

SOCIALISING SERVICE EMPLOYEES - THE PROCESS AND OUTCOMES

Saranya. P¹ & M. A. Joseph²

¹Research Scholar, Department of Commerce and Management Studies, University of Calicut, Malappuram, Kerala, India

²Professor, Department of Commerce and Management Studies, University of Calicut, Malappuram, Kerala, India

ABSTRACT

When an employee in a new organizational boundary (whether new recruitment/in case of promotion) is given adequate attention and training they will easily fit to the organizational role and culture. Effective socialization enhances employees' orientation to the organization. The service literature suggests that the effective socialization of service employees help to ensure a high degree of consistency in performance, thereby a high level of service quality. Hence this study aims to describe the process of socialization and its outcome in the service sector by surveying the customer- contact employees of general insurance companies, using the Organisational Socialisation (OS) scale of Jones (1986) and Employee Service Performance scale of Liao and Chaung (2004).

KEYWORDS: *Human Resource Management, Organisational Socialisation, Service Performance, Socialisation Tactics*

Article History

Received: 20 Jun 2018 | Revised: 02 Jul 2018 | Accepted: 06 Jul 2018

INTRODUCTION

Organisational socialisation or “people processing” refers to the manner in which the experiences of people learning the ropes of a new organisational position, status, or role are structured for them by others within the organisation (Mannen, 1978). It is the process through which new employees learn the skills, expected behaviours and values needed to become organisational members (Maanen and Schein 1979). Socialisation strategies are perhaps most obvious when a person first joins an organisation or when an individual is promoted or demoted (Mannen, 1978).

There are certain reasons that socialization is vital to both employees and organizations. First, it can decrease negative outcomes such as inappropriate behavior, turn-over, and absenteeism. Second, it enables newcomers to better participate to attain individual, team, and organizational goals. Third, it can create a learning environment for familiarising oneself with the organization's values, norms, and policies. Finally, whereas the results of socialization are consistent and its effects are immediate, the newcomers are more likely to successfully adapt to the new environment Beheshtifar, Rashidi, & Moghadam (2011).

Human resource is perhaps the most influential factor of service quality. If the employees are not able to deliver the service effectively, customer dissatisfaction will arise. If the employees are well informed about the organizational strategies, objectives and policies their performance can be encouraged and avoid the service performance gap. “Service employees who have been effectively socialized may help ensure a high degree of consistency in behavior as well as a high

level of service quality” (Govender, 2002). It is in this context the study examines the process and performance outcomes of socialization in the service sector by surveying the customer- contact employees of general insurance companies, using the Organizational Socialization (OS) scale of Jones (1986) and Employee Service Performance scale of Liao and Chaung (2004).

ORGANIZATIONAL SOCIALIZATION

Organisational socialization refers to the process through which individuals obtain the social knowledge and skills which are necessary to perform an organizational role. Although socialisation is a continuous process, it has more significance when a member passes a certain organizational boundary (promotion, transfer etc). Van Maanen (1978) has identified six major tactical dimensions (socialization tactics) which characterize the structural side of organizational socialization. These include:

- **Collective vs. Individual Socialisation Processes:** It refers to the tactic of taking a group of recruits who are facing a given boundary passage and putting them through a common set of experiences together. Group training for salesman, management training courses to which groups of practicing or prospective managers are sent for a certain period of common education is examples of collective socialization. At the other extreme, socialization in the individual mode refers to the tactic of processing recruits singly and in isolation from one another through a more or less unique set of experiences, for example, on-the-job training, apprenticeship programs.
- **Formal vs. Informal Socialisation Processes:** Formal socialization refers to those processes in which a newcomer is more or less segregated from regular organizational members while being put through a set of experiences tailored explicitly for the newcomer. Informal socialization processes, in contrast, do not distinguish the newcomer’s role specifically nor is there an effort made in such programs to rigidly differentiate the recruit from other more experienced organizational members. As such, informal tactics provide a sort of laissez-faire socialization for recruits whereby new roles are learned through trial and error. Formal socialization processes are typically found in organisations where specific preparation for new status is involved and where it is deemed important that a newcomer learn the “correct” attitude, values, and protocol associated with the new role. Learning through informal mode is entirely different, where the newcomer must select their own socialization agent.
- **Sequential vs. Random Steps Socialization Process:** Sequential socialization refers to transitional processes marked by a series of discrete and identifiable stages through which an individual must pass in order to achieve a defined role and status within the organization. For example, a bank may groom a person for a particular managerial position by rotating him or her across the various jobs that will comprise the range of managerial responsibility. In the random process, there is no fixed sequence of steps which leads to a role. For instance, a factory worker may become a shop supervisor without the benefit of an intermediary training program.
- **Fixed vs. Variable Socialization Processes:** Fixed socialization process refers to the degree to which the steps involved in a socialization process have a timetable associated with them and the same is communicated to the recruits. So the recruits will be well informed about the career path in the organisation.
- In variable socialization process a recruit have little information about the career path, that is, he or she may not be aware about the boundary passage in the organization and the socialization process will not be same for

