



Turnover intention and Job involvement in Indian BPOs: Mediating role of Employees' Attitude

Dr. Jay Singh,

Associate Professor,

Department of Psychology, University of Allahabad, Prayagraj, India- 211002

Abstract : The Indian business process outsourcing (BPO) organizations emerged and grew rapidly but soon have started to face many problems related to the high turnover of employees leading to a shortage of proficient workforce. This study examines the role of employees' attitudes toward satisfaction and job involvement in their turnover intention.

The present study comprised 460 customer care executive (CCE) level employees with 388 males and 72 females belongs to the age range of 20 to 34 years. Respondents were selected purposively from different BPOs situated in Delhi and Kolkata cities of India. Results of hierarchical regression analyses show that job involvement and employees' attitude toward satisfaction individually are significant negative predictors for turnover intention. The analysis further revealed that, after controlling the effect of attitude towards satisfaction, the association of job involvement with turnover intention has been changed significantly, which can be considered the mediating effect of employee attitude to predict turnover intention by their job involvement, which was further checked with Aroian version of the Sobel test and found significant.

Key Words- Turnover Intention; Job Involvement; Employees' Attitude; Indian BPO

Introduction

Business world should thanks to globalization, liberalization, and outsourcing, which creates healthy business competitiveness and has become the key factors for the survival and growth of the economy and employment. Over the past two decades, the role of the human resource (HR) department in organizations has undergone a major transformation. From simply providing back-office administrative support through the paperwork it has changed to playing a key role in supporting business plans and strategies by facilitating the creation of an innovative workforce.

With the rapid changes in technology offering business, human resources need to be re-trained to resume productivity. The cost of training is high, the cost of not training is higher, and the cost of hiring a trained employee is the highest. Employee loyalty can no longer be taken for granted. Employees today leave the organization not only for better pay and opportunities but also for several other reasons like a discontented working environment, bullying boss, non-cooperative sub-ordinates, hostile colleagues, non-recognition of performance, etc. as well as an inappropriate self-attitude towards job and organization. So, measures to retain these trained/high-performing employees have become as important as training or hiring them. Today, the HR department has to be innovative in developing strategies and plans to cover all the above areas by treating employees as its customers and acting as their mentors or change agent.

The current working situation in some organizations, especially in business process outsourcing (BPO) industries does not paint a rosy picture. So, there is a need to discuss BPO organizations in an indigenous context especially focusing on the point of employees' attitudes toward organizational processes. An overview of the concept of BPO in the Indian context is given below.

Indian business world experienced a new concept as BPO became an exciting source of employment and revenue generation during the late nineties. It can be defined as a shift of an organization's whole non-core but critical business functions to an outside vendor who utilizes IT-based service delivery. BPO, doing so assists an organization to concentrate on its core processes as they can reduce costs and improve shareholders' value.

The main reason of the rapid development in the BPO sector of India is the changes in the Indian economy over last 30 years or so. It has been responsible for the growth of the information technology sector and after that, the BPO industry. In the late nineties, India became a 'free market economy and due to this outcome, foreign investment was liberalized. Liberal reforms set the stage for India to emerge as a superpower in the BPO industry. According to NASSCOM Strategic Review (2012 & 2015), the Indian BPO sector has emerged rapidly, and its exports have grown from \$565 million in 2000 to about \$146 billion in 2015. This business is likely to grow at an 8 to 9% compound annual growth rate (CAGR) and would reach US\$225-250 billion by 2025 (Kumar, 2022). Reports also stated that the sector added 160,000 employees in 2013, and make available direct employment to 3.1 million and indirect employment to 10 million people. The BPO sector in merely India has provided more than 74,400 jobs for Indian, and is soon to employ over 1.1 million (Dey, 2021). Research of NASSCOM revealed that the quality orientation of leading call centres in Delhi delivers round the clock services. Indian call centre services also hold around 55% of world's business outsourcing projects, which makes BPOs as the leading sector of Indian business market (ICCS BPO, 2018).

