
Workplace Friendship, Employee Engagement and Job Burnout: A case of relationship study in BPO Sector of Delhi, NCR

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ABSTRACT

Workplace friendship is considered voluntary. These are influenced by individual and contextual factors such as life events, socializing, shared tasks, physical work proximity, work related problems, and slack time. Workplace friendship and organisational environment and policies help in keeping employees engaged in their work by motivating and providing them with emotional support. This study helps us to find out the relationship between workplace friendship, employee engagement and job burnout in the BPO sector. For the present study, the data was collected with the help of a standardized questionnaire from 100 employees working at BPOs in Delhi, NCR. To meet the research objectives the data analysis techniques used in the study were Correlation & Regression Analysis. The research showed a positive correlation between workplace friendship and employee engagement indicating that as the workplace friendship increases, employee engagement also increases, there is a significant impact of employee engagement on job burnout and there is no relationship between workplace friendship and job burnout among employees of BPOs. This research suggested the direction for future recommendation on the relationship between workplace friendship and employee engagement more concisely and briefly. The BPOs should try to come up with new activities and programs to increase workplace friendship and employee engagement and to decrease job burnout among employees leading to more efficient and productive workforce benefitting the employees, customers and society at large.

Key Words: Workplace friendship, Employee Engagement, Job Burnout, BPO,

Introduction

BPO [Business Process Outsourcing] has been the latest mantra in India today. As the current sources of revenue face slower growth, software companies are trying new ways to increase their revenues. BPO is top on their list today. BPO saves precious management time and resources and allows focus while building upon core competencies. The list of functions being outsourced is getting longer by the day. India has one of the largest pools of low-cost English speaking scientific and technical talent. This makes India one of the obvious choices to outsource to. Dell, Sun Microsystems, LG, Ford, GE, Oracle all have announced plans to scale up their operations in India. The factors affecting the development of the Indian BPO industry are both extrinsic and intrinsic to India. This is an extraordinary time for the BPO

space, with huge leaps in business technology, process, and theory taking place against the backdrop of tumultuous economic conditions, the ongoing evolution of globalisation, and the social and mobile revolutions playing out across the world. Workplace friendship and organisational environment and policies help in keeping employees engaged in their work by motivating and providing them with emotional support. This research suggested the direction for future recommendation on the relationship between workplace friendship and employee engagement more concisely and briefly.

Review of Literature

Workplace Friendship:

Dotan. H (2009) conducted a study on Workplace Friendships in which the researcher discussed origins and consequences for managerial effectiveness. The results of the study showed that the factors of friendship formation can help explain the differential effects of friendships, and can assist in answering the vital question of how and why friendships lead to various outcomes.

Berman. M.E (2000) wrote an article on Workplace Relations: Friendship Patterns and Consequences according to Managers. It was found that managers especially supported friendship among co-workers and themselves and very few managers disapproved of such relations even when different genders were involved.

Employee Engagement:

Alan M. Saks (2006) conducted a study to examine Antecedents and consequences of employee engagement. This was the study to explain a distinction between job and organization engagement and to measure a variety of antecedents and consequences of job and organization engagement.

Bhatnagar. J (2007) studied talent management strategy of employee engagement in Indian ITES employees which is a key to retention. The purpose of this paper was to investigate talent management and its relationship to levels of employee engagement using a mixed method research design. High factor loadings at intermediate stages of employment were indicative of high engagement levels, but the interview data reflected that this may mean high loyalty, but only for a limited time.

Fitz-enz (2003) examined key people challenges is to build a fierce employer Brand Equity and way to do that is to retain employees. This would be possible if organizations provide them with a passion to work, and an engrossing environment which maximizes their performance and gives a continuous work experience that is difficult for competitors to replicate.

Branham (2005) explained in his article: an employer of choice recruits and engages talent through practices that address both tangibles and intangibles, with a focus on the long-term as well as the short term, and are tailored to the organization.

Bakker &Demerouti (2007) conducted a study on Work engagement and accumulation of task, social, and personal resources: a three-wave structural equation model. Study investigated gain spirals between employees' engagement and their task, social, and personal resources. It focused on the key resources of job control, positive work relationships, and active coping behavior. It went beyond previous researches by disentangling task-related, social, and intrapersonal gain spirals, demonstrating that these three are distinct and relatively independent processes.

