

Influence of Demographic Characteristics on Service Recovery Performance: A Study of Frontline Staff of India Post

Padmanaban Sooresh,

Doctoral Research Scholar,
Department of Management Studies,
Pondicherry University, Pondicherry, India.

Dr. S. Victor Anandkumar,

Professor,
Department of Management Studies,
Pondicherry University, Pondicherry, India.

ABSTRACT

Though adequate literature is available on service failure and recovery in private enterprises, it is quite limited in case of Government Departments and Public Sector Undertakings. Though a few studies have been undertaken on service failure and recovery in above mentioned organisations, it is all customer-oriented. There exists a gap in the literature regarding study of factors that influence the service recovery performances of frontline staff of Government departments.

Unlike goods, the involvement of frontline staff in delivery of services and service recovery in case of failure is quite high. The purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of demographic characteristics of frontline staff on their service recovery performance. The study is carried out among the frontline staff of India Post, a government department coming under the ministry of communication, Government of India.

Primary data was collected from 202 frontline staff of Pondicherry Division, India Post, Government of India through structured questionnaire during Q4 2017 and hypothesis were tested through Independent sample t-Test, Chi-square test and Analysis of variance (ANOVA). The scale used here for measuring was adopted from the one developed by Boschoff and Allen (2000).

Demographic characteristics like Designation, Education and Training, Rural/Urban and Sub Division have significant influence on the perception of front line staff regarding service recovery performance, while gender, age and years of service do not exert any influence.

The Management should take note of the fact that education and training has negative influence on the perception of frontline staff regarding their service recovery performance. This needs further research and necessary steps should be taken to rectify the same.

India Post being the largest Postal network (1,54,880 Pos), study of a single division may not reflect the real picture. While this study has considered only the frontline staff, the perception of back office staff involved in the service recovery also needs to be studied.

Keywords: demographic characteristics, service performance, rural and urban characteristic etc.

INTRODUCTION:

Service failure is generally described as service performance that falls below a customer's expectation in such a way that leads to customers' dissatisfaction. Service recovery is the action taken by an organisation in response to the service failure (Zeithaml, Bitner, Gremler & Pandit, 2011). Service failure and poor service recovery are a major cause of customer defection. Good service recovery is vital weapon in the armoury of any service organisation not only to retain its customer base but also to march ahead of its competitors.

Service recovery is usually done by frontline staff who has direct contact with aggrieved customer. So it is pertinent to study the factors influencing the service recovery performance of the frontline staff. Whether a successful service recovery performance leads to extrinsic job satisfaction of frontline staff and negates their intention to leave is worth studying. Though literature on service failures and recoveries in private sector is

available, it is quite limited in case of Government Departments and Public Sector Undertakings. Even in those studies, the research focus is on customers rather than frontline staff.

Like working environment perceptions, perceived managerial attitudes has its own influence on the service recovery performance of frontline staff, their extrinsic job satisfaction and intention to leave. However limited study is carried out about these factors with regard to frontline staff employed in Government Departments and public utility organisations. Boshoff-Allen's scale (2000) is widely used to measure the influence of above mentioned antecedents on service recovery performance of frontline staff.

Before studying the antecedents, it is worth to study the influence of the demographic characteristics on the service recovery performance of frontline staff of Government Departments and Public Sector Undertakings. This study confines itself to India Post (Ministry of Communication, Government of India), considering the time and resource constraints. This study is undertaken to know whether demographic characteristics influence the service recovery performance of frontline staff in a typical government department.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND:

Reliability is the foundation stone on which any service organization can build its super structure. Customers value reliability over all other dimensions (Parasuraman, Berry & Zeithamal, 1991). However, in spite of all steps and precautions taken to avoid gaps in delivery of service, service failures do occur in all organisations. Bell & Zemke (1987) define service failure as "A situation in which customers are dissatisfied because their perceptions of the service they have received is worse than their expectations". Service failures are inevitable and occur in both the process and the outcome of service delivery. They include situation when the service fails to live up to the customer's expectations (Michel, Bowen & Johnston, 2007). Any company that serves external or internal customers must accept that failures happen and institute systems and processes to deal with them (Michel, 2001). Service failure may lead to positive outcomes such as customers satisfied and repurchase intentions, if they are resolved effectively (Karatepe, 2006)