Despite all of the above fine facts, presently voluntary turnover has become a problem for this business world, regardless of the nature of the job. High employee attrition is attributed more to brain drain (Singh & Mittra, 2012). The costs of this turnover not only have an impact on the organizational production but also affect the morale of the other staff. A figure explained that replacing an employee costs a company \$78,000 (Ramsey-Smith, 2004). These costs include recruitment and training (Alexander et al, 1994), firm-level social capital loss (Dess & Shaw, 2001), decreased temporary productivity, and important tacit knowledge loss (Droege & Hoobler, 2003).

Building an understanding of what reasons an employee chooses to leave the organization allows management to reduce and manage the voluntary turnover process more effectively. This will facilitate employee retention strategies and develop a desirable working environment. Empirical evidence suggests that the BPO sector faces the highest industry attrition rates (Numerof, Abrams, & Schank, 2002; Barney, 2002; HFS, 2021) and this dramatic and continuous rise is greatest challenge for the sector (Krishnan & Muthukamu, 2021). Workplace satisfaction in BPO employees and working conditions was deemed not enough motivating and is one of the big factors for attrition (Gupta, 2020). Although a plethora of investigations were done over the past four decades by both academicians and organizational practitioners on the factors behind voluntary turnover and its consequences. Still, it's a need to deal comprehensively with employees' involvement in jobs and attitudes toward satisfaction in the organization, especially in the Indian work environment.

Job involvement is a variable that is considered very effective tool and management strategy through which employees' behavior may improve favourably for organizations. In the Indian context, it has been observed that different human actions may clarify through its rich culture and mythology. It is evident as Rao and Abraham (2003) have argued that the civilizing aspects will be deeply rooted in the individual psyche and relevant in positive cognition that may affect individuals in the workplace.

At present, the indigenous culture of India has been quick to accept alien customs and mores while preserving its distinctive values and rules (Biswas et al., 2006). Job involvement has been one of the oldest Indian work values and could be consider to have dispositional value (Kanungo, 1982). According to Lodahl and Kejner (1965), job involvement affects people for whom their job constitutes the most important portion of life. Hence, job involvement appears to be a construct that would be a very important variable in explaining employees' behavior, especially in India.

Job involvement is established as the outcome of appropriate or inappropriate HR practices and it is likely to assume that the HR practices of an organization will dictate an employee's decision to stay or quit an organization (Koys, 2001). Griffith, et al. (2000) reviewed a model of element analysis on employees' volunteer turnover, and they describe that, among different kinds of variables related to job content and external environment factors, job involvement was found to be a strong predictor for the turnover intention of employees. Van Dick, et al. (2004) in their study, argued that individuals think and behave on behalf of the group to which they belong because this group membership adds to their social identity.

According to Brooks and Edward (2006), the greater connection of a person to an organization and community may be a predictor of their stay in the organization. A considerable body of literature about psychological perspectives of employees' turnover intention points out that, this intention may arise by incongruence between an individual's psychological perception of their job environment (Madhan & Jain, 2015), and an individual's needs and aspirations (Rao, Subbarayudu & Siddhardha, 2016). But, this association might be mediated by an individual's attitudinal facets such as commitment (Biswas, 2010) which is highly associated with the level of involvement and satisfaction with his/her job.

Employees' attitude toward satisfaction with work is an important behavioural domain for their job outcomes and organizational responses. The adverse attitudes of an employee may cost his/her organization at large scale. Plenty of earlier evidences aligns with the classic view that attitude affects behavior more than behavior affects attitude (Fazio et al., 1989). A time-sequenced meta-analysis of 49 studies on job attitudes found that the predictive value of attitude-to-behavior was stronger than the predictive value between behavior-to-attitude (Glasman & Albarracín, 2006). Many other evidences from dozens of time-lagged studies also tends to favour the attitude-behavior mechanism (Harrison et al. 2006). Among various factors influencing the intention to quit the job, the satisfaction-related attitude is the most influential, and a lot of other attitudinal research shows that behavioral intention is the result of attitudes (Ajzen, 2001).