Job Burnout:

Nagar. K (2012) conducted a study on Organizational Commitment and Job Satisfaction among Teachers during Times of Burnout. Their work is significant for two reasons: It attempts to develop and test a model for burnout and its effect on job satisfaction and the subsequent effect of job satisfaction on organizational commitment and it signifies one of the first attempts to develop a linkage among burnout, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment among teachers. Since teachers satisfied with their jobs are more likely to be happy and have a stronger will to work hard, they may be more effective and successful in performing their roles.

Toker.S&Biron. M (2010) conducted a study on Job burnout and depression: Unraveling the constructs' temporal relationship and considering the role of physical activity. The study was conducted in University of Tel Aviv. On the basis of a full-panel three-wave longitudinal design, in a large sample, the results indicate that depression is a stronger predictor of subsequent job burnout rather than the other way around.

Srivastava. S (2010) conducted a study to explore the relationship between Job Burnout and Managerial Effectiveness as moderated by Perceived Organisational Support and Locus of Control. It was found that Job Burnout was negatively related to Managerial Effectiveness and Perceived Organisational Support and Locus of Control moderated Job Burnout and Managerial Effectiveness relationship.

Cheng.W (2007) conducted a study on Psychometric properties of the Chinese version of Copenhagen burnout inventory among employees in two companies in Taiwan. The study examined the psychometric properties of two selected scales personal burnout and work-related burnout—from the Chinese version of the Copenhagen Burnout Inventory (C-CBI) from two companies in Taiwan. Both the C-CBI personal burnout scale and work-related burnout scale had high internal consistency and were correlated well with other health, job characteristics, and perception of work measures; furthermore, exploratory factor analysis extracted two empirical factors.

Srivastava. S (2001) conducted a study by analysing the impact of mentoring on job burnout-Job satisfaction relationship, an empirical study on Indian Managers. The purpose of the study is to explore the relationship between job burnout and job satisfaction as moderated by mentoring. It was found out that job burnout was negatively related to job satisfaction and mentoring moderated the job satisfaction and job burnout relationship.

Employee engagement and Job Burnout:

Schaufeli B.W (2012) wrote an article about Burnout, Boredom and Engagement in workplace. The article talked about how employees feel at work and it was concerned with their psychological well-being, which can be either negative or positive. The result of the study stated that the way employees feel has not only to do with who they are, i.e. their personality – but also with where they are, i.e. in their jobs. In essence, employee well-being results from the interaction between person and (work) environment.

Rothmann.S (2007) conducted a study on Job Demands, Job Resources, Burnout and Work Engagement of managers at a mine in the North West Province. The objective of this study was to investigate the relationships between job demands, job resources, burnout, and engagement of management staff. The results revealed that exhaustion was predicted by workload, job insecurity and a lack of resources, while cynicism was predicted by lack of organisational support and advancement opportunities Workplace Friendship on Employee Engagement:

Wright. J (2009) conducted a study on Role Stressors, Coworker Support, and Work Engagement: a longitudinal study. The main purpose of this longitudinal study was to investigate the nature of work engagement over time. The analyses also showed that initial role stressors were not related to engagement measured one year later, but that there was a moderated effect of coworker support on the relationship between initial role ambiguity and engagement measured one year later.

Lee. J (2006) conducted a study on Effects of Workplace Friendship on Employee Job Satisfaction, Organizational Citizenship Behaviour, Turnover Intention, Absenteeism, and Task Performance. The findings suggested that when employees have trustworthy friends at work, they can get help or advice from their friend co-worker's and, therefore, gain feelings of security, comfort, and satisfaction with their job at work and that workplace friendship may enhance organizational performance because employees in friendships like to help each other with tasks, communicate with morale-building behaviours, have few communication difficulties and thus can increase their effort and rate of production.

Research Methodology and Design

The study is based on primary data collection with a sample size of 100 respondents (BPO Sector employees) residing in 'National Capital Region' of New Delhi, India. The questionnaire used for the sample survey is an improvised combination of following standardized questionnaire. Questionnaire used is a standard questionnaire made by Ebonee Johnikin (2012) which analyses Workplace Friendship along with a questionnaire by Alexandra.M.Miller (1998) which analyses employee engagement and lastly a questionnaire by Marcel Lourel & Farida Mouda (2008) which measures the degree of job burnout. Few questions are framed to gather demographic as well as personal profile of the respondents and the rest of the questions will be rated on a five point Likert scale. The questionnaire intended to collect the various opinions during the period January 2014 to April 2014.