As industries become more competitive, consumers tend to become more and more demanding (Boshoff & Allen 2000). As such no organisation can ignore service failure in the cut throat competitive world however negligible it may be. Therefore, an excellent service recovery is imperative not only for retaining existing customers but also for future growth. Efforts made by the firm to return aggrieved customers to a state of satisfaction following a service failure are known as service recovery and its successful implementation can lead to a host of benefits for the service firm (Andreassen & Lindestad 1998). If done well, service recovery strengthens customer loyalty, corrects weak links in processes and improves profitability. If done poorly, recovery efforts can unleash irreparable damage to customer relationships, contribute to employee dissatisfaction and devastate profitability (Brown, 1997).

Exceptional service recovery will require more customer feedback and sensitivity, greater speed and a continued personal touch (Brown, 1997). Information and Communication Technology (ICT) helps in providing excellent service and service recovery by boosting frontline employees, enhancing internal coordination for service recovery, empowering customers for recovery and equipping management for recovery. Conservative and traditional methods of service recovery is not only time consuming but also ineffective in retrieving some of the services that has failed. Customers who are in agitated mood as in most cases of service failure can be pacified only by instantaneous response from the service provider. This is possible only when ICT is fused with the already existing service recovery mechanism. The biggest challenge will be in the creative application of Information Technology (IT) to retrieve the lost services.

Though technology has started playing a very major role not only in providing excellent service quality but also in service recovery, it is the frontline staff who with the aid of above said technology perform service recovery. Thus, the success of service recovery depends on the service recovery performance of frontline staff. Service Recovery Performance refers to all those activities performed by staff to return the aggrieved customer to a state of satisfaction so that they continue their business relationship with the firm in future. According to Johnston (2001), a successful service recovery performance is a win-win-win situation for customers (satisfaction), staff (job satisfaction & reward) and service firm (retention of customer & profit).

Given the paramount importance of service recovery performance, it is absolutely necessary to study how the frontline staff are perceiving their service recovery performance and identify the factors that influences the frontline staff's service recovery performance. However, few studies are undertaken in this area. Though literature is available regarding frontline staffs' perception of their service recovery performance and the factors influencing their performance in banks, health care services, hospitality and telecommunications (Boshoff & Allen, 2000; Yavas, Karatepe, Awei & Tekinkus, 2003; Karatepe, 2006; Ashill, Rod & Carruthers, 2008;

Rod&Ashill,2010)few studies are carried out on the service recovery performances of frontline staff in Government Departments and Public Sector Undertakings. There is a gap in the literature regarding factors influencing service recovery performances of frontline staff and their perception in government departments and public sector undertakings.