The negative relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intention is well-established in the literature (Mulki et al., 2008). Recent studies also reported a high correlation between job satisfaction and turnover intention (Park & Kim, 2009; McNall, et al., 2010; Huning & Thomson, 2011). Mishra and Solanki (2018) have concluded that positive attitude toward job produce high engagement and in turn low intention to quite the job. Therefore, the above studies show the important relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intention.

The aforementioned studies indicate a common negative association of job satisfaction with turnover intention as well as actual turnover of employees, but some researchers have studied the relationship from different perspectives. Falkenburg and Schyn (2007) found a complex moderating effect of job satisfaction and organizational commitment on withdrawal behaviors. This finding indicates that the relationship between employees' attitudes towards job satisfaction and turnover intention may explicate in some other way. The present study attempts to further probe this area.

The study was conducted with the turnover intention of employees as the main criterion variable because it was not possible to explore the reason for actual turnover as employees had already left the organization. Furthermore, the literature suggests that turnover intention is the most immediate precursor of turnover and it is widely acknowledged that identifying and dealing with antecedents of turnover intention is an effective way of reducing actual turnover (Tumwesigye, 2010).

Although numerous studies are conducted to understand the problem of turnover intention about the above-said variables, still a clear relation was not found. Mulki, Jaramillo, and Locander (2008) have used attitudinal and stress theory to examine the effect of some variables on job outcomes and concluded that the relationship was fully mediated by job satisfaction. Zopiatis et al. (2014) have also shown empirical evidence that a negative association between job satisfaction and turnover intention was not supported. Many other studies have shown the mediating effect of job satisfaction to predict turnover intention (Bayarçelik, & Findikli, 2016; Hendri, 2019).

Present study attempts to investigate an important population employed in BPOs because very few studies were carried out on this sector with the said variables. Above literature illustrates the confusion about the role of employees' attitude towards satisfaction and job involvement in predicting intention to leave the current job. Therefore, it will be interesting to know whether employees' attitude play the role of either direct predictors or mediator.

Objectives

Specifically, the study will be guided by the following objectives:

- (i) Measure the association between job involvement and turnover intention.
- (ii) Measure how employees' attitudes are associated with their turnover intention.
- (iii) To investigate the combined effect of job involvement and employee attitude on turnover intention.

Hypotheses

The present investigation will test the following hypotheses:

H₁: There would be a negative association between employees' attitude and turnover intention.

H₂: There would be a negative association between job involvement and turnover intention of the employee.

H₃: Job involvement would be a significant predictor of employees' attitude.

H₄: Employees' attitudes would play a significant mediating role in the association of job involvement with turnover intention.

Methods

Design and Sample

The present research is an attempt to examine the association of employees' attitudes toward job satisfaction and job involvement (predictor variables) with turnover intention (criterion variable). Therefore, the present study follows a correlational design. The sample comprises 460 customer care BPO employees including 388 males and 72 females of the age range of 20 to 34 years (Mean=24.25) with a minimum of one year of experience (Mean=2.60). 24 respondents were married while 436 showed unmarried status. The population of the sample is a wide and large number of BPOs across India. Their work schedule is hectic as they do not get easily interested to participate in the research. Therefore, sampling was done by purposive sampling technique across Delhi (270) and Kolkata (190) regions from different BPOs.

Tools

1. Turnover Intention Scale-

This scale is developed by J. Singh, 2022. Primarily 26 items were selected on the bases of the review of related literature and items of the priory scales. But after the pilot study, only 20 items were found appropriate, and finally, on the total sample, the overall scale was found highly reliable with .90 Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items. The concurrent validity of the scale was also established by measuring correlation (.80) with the items of the previous scale. Factor analysis of this scale was done and two factors were identified mismanagement-related turnover intentions (Factor-1), and nature of work and lucrative opportunities-related turnover intentions (Factor-2).

