

Investigate the Relationship between Variables and Role Clarity Effects on the Perceived Service Quality of Front Line Employees (Studied on the Clerks of the Keshavarzi Bank in the Province of Chaharmahal-E-Bakhtiary)

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Abstract

One of the success factors in organizations is giving good services to customers which can be a competitive advantage for organizations such as banks. In this regard, the front line employees' role clarity is an important factor in employees' perception of service quality. The aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between role clarity and items and their effects on the perceived service quality of front line employees. We will represent a conceptual model which indicates the relationship between variables affecting role clarity including feedback, job autonomy, participation in decision-making and supervisor's considerations. Its results would be organizational commitment, job satisfaction and service quality. This study is a descriptive-survey one and uses the path analysis method to examine the relationships between variables. The statistical population of this research includes 580 of front line employees in the keshavarzi bank of Chaharmahal-e-Bakhtiary province. Using random sampling, a sample of 132 participants was selected. Questionnaire was used as data collection tool. Results show that role clarity has an important effect on the employees' perception of services quality. Regarding the findings, there is a positive relationship between variables and role clarity and also between the results of role clarity and its results concerning the quality of services.

Keywords: service quality, role clarity, the keshavarzi bank

Introduction

In the present century, new changes have made the service section to extend with more speed which is one of the success factors in service organizations like banks. Customer satisfaction will be achieved by improving offered services to them. In past, because of many factors such as excessing of demand over supply and limitation of competition in different fields, there were not paid much attention to customers' needs and wants. People had to get their needed products and needs whatever quality it had.

In recent years due to the increase of service variety and competition in banking industry, service and manufacturing organizations, had to provide their customers with more various products and services with a higher quality regarding their demands, wants and interests to survive and obtain more profitability and market share in the market. On the other hand the customers' awareness of the products and services has increased. Therefore, by increasing competitors, the customers would not be willing to receive any kind of products and services. Today, customers seek services which provide them with their needs, wants and interests as much as possible as well as a good quality.

In addition, the quality of services is regarded as an important challenge in today management. The tendency of researchers to investigate different aspects of service quality which is an important cause of organizations' success shows the significance of this issue. Furthermore the success of organizations depends on service providers who identify customer demands to respond them with favorable quality. (Papadimitriou, and Karteroliotis 2000). In this respect we can mention the role of employees who have direct contact with customers which can affect offering services and providing desired quality. For customers, the evaluation of services bases on desired services offered by the front line employees. (Malhorta, and Mukherjee 2004). In other words, providing desirable services depends on the front line employees have face-to-face contact with customers. So, to boost the services quality we should manage the behavior of these employees (Schneider Bowen 1985). Regarding these facts, this research, analyze the impact of factors affecting on the front line employees' role clarity in the bank and its effect on the services offered by them. This study aims at investigating service quality from the employees' perspective and also factors affecting on staffs' role clarity. It also tries to determine the relationship between these variables and services quality as a positive step toward the improvement of provided services in the banks and support managers to make decisions about their employees.

Purpose of the study

Nowadays, due to the increase the number of banks and the variety of the provided services by them, service quality is a key factor and may be accounted as a competitive advantage for the bank. In this regard, we cannot deny the importance of those employees who are in direct contact with customers, since they have a big contribution in providing high quality services.

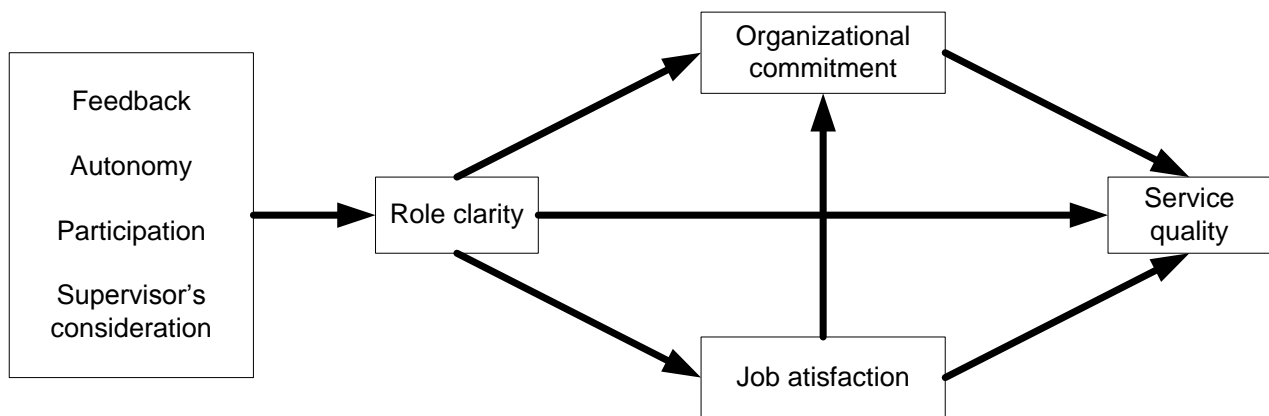
Therefore, the employees' commitment to the quality of services is so important for the organization. Providing the desired services by front line employees is an important issue for service organizations. In other words, a big part of their success depends on their front line employees (Chebat, Babin, and Kollias 2002). Lack of role clarity which indicates understanding the degree of information job performance (Kelly, and Hise 1980) may have a negative impact on employees' performance (Churchill et al 1979). Therefore, in this study we will investigate the effect of variables and the results of role clarity on the service quality. The study of the relationship between organizational factors and role clarity stems from Hackman and Oldham's job characteristic model and the path-goal theory of Robert House (Hackman, and Oldham 1976; Fried, and Ferris 1987; Kelloway, and Bailing 1991). These theories helped us to divide the variables into two categories of task-oriented and leader-oriented (Jackson, and Schaler 1985). In this regard, the variable of job design (task oriented variable) and the supervisory considerations and participation (leader oriented variable) are affecting variables on the front line employees' role clarity (Donnellij, and Ivancevich 1975; Singh, 1993). According to the literature review, two variables of job autonomy and feedback were selected from the factors of job design factors, and supervisory considerations and participation from the factors related to the supervisor.

