

Motivating Retail Sales Personnel Customer Orientations: An Empirical Study

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INTRODUCTION

It is observed from marketing literature that the impact of a firm's customer orientation on its long-term economic success is largely undisputed. As a sequel to this, the concept of customer orientation has assumed tremendous importance in marketing research. The idea behind customer orientation - which is closely related to the fundamental thinking behind marketing itself (**Kotler, 1972**) - is that a company has to address the needs and wishes of its customers adequately in order to ensure that they will buy the company's products, ensure sales of the company, exhibit a high degree of satisfaction with these goods and services, and ultimately, become loyal customers of that company. Although it is rarely made explicit in the literature, customer orientation can be seen as a main construct of the relationship marketing concept (**Hennig-Thurau and Hansen, 2000**). However, there is a dearth of a widely accepted definition of sales person's customer orientation, and also there is disagreement among the researchers as to how to conceptualize the construct. The sales sector plays a more critical role in the growth of developing economies, and both multinational and local sales firms are exploring various ways and means in an attempt to improve their sales quality to create customer satisfaction and loyalty. Prior research revealed that the attitude towards job of customer contact - sales employees and customer satisfaction and loyalty are directly related. As such, managing the attitudes of salesforce towards their job is critical to the success of sales firms (**Heskett et al. 1994; Schneider & Bowen, 1995**). The positive job attitude of the customer contact employees is an integral part of the market orientation. Since the emergence of market orientation in the 1990s, it has been widely accepted as a major way to enhance the performance of the firm (**Jaworski and Kohli, 1993; Narver and Slater, 1990**) as well as of the individual employees of the firm (**Jaworski and Kohli, 1993; Selnes et al., 1996; Siguaw et al., 1994**). At the individual employee's level, it has been found that market orientation, as a single construct, reduces the role stress of employees while increasing their job satisfaction and organizational commitment (**Jaworski and Kohli, 1993; Selnes et al., 1996; Siguaw et al., 1994**). These studies on the effect of market orientation on employees' job attitudes, are considered mostly for the male-dominant Western subjects (**Jaworski and Kohli, 1993; Ruekert, 1992; Selnes et al., 1996; Siguaw et al., 1994**). In sales and marketing literature, it is documented that the behaviour of employees towards the customers plays a central role in generating customer satisfaction and sales quality (**Bitner et al., 1990; Sergeant & Frenkel, 2000; Bowen & Schneider, 1985**). This is especially true for the employees who interact personally with the customer as part of the sales interactions. As a result of which, the sales employee's customer orientation is expected to strongly influence a sales firm's business performance by developing a long lasting customer-employee relationship (**Bove and Johnson, 2000**).

From prior studies, it is evident that customer orientation creates greater long-term performance benefits for the salesperson relative to sales orientation (**Brady and Cronin, 2001; Goff et al., 1997; Kelley, 1992; Langerak, 2001; Reicheld and Sasser, 1990; Saxe and Weitz, 1982; Thakor and Joshi, 2005**). However, there exists a significant difference in the extent to which customer orientation is practiced (**Boles et al., 2002**). It is believed that the sales person's persistence with sales orientation and their unwillingness to practice customer orientation is due to the reason that the latter requires greater salesperson's effort in customer relationship development activities (**Saxe and Weitz,**

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1982). A salesperson's motivation to engage in customer orientation is a precondition for its practice, since the effort of the salesperson is determined by motivation (**Deci and Ryan, 1985**). In view of this, it is necessary to identify the determinants of salesperson motivation to engage in customer orientation in a retail service context, since not many studies have been undertaken using retail sales personnel.

In the service marketing literature, the quality of service has gained much research prominence in recent years. With greater choice of retail outlets and increasing awareness, Indian consumers have become more demanding of improved quality service. The key players of the Indian retail market no longer neglect customer service issues. The customer orientation of the retail sales personnel remains unexplored to a large extent in prior researches. If a retailer decides to strategically augment its sales on a long term basis, it is essential that the retailer should adopt changes systematically to introduce innovative customer interaction strategies, with a long-term vision to retain customers.

There are various literature based on customer orientation, however, important gaps associated with our understanding of the factors that motivate customer orientation also co-exist. After going through the previous literature, we observe that despite considerable evidence associated with the motivating propensity of jobs (**Eby et al., 1999; Hackman and Oldham, 1980**), the effect of sales personnel's affective evaluation of their job on customer orientation has been examined in very few instances. Secondly, in prior researches on customer orientation, the interrelated effects of the two different motivational drivers (sales person's affective evaluation on their job and their affective evaluation of the organization they work for) on customer orientation is also very limited. Thirdly, the researchers also observe that in prior literature, the researches on customer orientation did not incorporate job related stress, which is an important job characteristic that might affect the motivation of the sales personnel.