2. Short Employee Attitudes Scale

This scale has been developed by H. C. Ganguly, (1994) comprising 12 items. The 3 domains of this scale consist of the nature of work, pay and security, supervision, and company policies & practices. The reliability of the scale was 0.79 and validity is well established as reported in various early studies. In the present study, reliability was found satisfactory for 11 items (Cronbach's Alpha 0.774), one item was withdrawn due to low item-total correlation in reliability analysis.

3. Job Involvement Scale

The job Involvement Scale (JIS) has been developed by Lodahl and Kejner (1965). It is a 20-item Likert-type 5 – point scale. Split-half alpha reliability by spearman Brawn was found .72 (for nurses), .80 (for engineers), and .89 (for students). The validity of the scale was determined by external criterion. Four of the five measures (Smith's Job Descriptive Index) have shown association with high job involvement, satisfaction with work (.29), promotion (.38), supervision (.38), and people (.37). In the present study, the reliability was found satisfactory for only 15 items (Cronbach's Alpha 0.785) while five items were withdrawn due to low item-total correlation in reliability analysis.

Results

Analyses of responses were done by using multiple regression and online mediation analysis as per the need of this study and results are presented below-

Table 1

Summary of Multiple Regression (Simultaneous) Analysis for Demographic Variables Along with Tenure as Predictors and Turnover Intention as Criterion

Demographical Variables	Criterion Variables		
	Overall Turnover Intention	Mismanagement	Nature of Work and Lucrative Opportunities
Organizational Region	.042	.107*	-.049
Gender	-.034	-.021	-.041
Age	-.063	.080	-.123*
Marital Status	0.13	.028	.090
Experience (work Tenure in Current Organization)	-.040	-.145**	.100
R	.089	.171	.198
R Square	.008	.029	.039
Adjusted R Square	-.003	.018	.029
F	.718	2.721*	3.706**

*P<.05, **P<.01

Note- Organizational Region is coded as: 1= Delhi Region, 2=Kolkata Region

Gender is coded as: 1= Male, 2= Female

Marital Status coded as: 1= Married 2= Unmarried

Note- Standardized β is reported in tables

Table 1 specifies that demographic variables (gender, age, marital status), working region, and tenure is significantly contributing to the prediction of both factors of turnover intention as mismanagement-related turnover intention ($R^2 = .029$, $F = 2.72$, $p < .05$), and nature of work and lucrative opportunities related turnover intention ($R^2 = .039$, $F = 3.71$, $p < .01$), whereas results reveal no significant association of any variable with overall turnover intention. But specifically working region ($\beta = .107$, $p < .05$), age ($\beta = -.123$, $p < .05$), and work tenure ($\beta = -.145$, $p < .01$) are showing little contribution in explaining the turnover intention of employees. So forth, here is a strong reason to control these variables in the main analysis. Hence, to test the proposed hypotheses, hierarchical regression analyses were performed with demographics, working region, and tenure treated as control variables.

Table2

Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Employee Attitudes toward Satisfaction as Predictor and Turnover Intention as Criterion (N= 460)

Control Variables	Criterion Variables					
	Overall Turnover Intention		Mismanagement		Nature of Work and Lucrative Opportunities	
	Step-1	Step-2	Step-1	Step-2	Step-1	Step-2
Organizational Region	.042	.023	.107*	.092*	-.049	-.067
Gender	-.034	.042	-.021	.042	-.041	.031
Age	-0.13	.040	.080	.124**	-.123*	-.074
Marital Status	.063	.037	.028	.007	.090	.065
Experience (work Tenure in Current Organization)	-.040	-.040	-.145**	-.145***	.100	.099*
Predictor						
Employee Attitudes		-.664***		-.556***		-.625***
Overall R²		.441		.332		.422
Adjusted R²		.443		.323		.414
R² Change		.443		.303		.383
F^a-Change	0.72	350.39***	2.72*	205.04***	3.71**	299.65***

*P<.05, **P<.01, ***P<.001

a- Degree of Freedom on Step-1 = 5,454, and Degree of Freedom on Step-2 = 6,453

Note- Standardized β is reported in table

Results of table 2 show that overall employees' attitudes towards satisfaction in the organization is a significant negative predictor of overall turnover intention ($\beta = -.664$, $p < .001$) which explains 44.3 percent of the total variance in it, and both factors i.e. mismanagement related turnover intention ($\beta = -.556$, $p < .001$) with the explanation of 30.3 percent of the total variance, and nature of work and lucrative opportunities related turnover intention ($\beta = -.625$, $p < .001$) with the account of 38.3 percent of the total variance are also significantly predicted by employees' attitudes.