In addition the effect of role clarity on the results of employees' performance is explained by two cognitive theories in organizational behavior literature (Expectancy theory and attribution theory). The expectancy theory states that the evaluation of the service employees' valence (a belief that is related to the possibility that the focusing of a certain amount of effort in special dimensions of service) leads to increasing of performance level in that dimension of service. Role clarity enables the employees to extend desirable focus on that special dimension of service. Furthermore the self-assessment of front line employees of their performance is modified by attribution processes (Decarlo et al 1997) which are related to role clarity as well. The attribution theory states that employees are not only motivated by increasing rewards, they are also motivated by gaining cognitive mastery on the causal structure of environment. (Kelly, and Sujan 1986).

Role clarity helps to know this structure. So attention to these concepts, three important consequences of job satisfaction, organizational commitment and job performance stem from role clarity (Babin, and Boles 1986; Ruyter et al 2001).

Therefore, the aim of this study is to investigate the effect of front line employees' role clarity on their perception of the service quality provided to customers. So, in this research we focus on the extension and investigation of a conceptual model to show the relationship of variables and role clarity consequences on the service quality. This model is designed and tested by Avinadan Mokoji and Maltora (2006). We try to study this model in the agriculture bank of Chaharmahal-e-Bakhtiary province.

Figure 1: Mokroji & maltora(2006)



Literature review

Most of the researches don't show a relationship between role clarity and job performance (Brief, and Aldag 1976; Micheols 1987; Singh 1993). Although, by more investigation in the literature, there were found limited results related to the positive effect of role clarity on performance (Singh 1993). In fact some researchers have found a negative relationship between role clarity and objective and subjective criteria of the service quality (Jackson, and Skulor 1985; Wetzeds 2000). In fact a lower degree of role ambiguity may cause better performance (Lyons, 1971). In most studies, only the customers' perception of the service quality has been examined. Although ample extensive researches show that self-assessment in personnel domain is more suitable than the service quality. (Harriss, and Schaabroeck 1989; Singh 1993 ,and 2000, Yilmaz, 2002).

In this research the study of front line employees' perception about of the supervisor's feedback based on how well they performed which includes recognition by the direct supervisor for providing qualified services. (Young 1998). Feedback creates the internal motivation and important motivational characteristics which affect job design (Armstrang 1996; Hacket 2001). Feedback helps front line employees to perceive the limits and clarity of their roles and hence this has an considerable effect on the perceived role clarity by them. Job autonomy is related to the degree of freedom and significant independence which the person has to plan his work and determine the work process (Hackman, and Oldman 1976). In this research, autonomy is related to the front line employees' perception of the degree of their freedom and flexibility in providing services to customers. Autonomy is a key variable which is an important feature of job motivation and it affects job designing which improves the quality of services by creating role quality (Donnwlly, and Ivancerich 1972; Hackman, Oldhem, and de Ruyter 2001).

Participation in decision making is related to the extent of influence which employees can exert on decisions related to their jobs (Teas 1983). Reports show that the employees who participate in decision making, have a better understanding of their role clarity (Teas 1983 and 1980). Employees' participation is an indirect factor to understand the effect of the manager's expectations from the job behavior. So, it was understood on role clarity.

The supervisory considerations is related to supervisors' behavior in relation to the subordinates' welfare and health promotion (Boshoff, and Mels 1995). The supervisory considerations create a climate of psychological support and mutual trust which is so related to the front line employees' role clarity (Teas 1983; Kohli 1989; Deconick, and Brock 1993). Evidences show that leadership supportive and helpful behavior have a considerable effect on front line employees' wellbeing (Holman 2002).

