CHAPTER 3
JOB SATISFACTION

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3.1 INTRODUCTION
Job satisfaction is a complex area of Organizational Behavior and Human Resources Management that has been widely researched over the years with a number of theories and views relating to it. However, job satisfaction in call centers has not been researched as extensively within the Mumbai based call center context. More studies on job satisfaction of call centre representatives are necessary because motivated employees provide better customer service than unmotivated employees.

3.2 DEFINITION OF JOB SATISFACTION
Job Satisfaction is a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job or job experiences.

Job satisfaction is how people feel about their jobs and different aspects of their jobs. It is the extent to which people like (satisfaction) or dislike (dissatisfaction) their jobs.

The Chart 3.1 below mentions the responses to the levels of dissatisfaction shown towards one’s job and their employers.
Chart 3.1
Employee’s response to his Job dissatisfaction and his reactions towards his employer

A dissatisfied employee’s response to his job dissatisfaction can oscillate
between being active and vocal as regards to his grievances to being very passive and submissive. This can lead to four reactions from the employee.

1. An active employee would voice his grievance openly to the management of his organization and seek immediate redressal for the same. Such employees tend to be constructive in their approach and would be like to have their grievances handled appropriately.

2. When active disgruntled employees are not appropriately handled by their managers and the Human Resource Departments they tend to lose their interest in their jobs and hence we see a huge turnover of such employees.

3. On the other hand a passive or submissive employee would simply let his dissatisfaction remain to himself and carry on with his work as usual. This can be either due to his loyalty for the organization or his fear of the management. In this case there is submissiveness displayed from the employee’s side and he feels alienated in his work environment.

4. Such submissive or passive employees can become targets of union leaders who can mislead them into neglecting their duties or still worse can coerce them into destructive activities against the organization.

All the above four scenarios can prove to the detrimental to the growth of the organization and its employees.

3.2.1 CONSEQUENCES OF LOW JOB SATISFACTION

1. Turnover is higher:

   Lower level of job satisfaction results in direct impact to labour turnover. In many industries this is the most common cause for labour turnover. In the BPO and Call Center organizations, this issue of low job satisfaction due to the basic job profile, work / shift timings and
lack of career opportunities is highlighted by a high turnover of manpower.

2. Absenteeism is higher:
The immediate and most visible signs of low job satisfaction are the absenteeism in any organization. Habitual absenteeism can become chronic ailment for the human resource climate of an organization. This can prove to be detrimental to both employees as well as the organization.

3. Performance is lower:
Low morale of employees result in their performance being hampered. Productivity and morale have a positive co-relationship. Lower productivity results in production losses and therefore low profitability. This not only impacts the entire organization but the economy as a whole.

4. Accidents increase:
Unproductive employees do not care for safety norms. Adherence to rules and norms becomes secondary concern for employees having lower level of motivation. Their primary concern becomes their grievances as regards to their job. This neglect leads to damage to the organizational property and its image.

5. Personal health decreases (due to stress):
High levels of stress leads to physical ailments like back ache, high blood pressure, etc in employees having lower morale. This can also
be one of the main reasons for lower performance, high absenteeism and high manpower turnover.

6. Unionization efforts increase:
A disgruntled employee first seeks solace in the union office. His trust on his employer goes down and union leaders take advantage of the same. Many a times instead of helping the employee these union leaders motivate them to act against the management of the organizations. This proves costly for the management in the long run.

7. Stock prices are lower:
Low image of the organization due to union problems, loss of production, customer complaints, increase in accidents resulting in revenue loss due to compensation to workmen and high labour turnover combines its effects and pushes down the share price of the organization on the stock exchanges. This leads to loss of investor confidence in the organization. This can prove to be very costly for organizations depending on borrowed funds for their expansion and growth.

All these above factors are interlinked and are directly attributable to job related dissatisfaction of employees. If organizations do not nip the issue in its bud it has to pay a dear price for the same in the long run. Most organizations view these issues seriously and deal with them diligently.
3.3 THEORIES OF JOB SATISFACTION

Theories related to job satisfaction can be traced to Elton Mayo’s Hawthorne Experiments - a series of experiments on factory workers carried out between 1924 and 1932. Based on the Hawthorne experiment observations, certain parameters essential to job satisfaction like job characteristics, motivation, monotony, fatigue, etc. were highlighted and further research was conducted by various behavioral experts in this area. Some of the research was propounded into the job satisfaction theories that we know of today. Some of these theories are mentioned below.

