

A STUDY OF EMPLOYEE JOB SATISFACTION IN CALL CENTRES IN INDIA

NAGARAJ SUBBA RAO

Research Scholar, Dept. of Management,
Sri Satya Sai University of Technology & Medical Sciences,
Sehore, Bhopal-Indore Road, MadhyaPradesh, India

Dr. INDRAJIT SINGH YADAV

Research Guide, Dept. of Management,
Sri Satya Sai University of Technology & Medical Sciences,
Sehore, Bhopal-Indore Road, MadhyaPradesh, India

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to examine the significance of job satisfaction in call centre on employees. The approach implemented in this study was a quantitative research. This was conducted via self-designed questionnaire, based on critical analysis of the literature available on Job satisfaction in call centres. The findings suggest that high stress, odd working time, and work environment have a negative impact on employees' job satisfaction. Health issues are created in the call centres. Although there have been many works presented on call centres over the years and the sector has matured, the business still seems to struggle with similar problems. In the wake of social media and other communication channels, call centres might have to go through changes. In order to progress managers must understand the value of their employee and their impact on the customer. The findings of this paper may contribute to employee or a manager working in the call centre environment who is interested in transforming their centres into customer contact centres, and improving circumstances for employees and customers. The research may also contribute the already existing literature.

KEYWORDS-- Job Satisfaction, Call Centre, Work Environment

INTRODUCTION

The Call Centre Association (1999) defines CALL CENTRES as “a physical or virtual operation within an organization in which a managed group of people spend most of their time doing business by telephone, usually working in a computer-automated environment”. Nothing has changed in the call centre industry over the past ten years. Employees still suffer from over pressurised environment, constant monitoring, and lack of empowerment, high stress, low job satisfaction, lack of motivation and a need to leave the job; but difficulties in doing so. Where are the call centres going wrong? Is there no vision on how to make them better? Make them better not only for employees but also for customers. It is also a struggle for customers to constantly fight with automated voice systems, or undertrained agents that would rather transfer the call because if they try to find an answer to a customer's problem their daily performance and so any related bonus will be negatively

affected. Call centres industry continues to grow and expand with recent changes in communication channels, customers can contact via emails, SMS or even social media. Customers' expectations have also elaborated, as they are looking for better, faster and cheaper service. Managers are working on ideas how to cope with this demand, yet sometimes seems they may be „overdoing“ it. At the expense of employees, managers implement more and more changes and ideas into the centres yet not always it is a though and reflected upon process. Sometimes, although the changes have happened in the outside world business struggle to catch up, they forget to update their processes inside, yet again putting strain on employees. The worker is the first and often only point of contact between the firm and the customer, therefore the relationship must be kept at the higher standard and quality. Customers expect and even demand 24-hour electronic service, which has resulted in an exceptional increase in service-based call centres. While many researchers have investigated job satisfaction over the years, “the impact of call centre workplace upon employee satisfaction or well-being is beginning to attract the attention of researchers” Call centres have become an integral part of most organizations today, playing a pivotal role in the service delivery chain. Other factors that are often associated with call centres are; high stress levels, high staff turnover and emotional burnout. These factors impact negatively on job satisfaction.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The area of research is quite nascent and hence not much research papers are published. But of late there have been many articles related to problems faced by call centre executives in the print media. Some of the recent research papers highlight the problems faced by call centre executives. These range from occupational diseases, role stress, facing verbal abuses from irate customers to job related monotony.

1. Sudhashree V. P, Rohit K. and Shrinivas K. in their article titled “Issues and concerns of health among the call centre employees” (The Indian Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine, December 2005, Volume 9, Issue 3 Pgs. 129 – 132) mention that BOSS (Burn Out Stress Syndrome) is seen very common among the young call centre executives. The symptoms of this sickness include chronic fatigue, insomnia, and complete alterations of the 24 hour biological rhythm of the body are routine cause for sickness absenteeism. Chronic levels of stress affect the heart, endocrine system and can also lead to sleep disorders.

2. Ernesto Noronha and Premilla D'Cruz in their research paper titled “Organizing Call Centre Agents: Emerging Issues” (Economic and Political Weekly, May 27, 2006 Pgs.2115 – 2121) indicate that during their primary data collection from call centre employees located at Mumbai and Bangalore, it was found that their job content required them to enthusiastically deal with irate customers keeping aside their emotions. Interacting with irate or abusive customer was seen as an integral part of their job content. Emotions were to be kept aside and it was mandatory to attend the next call with equal attention even when the previous caller had verbally abused the employee.