everyone.

- **Serial vs. Disjunctive Socialization Processes:** A serial socialization process is one in which experienced members of the organization groom newcomers who are about to assume similar kinds of positions in the organization. In effect, the experienced organizational members serve as role models for recruits. When newcomers are not following the footsteps of immediate or recent predecessors, and when no role models are available to recruits to inform them as to how they are to proceed in the new role, the socialization process is a disjunctive one.
- **Investiture vs. Divestiture Socialization Processes:** Investiture processes substantiate and perhaps enhance the newcomer's view of himself or herself, by ratifying for recruits the viability and usefulness of those personal characteristics they bring with them to the organization. It attempts to make entrance into a given organizationally defined role as much as smooth and trouble free as possible. Divestiture socialization process seeks to deny and strip away certain personal characteristics of a recruit.

SERVICE PERFORMANCE

One of the main purposes of this study is to find out the outcome of socializing service employees. It has been stated that socialization helps to adapt to the organizational policies and values. The samples being service organizations, their main concern is providing better service to the customers. Therefore the relationship between socialization and service performance will be examined.

Employee performance, in general, refers to behaviors that are relevant to organizational goals and that are under the control of individual employees (Campbell, McCloy, Oppler, & Sager, 1993). In a service organization, the quality is largely depends upon the employee-customer interaction, because, it is the service employees who represent the organization before customers. For providing quality service, they need to identify the customer expectations and act accordingly, therefore employees' behavior has significant role in influencing customers' perception towards service quality.

As a part of the organisational role, employees need to perform activities directed towards serving the customers- including meeting customers, responding to their queries, clerical works etc., these are termed as service performance in this study. Thus service performance means, the behavior and the job performance of service employees which are directed towards the organizational goal of serving the customer.

RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

Socialization has been considered as an effective technique for enabling employees to take up their role in the organisation. A number of studies suggest organizational socialization as a strategy to improve employees' performance by enhancing role orientation, social adaptation, organizational commitment etc (Baker III & Feldman, 1990; Allen, 2004; Beheshtifar, Rashidi, & Moghadam, 2011; Filsatd, 2011). Socialization tactics aids employees to learn and demonstrate the desired behaviour for the organization.

Previous studies show that one of the effective strategies for improving employee performance is implementing socialisation for newcomers. Successful socialization results in more commitment and performance improvement (Syatat, 2006). By examining various socialisation tactics, it is possible to learn about the socialization in an organization.

Organizational Socialization tactics is one method of actively embedding new employees in an organization. The serial and investiture socialization tactics that provide experienced organizational members as models and that provide realistic information about the difficulties in a job were positively related to employee embeddedness to the organisation (Allen, 2004).

Likewise, there is a significant relationship between institutionalized social dimensions (includes serial-disjuncture and investiture-divestiture socialisation tactics) and organizational commitment. That means providing newcomers with role models and support and acknowledgement from experienced colleagues positively affect their organizational commitment (Filstad, 2011). The review of the literature reveals that organizational socialization influences the attitudes and performance of employees. Due to environmental competition, a service organization should improve issues such as service quality, customer satisfaction, and service delivery. To improve, successful organizations design and implement vital plans such as socialization for newcomers. Although socialization is a continuous and ongoing process, it is suggested that managers should perform socialization at all levels of the organization and for all employees, especially those with high seniority (Beheshtifar, Rashidi, & Moghadam, 2011).