Simple Random sampling is done to select the respondents due to time constraint and due to the limited number of respondents available for this study. Correlation analysis and regression analysis will be used in order to study the relationship between workplace friendship, employee engagement and job burnout across employees in BPO sector.

Objectives of the study

- To find the degree of relationship between workplace friendship and employee engagement.
- To identify the effect of employee engagement on job burnout.
- To find out the relationship between workplace friendship and job burnout.

Scope and Significance:

The study is limited to Delhi NCR region only which is just a representative sample. Further researches can be carried out with the entire population using different industrial sectors. This Research will further help in Acquiring better knowledge of employees regarding their emotional needs and personal needs while working in any organization. Due to time constraint, research is carried out to take only the response of 100 respondents which may not be applicable to entire country, so research could also be carried out to take large number of representative sample which is consistently applicable to entire country. Various activities can be organized by organizations that would help to increase the bonding and friendship between employees, leading to a motivated and emotionally strong workforce.

Hypothesis

H01: There is no relationship between workplace friendship and level of employee engagement among employees in Wipro BPO.

H02: There is no relationship between workplace friendship and job burnout among employees in Wipro BPO.

H03: There is no impact of employee engagement on job burnout among employees in Wipro BPO.

Results & Discussion

The below data analysis had been done by using SPSS tool. Correlation and regression analysis were used to test different hypothesis.

The questionnaire consists of four demographic questions representing the respondents Age, Relationship status, Education and Working since.

Parameters taken	Number of respondents	Percentage
Under 30 years	26	26%
30-49 years	71	71%
50 years and over	3	3%
Total	100	100%

Table 1: Age of Respondents

Inference: 71% of the respondents are between the age group of 30-49 years, 26% of respondents are under 30 years of age and the remaining 3% of the respondents are 50 years and above.

Parameters taken	Number of respondents	Percentage
Married	71	71%
Living with a partner	3	3%
Have a partner but not living together	6	6%
Do not currently have a partner	14	14%
Recently separated divorced	6	6%
Total	100	100%

Table 2: Relationship status of Respondents

Inference: 71% of the total respondents are married, 14% of the respondents do not currently have a partner, 6% of the respondents have a partner but not living together, 6% of the respondents are recently separated from their partners and the remaining 3% of the respondents are living with a partner.

Parameters taken	Number of respondents	Percentage
High school	3	3%
Vocational/ Technical school	2	2%
Some college	29	29%
Bachelor's Degree	40	40%
Master's Degree	24	24%
Others	2	2%
Total	100	100%

Table 3: Educational level of Respondents

Inference: 40% of the respondents possess a bachelor’s degree, 29% of the respondents have studied in some college, 24% of the respondents have a master’s degree, 3% of the respondents have a high school education, 2% of the respondents have studied from some technical school and the remaining 2% respondents have some other educational qualification.

Parameters taken	Number of respondents	Percentage
Less than 5 years	37	37%
5 to 15 years	54	54%
15 to 25 years	6	6%
25 and above	3	3%
Total	100	100%

Table 4: Time period (working duration in the organisation)

Inference: 54% of the respondents have been working in the organisation for 5 to 15 years, 37% of the respondents are working in the organisation for less than 5 years, 6% of the respondents have been working in the organisation for the past 15 to 25 years and the remaining 3% respondents have been working in the organisation for the past 25 years and above.

$$r = \frac{n(\sum xy) - (\sum x)(\sum y)}{\sqrt{[n\sum x^2 - (\sum x)^2][n\sum y^2 - (\sum y)^2]}}$$

	Workplace Friendship	Employee Engagement
Workplace Friendship	1	.669**
Pearson Correlation		.000
Sig. (2-tailed)		100
N	100	100
Employee Engagement	.669**	1
Pearson Correlation	.000	
Sig. (2-tailed)		100
N	100	100

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

Table 5: Relationship between Workplace friendship and Employee Engagement

Interpretation: The correlation Table shows that there is a positive correlation (relationship) between workplace friendship and level of employee engagement among employees of BPOs as the Pearson correlation value comes out to be .669 and the significance value is .000. Since the correlation is significant at the 0.05 level hence the significance value of .000 shows that null hypothesis is rejected in this case and alternate hypothesis is accepted.

