

Dimensions of Occupational Stress Impacting Turnover Intentions Amongst BPO Employees : An Empirical Study

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Abstract

Nowadays, many organizations are confronted with the problem of higher level of employee turnover that brings higher replacement costs to these companies. Especially analysing the current situation in the BPO Industry, it is observed that the turnover intention of call centre employees is greater than its expected level and has become a major threat to their existence. Job stress is one of the major factors which tremendously influences this problem. This study mostly focused upon the impact of job stress (JS) on employee turnover intention (TI) of call centre employees in the BPO industry. Eight five respondents participated in the study. The study was carried out using the survey method. For the survey, the standardized questionnaire of Osipow (1998) for occupational stress and Rajkumar and Karthik Sridar (2015) for turnover intentions were used. The results revealed that scope of occupational stress, that is, role uncertainty/ambiguity, role boundary, role responsibility, and the physical environment had a substantial significant impact on turnover intentions of employees. The dimensions of occupational stress, that is, role insufficiency and role overload had a slight impact on turnover intentions of employees. The regression model stated that there was dependency between occupational stress and turnover intentions. The study suggested that empowerment should be provided at the workplace so that the employees can minimize their inter role distance and can increase job involvement. To make a productive workforce, the sub - variables of job stress like role stagnation, role isolation, and role overload should also be minimized by working more on the person-organization-fit at the time of recruitment and selection.

Keywords : stress, turnover intentions, role ambiguity, ambiguity role boundary, role responsibility, physical environment

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Job stress has been understood by clashes at work, workload, and physical environment. The term 'stress' is fundamentally from physical science where it literally means the force located upon a thing to cause damage, twisting, breaking, or bending. Stress is defined as a condition when an individual realizes the pressure on him/her or the requirements of the situation are wider than what a person can handle, and if these requirements are huge and continue for a long period of time without any break, deterioration of mental and/or physical health or behavioural problems may occur (Mansoor, Fida, Nasir, & Ahmad, 2011).

In a company, stress brings about changes in the behaviour of employees that eventually reduces cooperation amongst an organization's employees (Sohail & Rehman, 2015). Awang, Amir, and Osman (2013) selected the factors - job satisfaction, organizational commitment, job stress, work enrichment, and personality fit - of work performance for their study. The methodology validated the quantitative necessities of response error, simple

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random sampling, and socially desirable bias. Turnover intention has been one of the most significantly problematic and also a critical issue for managing employees till date. Employees who have a high level of pressure/stress at the work place are more possible to be poorly motivated, unhealthy, less safe, and less productive at work. They also are less likely to succeed in a competitive market. Stress can come from a variety of sources of work pressure and affects people differently (Arshadi & Damiri, 2013). A challenge for the organization is to maintain its work force as much cost is incurred on them directly or indirectly. In the end, the employees are the face of an organization as they are the basic building blocks of an organization. Attempts have been made to reduce the rate of turnover in organizations. For an employer, it is important to make the environment favourable to work for employees, so that their performance gets better (Kaur, Mohindru, & Pankaj, 2013).

“Employee turnover” is a phrase that is extensively used nowadays in business circles. Sinha (2010) also conducted a research on reasons for stress among employees and their coping mechanisms. His research highlighted that employees are the foundation of the success of any commercial business and hence, they need to be encouraged and maintained by the organization at all costs.

In the past few years in India, the ITES/BPO sector has been growing with huge leaps and bounds. As a result, this has also posed certain challenges to human resource practitioners and the biggest challenge of all of them happens to be the retention of the ambitious and the transitory. In today's society, voluntary turnover has turned out to be a major problem and a major threat for many establishments, irrespective of the nature of the job (Sree Rekha & Kamalanabhan, 2013).

Relationship Between Occupational Stress and Turnover Intentions

The effect of occupational stress on the performance of the workforce has been observed to be a significant point of worry for establishments. Negative stress disturbs the mental and physical health of employees. Hence, it is important to recognize different occupational stress inducers (OSI) on one side and the influence of OSI on different characteristics of job performance on the other (Ratnawat & Jha, 2014).

According to Deshpande (2012), work force productivity is by far the most significant factor as far as the achievement of a business is concerned. The efficiency of employees is in turn reliant on the psycho social welfare of the organization's personnel. Stress can disturb one's social life, health, work performance, and the bond with family members. Stressors and their corresponding significance are to be assumed at an individual level and also at the administrative level. Stress at work has arisen to be one of the most important issues for businesses and has reached disturbing proportions.