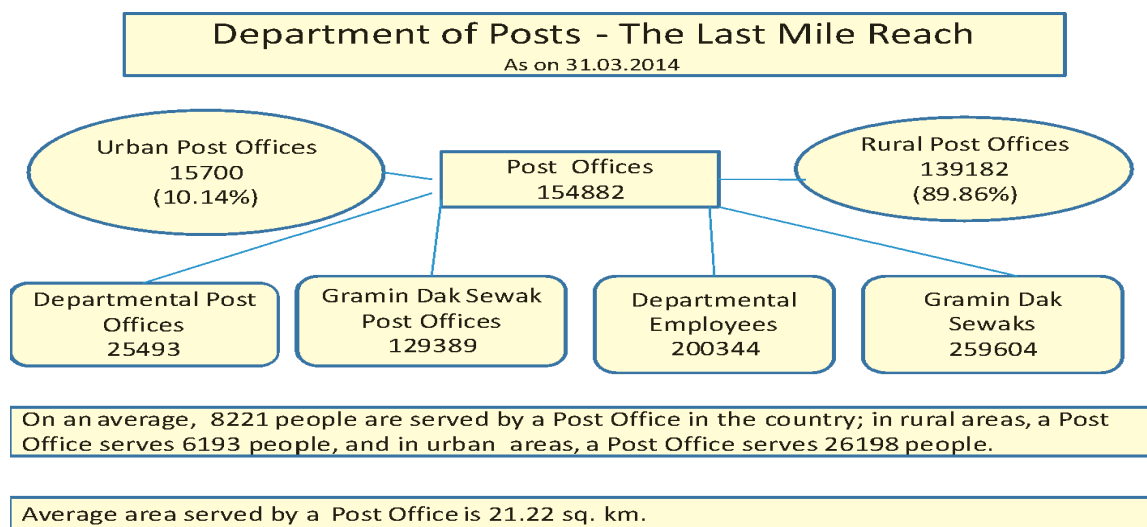
All over the world, Government Departments offering public utility services face stiff competition from private players. Economic liberalization, privatisation and globalization have opened the door for private enterprises to enter all those services in which government departments were enjoying monopoly for a long time. The consequences of the above socio political and economic changes are far reaching. For instance, the public health care system is forced to compete with other Government Departments& Public Sector Undertakings for allocation of public funds though its services are inevitable to the common man. In most of the countries public health care has metamorphosed from social service to profit making business venture. Thus, worldwidemany government departments and public sector undertakings are undergoing reforms in the form of commercialisation and privatisation to achieve the goal of utmost efficiency in service, cost management, optimum use of existing assets and resources, minimum dependence on public funding, attaining total self-reliance in funds and operation.

One typical example of such Government department providing public utility service is the Postal Department. Previously Postal Departments all over the world enjoyed absolute monopoly regarding delivery of mails. Lack of competition made postal departments to ignore both service quality and customer satisfaction. Prevention of service failure and subsequent recovery was not paid much attention in the past since it is totally funded by the federal or the local government as the case may be(Kristensen, Martensen&Gronholdt,2000).

However, the turn of 21st century saw reforms of far reaching implications in the postal services world over. Depleting revenue, due to constant fall in letter mails as people all over the world started using Internet-based communications,forced many postal departments to turn customer centric and to provide valued-added services and take service quality very seriously. Deutsche Post(Germany), Netherland Post, Canada Post, Australia Post Sweden Post, Singapore Post are some of the Postal services which have undergone far reaching reforms and customers are provided with services which are on par with private players in the industry (Geddes,2005).

Though reforms are sweeping the postal servicesworld over and in spite of introduction of ICT, service failures do happen in postal services quite often. For instance, India Post (Department of Post) coming under the Minister of Communication, Government of India, is the largest postal network in the world with 1,53,000 post offices catering to 1,280 million people. The mail business of India Post is constantly falling over the years and in spite of quantum leap made in ICT in both delivery of services and service recoveries, service failure perennially plagues India Post. In 2016, the mail volume delivered by India Post was 6240 million and complaints received in that year was 1.8million (India Post Annual Report,2016). Out of 4,48,840 staff employed in India Post approximately 1,75,000 employees work as frontline staff coming into direct contact with the customers and they handle aggrieved customers at the first instance. Given the vast geographical area, very large network and huge number of frontline staff employed, this study confines itself to the service recovery performance of frontline staff of Pondicherry Division, Chennai Region, Tamil Nadu Circle of Department of Posts.

Figure-1: India Post - a bird's eye view



Though many instruments are available to measure the service recovery performance and factors that influences service recovery performances of frontline staff, the instrument developed by Boshoff and Allen (2000) is widely used. Boshoff has developed the instrument by assimilating items from various popularly used scales developed by different authors for measuring particular variable. Thus by using Boshoff-Allen’s instrument, all the variables are measured.

