

The Relationship between Customer Orientation, Job Demand Stressor and Service Recovery Performance: A Study of Frontline Employees

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Abstract

Some of the researchers and managers have uncontested the frontline employees (FLEs) who are significant for the effectiveness in organization. Because of the fact that they have some roles which are boundary spanning so the FLEs has an important key role in delivering service and making customer relationships. This study attempts to highlight the vital role of service recovery performance (SRP) with regards to frontline employees. There is a link between service recovery performance, job stressor, and customer orientation.

Key words: customer orientation, Job demand stressor, service recovery performance, frontline employees

1. Introduction

Some of the researchers and managers have uncontested the frontline employees who are significant (FLEs) for the effectiveness in organization (Bitner et al., 1994; Hartline and Ferrell, 1996; Rucci et al., 1998; Singh, 2000). Because of the fact that they have some roles which are boundary spanning so the FLEs has an important key role in delivering service and making customer relationships (Booms and Bitner, 1981; Babakus et al., 2003). For marketing concept implementation FLEs is considered as a direct participant (Brown et al., 2002), and also their behavior and attitude related to customers shows the perceived service quality of the customers as well as their performance and satisfaction (Bowen and Schneider, 1985; Mohr and Bitner, 1995; Rust et al., 1996a, b; Yoon et al., 2001). One of the crucial strategic issues is the service recovery performance in the literature of service marketing.

The main definitions are doing the things very right the second time (Ruyter and Wetzels, 2000), and also the actions which the provider of service does to react to the failures in service (Bitner et al., 1990; Gronroos, 1990; Bendall-Lyon and Powers, 2001). The studies from the past offers that the service recovery that is very effective is able to build a paradox for service recovery that has a higher secondary satisfaction (i.e., satisfaction after a failure and recovery effort) compared to pre failure levels (McCullough et al., 2000; Smith and Bolton, 1998).

The failures related the service are very context specific and their frequency is different in various organizations and also the reaction of people to the service failure is different from any individual to another one. After the occurring of service failure FLEs plays a key role for defining the customer dissatisfaction and this fact leads to underestimating of service examination

importance and its recovery performance. Some low amounts of FLE performance for service recovery are considered as the undesirable results for the firm and knowing the elements that impact the frontline efforts related to the failure of the service is vital for minimizing the negative impacts on organizational effectiveness.

One of the main mentioned big problems is job stressors for the frontline occupations and pointing to the social, physical and psychological as well as organizational dimensions of the job that needs ongoing physical and also psychological efforts effort (Cordes and Dougherty, 1993; Maslach et al., 1996; Demerouti et al., 2001). A lot of demands were made by job stressors related to the resources or abilities of the employees (Abramis, 1994) and the absence of predictability is involved in them as well as understandability and control of the environmental context (Cohen, 1980).

Until today, the investigations related to job demand stressors and service recovery performance have mainly concentrated on some services for instance hospitality, baking and health (Boshoff and Allen, 2000; Yavas et al., 2003; Matilla and Patterson, 2004; Ashill et al., 2005). In the public sector there have been some focus on service enhancement and service quality (Lagrosen and Lagrosen, 2003; Chen et al., 2004; Ancarani, 2005), but it is proposed that it is timely to assume the service quality models applicability in the contexts in which previous departments of public sector have done corporatization and turned into state owned enterprises and also deregulation and by considering the offered services there is no rely on their previous statutory and natural position which was monopoly. SOEs is considered as the trading firms which are owned by government and they should operate like the successful business and for being a good employer and showing a social responsibility sense (Duncan and Bollard, 1992, p. 11).

These type of enterprises should concentrate on customer service better than before for competing in a marketplace which is open and this would be big challenge for the staff in frontline because of the lack of their experience to be governed by the market based values and customer instead of the ones from public policy makers and when customers have more sophisticated demand and also their reactions related to service quality (Nwankwo and Richardson, 1994).

Additionally, facing with some doubts from bigger competition than was experienced previously, it would be useful to be threatening for temporary and also disruptive related to the employees of the public service firms. Some necessary modifications that should be done can bring a lack of social psychological anchors based on what individuals were dependent on for a long time so will be created for some employees a floundering sense in the world which could no more be predictable and also familiar (Mikkelsen et al., 2000, p. 372).