Table3

Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Job Involvement as Predictors and Turnover Intention as Criterion (N= 460)

Control Variables	Criterion Variables					
	Overall Turnover Intention		Mismanagement		Nature of Work and Lucrative Opportunities	
	Step-1	Step-2	Step-1	Step-2	Step-1	Step-2
Organizational Region	.042	-.014	.107*	.041	-.049	-.079
Gender	-.034	.014	-.021	.034	-.041	-.016
Age	-0.13	-.094	.080	-.015	-.123*	-.166**
Marital Status	.063	.066	.028	.031	.090	.091
Experience (work Tenure in Current Organization)	-.040	.068	-.145**	-.019	.100	.156**
Predictor						
Job Involvement		-.304***		-.358***		-.160***
Overall R²		.084		.135		.060
Adjusted R²		.072		.123		.048
R² Change		.077		.106		.021
F^a-Change	0.72	37.89***	2.72*	55.278***	3.71**	10.23***

*P<.05, **P<.01, ***P<.001

a- Degree of Freedom on Step-1 = 5,454, and Degree of Freedom on Step-2 = 6,453

Note- Standardized β is reported in tables

The results of table 3 show that job involvement of employees explains 7.7 percent of the total variance and has a significant negative association with their overall turnover intention ($\beta = -.304, p < .001$), and both factors as mismanagement-related turnover intention ($\beta = -.358, p < .01$; explained total variance- 10.6 percent) and nature of work and lucrative opportunities-related turnover intention ($\beta = -.160, p < .001$) with 2.1 percent of the total variance.

Table4

Mediated Regression Analysis: Job Involvement (Predictor), Employee Attitudes (mediator), Turnover Intention as Criterion (N= 460)

Predictor Variable		Criterion Variable: Turnover Intention		
		Overall Turnover Intention	Mismanagement	Nature of Work and Lucrative Opportunities
Job Involvement (JI)		Mediator Variable: Employees' Attitudes (EA)		
Step1	JI → EA	.459***	.459***	.459***
Step2	JI → TI	-.304***	-.358***	-.160***
Step3	EA → TI	-.665***	-.507***	-.684***
	JI → TI	.001	-.124**	.154***
Aroian version of the Sobel test	t- statistics	-8.55514292	-7.62780381	-8.59909186
	p-value	1e-8 ⁺	1e-8 ⁺	1e-8 ⁺

*P<.05, **P<.01, ***P<.001

Note: Standardized β is reported in table

Table 4 presents the result of mediating effect of employees' attitudes in the relationship between job involvement and turnover intention (overall and both factor). The four conditions of Baron and Kenny (1986) and Kenny (2003) in testing the mediating effect of employee attitudes were fulfilled. As reported above, job involvement has a significant positive association with employee attitudes ($\beta = .459, P < .001$) and a significant negative association with turnover intention overall ($\beta = -.304, P < .001$), and both factor as mismanagement-related turnover intention ($\beta = -.358, P < .001$) and nature of work and lucrative opportunities related turnover intention ($\beta = -.160, P < .001$) over and above the effect of control variables. Thus, two of the four conditions are adequate for demonstrating mediation. The third condition is met by the finding that employee attitude is significantly negatively predicting turnover intention overall ($\beta = -.665, P < .001$) and both factors like mismanagement-related turnover intention ($\beta = -.507, P < .001$) and nature of work and lucrative opportunities related turnover intention ($\beta = -.684, P < .001$). The fourth condition is fulfilled by the results of direct insignificant association of job involvement with overall turnover intention ($\beta = .001, P > .05$), decreased association with mismanagement-related turnover intention ($\beta = -.124, P < .01$), and significant positive association with nature of work and lucrative opportunities related turnover intention ($\beta = .154, P < .001$), when the effect of employee attitudes was controlled.