RESEARCH MODEL AND HYPOTHESES:

This study aims at measuring the influence of demographical variables namely Designation, Rural/Urban, Sub Division, Gender Age, Education, Experience and Training on the Service Recovery Performance of Frontline Staff at India Post. The research framework is shown in figure-1 and the hypotheses are as follows:

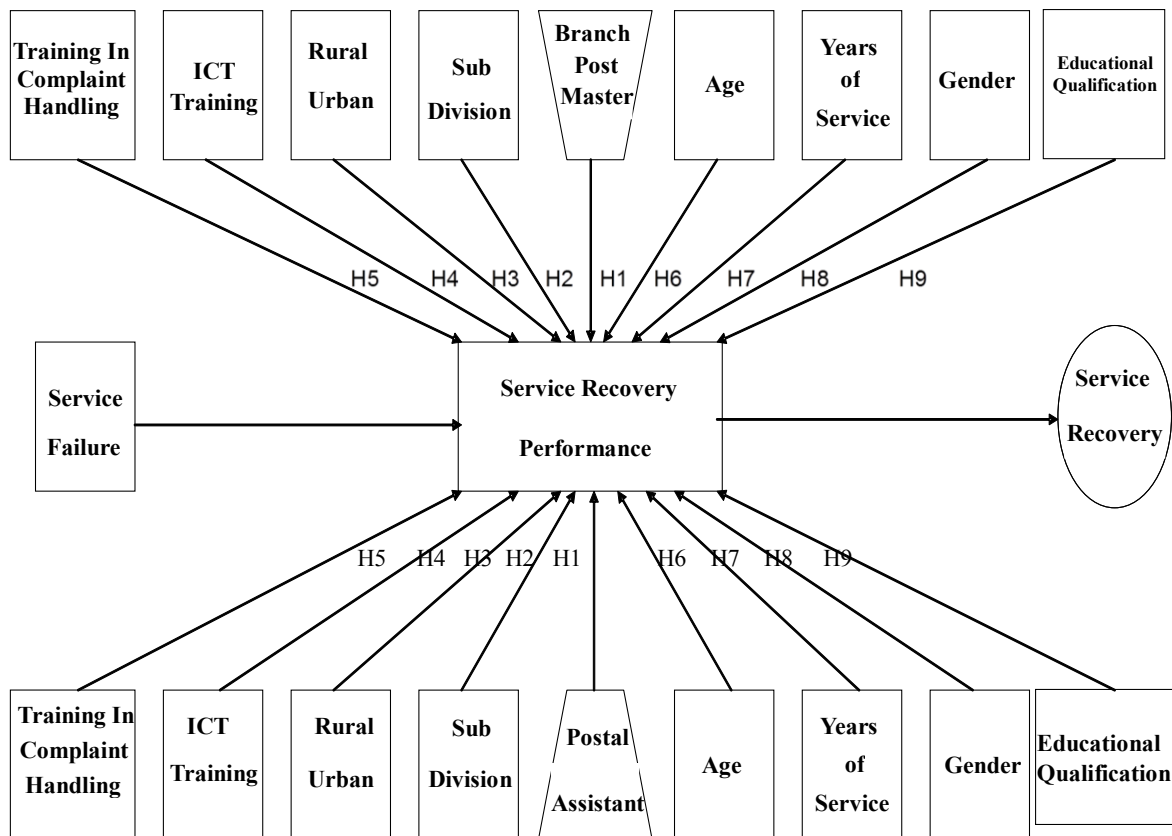
- H₁: Staff, in terms of their Designation groupings, differ in perception regarding their service recovery performance.
- H₂: Staff, in terms of their Rural/Urban groupings, differ in perception regarding their service recovery performance.
- H₃: Staff, in terms of their Sub Division groupings, differ in perception regarding their service recovery performance.
- H₄: Staff, in terms of their Age groupings,differ in perception regarding their service recovery performance.
- H₆: Staff, in terms of Gender groupings, differ in perception regarding their service recovery performance.
- H₇: Staff, in terms of Educational groupings, differ in perception regarding their service recovery performance.
- H₈: Staff, in terms of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) training imparted to them, differ in perception regarding their service recovery performance.
- H₉: Staff, in terms of Training in Complaint Handling imparted to them, differ in perception regarding their service recovery performance.