Job tension/stress has a straight and positive connection with turnover intentions. Mosadeghrad's (2013) main intention of the study was to learn the prominence of work-related stress amid hospital nurses in Isfahan, Iran. The study employed a cross-sectional investigation design. One-third of the nurses rated their stress at the workplace to be very high. Work-related stressors were linked to administrative duties and policies ; interpersonal relationships were one of the finest predictors of job-related stress among nurses. Therefore, hospital supervisors and administrators must initiate methods to decrease the quantity of stress amidst the nurses.

Karamzade, Ghandali, and Khalili (2014) attempted to observe the linkage between job-related occupational stress and turnover intentions among the nurses of both private and government hospitals in Shiraz. The job-related stress and turnover intentions in woman nurses was greater than in male nurses. The research showed that slight policy-making range or low control over the employee's occupation had a positive relationship with turnover intentions. Alternative outcome of this examination also revealed that there existed an association between shortage of job security and turnover intentions.

Mxenge, Dywili, and Bazana (2014) inspected the consequences of job-related stress and the employees' intention to quit amongst managerial personnel at the University of Fort Hare in South Africa. The main aim of the

study was to establish if there was an association between organizational stress and employee's turnover intentions. The study comprised of employees from the three campuses of the institutes - Alice, Bisho, and East London campus. The findings of the study showed that the association between the two variables (job stress and turnover intention) existed. The results displayed that there was a significant positive association between administrative stress and the employees' intentions to quit.

Research Methodology

(1) Hypotheses

✎ **Hypothesis 1 :** There exists a positive correlation between the various variables of occupational stress and variables of turnover intentions.

✎ **Hypothesis 2 :** Turnover intentions depend on occupational stress.

(2) Data Collection:

(i) Primary Data: Primary data were obtained mainly through questionnaire responses.

(ii) Secondary Data: Secondary data were obtained from journals, published papers, articles, and handbooks were referred to gain further insight pertaining to the topic. Primary data is the first hand information collected for specific purpose directly from the field of enquiry. The source of primary data for compilation of the data was the questionnaire.

(iii) Data Collection Tool : Data were collected through a questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed to collect data from the employees from the BPO industry. The Occupational Stress questionnaire is a standardized questionnaire developed by Osipow in 1998 and the Turnover Intentions questionnaire was designed by S. Rajkumar in 2015. The questionnaires were made use of after thorough discussion with the organization and keeping the objective of the research in mind. The occupational stress questionnaire had 60 questions which was divided by six dimensions. Likert scale was used on a 5 - point rating scale. The dimensions for stress that are considered are : role overload, role insufficiency, role ambiguity role boundary, role responsibility, and physical environment. The interpretation of data was done by using statistical tool SPSS 20. Data validation and conclusion were obtained by using ANOVA and correlation.

(iv) Sample Size : This study was carried out at a BPO Call Centre where stress and attrition go hand in hand. There were total of 1,200 employees working in the sample BPO Call Centre, out of which 85 respondents were selected by convenient sampling technique. The sample size of the study is restricted to 85 employees and the data were collected using purposive sampling technique. The study was conducted in Bangalore. The respondents were entry level BPO employees, and the research was conducted from July - December 2016. The sample size is estimated at a confidence level of 95%, and by allowing 5% of error in the samples. Standard population deviation is taken as 0.25 for the worst case scenario.

Hence, $N = 540$

$e = 5\%$

$\sigma = 0.25$

$z = 1.96$ at 95% confidence level

$$n = \frac{1.96^2 \times 0.25^2 \times 540}{(540 - 1) \times 0.05^2 + (1.96^2 \times 0.25^2)}$$

$$n = 82$$

(v) Tools used for Analysis : The statistical tool used to conduct the study is SPSS 20.0 version to correlate the variables.

Analysis and Results

Out of the 85 respondents, 35 employees (41%) were found to be men and 50 employees (59%) were women ; 70 respondents (82%) fell in the age group of 20 - 30 years, 11 respondents (13%) came under the age group of 31 - 40 years, and the remaining 4 respondents (5%) fell under the 41 - 50 years of age category ; 10 respondents had PUC as their highest qualification, 65 respondents were under graduates, and the remaining 10 respondents were post-graduates.

The Table 1 represents the Cronbach's alpha test results. This test was performed to identify the reliability of the questionnaire. From the table, the Cronbach's alpha value is 0.742, which reveals that the questionnaire was reliable.