The management and business culture had a big shift and also the main concentration of this paper is SOE had some shifts. It should be noted that there are also consolidation and incorporation of a service range and the functions of retailing for instance FLEs which are confronted with job demands and investigation by considering their impact on performance for service recovery and the relevant job results. The service delivery government restructuring is a main result of public sector role examination in society these days (Warner and Hebdon, 2001).

And related to the continuous universal trend for the corporatization of previous government departments (Kolderie, 1990; Toime, 1999; McKenna, 2000), and some factors that might be referred as NPM in which all of the dimensions of public sector production are altered to the aspects that exist in private sector (Rowley, 1998), and it is offered that a study for the relationship among service recovery performance and job demand stressors in this regard would be beneficial and this study mentions this paucity.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Service Recovery

While the service delivery quality declines the service failure happens and it is based on the expectations from customers (Bell and Zemke, 1987). There are always some unavoidable mistakes in service delivery similar to human endeavors so the service companies should have some strategies for service recovery for removing service failures. Service recovery is the action which is done by the provider of the service for understanding the customer dissatisfaction for responding to weak service quality and the service failure (Boshoff, 1997; Groenroos, 1988).

There was a lot of attention for service recovery from the practitioners as well as scholars. There is some difference in their viewpoints but all of them have a common idea that a service recovery that is effective is able to increase customer satisfaction and avoid customer defection (Hart et al., 1990).

There were a lot of discussions from researchers about strategies for effective service recovery. In 1987 Bell and Zemke suggested five ingredients related to service recovery, urgent reinstatement, apology, follow up, symbolic atonement and empathy. A research by Bitner in 1990 mentioned four key factors for the proper service recovery strategies which are compensation, apology, acknowledgment and explanation mainly for the retail industry. Kelly (1993) developed seven strategies for recovery which are correction, discount, correction plus, arrangement/employee intervention, management/employee intervention and the replacement that is basically more influential and the refund and apology are less influential. According to the analyses of critical incidents for many types of service firms, in 1995 Johnston understood that main part of the incidents are customers that are pleased with the results of service recovery and three main strategies were developed.

They are respectively information, empathy and also action. By studying the past studies it can be said that scholars propose a tangible and psychological strategies combination for responding to the service failures.

2.2. Job demand stressors

There are three main stressors which are related to FLEs in the literature of service which are role conflict, role ambiguity and finally role overload. (Singh et al., 1994, 1996; Babakus et al., 1999; Singh, 2000; Low et al., 2001; Bettencourt and Brown, 2003; Dawes and Massey, 2005). The role ambiguity is known as a condition full of stress that is the result of an employee confusion about his or her concerning views from the job (Rizzo et al., 1970; Senatra, 1980). The role conflict is about the perceived difference from the employee that exists between job expectation that occurs by different (Rizzo et al., 1970; Katz and Kahn, 1978; Gaertner and Ruhe, 1981; Handy, 1985; Perrewé et al., 2004). Role overload describes an inappropriately onerous magnitude of role requirements (Schick et al., 1990).

We suggest and define some of the relations among these mentioned job demand stressors and the performance of service recovery on the other side that concentrates on motivational and cognitive process (Tubre and Collins, 2000). In the context that exists incompatibility and also incongruity of the expectations discussed to and FLE by the role senders that is role conflict as a result the person cannot do the expected things.

As a result when FLE achieves some directions from various sources for instance supervisors and managers then she or he might assume an inability to provide the expectations for the demands

which are potentially conflicting. If the role conflict experienced by the FLEs so there will be the feel of uncomfortable and stress that will be shown in their actions and moods with the buyers, (Behrman and Perreault, 1984; Boles and Babin, 1996; Boshoff and Allen, 2000; Dubinsky and Hartley, 1986; Hartline and Ferrell, 1996). As a result there might be the compromise of service recovery performance.

Also when FLE does not have enough knowledge and information to do the needed actions and there is no clarity for the proper procedure for doing the tasks (role ambiguity) then she or he is not able to act properly to job demands (Jackson and Schuler, 1985).

It is suggested that having role ambiguity declines the performance for coping with dissatisfied customers by means of delays and diminished effort in actions (Babin and Boles, 1998; Brown and Peterson, 1994). Therefore, while FLEs are aware about the expectations from them, they will perform much better to cope with dissatisfied customers.