		Workplace Friendship	Job Burnout
Workplace FriendshipCorrelation	Pearson	1	-.022
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.829
	N	100	100
Job Burnout Correlation	Pearson	-.022	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.829	
	N	100	100

Table 6: Relationship between Workplace friendship and Job Burnout

Interpretation: The correlation table shows that the Pearson correlation value is -0.22, which shows that there is an inverse relationship between workplace friendship and level of job burnout among employees of BPOs, which is when the value of one variable increases the value of the other variable decreases. The significance level is .829 which means that the relationship is not at all significant and therefore it is likely that there exist no relationship between workplace friendship and employee job burnout and so the null hypothesis is accepted.

a. Dependent Variable: Job burnout

b. All requested variables entered.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.220 ^a	.049	.039	5.27186

a. Predictors: (Constant), Employee Engagement

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	138.923	1	138.923	4.999	.028 ^b
Residual	2723.667	98	27.793		
Total	2862.590	99			

Table 7: Analysis of variance between Workplace friendship and Job Burnout

a. Dependent Variable: Job burnout

b. Predictors: (Constant), Employee Engagement

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	27.411	3.927		6.980	.000
Employee Engagement	-.286	.128	-.220	-2.236	.028

Table 8: Relationship between Workplace Friendship and Job Burnout keeping Employee Engagement constant

a. Dependent Variable: Job burnout

Data Analysis:

- R value is .220
- R- Square value is 0.049
- F-value is 4.999

Interpretation: The regression table shows that the R value (.220) shows that there is high consistency in predicted values and observed values. R-Square value (.049) shows that unitary change in the value of employee engagement will impact job burnout by .049, which is it can be said that employee engagement can be considered as a good predictor of job burnout. The level of significance between employee engagement and job burnout is .028 which is less than .05, therefore it can be stated that there is an effect of employee engagement on job burnout among employees of Wipro BPO and the null hypothesis is rejected and alternate hypothesis is accepted.

Conclusion

In BPOs, employee engagement programs are important as they help to align the human activities to the company's strategies. Employee engagement is not just the process of engaging the employees productively; it also expects the organization to pave the way to ensure that the employees are motivated to put in their best efforts for the wealth maximization. This requires building loyalty which can inject commitment in doing quality work. The research showed a positive correlation between workplace friendship and employee engagement indicating that as the workplace friendship increases, employee engagement also increases, there is a significant impact of employee engagement on job burnout and there is no relationship between workplace friendship and job burnout among employees of BPOs. Wipro conducted employee engagement surveys every year and the year 2006 is said to have seen an employee turnover of 1300 per month in its BPO business. This inducted the company to launch —Josh, a program to create bonding of the employees with the company and for employee engagement. BPOs should make sure that its employees maintain a work life balance in order to reduce their stress and physical and emotional exhaustion. The following measures should be taken by BPOs to reduce job burnout and increase work life balance of its employees:

- a. Discourage employees from working late.
- b. Take a regular employee satisfaction survey that identifies pitfalls in the work pattern.
- c. Providing vacations to the employees.
- d. Providing opportunities like work from home, flexi time etc.

Friendships are a substantial part of the exercise of essential human values and they influence individual attitudes and behaviours which are shared with fellow employees in BPO sector. The consequence is that —numerous close friendships evolve from existing formal relationships and places, and for many people, these relationships are maintained within the organisational setting. Also, the friendships decrease the negative attitudes of employees by reducing narrow self-interest so the importance of friendship should not be taken lightly. Thus, among workplace relationships, friendship is unique in that —it is voluntary, has a personalized bond, and is for personal, socio-emotional benefits; while other workplace relationships which are imposed have a work-role bond, and are for organizational, work related benefits.

Recommendations

- BPOs should come up with different programs and activities that would help in increasing the employee engagement. Activities like: Communications activities, Reward schemes, Activities to build the culture of the organisation, Team building activities, Leadership development activities.
- BPOs should help employees in building a strong workplace friendship with each other by: for a healthy and strong relationship employees must be given the opportunity to communicate with each other, team leaders and supervisors must conduct a morning meetings with their team members, taking the teams or employees out for lunch or picnics or get together once in a while, making a separate site or web portal for the employees where they can share their personal interests and wish each other on their birthdays and anniversaries, advising employees not to be jealous of each other and learning for each other as much as they can.
- BPOs should also come up with different strategies and programs in order to minimize job burnout among employees. This can be done by: Providing laughter sessions, Exercise sessions, Meditation sessions, Prioritize work.

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