Job satisfaction refers to employees' feelings about their work and job's nature. employees who have understood their role clarity are more satisfied than those who have not.(Singh 1993; de Ruyter 2001). In a meta analysis study by Jackson and scholar (1985) it was found that job satisfaction is the direct result of role clarity.

Organizational commitment refer to emotional attachment of employees to the organization and individual's identification by working in the organization (Meyer, and Allen 1991).employees who have understood their role clarity in their jobs tend more to feel dependent on the organization, identified by the organization , and accept its goals, so they are more committed to the organization (Zaccaro, and Dobbins 1989; Johnstan 1990).

Furthermore, job satisfaction which is the result of role clarity affects the employees' commitment to the organization positively. Researches show that job satisfaction is a key factor to organizational commitment (Rusbult, and Ferrel , 1983; Williams, and Hazer 1986). Service quality is an important result of role clarity though limited empirical evidence indicate a relationship between role clarity and employees' performance (Singh 1993). But research in which the relationship between role clarity and performance was examined , show a weak relationship between these two variables (Brief, and Aldag 1976; Wezels 2000). Although in some studies the effect of the lack of role clarity (role ambiguity) is mentioned as an effective key variable relative attitude in service performance, they imply the effectiveness of employee's perceived role clarity on providing high quality services in service organizations.

Those employees who have perceived their role clarity and know what they are expected to do are more probable to provide services with higher quality. In most commercial services, the optional attitude and behavior of employees in front line has an important role in giving services with better quality (Schneider, and Bown 1995).

The acceptance and support of the organizations' goals, believing the reason for which the organization is founded and behaving in a way to reflect the employees' commitment affect the level of services provision(Zeithannl 1990; Boshoff, and Mels 1995; Boshoff, and Tait 1996). Investigation in jobs designed to provide customers with services , show a strong and positive

relationship between job satisfaction and services quality (Moshavi, and Terborg 2002). Those employees which are more satisfied with their job give better services compared with those who are not satisfied (Hartline, and Ferrell 1996; Atkins 1996).

Research hypotheses

Regarding the literature, the hypotheses were formulated as the following:

H_1 : There is a positive relationship between feedback and employees' perception of role clarity.

H_2 : There is a positive relationship between job autonomy and employees' perception of role clarity.

H_3 : There is a positive relationship between participation in decision- making and employees' perception of role clarity.

H_4 : There is a positive relationship between management considerations and employees' perception of role clarity

H_5 : There is a positive relationship between the employees' role clarity and their job satisfaction.

H_6 : There is a positive relationship between the employees' role clarity and their organizational commitment.

H_7 : There is a positive relationship between the employees' job satisfaction and their organizational commitment.

H_8 : There is a positive relationship between the employees' role clarity and their services quality.

H_9 : There is a positive relationship between the employees' organizational commitment and services quality.

H_{10} : There is a positive relationship between the employees' job satisfaction and services quality.

Research method

This study is descriptive- survey in case of method and uses the path analysis method to examine the relationship between variables.

The statistical population of this research contains 580 participants selected from the front line staffs in the agriculture bank of Chaharmahal-e-Bakhtiary. Since in this research, the variance of statistical population is unknown , performing a preliminary study on a group of participants was necessary to pre-estimate the sample variance in advance. Therefore, a group containing 30 people were selected randomly and given the questionnaires to fill them out. After extracting the data related to the given responses and pre-estimation of the variance, the volume of statistical sample of the study was obtained by the following formula:

$$n = \frac{N \cdot Z_{\alpha/2}^2 \cdot \partial^2}{N \cdot d^2 + Z_{\alpha/2}^2 \cdot \partial^2} = 128$$

Table 1: Defined formula's symbols

<i>n</i>	sample volume
<i>N</i>	statistical population volume
<i>d</i>	estimation percision
∂^2	error percentage
α	sample variance

To gather information the library method was used to codify theoretical basics and research history. However the filed method was applied to test the hypotheses. In this research the main instrument to gather data is a questionnaire containing 35 closed questions which was designed by Avindan and Maltora (2006) . it was translated by the researcher and validated by the assistant professor before being used. The questionnaire contains 35 questions and is made based on likert scale in a five-choice range (very little, little, average, much and very much). The order of questions is as the following:

- Question 1 to 10 is related to the services quality
- Question 11 to 16 is related to organizational commitment
- Question 17 to 18 is related to job satisfaction
- Question 19 to 23 is related to role clarity
- Question 24 to 26 is related to feedback
- Question 27 to 29 is related to job autonomy
- Question 30 to 32 is related to job participation
- Question 33 to 35 is related to supervisor's considerations

The method of scoring the questionnaire is that the choices of, very much, much, average, little and very little are respectively scored as five, four, three, two and one.