At last, at the time that FLEs have some placed demand for themselves that is higher than their resources and abilities (role overload) so they are not able to do the tasks properly. Like the other stressors of role FLEs is having some role overload that is to be felt stressed and these behaviors which are uncomfortable will be shown in their interaction with the buyers. There might be the compromise of service recovery efforts.

From the findings from extent and available literature, we can say that these stressors of job demand should lead to low degrees of performance related to service recovery and shows that they are representing a lack of knowledge or the overload of information and also anxiety and frustration feeling (Jackson and Schuler, 1985; Tubre and Collins, 2000). Moreover, these stressors of job will weaken the performance effort and also performance and reward expectancies and therefore affects the job satisfaction and organizational commitment to organization in a negative way (Jackson and Schuler, 1985; Tubre and Collins, 2000).

2.3. Link between emotional exhaustion and service recovery performance

The actions that is done by a service firm is the service recovery to repair the service failures (It is about the time that a buyer is not satisfied about an undeserved service) in order to returning the customer satisfied to the firm. As discussed before, service recovery proper implementation will cause many benefits for instance empowering positive word of mouth advertisement and enhancing purchase of the customer from company (Blodgett et al., 1997; Kim et al., 2009; Tax et al., 1998; Wirtz and Mattila, 2004).

One of the important job related performances is SRP in the context of tourism and hospitality and it is about the frontline employees of service and their perception for their actions and capabilities to solve a failure from service into the customer satisfaction (Babakus et al., 2003, p. 274).

The current research mentions that employees from frontline service in emotional exhaustion (EE) in the real workplace have a deleterious impact on their SRP which is related with the negative results of relationship in Koeske and Koeske's (1993) SSO framework. This theory suggests useful ideas for this relation. While an employee feels threaten then he or she will have stress. It might be because of resource loss, encounter actual resource loss, or receive insufficient return of supplementary resources on investments of resources (Hobfoll, 2001). It will cause the EE feelings. Usually after a lot of investment in workplace, the person might assume that the resource is not sufficient for meeting work demands. Also while the emotional resources of employees cope with demand of their job and it is exhausted then they cannot do the tasks related to job in a good way and it is related to the COR theory (Lee and Ashforth, 1996).

There have been so many investigations about negative impacts on EE and performance of job that have been developed. But there is not enough knowledge about defined impacts of EE for the SRP of the service providers in the frontline. For example, in 1998 Wright and Cropanzano revealed job performance in a sample from workers in social welfare of the US that were deteriorated because of EE.

But anyways by developing a study in Turkey from frontline hotel employees in 2008 Yavas understood that there is no significant relation among job performance and EE. In an investigation which was longitudinal and took 2 years for the public sector in 1997 Wright and Bonett understood that EE employees at Time 1 predicted the performance of job at Time 2. Additionally, this impact stayed significant even after taking account job performance of Time 1. Karatepe (2009), also stated that EE is considered as a negative predictor for the SRP from employees in hotels of Northern Cyprus.

In a recent study, from a sample of full time employees in a hotel of Kish Island and also Tehran located in Iran, Karatepe (2011) stated that the EE impact is significantly negative on role performance.

2.4. Link between customer orientation (CO) and service recovery performance

For performing the jobs related to the task CO empowers the service providers of the frontline. Pursue SRP, (Babakus and Yavas, 2012), and also contributing in mutual interactions for satisfaction with buyers (Pan and Zinkhan, 2006). In the level of individual, CO has a key role as the reservoir of endure for some emotional resources of cognition for improving the performance. Employees who have higher CO are having more corporative attitude and naturally are eager to react to problems of customers with some solutions. Also try to be polite, friendly, emotionally stable and also confident while doing the interaction with buyers (Donavan et al., 2004).

There are a few empirical proves which are growing about the fact that CO straightly and also in a positive way impacts frontline job performance of employees and they will counter EE (Babakus et al., 2009). Also the empirical evidence is limited related to supporting the fact that CO in individual level is related to frontline employees in a positive way and SRP is the performance that is job related. For instance, in a recent investigation of employees in Korean hotel which was conducted by Park and Kwan (2005) CO showed a significant positive effect on SRP. In the frontline staff sample of the main national retail bank Allen and Boshoff (2000) understood that having customer service orientation has an impact that is significantly positive on the SRP.