3.3.1 THE JOB CHARACTERISTICS / THE WORK DESIGN MODEL

Work design is concerned with the characteristics of the jobs. Work design theory would provide an important guiding framework for examining the psychosocial challenges facing employees in the call centre context.

Skill: A trait or a technique required to accomplish a task.
Task: A single unit of work the employee has to perform.
Job: Multiple tasks which are homogenous when grouped together form a job.

An employee’s job profile would therefore be all the jobs that he does during the working hours every working day. The job characteristics model defines these jobs and their effects on the motivation levels of the employees. This is identified by the core job dimensions and the psychological effects it creates on the employees performing those jobs. The outcomes resulting from these psychological effects either act as a morale booster or become detrimental to the productivity of the employees.

Hackman & Oldham\textsuperscript{28} identified five “core job characteristics” that relate to the motivation and satisfaction of employees. These characteristics are:

\textsuperscript{28} Fred Luthans, \textit{Organizational Behavior}, 2007
1. **Skill variety:** the degree to which the job requires different skills

2. **Task identity:** the degree to which the job involves completing a whole, identifiable piece of work rather than simply a part.

3. **Task significance:** the extent to which the job has an impact on other people, inside or outside the organization

4. **Autonomy:** the extent to which the job allows jobholders to exercise choice and discretion over work

5. **Feedback from the job:** the extent to which the job itself (as opposed to other people) provides jobholders with information on their performance.

These core job characteristics were suggested to produce ‘critical psychological states’, for example, skill variety, task identity and task significance affecting the *experienced meaningfulness of work*. Autonomy influences the *experienced responsibility for work*, and feedback relates to *knowledge of results* of work activities. These states were then responsible for four main outcomes, that is, work satisfaction, internal work motivation, work performance, and absenteeism and turnover.

In the case of call centre employees these core job characteristics would reflect the following:
1. **Skill variety**: the degree to which the job requires different skills. Most employees in a voice based call centre either make telephone calls or are receiving telephone calls from customers spread across the globe. In their case the only skill required is communicating in good English with developed accents as per the location needs i.e. if the customer is located in USA, the accent developed by the call center employee would be such that it suits the local slang. They are trained to use words and phrases common to the public of that region, state or country. Like the people in USA generally use the word “Ya” to mean “Yes”. The term “Gas” means “Petrol” in the USA.

This essentially means that for a call center employee the degree to with the job requires different skills are low. The skill variety demands of the job are only communication skills, listening skills and general command over some accents on which the employee is trained as per the customer locations.

2. **Task identity**: the degree to which the job involves completing a whole, identifiable piece of work rather than simply a part. In most in-bound call centers (where the customer makes a telephone call to the call center) the customer calls for some information request or some service request or any type of query for a product / service which the customer is using. In all such cases the task of the call center employee is just to provide the necessary information to the customer and that ends the transaction there. In case the call center executive is unable to provide the information or fulfill the service request, the call gets escalated to his supervisor or to the next level executive. So in both cases the task itself limits the call center executive from identifying his work to the customers end needs. Only in a few cases
where only passing on some information that can help the customer achieve his need can the call center employee identify his work to the customers end needs.

In cases of the out-bound call centers where the call center employees are expected to make telephone calls to the customers for either selling insurance, mortgage loans or to recover credit card payments the only interaction between the call center employee and the customer is to get appointments for the field executives, who then personally visit the customer and arrange for further interaction with them. Here again like the in-bound call center employee even for the out-bound call center employee the task of calling up the customer does not fulfill the customers end needs and hence has a feeling of being a mere cog in the wheel.

3. Task significance: the extent to which the job has an impact on other people, inside or outside the organization. Most of the job responsibilities of any call center employee are related directly to either making or receiving telephone calls and satisfying the customer’s query. Most of the call center representatives are judged for performance based on number of call attended/made and also on the duration of time spent on such a call. Where the number of calls being low and where the duration of any call exceeding the specified optimal call duration the call center employee is judged to be performing below defined productivity norms/standards. Since the call center employee’s job profile being “person centric” in nature it does not have a direct impact with the peers in the group. This can lead to higher levels of job stress and no peer interaction during the job performance. There
is minimal team based interactions required while performing the core job by any call center employee.