3. Lewig K. A. and Dollard M. F. in their article titled “Emotional dissonance, emotional exhaustion and job satisfaction in call centre workers” (European Journal of Work And Organizational Psychology, 2003, 12 (4), Pgs. 366–392) have researched on Emotional Labour (emotional demands) of call centre work and their relationship to the job satisfaction and emotional exhaustion in a sample of South Australian call centre workers. Qualitatively the research confirmed the central role of emotional labour variables in the experience of emotional exhaustion and satisfaction at work. Emotional dissonance was found to exacerbate the level of emotional exhaustion at high levels of psychosocial demands, indicating jobs combining high levels of both kinds of demands are much riskier. 35 The research points out that the potential ways to alleviate emotional exhaustion due to emotional dissonance is to reduce other psychosocial demands, increase rewards, support and control as conceptualized in the Job Characteristics Model.

4. Kode Ruyter, Martin Wetzels and Richard Feinberg in their research paper titled “Role Stress in Call Centres: Its Effects on Employee Performance and Satisfaction” published in the Journal of Interactive Marketing, pp. 23 – 35, Volume 15, Number 2, Spring 2001 mention that particularly the autonomy dimension of empowerment has a role stress-reducing effect. Interesting substantive direct positive effects of empowerment competence and leadership consideration on job satisfaction were found. Job satisfaction was found to be conducive to job performance. Furthermore, it was found that job satisfaction reduces turnover intentions, directly and indirectly via organizational commitment.

5. Christer Strandberg and Olof Wahlberg (The Journal of E-working, Pgs 116-136, Vol 1, December 2007) published a research paper titled “All Call Centres are not electronic sweatshops”, conducted a study focused on the psychosocial work conditions in Swedish in-house call centres compared with the same conditions in Nordic (Swedish, Norwegian, Danish and Finnish) organizations in general. It was found that Swedish in-house call centre employees perceive work to be more controlled than employees in Nordic organizations in general do. In addition, work is not perceived to be as central in life by call 36 centre employees as it is perceived by employees in Nordic organizations in general.

6. Divya C. McMillian in her research paper titled “Outsourcing Identities - Call Centres and Cultural Transformation in India.” (Economic and Political Weekly, January 21, 2006 Pgs. 235 – 241) mentions of indepth interviews conducted with 40 employees of six call centres located at Bangalore. Her research findings point out to the fact that most of these employees had to change their names, identities and their voice accent to suit the customer’s home country where the calls were being made or from where they originated. This resulted in fictional personal profiles created by their job content which affected their cultural identity.

7. A study on “Women in Call Centres” conducted by Preeti Singh and Anu Pandey, wherein interviews of 100 women employees of several call centres based in India were undertaken. (Economic and Political Weekly, February 12, 2005 Pgs. 684 – 688). The study finds a direct and adverse effect of nightshift employment on the health of women. This study concluded both the positive as well as the negative aspects of call centre

environment. The positive aspects related to the number of years of experience, age and qualifications of the respondent with that of her salary. There appears to be no other area of employment in India which gives its employees an attractive pay package at such a young age and with minimum qualifications. There are also some negative aspects about this job, which includes risks such as the difficulty of traveling at night, health hazards and social stigma. But 37 the major problem is the health hazard from doing night duty. Some respondents felt they were like security guards who stayed awake all night to attend to their duties and slept the whole day through, and in doing so they suffer from problems like sleep disorder and indigestion. In order to keep awake against the body clock, they start smoking and drink innumerable cups of tea and coffee. This gets them addicted to tea, coffee and cigarettes, which subsequently becomes the cause of their bad health.

8. The Dataquest-IDC BPO E-Sat survey 2007 was based on the feedback from 1,749 employees belonging to 19 companies located in cities like Mumbai, Pune, Kolkata, Delhi NCR, Chennai, Ahmedabad, Hyderabad and Bangalore. The survey also revealed that while large firms ranked better in parameters like work culture and image, niche companies were better in terms of salary and job content. Of the 1,749 employees surveyed as a part of the survey, 32 per cent complained of sleep disorders, followed by 25 per cent as having digestive disorders and 20 per cent of having eye-sight problems. The survey measured employee satisfaction was based on 11 parameters.

