responsibilities and expectations is essential in helping employees feel secure and confident in their work. These findings emphasise the importance of structured work settings and clearly defined roles in reducing uncertainty and building positive morale.

The study also identified emotional labour as a partial mediator in the relationship between culture shock and morale. Employees who encounter stressful or unclear situations are often compelled to regulate their emotional expressions in order to maintain professional interactions. While this form of emotional management may allow employees to cope with immediate challenges, it also imposes additional psychological strain. This dual role of emotional labour highlights the hidden costs of adjustment, as employees must expend both cognitive and emotional resources to sustain morale.

These results are consistent with earlier studies that link maladjustment to reduced commitment and enthusiasm (Furnham, 2011). However, this research extends existing literature by focusing on morale rather than job

satisfaction alone. Morale captures a broader outlook that encompasses employees' overall spirit, cooperation, and collective energy, making it a critical indicator of organisational health. By integrating culture shock, emotional labour, and morale into a single explanatory framework, this study contributes to organisational behaviour theory by broadening the scope of outcomes considered in workplace adjustment research.

From a practical perspective, the findings underscore the importance of IT organisations in creating supportive environments and reducing role ambiguity. By investing in clear communication, fair policies, and managerial guidance, firms can reduce the intensity of culture shock and its negative impact on morale. Furthermore, organisations should recognise the burden of emotional labour and provide resources such as counselling, mentoring, and training in emotional regulation. These interventions not only help employees cope with culture shock but also sustain long-term morale, which is essential for retention and productivity in knowledge-driven industries.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study aimed to investigate the impact of culture shock on employee morale in the Indian IT sector, with a specific focus on the mediating role of emotional labor. The results clearly demonstrate that culture shock significantly reduces morale, as employees faced with unsupportive organisational climates, low self-efficacy, or ambiguous role expectations experience disorientation and a decline in enthusiasm, confidence, and overall workplace satisfaction. By confirming that emotional labour partially mediates these relationships, the study sheds light on the dual pathways through which culture shock exerts its influence, both directly by undermining morale and indirectly by compelling employees to regulate their emotional expressions as a coping mechanism.

The study contributes to organisational behaviour literature in several important ways. First, it extends the concept of culture shock beyond its traditional association with cross-cultural adjustment to highlight its relevance in domestic organisational settings, particularly in fast-paced industries such as IT. Second, it positions employee morale as a central outcome variable, moving beyond the narrower constructs of job satisfaction and performance that dominate prior research. By doing so, it broadens the theoretical lens to include a more collective and holistic measure of employee well-being. Third, the integration of emotional labour as a mediating mechanism advances theory by demonstrating that coping strategies are not simply outcomes of culture shock but also processes that shape its eventual impact on morale.

From a managerial perspective, the findings underscore the urgent need for IT organisations to address the root causes of culture shock. A positive organisational climate, built on fairness, transparency, and supportive leadership, is vital in sustaining morale. Similarly, clarifying job responsibilities and reducing role ambiguity can help employees feel more secure and confident in their contributions. The results also highlight the hidden psychological burden of emotional labour. Managers must be aware that while employees may appear to be coping outwardly, the emotional regulation required to maintain professionalism can deplete energy and reduce morale over time. Interventions such as mentorship programs, counselling services, and training in emotional regulation can help employees manage these demands more effectively.

Although this study provides robust evidence for the proposed framework, several avenues for future inquiry remain open. First, the research was conducted in the Indian IT sector, a knowledge-intensive and highly globalised industry; future studies could extend the model to other sectors, such as healthcare, education, or manufacturing, to examine whether the relationships hold across different organisational contexts. Second, longitudinal research could provide deeper insights into how culture shock and morale evolve, particularly as employees transition from entry-level roles to more experienced positions. Third, future studies could explore the role of moderating factors such as leadership style, organisational support systems, or hybrid work arrangements, which may either amplify or buffer the impact of culture shock on morale.

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