Contrary to the foreign studies Raina & Chauhan's (2016) study has found that even if socialization practices are reasonably well entrenched in India, Western theories cannot be extrapolated to Indian population, because socialization has a weak correlation with organizational commitment, organizational identification, job satisfaction or intention to leave. Therefore, it is necessary to study the socialization of employees in the context of the study.

OBJECTIVES

- To study the organizational socialization process in general insurance companies in Calicut district.
- To find out the relationship between organizational socialization and service performance outcomes of employees in general insurance companies in Calicut district.

METHODOLOGY

Keeping in view of the objectives of the study the research design is descriptive as well as analytical in nature. The sample consists of customer- contact employees of general insurance companies, who are working with the organization for less than three years.

Both secondary and primary data is used in the study. The primary data is collected by using questionnaire from 100 customer-contact employees in both public and private general insurance companies in Calicut district (Kerala), including New India Assurance Company Ltd., United India Insurance Co. Ltd., Iffco Tokio General Insurance Co. Ltd and HDFC ERGO General Insurance Co. Ltd.

The Shapiro- Wilk test revealed that the data is not normally distributed therefore Mann Whitney U test is employed for analyzing the data. The regression analysis has also conducted in the study.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

Organisational Socialisation in General Insurance Companies

To study the socialization process in general insurance companies Organisational Socialisation (OS) scale of Jones (1986) is adopted after necessary changes. The questionnaire addresses six types of socialization tactics and

employees are asked to mark their agreement in five -point likert scale.

To analyze whether the socialization tactics differ between public and private sector general insurance companies Mann Whitney U test is used.

Ho: The socialisation tactics of public and private sector general insurance companies are same

Table 1: Comparison of Socialisation Tactics in Public and Private Sector Companies

Sector	N	Mean	SD	T value	P value
Public sector	50	80.16	11.469	0.747	0.459
Private sector	50	77.40	14.479		

Source: primary data

The p-value (0.459) is greater than the significance level (0.05), so the test suggests accepting the null hypothesis. Hence, the socialization tactics in public and private sector general insurance companies does not significantly vary each other.

Socialisation Tactics- Employees' Perception

The study has analyzed the perceptions of employees regarding the socialization processes. The result is given in table 2

Table 2: Mean Score of Socialisation Tactics

Socialisation Tactics	Mean	
	Public Sector	Private Sector
Collective Vs Individual	7.8	7.28
Formal Vs informal	3.72	3.44
Investiture Vs divestiture	7	7.06
Sequential Vs random	7.26	7.04
Serial Vs disjunctive	10.64	10.42
Fixed Vs variable	3.66	3.44

Source: Primary data

The table discloses the mean score of different socialization processes/tactics in general insurance companies, from the perception of employees. Among the six types of socialization tactics the serial Vs disjunctive socialization tactic yield the highest mean score in both public (10.64) and private sector (10.42) companies. That is, the socialization process in which newcomer adapt to the organizational culture through a role model is perceived as an effective socialization process by the employees.

Socialization and Service Performance

To investigate whether socialization tactics influence the service performance of employees' simple linear regression is carried out. As the data is not normally distributed the normality of error terms or residuals is checked, where it is found that the residuals satisfy the assumption of normality and therefore decided to conduct linear regression.

Table 3: Model Summary of Simple Linear Regression Analysis

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	F	Sig.
1	.637	.406	.393	2.769	.000

Source: primary data

Table 4: Coefficients

Model	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standard Coefficients	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	
Constant	19.296	3.459	.637	.000
Socialisation	.248	.043		

Source: primary data

The result reveals that the regression model is a significant one ($F(1, 98) = 2.769$, $p = .000$; $p < 0.05$) therefore, Socialisation is a good predictor of Service performance. Socialisation explains a significant amount of variance in service performance ($R^2 = .406$, $p < 0.05$).

Though socialization predicts service performance it may not be necessary that all the six tactics contribute uniformly to this linear relationship. Therefore, a multiple regression analysis has done to examine the relationship between each socialization tactics and service performance.