9. There have been many incidents of women call centre employee being raped and murdered at Mumbai, Pune and Bangalore regions. Some newspapers have commented on this issue. Newspaper "The Hindu" reported on the rape and murder of Hewlett Packard employee Pratibha Murthy in December 2005 shook the BPO (business process outsourcing) industry, which scrambled to damage control mode and tighten security for its women employees. Series of measures were announced to protect women, especially on the night shift. The Press Trust of India, New Delhi, reported on January 17, 2006 that "In the light of the rape and murder of a call centre employee in Bangalore, the National Commission for Women (NCW) today said it will formulate guidelines to ensure safety of women employees in the BPO sector". 10. The article "Setback for BPO industry: Nasscom" in the Times of India dated 4th November 2007 mentions, The National Association of Software and Service Companies (Nasscom) has expressed deep shock and dismay at the incident involving murder of a young Pune based BPO employee Jyoti Kumari Choudhary. In a press release issued by them, it stated that the murder reflects the need for greater safety and security and emphasized that every possible measure should be taken to eliminate such crime. "Such incidents setback efforts that are being made to bring about gender equality in the country's workforce."

DEFINING THE PROBLEM

Job satisfaction is a factor affecting call centre representatives. Call centres are generally associated with low levels of satisfaction due to the fairly low skilled nature of their work. Other factors that are often associated with call centres are; high stress levels, high staff turnover and emotional burnout. These factors impact

negatively on job satisfaction. The Times of India reported on 8 May 2007, “Two recent cases of suicide have brought work-related stress back in news. Hyderabad Times probes...Recent incidents have served as a rude shock for young working professionals in the city, who had accepted stress as a way of life. A 25-old software engineer, Pavan Kumar, allegedly committed suicide, not being able to bear 'public humiliation'. On the same day, a 23-year-old BPO employee G Venugopal took recourse in suicide, citing 'personal reasons'. Many factors might snowball into a person committing suicide, but HR professionals believe that stress at the workplace can be a major contributor, and justifiably so, as people spend almost all their time at the workplace. Many are caught in a situation in which they can't quit a stressful job due to lack of options. According to psychologist PT Sundaram, sometimes, it's a clash of values and the lack of job satisfaction which pushes an individual 43 over the line. "I have many young employees who are not happy with their new jobs, in spite of getting a 100 per cent hike. To make matters difficult, many are clueless about their source of their discontent," says Dr Sundaram”.

This study was undertaken to:

- Identify the problems of the call centre employees.
- Assessment of the risks perceived.
- Review the status of the employees. Health concerns

Long hours of work, permanent night shifts, incredibly high work targets, loss of identity are threaten to call centre industry in India. The odd timing and nature of work roots people to a chair for 9 hours a day, reading pre-scripted conversations on the phone endlessly- often to irate customers from across the world. In call centre every single second of an employee's time is recorded, measured and automatically logged on to a computer for praise or censure on a weekly basis. In call centre the three acts of listening, watching and talking goes simultaneously, without any break. All these things puts enormous stress on the employee. The call center ranked high for attrition due to health reasons, for: Sleeping disorders-83% compared to industry average of 39.5%, Voice loss-8.5% as against 3.9%, Ear problems (8.5%), Digestive disorders (14.9%) and Eye sight problems (10.6%) Its effects on employee performance and satisfaction. Call centers have become an important customer access channel as well as an important source of customer related information. Frequently, call centre employees experience role stress as a result of the conflicting demands of the company, supervisors, and customers.

Working conditions, well-being, and job-related attitudes among call centre agents

A comparison of 345 call centre agents with 658 workers in traditional jobs with long lasting training revealed lower job control and task complexity/variety and higher uncertainty among call agents. However, time

pressure, concentration demands, and work interruptions were lower in call agents. Working condition negatively affect to the call centre employees.

Emotional dissonance, emotional exhaustion and job satisfaction in call centre workers

The rapid rise of the service sector, and in particular the call centre industry has made the study of emotional labour increasingly important within the area of occupational stress research. Qualitatively the research confirmed the central role of emotional labour variables in the experience of emotional exhaustion and satisfaction at work. Specifically, the research confirmed the pre-eminence of emotional dissonance compared to a range of emotional demand variables unit's potency to account for variance in emotional exhaustion and job satisfaction. Specifically, emotional dissonance mediated the effect of emotional labor (positive emotions) on emotional exhaustion. India is the best place to outsource to Call Centers.