4. *Autonomy:* the extent to which the job allows jobholders to exercise choice and discretion over work. Most call center employee does not have any autonomy over their job content as well as its delivery. Automated call dialer just throws up calls to every call center agents (CSA – Customer Service Agents) and queues up calls one after another for response. No call can be unattended without prior permission from the floor supervisors. This is because the call center bills their clients based on the number of telephone calls attended / made in a day. If the call rate goes down there is a slump in the billing. In most cases the client pays the call center the same rate irrespective of the call duration. Higher the call duration, lower is the call attending rate. Therefore no call center allows the CSA any discretion over the number of calls one has to attend during the 8 hour work shift or the duration of each call one attends. This leads to frustration and fatigue. All this lowers the productivity of each employee.

5. *Feedback from the job:* the extent to which the job itself (as opposed to other people) provides jobholders with information on their performance. Most call center employees are closely monitored by their supervisors as well as their quality departments for the number of call attended and the duration of these calls. There is also a check for whether the call was terminated successfully or there was an escalation to a higher level. All such checks are regularly communicated to every CSA at the end of their work shifts. Any deviation in their calling from the set quality standards demands immediate reprimand in the form of cuts in incentives and in worst scenario
loss of one’s job. Hence such feedback about one’s job keeps them on tenterhooks every day. This leads to BOSS (Burn Out Stress Syndrome) in many employees. On the other hand positive feedback boosts the morale of the CSA, but the pressure for zero defect performance gets building up and increases the stress levels leading to mental and physical deterioration in the long run.

All these core job characteristics of call center employees cause mental and physical despair among them. At a very young age they adopt a deteriorating lifestyle by getting addicted to substances due to the mental stress. The physical aspects of their job profile do not permit them to be mobile for long periods within the stipulated 8 – 12 hour shifts. This leads to physical problems like backache, hearing problems, high blood pressure, etc to name a few ailments. Therefore there is high manpower turnover and chronic absenteeism among call center employees.

The Job Characteristics Model (JCM) is the most widely used theoretical approach to job design. This research focuses mainly on two important aspects of a call center executive’s problems related to job satisfaction and personal security posed by their job design.

3.3.2 EMOTIONAL LABOR.
Another dimension of studying the psychosocial challenges facing employees in the call centre would be the “emotional labor” component of their job design.
Emotional labor is a forced alteration in the behavioral aspect of a worker wherein he is expected to display or change his emotions as a part of his job to manage customers. Most of the times this concept is used in the service industry like hospitality, tourism, banking, entertainment, healthcare, etc wherein the employees of such organizations have to have face to face contact with their customers or at least over the telephone. In such situations they have to change their emotions as per the needs of the organization. These changes in their emotions are required to satisfy their organizations customers. This includes changes in their body language too.

The term "emotional labor" was first defined by the sociologist Arlie Russell Hochschild (1983) as the "management of feeling to create a publicity observable facial and bodily display". According to Hochschild, jobs involving emotional labor are defined as those that:

(1) require face-to-face or voice-to-voice contact with the public;
(2) require the worker to produce an emotional state in another person;
(3) allow the employees to exercise a degree of control over their emotional activities.

In the case of call center employees the concept of “emotional labor” is applicable as the very core characteristic of their job profile involves voice-to-voice contact with the customers.

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Display rules refer to the organizational rules about what kind of emotion to express on the job. Every call center employee has to be very cordial to the customers over the telephone. The employee has to remain calm and composed even in the event of verbal abuses which are personal and racial in nature. These Display rules of the call center leads to stress, nervous breakdowns, frustration, suppressed anger and many more psychological ailments with the call center employees.

Emotion regulation refers to the process of modifying one's own emotions and expressions. That is, the processes by which individuals influence which emotions they have, when they have them, and how they experience and express these emotions. There are two kinds of Emotion regulation:

antecedent-focused emotion regulation, which refers to modifying initial feelings by changing the situation or the cognitions of the situation;
response-focused emotion regulation, which refers to modifying behavior once emotions are experienced by suppressing, faking or amplifying an emotional response.

A call center employee cannot in any situation disclose his identity or the country he is from. He dons a fake identity and shows his pseudo-nationality status with every caller. Therefore most call center employees are imposed response-focused emotion regulation by their employers. This double identity and pseudo-nationality causes cultural conflicts, emotional instability and total loss of self esteem within the call center employees. Most call center employees take recourse to substance addiction and abuse.
Many take to criminal activities for sustaining these habits while others succumb to remorse resulting in high attrition among call center employees.

Forms of emotional labor
Employees can display organizationally-desired emotions by acting out the emotion. Such acting can take two forms:

*surface acting*, involves "painting on" affective displays, or faking; Surface acting involves an employee's (presenting emotions on his or her "surface" without actually feeling them. The employee in this case puts on a facade as if the emotions are felt, like a "persona").