Table-1 gives the details of all demographic characteristics included in the study. Figure -2 shows the hypothesised direction of the relationship between the demographic characteristics and service recovery performance.

Table-1: Demographic characteristics considered for the study

Demographic Characteristics	Description
Designation	The frontline staff basically belong to two categories namely Postal Assistant(Regular Departmental Staff) and Branch Post Master(They work in the village post offices and their pay and service are governed by special enactment namely Gramin Dak Sevak Conduct and Engagement Rules, 2011).
Rural/Urban	Head Post Offices and some of the Sub Offices are located in Urban areas. While remaining Sub Offices and Branch Post Offices are located in rural areas.
Sub Division	The Postal Division is divided into sub divisions for administrative conveniences.
Age	The minimum age required to enter the postal service in India is 18. While the superannuation age is 60 for Postal Assistants and 65 for Branch Post Masters.
Years of Service Rendered	This describes the number of years of service rendered by the respondents in postal service
Gender	This indicates the number of male and female respondents in the sample
Educational Qualification	This indicates the educational qualification of the respondents. Minimum educational qualification required for selection to the above two cadres is Higher Secondary(+2) schooling. However, there are many graduates and post graduates among them.
ICT Training	This indicates whether the respondents have under gone any training in Information and Communication Technology which is very essential for computer operations
Training in Complaint handling	This indicates whether the respondents have under gone any training in handling the complaining customer.

Figure 2: Demographic characteristics influencing service recovery performance of frontline staff of India Post



METHODOLOGY:

This is a descriptive study carried out using primary data collected from respondents through survey method. The questionnaires were distributed to the frontline staff of Pondicherry Division, Department of Post, Government of India. Table-2 shows the organisational profile and staff strength of Pondicherry Division. The frontline staff are chosen for the study because they are at the vantage point of judging the mood of the customers and gauge the level of satisfaction/dissatisfaction of the customer in a service recovery. Moreover, the outcome of service recovery to a great extent depends on their performance (Schneider and Bowen,1985). The Pondicherry Division has around 400 employees as frontline staff. For this study, questionnaire was distributed among 202 frontline staff.

Stratified random sampling technique is used in selection of samples so that respondents are selected from all the five sub divisions of Pondicherry Division. Respondents are selected at random from two strata, namely PAs and BPMS, in every sub division. Thus by using stratified random sampling it is not only ensured that both the categories of frontline staff namely PAs and BPMS are adequately represented but also respondents represent the entire geographical area of Pondicherry division. The sample size is determined based on Cochran (2007) formula with 95% confidence level. Since the population size is only 400, the sample size derived using the above formula comes to 196 which adequately represents the population.

Table 2: Profile of Pondicherry Division

Owned and Administered by	Department of Posts, Ministry of Communication, Govt. of India
Circle	Tamil Nadu
Region	Chennai City
Division	Pondicherry
Number of Sub Division	05
Number of Head Post Offices	03

Owned and Administered by	Department of Posts, Ministry of Communication, Govt. of India
Number of Sub Post Offices	67
Number of Branch Post Offices	325
Total Staff	1073
Total Frontline Staff	400
Number of Post Offices in Urban Area	33
Number of Post Offices in Rural Area	362
Ave. Urban Area Served by a Post Office	2.18 Sq.Km
Ave. Rural Area Served by a Post Office	10.32 Sq.Km
Ave. Population served by a Urban Post Office	62887
Ave. Population served by a Rural Post Office	2352
Total Area served by Pondicherry Division	3852 Sq. Km

A questionnaire based on the instrument developed by Christo Boshoff was used for primary data collection. The variables were measured using multi item scales linked to a five-point Likert-typescale. The dependent variable being the perceived service recovery performance of frontline staff was measured by a six-item instrument adopted from Boshoff and Allen(2000). The demographic characteristics were introduced after studying the job requirement of two categories of frontline staff namely Postal Assistant(PA) and Branch Post Master(BPM). The questionnaire was distributed among 202 frontline staff of Pondicherry Division comprising both Postal Assistants and Branch Post Masters. The profile of the respondents is given in Table-3. The researcher, through stratified random sampling, ensured that the respondents represent not only all the five sub-divisions but also the Head Post Offices in urban areas, Sub Offices in urban and rural areas and Branch Post Offices in rural areas. 196 responses were taken for further analysis rejecting six responses for incomplete information.