Table 5: Model Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	F	Sig.
0.704	.496	.426	1.054	.000

Source: primary data

Table 6: Coefficients

Socialisation Tactics	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	
Collective Vs Individual	.888	.270	.521	.002
Formal Vs Informal	.077	.394	.027	.846
Investiture Vs Divestiture	.142	.264	.085	.595
Sequential Vs Random	.448	.308	.259	.153
Serial Vs Disjuncture	-.021	.176	-.019	.904
Fixed Vs Variable	-.111	.509	-.036	.826

Source: primary data

It has found that three of the socialization tactics has positive Beta values and the other three has negative values. When considering the p value only one tactic ie, 'Collective Vs Individual' socialization tactic explains significance variance in service performance ($\beta = 0.521$, $p = .002$; $p < 0.05$), which clearly reveals that only 'Collective Vs Individual' socialization contributes to the linear relationship between socialization and service performance.

CONCLUSIONS

Socialization is a continuous process through which employees learn to fit to the organizational role. A socialized employee can contribute to the organization's goal. The study has carried out in general insurance industry, including both private and public sector companies, where it is found that the socialization tactics does not differ significantly between both sectors. And it is also observed that majority of the employees have opined positively regarding the socialization practice in the insurance companies. Among the six socialization processes the serial socialization is perceived as the most effective process by the employees. That means, getting guidance from an experienced organizational member who is assuming the same responsibility is much helpful than the other forms.

The regression analysis revealed a significant relationship between socialization and service performance. That is, organizational socialization does influence the service performance of employees. If there is proper socialization of

employees, the service organisations like general insurance companies can enhance the service performance of their employees, because employee performance is very essential for meeting customer requirements and thereby making happy customers. The multiple regression analysis performed between various socialization tactics and service performance shows that all the socialization tactics doesn't equally contribute to service performance, only 'collective-individual' socialization does. Therefore, organizations that want to enhance service performance through socialization have to concentrate more on collective-individual socialization tactic.

REFERENCES

1. Allen, D. G. (2004). *Do Organisational Socialization Tactics Influence newcomer Embeddedness and Turnover?* *Academy of Management Best Conference Paper 2004 HR; B2*, (p. 6).
2. Baker III, H. E., & Feldman, D. C. (1990). *Strategies of organisational socialisation and their impact on newcomer adjustment. Journal of managerial issues*, 11(2), 198-212.
3. Beheshtifar, M., Rashidi, M., & Moghadam, M. N. (2011, October). *Study of Organisational Socialisation and its Relationship on Employees' Performance. Africa Journal of Business Management*, 5(26), 10540-10544. doi:10.5897/AJBM11.502
4. Kareem, Mohanad Ali. "The Relationship Between Human Resource Management Strategies And Competitive Advantage."
5. Campell, J., McCloy, R. A., Oppler, S. H., & Sager, C. (1993). *A theory of performance. In S. N., & W. C. Borman, Personnel selection in organizations (pp. 35 - 70). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.*
6. Filstad, C. (2011). *Organisational commitment through organisational socialisation tactics. Journal of Workplace Learning*, 23(6), 376-390. doi:10.1108/13665621111154395
7. Govender, K. (2002). *Enhancing Service Production and Service Quality. SA Journal of Industrial Psychology*, 28(1), 33-36.
8. Mannen, J. V. (1978). *People processing: strategies of organisational socialization. Organisational Dynamics*, 19-36.
9. Swathi, B. "A comprehensive review on human resource management practices." *IMPACT: International Journal of Research in Business Management* 2.9 (2014): 21-28.
10. Maanen, J. V and Schein, Edgar H. (1977). *Toward a Theory of Organisational Socialization. Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Retrieved from: <https://www.academia.edu/30356947/swp-0960-03581864.pdf>, on 28-02-2017.*
11. Raina, R., & Chauhan, R. (2016). *organisational socialization and work related attitudes in India's uncertainty culture. The Indian Journal of industrial relations*, 52(2).
12. Syatat A (2006). *Human Resource Management, Management issuances, Third edition, Tehran, pp. 47-171.*