ANOVA was conducted on the data which were collected to understand the differences in the opinion on occupational stress and employee turnover based on various demographic factors. The Table 2 shows that the significance value, that is, p - value ($p \geq 0.05$) for occupational stress is 0.031, which is less than 0.05. Hence, it is understood there was a significant difference in the opinion about occupational stress among the respondents based on gender ; whereas age and qualifications' significance p - values ($p \geq 0.05$) for occupational stress are 0.6 and 0.3, which are more than .05, revealing that there was no significant difference in the opinion about occupational stress among the respondents based on age and qualifications.

Table 1. Reliability Test

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.742	8

Table 2. ANOVA Showing Effects of Occupational Stress on Employee Turnover Based on Various Demographic Factors

Dimensions	% of Sample	Mean	F - value	Significance
Gender				
Male	41%	0.384	. 4.817	0.031
Female	59%	3.46		
Age (in years)				
20-30	82%	3.4	4.817	0.34
31-40	11%	3.32		
>50	13%	3.07		
Qualifications				
PUC	12%	3.47	0.487	0.616
UG	76%	3.38		
PG	12%	3.26		

Table 3. Inter - Correlations Table

	Role Overload	Role Insufficiency	Role Ambiguity	Role Boundary	Role Responsibility	Physical Environment
Role Overload	1	.384**	.678**	.408**	.236*	.489**
Significance		.000	.000	.000	.030	.000
Role Insufficiency	.384**	1	.553**	.558**	.587**	.425**
Significance	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000
Role Ambiguity	.678**	.553**	1	.620**	.348**	.465**
Significance	.000	.000		.000	.001	.000
Role Boundary	.408**	.558**	.620**	1	.614**	.311**
Significance	.000	.000	.000		.000	.004
Role Responsibility	.236*	.587**	.348**	.614**	1	.142
Significance	.030	.000	.001	.000		.194
Physical Environment	.489**	.425**	.465**	.311**	.142	1
Significance	.000	.000	.000	.004	.194	
Total Turnover Intention	.246*	.244*	.388**	.354**	.381**	.369**
Significance	.023	.024	.000	.001	.000	.001

Note : **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

✍ **H1** : There exists a positive correlation between the variables of occupational stress, namely role overload, role insufficiency, role ambiguity, role boundary, role responsibility, and physical environment.

Correlation test was performed to understand the affiliation concerning the numerous magnitudes of occupational stress and employee turnover. The correlation Table 3 depicts that role ambiguity and turnover intentions are significantly correlated ($r = 0.388$) ; role responsibility and turnover intentions are significantly correlated ($r = 0.381$) ; physical environment and turnover intentions are significantly correlated ($r = 0.369$) ; role overload and turnover intentions are slightly correlated ($r = 0.246$) ; and role boundary and turnover intentions are slightly correlated ($r = 0.244$). Hence, the results reveal that H1 is accepted.

✍ **H2** : Turnover intention depends on occupational stress.

To test this hypothesis, multiple regression analysis is used. Turnover intention as a dependent variable and occupational stress as an independent variable are considered.

The equation is formed as :

$$Y = a + bX_1 + bX_2 \dots\dots\dots (1)$$

a = intercept and b = slope of line

The above equation reveals that the turnover intention is dependent on occupational stress. The results are presented in the Table 4. The Table 4 reveals that the beta value is .453, t is 6.037, p value is $>.05$. R is .453, and R square is .205, which indicates 20% dependency of turnover intentions on occupational stress. From the Table 4, it is clear that occupational stress has a strong impact on turnover intentions. The results show the R^2 value as .205, implying that turnover intentions depend on occupational stress. Hence, the above results lead to the acceptance of H2.

Table 4. Regression Model of Occupational Stress and Turnover Intentions

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		<i>B</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
1	(Constant)	.299	0.299		6.037	0
	Occupational Stress	0.406	0.088	0.453	4.625	0

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Discussion

It can be interpreted from ANOVA that on an average, all the respondents with different educational qualifications had similar opinion that they experienced occupational stress in their organization. It is also found that respondents who came under different age groups also had similar opinion about occupational stress. Since the significance value is less than 0.05%, it can be inferred that gender does have an impact on the manner in which occupational stress is observed by the employees or personnel in the BPO industry. It is also clear that the respondents were distinguished into men and women and had different or contradictory opinions on occupational stress. The results of ANOVA reveal that on an average, all the respondents with different educational qualifications had a similar opinion that they underwent occupational stress in the organization. It is also found that respondents who came under different age groups also had similar opinion on occupational stress. Also, the respondents based on gender had the same opinion that they may make up their mind to quit their job due to occupational stress. Regardless of the age group, the respondents' opinion remained the same with respect to turnover intentions.