To address these limitations in prior customer orientation research, we tried to draw from the Job Characteristics Model (JCM) (**Hackman and Oldham, 1980**). There are basically two reasons for which the JCM is especially appropriate for the purposes of this research. Firstly, the JCM clearly focuses on the motivation potential of jobs. Secondly, it identifies the affective evaluations of the organization context and the payments as the moderators of the relationship between the sales personnel's affective evaluation of their job and motivation.

The researchers begin by going through the prior literature survey to discuss the conceptual framework. Following this, the researchers will actually define their objective of the study. Subsequently, they will discuss the method used for the study. The results of the empirical tests will then be presented. Research results have been discussed in the next section followed by managerial implications, limitations and scope for further research.

PAST RESEARCH

The retail industry has developed into a full-fledged industry in America and Europe, where more than three-fourths of the total retail trade is done by the organized retailers. Retailing was limited to commodities that fulfil the basic human needs in the very early stage of human civilization. With the economic liberalization in 1991, retailing in India witnessed a wave of organizations entering the retailing business like Shoppers Stop, Subiksha, Nilgiris, Food World, Pantaloon etc. Today, buyers are expecting more convenience, friendlier and less time consuming purchase situations. The retailers also are in a process of transforming the processes of customer interactions with an attitude to practice customer oriented selling. This requires that retailers more intensively focus their attention on services on a strategic level. A key gap in previous researches, however, is related to the dimensions that constitute a customer oriented business strategy. When a retailer adopts a customer oriented business strategy, several important strategic decisions must be made (**Homburg, Hoyer, & Fassnacht, 2002**). Therefore, we attempt to clarify conceptually what these decisions are. Our study tries to conceptually and empirically address the issue of a customer oriented business strategy in the retail marketing context.

The primary objective of customer orientation is to fulfil individual customer expectations and needs. **Bruhn (1999)** distinguishes three forms of customer orientation, ranging from a very narrow, to a broad, situation-based interpretation. The information based interpretation defines customer orientation in terms of the availability of customer information, i.e. the extent to which information on customer needs is collected and analyzed, and the extent to which this information is available in a company or public organization. The culture and philosophy-based interpretation goes beyond the first interpretation. It defines a company's customer orientation through the presence of certain elements in its general corporate philosophy, such as values, norms and convictions (**Deshpande et al., 1993**;

Homburg and Pflesser, 2000). Thus, customer orientation is part of corporate culture and characterizes not only the company's opinions, but also its employees' behaviour in dealing with customers. The third form of customer orientation is sales and interaction based customer orientation, which is mainly determined by the quality of the sales provided. This view diverges from the first two forms of customer orientation. While the first two conceptualizations address customer orientation from the standpoint of the organization, the sales and interaction based conceptualization considers the customer's perspective. On the basis of these differing interpretations, it is important to adopt a broad definition of customer orientation that takes into account all three interpretations introduced by **Bruhn (1999)**. According to **Bruhn (1999)**, Customer orientation is the comprehensive, continuous collection and analysis of customer expectations as well as their internal and external implementation in an organization's sales and interactions, with the objective of establishing stable and economically advantageous customer relationships in the long term. An important part of the sales personnel function is to help customer make purchase decisions that will satisfy customer preferences (**Saxe and Weitz, 1982; Spiro and Weitz 1990**). Customers have preferences, both in the immediate and long term. Typically, short-term preferences (or wants) are felt and clearly articulated, whereas, long-term preferences (or needs) tend to be latent. A customer oriented sales personnel aims to uncover and satisfy these latent needs. Indeed, as **Saxe and Weitz (1982)** stated, *"highly customer oriented sales people avoid actions which sacrifice customer interest to increase the probability of making an immediate sale."* In this research, the researchers focus on customer orientation, keeping the important job related characteristics of retail sales personnel viz., uncovering and satisfying customer's long term needs and listening to customer's specific needs by interacting with them. As already mentioned earlier, here, the retail sales organization set up is taken up into consideration because of the presence of huge scope of customer interaction with the customer contact employees. Furthermore, it is also felt that the long term perspective of developing the customer relationship is a precondition for success in the retail sector.

It has been observed that the organization's success depends on effective customer relations and the customer sales employees play a vital boundary spanning role for the organization. In consistent with such observations, the organizations are always in a constant process to build up their image among the customers by managing the types of behaviours employees' exhibit (**Becherer & Maurer, 1999; Hipkin, 2000; Martin, 2000; O'Gorman & Doran, 1999**). This is especially important in those organizations, where nearly all employees have direct contact with the customers on a daily basis (**O'Gorman & Doran, 1999; Parnell, Carraher, & Odom, 2000; Zinger, LeBrasseur, & Zanibbi, 2001**). **Wright, Pearce, and Busbin (1997)** found that firms which emphasize on customer service generate high on return on sales, return on investments, return on assets, and profit growth by the individual employee's outcomes than those firms which are less emphasizing on customer service, irrespective of the size of the firms.