Results of the Aroian version of the Sobel test further indicate that employee attitudes fully mediate the association of job involvement with overall turnover intention (t- statistics= -8.55514292, $p < 1e-8$ +) and nature of work and lucrative opportunities related turnover intention (t- statistics= -8.59909186, $p < 1e-8$), while partial mediation is seen with mismanagement related turnover intention (t- statistics= -7.62780381, $p < 1e-8$).

Discussion

The main objective of this study was to examine how attitudes toward satisfaction and job involvement influenced the turnover intention of Indian BPO employees.

Results indicate that a high level of positive employee attitudes towards satisfaction about different aspects of the organization predicted a low level of intention to leave the organization. Other relevant studies also reported similar findings and show a high negative correlation between job satisfaction and turnover intention (Park & Kim, 2009; McNall et al., 2010; Wickramasinghe; 2010; Huning & Thomson, 2011). Therefore, it can be said that attitude toward job satisfaction is a very influential variable for the decision of employees either leave the organization or not, it is proved by the present study and supported by recent pieces of evidence (Sachdeva, 2014; Gebregziabher et.al., 2020; Rakhmitania, 2022).

Another result of this study of correlation and regression analyses indicates that the involvement of employees in their job was found to be a significant negative predictor for intention to leave. In other words, the when an employee will feel his/her work as important, meaningful, and intrinsically rewarding, s/he may generally show high engagement in organization. And, in case of high involvement in the job s/he is more likely to stay in the current organization. Past and recent researches are also consistently found a moderate relationship between job involvement and turnover intention. A meta-analysis of job involvement by Brown (1996), a review of the model of element analysis on employees' volunteer turnover by Griffith (2000), a survey by Alarcon and Edwards (2010), and many empirical pieces of evidence are similar to present findings (Thaiba, & Surya, 2019; Gupta & Bhatia, 2023).

Another specific result of this study was the significant mediating role of employees' satisfaction between job involvement and turnover intention. The disposition theory of job involvement may offer the reasonability for this mediation. Weiss and Cropanzano (1996) have suggested that disposition may influence the experience of emotionally significant events at work, which in turn influences attitudes toward job satisfaction. It shows that involvement can affect satisfaction-related attitudes because involvement is considered a dispositional value (Kanungo, 1982). Ekmekçi (2011) found that job involvement perceptions of the employees affected their organizational commitment which is highly and positively associated with satisfaction. These findings show that employee satisfaction may play an effective role as a mediator between job involvement and turnover intention.

Mediation can also be explained in the light of Indian psychology. The opposite of Sakam Karma (attached involvement) or an action done with the expectation of results, Nishkam Karma (detached involvement) has been variously explained as 'Duty for duty's sake' (Mishra, 2003). 'Detached Involvement' means neither a negative attitude nor indifference but dedication and responsibility toward the work without expectations. Nishkam Karma is the central theme of the Bhagavad Gita (Parmar, 2002), where Krishna advocates 'Nishkam Karma Yoga' (the yoga of selfless action) as the ideal path to realize the Truth. Allocated work done without expectations, motives, or thinking about its outcomes tends to purify one's mind and gradually makes an individual fit to see the value of reason and the benefits of renouncing the expectation from work itself. Therefore, job involvement has not only a psychological status in the working situation, but it is considered an internalized value that is a part of our Indian culture. It teaches us to follow it in our path, leading to becoming good human beings. Weitz (1952) stated that "some individuals generally gripe and groan than others" and that such individuals when dissatisfied with their jobs will be less likely to quit than those who are more positively disposed toward life. So, it seems that attitudes towards satisfaction may be affected by the involvement which in turn affects turnover intention, and the involvement of a follower of Niskam Karm Yoga may not show association with turnover intention in the condition of controlled perception about satisfaction towards the job.

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