Table 3: Profile of the Respondents

Demographic characteristics	Attribute	Numbers	Percentage
Designation	Postal Assistant	102	52
	Branch Postmaster	94	48
Rural / Urban	Rural	94	58
	Urban	102	52
Sub-division	Pondicherry North	42	21
	Pondicherry South	43	22
	Villupuram	30	16
	Tindivanam	53	27
	Gingee	28	14
Age	21-20	53	27
	31-40	48	30
	41-50	43	22
	51-65	42	21
Years of service rendered	Less than 10 years	86	44
	Less than 20 years	52	27
	Less than 30 years	35	18
	More than 30 years	23	11
Gender	Male	120	61
	Female	76	39
Educational qualification	Higher Secondary	62	32
	Diploma	31	16
	Graduation	76	39
	Post Graduation and above	27	13
ICT training	Yes	110	56
	No	86	44
Complaint handling training	Yes	39	20
	No	157	80

Associations Between the Demographic Characteristics of Frontline Staff of India Post:

Table 4: Results of Chi-square test of association

	Designation	Rural Urban	Sub-Division	Age	Years of Service Rendered	Gender	Educational Qualification	ICT Training	Complaint Handling Training
Designation		0.000	0.002	0.100	0.052	0.472	0.000	0.000	0.508
Rural /Urban			0.002	0.100	0.021	0.472	0.000	0.000	0.333
Sub-Division				0.117	0.971	0.857	0.131	0.187	0.323
Age					0.000	0.004	0.000	0.013	0.156
Years of Service Rendered						0.857	0.001	0.003	0.784
Gender							0.041	0.146	0.322
Educational Qualification								0.000	0.356
ICT Training									0.028
Training in Complaint Handling									-

Demographic Characteristic –Wise Influence on Service Recovery Performance of Frontline Staff:

Table-5 shows the existence/non-existence of influence that the demographic characteristics have on the perceived service recovery performance of frontline staff. The demographic characteristic namely Designation has significant influence on the service recovery performance of front line staff (Sig-0.000). The two attributes of Designation, namely Postal Assistant (PA) and Branch Post Master (BPM), show mean values of 3.7892 and 4.3050 respectively regarding their perception of service recovery performance. BPMs perceive more positively their service recovery performance than PAs. The possible explanation for this may be BPMs may be receiving very few complaints in the village post offices (BOs) when compared to Sub-offices (SOs) and Head Post Offices (HOs) where most of the PAs are working. Moreover, BPMs are not required to handle computers for service recovery performance. This work is done in SOs and HOs even for the complaints received by the BPMs in their Post Offices namely BOs. Another reason being in village post offices (BOs), the BPMs have personal and close relationship with the people in the village. Most of them being his kith and kin, incidence of facing an annoyed or infuriated complainant is rare; hence his perception of service recovery performance may be comparatively higher than PAs.

Table 5: Influence of Demographic Characteristics on the Frontline Staffs’ Perception Regarding Service Recovery Performance

Demographic characteristics	Attribute	Freq.	%	Mean	S.D.	f/t Value	Sig.
Designation	PA	102	52	3.7892	0.55596	0.391	0.000
	BPM	94	48	4.3050	0.50543		
Rural / Urban	Rural	94	58	4.2890	0.51220	0.283	0.000
	Urban	102	52	3.8039	0.56357		
Sub-division	PYN	42	21	3.9405	0.61796	4.657	0.001
	PYS	43	22	3.8062	0.47410		
	VPM	30	16	4.1611	0.59287		
	TNV	53	27	4.0597	0.60101		
	GIN	28	14	4.0366	0.53999		
Age	21-20	53	27	4.0673	0.61456	0.200	0.938
	31-40	48	30	4.0086	0.60410		
	41-50	43	22	3.9845	0.60729		
	51-65	42	21	4.0833	0.53502		
Years of service	Less than 10 years	86	44	4.0756	0.61552	0.420	0.739