From the correlation table, it is understood that the r - value of 0.388 is significant for role ambiguity and turnover intentions. It is hence understood that role ambiguity has a high positive correlation with turnover intentions of the respondents. This means that when the role ambiguity increases, the intention to leave the organization also increases. It is also understood that the r - value of 0.381 is significant for role responsibility and turnover intentions. It is hence understood that role responsibility has a high positive correlation with turnover intentions of the respondents. This means that when the role responsibility increases, the intention of the employees to leave the organization also increases. At the end, it is also understood that r - value of 0.369 is significant for physical environment and turnover intentions. It is hence understood that physical environment has a high positive correlation with turnover intentions of the respondents. This means that when the physical environment gets bad or worsens, the intention of the employees to leave the organization also increases.

From the correlation table, it is understood that the r - value of 0.354 is significant for role boundary and turnover intentions. It is hence understood that role boundary has a high positive correlation with turnover intentions of the respondents. This implies that when the role boundary increases, the intention to leave the organization also increases. It is inferred from the analysis that the r - value of 0.246 is significant for role overload and turnover intentions. It is hence understood that role overload has a positive correlation with the turnover intentions of the respondents. This means that when the role overload increases, the intention of the employees to leave the organization also tends to increase. Finally, it is also understood that the r - value of 0.244 is significant for role insufficiency and turnover intentions. It is hence understood role insufficiency has a positive correlation with turnover intentions of the respondents. This means that when the role insufficiency gets bad or worsens, the intention of the employees to leave the organization also tends to increase.

The scope of occupational stress, that is, role uncertainty/ambiguity, role boundary, role responsibility, and the physical environment has a substantial significant impact on turnover intentions of employees. The dimensions of occupational stress, that is, role insufficiency and role overload have a slight impact on turnover intentions of

employees. The regression model states that there is dependency between occupational stress and turnover intentions.

The findings of our study are similar to previous studies conducted in this context. Empowerment should be provided at the workplace so that the employees can minimize their inter role distance and increase job involvement. To make a productive workforce, the sub variables of job stress like role stagnation, role isolation, and role overload should also be minimized by working more on the person-organization-fit at the time of recruitment and selection (Walia & Narang, 2015). The sample organization, and organizations in general, should provide a work climate where employees can feel like coming to a second home. Jobs should be created in such a way that the employees should have a feeling that they are enjoying their work (Chandel & Kaur, 2015).

Managerial Implications

The pursuit of profit is no longer the only goal of any business firm. Companies that look after their employees and value them as assets are successful in the longer run. The findings of the study suggest that job stress increases burnout and employee turnover intentions. As a matter of fact, no organization can be totally stress free. However, certain steps can be taken by managements to lower down job stress. Types of interventions could address turnover problems. Strategies that aim to reduce levels of turnover and increase retention levels may do well in enhancing job satisfaction, minimize work stress, and enhance workplace support systems. Since job stress is associated with employees' performance, it is extremely vital to minimize it by implementing accurate HR policies so that it helps in reducing the attrition and makes an organization healthy.

Conclusion

It is upon the management to take a strong interest in assisting the employees to develop positive work attitudes by remodelling jobs and giving autonomy to employees to take self-decisions and enjoy more independence in executing their duties. Managers should examine and inspect the various sources of turnover of employees, which is the best methodology to fill in the primary opening of the source, so that they will be in a condition to retain the employees in their organization to develop their effectiveness in this world of globalization. Much of the pressure at work is caused not only by work overload or time pressure, but also by lack of rewards and good wishes, and most important of all, by not providing people autonomy to work. If organizations focus upon improving the emotional welfare and overall well-being of employees, in the approaching future, organizations would make much more profits and also, employee retention would increase because “a fit and healthy employee is a productive employee” (Kumari & Pandey, 2011).

Limitations of the Study and Scope for Further Research

The sample size selected for the study is small and not representative of our entire country. Also, a number of respondents refused to share their data and the number of women respondents was disproportionately high, implying that the results of the study could not be generalized. The data obtained for the research is through a questionnaire, use of mix method comprising interviews and qualitative data gathering techniques could give more precise results.

In this study, a questionnaire survey was conducted with BPO executives and the data were not obtained for supervisors and managers. Beyond all these limitations, there are many other factors of interest, which are not included in the current study because of practical and time constraints. Future researchers can examine the moderating role of other variables on employees' intention to leave an organization. This study can also be

conducted at different organizational levels. Perhaps, organizational commitment can have a significant impact on intention to leave at the lower organizational level but not at higher level in an organization. Emotional stress or burnout is influenced by many factors, and further studies can suggest better coping mechanisms keeping in mind the situations and better work policies to curtail the risk of employee turnover.

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