In another recent study it was reported that between SRP and CO among Korean hotel employees is no significant positive (Park and Hong, 2008). But however these investigations concentrate on CO at level of organization to protect the CO weak role and customer service orientation for defining SRP. In level of individual, in the conducted empirical analyses of bank employees in 2009 Babakus revealed that CO has the positive significant effect on job performance in New Zealand. These outcomes and specially the CO individual level need more empirical research for the tourism and managing hospitality and the literature of marketing.

2.5. Job satisfaction

For having independence based on so many self motivations and also FLEs needs success at workplace. Job satisfaction is considered as one of the crucial elements for knowing their attitudes. The term of job satisfaction is known as “the pleasurable emotional state resulting from

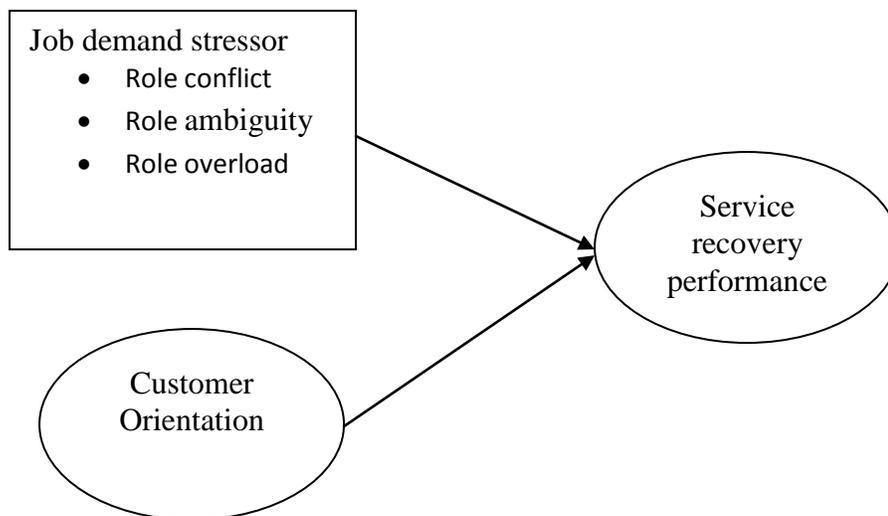
the appraisal of one's job as achieving or facilitating the achievement of one's job values'' (Locke, 1969, p. 316). There are many empirical and conceptual evidence that shows performance is related to satisfaction from job (Porter and Lawler, 1968; Wanous, 1974; Sheridan and Slocum, 1975; Bagozzi, 1978, 1980; Brown and Peterson, 1993; Babakus et al., 1999; Karatepe and Tekinkus, 2006). Similar to the statements mentioned above, it seems to be logical to put a direct positive impact from the service recovery performance on satisfaction from job.

2.6. Organizational commitment

The term organizational commitment is known as the relative power of individual identification with the involvement of corporations (Steers, 1977; Mowday et al., 1979). This definition is in relation to Meyer and Allen's (1990) conception for the influential organizational commitment that is related to the degree of strength of the emotional side of the employee to the firm. The FLEs performance was revealed to be a crucial factor for the organization commitment (Brown and Peterson, 1993; Low et al., 2001; Karatepe and Tekinkus, 2006). In a service recovery performance it can be said that job stressors elements play key roles in a degree that FLEs attribute low amounts of service recovery performance to stressors in the context of work and also their organizational commitment will be declined. In opposite, commitment of FLE to the organization will be enhanced at high levels of performance related to service recovery.

3. Proposed Framework

Followed by above discussion, this study proposes a new framework. It is clear that any linkage in this framework is supported by previous research.



4. Conclusion

Some of the researchers and managers have uncontested the frontline employees (FLEs) who are significant for the effectiveness in organization. Because of the fact that they have some roles which are boundary spanning so the FLEs has an important key role in delivering service and making customer relationships. For marketing concept implementation FLEs is considered as a direct participant, and also their behavior and attitude related to customers shows the perceived

service quality of the customers as well as their performance and satisfaction. One of the crucial strategic issues is the service recovery performance in the literature of service marketing. This research highlighted two factors may affect service recovery performance including job demand stressor (Role conflict, Role Ambiguity, and Role overload) and customer orientation. As a future study this research suggested testing proposed framework of this study in several scopes.

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