1) Large and educated workforce is easily available in India- Call centers in India have a largest number of qualified, tech-savvy, IT literate, trained, skilled and experienced professionals. India has the largest English-speaking population after the USA. India's large and well-educated workforce has been one of India's main advantages over other countries. India will continue to have a well-educated and large workforce, because India has an ever increasing number of college graduates and a large number of successful training industries. India's large manpower is willing to work for a lesser price. In a call center operation, manpower typically accounts for 55 to 60 percent of the total cost. In India, manpower is available at a fraction of the cost overseas.

2) Different outsourcing services are available in India Call centers in India have experience in offering a number of call center outsourcing services, such as, inbound call center services, telemarketing services, technical Support services, CATI services, disaster recovery services, email support services and chat support services amongst others. Call centers in India can also provide a host of IT enabled services, such as, helpdesk services, accounting services, transaction processing services, remote network management and end-to-end processing amongst others. Indian call centers offer cost-effective call center outsourcing services without compromising on quality. Call centers in India also have the best of technology, people, processes, resources, operational expertise.

3) Time Zone Advantages- More and more global organizations have been outsourcing call centers to India, because of India's time zone advantages. India's twelve hour time difference enables global organizations to provide their customers with 24x7x365 days services. By taking advantage of India's time difference, companies in the U.S have been able to ensure that their customers receive round-the-clock customer support.

CONCLUSION

Employees working in call centers answer or originate a call on company's behalf. They make a great influence on customer satisfaction, but there is a growing debate over the status of call centre workers in industry and the level of job satisfaction among them. The study revealed that good salary was the main reason for joining the call centre job. It is important to keep job satisfaction high so as to reduce turnover levels in call centers. Majority of the employees were found to be high on satisfaction levels and believed that job satisfaction level does not vary with respect to timeliness. The satisfaction of the employees was found to be dependent on factors like contribution of organisation towards employee development, independence of employees, work environment, balanced work, stress free environment and peer- superior support.

REFERENCES

- [1] C.R.Kothari. (2008). Research methodology, methods and techniques. (2 nd printing). New age International Publishers.
- [2] Christer Strandberg & Olof Wahlberg. (2007). All call centres are not electronic sweatshops. The Journal of Eworking, 1, 116-136.
- [3] Cooper, S. (2006). Business research methods. (9th ed.). Tata McGraw Hill.
- [4] Ernesto Noronha & Premilla D' Cruz. (2006). Organizing call centre agents: Emerging issues. Economic and Political Weekly, 2115-2121.
- [5] Garry Dessler & Biju Varkkey. (2009). Human resource management. New Delhi: Dorling Kindersley (India)Pvt. Ltd.
- [6] K.Asathappa. (2010). Human resource management. New Delhi: Tata McGraw Hill.
- [7] Kalarani. (2011). Job Satisfaction and Organizational commitment of employees in the IT industry of Kerala.
- [8] Kode Ruyter, Martin Wetzels, & Richard Feinberg. (2001). Role stress in call centers: Its effect on employee performance and satisfaction. Journal of Interactive Marketing, 15(2), 23-35.
- [9] Lewig K. A. & Dollard M.F. (2003). Emotional dissonance, emotional exhaustion and job satisfaction in call centre workers. European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology, 12(4), 366-392.
- [10] McMillian, D. C. (2006). Outsourcing identities- Call centers and cultural transformation in India. Economics and Political Weekly, 41(03), 235-241.
- [11] N., C.T. (2001). Human resource management. New Delhi: Dhanpat Rai & Co. Pvt. Ltd.

- [12] Nargundkar. (2008). Marketing research. (3rd ed.). New Delhi, India: Tata McGraw Hill.
- [13] P.G.Aquinas. (2006). Human resource management. (1st ed.). India: Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd.
- [14] P.SubbaRao. (2007). Personal and human resource management. (7th ed.). India: Himalaya Publishing House.
- [15] Panneereselvam, R. (2007). Research methodology. (5th Printing). India: Pentice-hall of India Private Ltd.