Demographic characteristics	Attribute	Freq.	%	Mean	S.D.	f/t Value	Sig.
Years rendered	Less than 20 years	52	27	3.9615	0.60464		
	Less than 30 years	35	18	4.0333	0.47965		
	More than 30 years	23	11	4.0652	0.63512		
Gender	Male	120	61	4.0389	0.56910	1.235	0.945
	Female	76	39	4.0329	0.62658		
Educational qualification	Higher Secondary	62	32	4.2258	0.51489	6.476	0.000
	Diploma	31	16	4.2204	0.56501		
	Graduation	76	39	3.8772	0.64427		
	Post Graduation and above	27	13	3.8395	0.43235		
ICT training	Yes	110	56	3.8909	0.60005	0.517	0.000
	No	86	44	4.2229	0.52494		
Complaint handling training	Yes	39	20	4.0769	0.59216	0.004	0.631
	No	157	80	4.0265	0.59152		

The demographic characteristic, namely Rural/Urban, also has significant influence on the perceived service recovery performance of frontline staff (sig-0.000). As mentioned above, since rural areas mostly consist of village post offices(BOs) and BPMs, the frontline staff perception of service recovery performance is high (M-4.2890) compared to the Urban areas which mainly consists of suboffices(SOs) and head offices(HOs) having PAs as frontline staff(M-3.8039). Another reason being, in urban areas the volume of work and the related work pressure is more when compared rural areas and service failure and service recovery performance adds to the workload of PAs. As stated earlier, the PAs in SOs and HOs have to process the complaints originating in the BOs also since computer is available only in SOs and HOs. This additional burden has its negative impact on their perception regarding service recovery performance. More ever PAs in SOs and HOs are constantly monitored by the administration when compared to the BPMs of BOs; this puts certain of pressure on them while performing service recovery performance. Another reason that may be attributed is that PAs in Urban areas face mostly rigid and less friendly complainants when compared to BOs in rural areas.

The demographic characteristic namely Sub-divisions also has significant influence on the perceived service recovery performance of frontline staff (sig-0.001). The Pondicherry North and South Sub-divisions have a mean value of 3.9405 and 3.8062 whereas Villupuram, Tindivanam and Gingee sub divisions has a mean value of 4.1611,4.0597 and 4.0366 respectively. The reason being Pondicherry North and South Sub-divisions comprise mostly urban areas and as such the respondents from these sub-divisions are mostly PAs from SOs. As explained earlier the perception of PAs regarding service recovery performance is less when compared to the BPMs. Hence there is significant difference between Pondicherry North and South sub-divisions and Tindivanam, Villupuram and Gingee sub-divisions.

However, the demographic characteristic Age does not have significant influence (sig-0.938) on the frontline staffs' perception regarding service recovery performance. The mean value for the age group namely 21-30 is 4.0, for 31-40 it is 4.0, for 41-50 it is 3.9 and for 51-65 it is 4.0. Thus, there no difference in the mean value among the above mentioned four attributes. Similarly, there is no significant influence of the characteristic, 'Years of service rendered' on the frontline staffs' perception regarding service recovery performance (sig-0.739). The mean value for less than 10 years of service it is 4.0, for less than 20 years of service it is 3.9, for less than 30 years of service it is 4.0 and for more than 30 years of service it is 4.0. Thus, there is no significant difference in the mean value among the four attributes mentioned above. Similarly, it is found that the mean value for the perception regarding service recovery performance is same for both male and female(4.0).Thus, the demographic characteristicgender has no significant influence on the frontline staffs' perception regarding service recovery performance(sig-0.945).