*deep acting* wherein they modify their inner feelings to match the emotion expressions the organization requires.

Though both forms of acting are internally false, they represent different intentions. That is, when engaging in deep acting, an actor attempts to modify feelings to match the required displays, in order to seem authentic to the audience ("faking in good faith"); in surface acting, the alternative strategy, employees modify their displays without shaping inner feelings. They conform to the display rules in order to keep the job, not to help the customer or the organization. Deep acting is argued to be associated with reduced stress and an increased sense of personal accomplishment; whereas surface acting is associated with increased stress, emotional exhaustion, depression, and a sense of in authenticity.

In 1983, Arlie Russell Hochschild, who wrote about emotional labor, coined the term *emotional dissonance* to describe this process of "maintaining a difference between feeling and feigning".

Determinants of using emotional labor
1) Organizational norms.
   Typically organizations that are hard driven or where the work culture is more standardized with the aim to give uniform services to customers are more prone to having emotional labor among its employees. This can be seen clearly between the job profile of Airhostesses in major airlines and the job profile of insurance selling agents.

2) Employee’s feelings on the job.
   If the employee’s feelings match with the feelings that he is supposed to express at the workplace, there would be less discrepancy in his expressed behavior and his inner feelings. Similarly if he feels that the job profile he exhibits match with his career aspirations, then the employee can easily express the organizationally desired behaviors or emotions.

3) Supervisory Control.
   Since the workers directly report to their supervisors, they look forward to some flexibility and understanding on the part of the supervisor regarding their emotional state of mind. Their incessant struggle between personal emotions and displayed emotions can be minimized by their supervisors who can define the display of emotions rules of the workers.

3.3.3 THE HIERARCHY OF NEEDS.
Abraham Maslow proposed in his 1943 paper *A Theory of Human Motivation* - *Maslow's hierarchy of needs*. Maslow's hierarchy of needs is
often depicted as a pyramid consisting of five levels: the four lower levels are grouped together as being associated with Physiological needs, while the top level is termed growth needs associated with psychological needs. Deficiency needs must be met first. Once these are met, seeking to satisfy growth needs drives personal growth. The higher needs in this hierarchy only come into focus when the lower needs in the pyramid are satisfied. Once an individual has moved upwards to the next level, needs in the lower level will no longer be prioritized. If a lower set of needs is no longer being met, the individual will temporarily re-prioritize those needs by focusing attention on the unfulfilled needs, but will not permanently regress to the lower level.

Chart 3.3
Maslow’s Hierarchy of Human Needs

- Physiological
- Safety
- Social
- Esteem
- Self-actualization
Source: “Organizational Behavior” by Fred Luthans

As per the theory of Maslow, with his physical needs relatively satisfied, the individual's safety needs take over and dominate his behavior. These needs have to do with man's yearning for a predictable, orderly world in which injustice and inconsistency are under control, the familiar frequent, and the unfamiliar rare. In the world of work, these safeties needs manifest themselves in such things as a preference for job security, grievance procedures for protecting the individual from unilateral authority, savings accounts, insurance policies, and the like.

Safety needs include:

- Personal security from crime
- Financial security
- Health and well-being
- Safety net against accidents/illness and the adverse impacts

As regards the “Safety” aspects of the call center jobs specifically for women employees poses a challenge for the call center employers as well. The Amendment to the Factories Act which allows women to work between 10 pm and 6 am, in Information Technology among other sectors, clearly puts the onus of ensuring safety of women employees on the employer. It further states that these timings shall be allowed only if the employer ensures safety of women at the workplace and while commuting. Most women employed by call centres work in eight hour shifts at odd hours at monthly salaries ranging from Rs 8000 to Rs 30,000. Most call centres handle business inquiries from English speaking countries. It is true that call centres have generated a good number of job opportunities but the fact remains that most employees accept whatever benefits come their way and
don't question their work conditions. They are happy with a pick and drop facility. But with crime against call center women employees on the rise the “Safety” aspect of their job profile proves to be a de-motivator as per Maslow’s model. While the employer cannot prevent untoward incidents while arranging a pick up or drop of women call center employee during the night shifts, it deters the employee from seeking employment with the call centers for night shifts. Maslow’s need hierarchy mentions that “Deficiency” needs must be met first before growth needs associated with psychological needs are met. This essentially means that call center employees, specifically women employees would not be motivated by job responsibilities, status symbols and such other incentives which are motivators targeting the employee’s growth needs, due to the inherent nature of their job timings and its associated risk factors viz. their personal safety and well being.