Research findings

To test the hypothesis we used the path analysis method using the Lisrel software which is described in case of model fit indexes in a table below.

Table 2

Described in case of model fit indexes

Index value	Index type
32.21 (P=0.271)	<i>Chi-Square</i>
0.066	<i>Root Mean square Remainder (RMR)</i>
0.95	<i>Goodness of fit Index(GFI)</i>
0.82	<i>Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index(AGFI)</i>
0.07	<i>RMSEA index</i>
0.95	<i>Normalized fit index(NFI)</i>
0.97	<i>Compatibility fit index(CFI)</i>
0.97	<i>Increasing fit index(IFI)</i>

Chi-square tests the hypothesis that the studied model is in agreement with covariance model between the observed variables. Smaller values show more fit. The *Chi-square* value for this model with a degree of freedom of 11 equals to 30.21 which is not statistically meaningful. Since its significance level is relatively big ($p=0.1$) we can conclude that the *Chi-square* test confirms the exact fit of model with the observed data.

The square mean index of remainder equals to 0.074 which is a small value. This indicates a small error in the model and therefore its fit is acceptable.

One of the most validated indexes which is used to examine the model is *GFI* which is a relative value of variances and covariance which are justified simultaneously by the model. This index can be regarded as an index similar to R^2 in multi-variable regression. The closer *GFI* is to one the more fit the model is regarding the data. The *GFI* index in this model equals to 0.94 which shows that the model is fit regarding the data.

The fit index AGFI or the very modified value is the *GFI* index for freedom degree. This index equals to the application of Squares mean instead of the addition of squares in numerator and denominator ($GFI-1$). The *AGFI* value should be equal to or bigger than 0.9 for the model to be accepted. Since the above index value equals to 0.91 the mentioned model has a good fit.

The *RMSEA* index or root mean squares estimation for those models with a good fit is less than five percent. Higher values up to 0.08 indicate a reasonable error for estimation in the population. Also the value of this index equals to 0.07 which shows an acceptable fit.

Bentler & Bonett (1980) suggested *NFI* values equal to or bigger than 0.9 compared to zero model as a good index for the fit of theoretical models. Due to the value of 0.95 for the mentioned index, the regarded model has a good fit.

CFI and *IFI* indexes should be bigger than 0.9 based on the fit basics and regarding the value of 0.97 for both indexes, the regarded model has a good fit.

Test of hypotheses

The value of standardized effect coefficient (path coefficient) between feedback and role clarity equals to 0.29 and it's statistically significant. It means that we can say with a 95percent of certainty that there is a relationship between feedback and role clarity.

The value of standardized effect coefficient (path coefficient) between job autonomy and role clarity equals to 0.51 which is statistically meaningful. It means that we can say with a 95percent of certainty that there is a relationship between job autonomy and role clarity.

The value of standardized effect coefficient (path coefficient) between participation in decision making and role clarity equals to 0.38 which is statistically meaningful. It means that we can say with a 95percent of certainty that there is a relationship between participation and role clarity.

The value of standardized effect coefficient (path coefficient) between management factors and role clarity equals to 0.45 which is statistically meaningful. It means that we can say with a 95percent of certainty that there is a relationship between management considerations and role clarity.

The value of standardized effect coefficient (path coefficient) between the employees' role clarity and job satisfaction equals to 0.54 which is statistically meaningful. It means that we can say with a 95percent of certainty that there is a relationship between role clarity and job satisfaction.

The value of standardized effect coefficient (path coefficient) between the employees' role clarity and organizational commitment equals to 0.19 which is statistically meaningful. It means that we can say with a 95percent of certainty that there is a relationship between role clarity and organizational commitment.

The value of standardized effect coefficient (path coefficient) between the employees' job satisfaction and organizational commitment equals to 0.17 which is statistically meaningful. It means that we can say with a 95percent of certainty that there is a relationship job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

The value of standardized effect coefficient (path coefficient) between the employees' role clarity and quality of services equals to 0.30 which is statistically meaningful. It means that we can say with a 95percent of certainty that there is a relationship between role clarity and services quality.

The value of standardized effect coefficient (path coefficient) between the employees' organizational commitment and services quality equals to 0.28 which is statistically meaningful. It means that we can say with a 95percent of certainty that there is a relationship between the employees' organizational commitment and quality services quality.

The value of standardized effect coefficient (path coefficient) between the employees' job satisfaction and services quality equals to 0.11 which is statistically meaningful. It means that we can say with a 95percent of certainty that there is a relationship between the employees' job satisfaction and services quality.

Conclusion

The results show that there is a positive relationship between the variables (feedback, job autonomy, participation in decision making and supervisor's considerations). This fact indicates that the variables of job designing affect role clarity which its results affect job satisfaction, organizational commitment and services quality as well.

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