The probable reason for the above three demographic characteristics namely age, gender and years of service rendered not showing significant influence on the perception regarding service recovery performance of frontline staff is that, for an aggrieved customer, it does not matter whether the person on the other side of the counter is young or aged, male or female and experienced or in experienced. The aggrieved customer expects from him/her a quick, courteous and successful recovery. Administration may also expect the same outcome from the staff as that of the aggrieved customer. Hence perception doesnot change on the basis of characteristics namely age, gender and years of service rendered.

The demographic characteristic namely 'Training in Complaint Handling' alsoshows no significant influence on the perception of frontline staffs' perception regarding service recovery performance(sig-0.631). Though 4/5th

of the respondents(157) have stated that they have not undergone the abovementioned training, the mean value for the perception regarding service recovery performance is almost the same for the those who are trained and those who are not (M-4.07 and 4.02). Just 20% of the respondents(39) have stated that they have undergone training in 'Complaint Handling' and the mean value shows that it does not have any impact on their perception regarding service recovery performance. This is discussed further in managerial implications.

The demographic characteristic namely 'Educational Qualification' has significant influence on the frontline staffs' perception regarding service recovery performance (sig-0.00). Respondents with higher secondary schooling have educational qualification have a mean value of 4.2258, those possessing diploma have a mean value of 4.2204, those respondents with graduation have a mean value of 3.8772 and those with post graduation and above have a mean value of 3.8395. We find from the mean values that the perception of service recovery performance is decreasing as educational qualification increases. Though many respondents from BPMs cadre possess higher secondary schooling as educational qualification, job designation cannot be attributed as reason for it. About 33 out of 94 respondents from BPM cadre possess graduation and above as educational qualifications. Here, it is found that higher educational qualification is having negative impact on the perception of service recovery performance.

The demographic characteristic namely Information and Communication Technology (ICT) training has significant influence on the frontline staffs' perception regarding service recovery performance (sig-0.000). Here also, it is found that training is having negative influence on the perception regarding service recovery performance. Those respondents who possess ICT training(110) have mean value of 3.8909 and those who do not possess ICT training (86) have mean value of 4.2229. Thus, possession of ICT training has a negative influence on the Frontline staffs' perception of service recovery performance.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY:

From the study, it is understood that demographic characteristics influence the perception of frontline staff regarding their service recovery performance. The management of Department of Post should undertake in-depth study to find out why the perception is low with PA when compared to BPM and rectify the same. Similarly, the management should address the question why educationally well-qualified frontline staff have low perception of their service recovery performance when compared to less qualified counterparts. BPMs should also be given ICT training and necessary infrastructure and accessories for providing excellent service and recovery in case of failure to rural people. Majority of the respondents have stated that training in complaints handling was not given to them. The Management should ensure that the frontline staffs are given adequate training in handling aggrieved customers.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY:

With respect to the Department of Posts, Government of India being the largest postal network in the world, study of just one division namely Pondicherry may not reflect the general picture of perception of service recovery performance by the frontline staff. This study focuses only on the frontline staff, whereas some staffs in the back office are also involved in service recovery performance and they may be studied in future. Moreover, the influence of demographic characteristics of frontline staff on the service recovery satisfaction of customers may be studied. The interaction of demographic characteristics with other antecedents namely perceived managerial attitudes and working environment perception needs to be studied in order to have more reliable findings on frontline staffs' perception of service recovery performance

CONCLUSION:

This study indicates that the perception of service recovery performance is high in rural areas than urban areas and it is vindicated not only by the rural/urban characteristic but also by designation and sub-division. Similarly, the perception of service recovery performance of frontline staff possessing higher educational qualification and ICT training is lower than the frontline staff possessing lesser educational qualification and lack in ICT training. However, those who possess training in complaint handling have higher perception of their service recovery performance than those who lack training in complaint handling. This study indicates that India Post needs to concentrate more in urban post offices and improve the service recovery by training the frontline staff in complaint handling, computerizing the rural post offices particularly branch post offices to reduce the burden of frontline staff. Further research may be carried out by studying the demographic characteristics of back office staff involved in the service recovery, comparing the outcome with that of frontline staffs' perception, this will throw more light on the influence of demographic characteristics on the perception of staff relating to service recovery performance.

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