According to the Job Characteristics Model, the motivation to work is a function of three critical psychological states experienced - meaningfulness of the work (or experienced meaningfulness), experienced responsibility for outcomes of the work, and knowledge of the actual results of the work activities. On the other hand, according to it, five different job characteristics - skill variety, task identity, task significance autonomy, and feedback, actually determine the above mentioned three critical psychological states in turn (**Hackman and Oldham, 1980; Renn and Vandenberg, 1995**).

Empirical testing of the full model has shown that experienced meaningfulness is the key mediator of the core job characteristics on motivation (**Johns et al., 1992**), thereby making it an especially salient driver of motivation. Given that job-related effects have not been extensively examined in prior customer orientation research, and given the salience of experienced meaningfulness in JCM, the researchers focus upon the effect of this affective evaluation of the job on customer orientation.

In addition to establishing that job-induced psychological states (or affective evaluations of the job) affect employee work behaviour, JCM argues that this effect will be moderated by employee's affective evaluations of the work context. The researchers focus upon some aspects of the work - like organizational identification, experienced meaningfulness, pay satisfaction, job variety, job autonomy, job supervision, job stress and examine the moderating effects of salesperson affective evaluations on customer orientation.

The sales personnel have to be motivated to expend greater effort in customer-related interactions in order to be customer oriented (**Saxe and Weitz, 1982**). Motivation to expend effort is generated through rewards. The rewards may be either intrinsic to activity performance or may be extrinsic to the activity, whose procurement is enabled by activity performance (**Deci and Ryan, 1985**). The feeling of accomplishment is regarded as an intrinsic motivator that

arises from successful activity performance. This is because, it is a rewarding psychological state that is directly attained through successful activity performance (**Brown et al., 1993; Hall, 1976**). On the other hand, the compensation that is received in exchange for activity performance enables the individual to obtain outcomes of value, and hence, is regarded as an extrinsic motivator (**Lawler, 1971, 1973**). The experienced meaningfulness and organizational identification fosters the feeling of accomplishment, thereby motivating the sales personnel to engage in customer orientation through intrinsic means, and pay satisfaction fosters sales personnel ability to procure valued outcomes, thereby fostering sales personnel motivation to engage in customer orientation through extrinsic means (**Thakor & Joshi, 2005**).

It is always necessary to distinguish between institutional and employee related constructs while measuring customer orientation. In the former case, one needs to analyze company documents and measure the extent to which the organization acts in a customer oriented manner. As far as the employee related customer orientation is concerned, it describes an employee's ability (or perceived ability) to act in a customer oriented manner and to meet customer expectations. The human factor perspective focuses on employee related customer orientation (**Korunka, Schritzer, Caryon, Hoonakker, Sonnek, and Sainfort, 2007**).

The scale developed by **Narver and Slater (1990)** takes into account the cultural aspect into consideration. Here, the customer orientation is described as a facet of corporate culture that increases customer benefits and thereby, the success of the company. The so-called MKTOR scale (Market Orientation Scale) consists of 14 individual items on the dimensions of customer orientation, competitive orientation and interfunctional coordination.

The SOCO scale (Selling Orientation and Customer Orientation) developed by **Saxe and Weitz (1982)** is often used to measure the customer orientation by employees, since it is an employee-related construct (**Bennett et al., 1999; Boles et al., 2001; Brown et al., 2002; Hoffmann and Ingram, 1992**). It consists of 24 items with two dimensions: 12 positive items on customer orientation and 12 negative items describing selling orientation. It is designed to measure the extent to which employees act in a customer-oriented manner and thus, increase customer satisfaction in the long run (**Brown et al., 2002**). It provides a measure of customer orientation by the employee. **Brady and Cronin (2001)** adapted this scale to measure customer orientation from the customer's perspective. It is not always mandatory that the SOCO scale would have to be utilized in its original form. On various occasions, the SOCO scale was modified just to suit the situation. In the previous discussions, the researchers found that the SOCO scale was modified to fulfil the research requirements. The researchers saw that **Michaels and Day (1985)** used a modified SOCO scale that reflected the views of buyers, rather than salespeople. On an other occasion, **Dunlap, Dotson and Chambers (1988)** used the SOCO scale in a research on real estate industry, however, they have used a five-point response format rather than the original nine-point scale of the SOCO scale. **O'Hara, Boles and Johnston (1991)** have also altered the original SOCO scale of a research on advertising and industrial sales people, where the researchers have reduced the items of the SOCO scale to 18 instead of the original 24 items. In another research, **Tadepalli (1995)** modified the SOCO scale by changing the frame of reference of the questions to a particular salesperson rather than to salespeople in general (by relating to respondents' most recent buying situation). Overall, the researchers found that the original SOCO scale for the purpose of researches carried on measuring customer orientation have been modified according to the requirements. Here, in this research also, the researchers have drawn items from the SOCO scale, but have not used all the items used in the original scale nor they have drawn items from other popular scales. Attempts were made to incorporate items from various measures adopted in various researches, which can explain the measure of customer orientation in a much more refined manner.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study mainly concentrates on various issues concerning the level of pay satisfaction, customer orientation, experienced meaningfulness and job related stress. In fact, customer orientation requires the sales person to be motivated to practice this mode of selling. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine relationship between experienced meaningfulness, organizational identification, job stress, pay satisfaction and customer orientation. The specific objectives of the study are listed below:

- (i) To adapt valid and reliable scales to measure relevant constructs with respect to the retail sales personnel.
- (ii) To examine relationship between experienced meaningfulness with sales employee's customer orientation in a

retail organizational set up.

(iii) To assess the relationship between retail sales person's motivation to expend the effort and customer orientation.

(iv) To integrate the findings mentioned above and formulate effective marketing and human resource management strategies.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Keeping in view the above objectives of the study, this study simply tries to answer to following questions:

- ✿ Is the any significant relation between customer orientation and organizational meaningfulness?
- ✿ How customer orientation is influenced by the perceived experience meaningfulness?
- ✿ How job stresses affect the customer orientation in a shopping mall business?
- ✿ How all these variables simultaneously affect the customer orientation concept for the long run survival of the business?

This study is expected to provide sufficient insight into the relationship between various perceptual variables incorporated in explaining the practice of customer orientation.

METHODOLOGY

In this study, the researchers have adopted a very simple cross-sectional descriptive research design study, where respondents are to provide response on different multi point responses, which require a great deal of understanding and comprehension of the concept on which the responses are sought. The responses were collected with the help of questionnaires from the chain retail outlet located in Siliguri, a small city in the district of Darjeeling in the state of West Bengal. However, the management staff of the organization was convinced regularly for the purpose of making them understand the importance of the study. Initially, it was visualized that the data collection will be done by the researchers, but at last, it was decided not to interact directly with the employees. The reason being that the respondents might not cooperate with the researchers and may provide biased responses. So, it was decided that the questionnaires would be distributed in the weekly meeting of the retail staff, where the targeted respondents (retail outlet sales staff) will be made aware of the study on behalf of the management. A total of 175 questionnaires were distributed among the sales members of the retail outlet in 3 phases, because all the staff members were present in weekly meetings of the outlet because of various kinds of leaves and day offs. A tentative due date of returning of the filled up questionnaires was fixed by the management of the outlet in consultation with the researchers by considering the factors - like the understanding of the questionnaires and maintenance of the work schedule of the sales personnel of the retail outlet and work pressure. Among the 175 questionnaires, 152 were returned within and after the due date had expired. From the returned questionnaires also, it was found that 32 were unusable because of failure to follow instructions. Thus, the effective sample size was reduced to 120, representing a response rate of 68.57%. This response rate can be favourably compared to response rates reported by **Yilmaz and Hunt (2001)** and **Siguaw et al. (1994)** in recent studies using sales person samples. During the response collection, it was found that some of the responses were collected prior to the date fixed as a due date of returning of the samples. There were some responses which were collected after the due date had actually expired. In order to test for non-response bias, the researchers compared the early-versus-late respondents on sex, age, sales experience, tenure with the current employer, and monthly income and found no statistically significant differences between the two groups. The way the researchers administered the questionnaires mitigates the threat of a non-response bias (**Armstrong and Overton, 1977**).

✿ **Sample & Study Design** : The study was carried out involving the customer sales employees of India's biggest retail

Table 1: Demographic Profile Of The Respondents

SEX		
Category	Frequency	Percentage
Male	94	78.33%
Female	26	21.66%

AGE		
Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Below 25 years	77	64.16%
26 yrs - 35 yrs	39	32.50%
36 yrs - 45 yrs	4	03.33%
46 yrs - 55 yrs	0	-
56 yrs -- above	0	-

TOTAL JOB EXPERIENCE		
Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 1 year	62	51.66%
1 year to 5 years	48	40.00%
6 years to 10 years	6	05.00%
11 years to 15 years	2	01.66%
15 years and above	2	01.66%

EXPERIENCE IN PREVIOUS JOBS		
Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 1 year	106	88.33%
1 year to 5 years	14	11.66%
6 years to 10 years	0	-
11 years to 15 years	0	-
15 years and above	0	-

QUALIFICATION		
Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Under Graduates	18	15.00%
Graduates	70	58.33%
Post Graduates	16	13.33%
Professionally Qualified	16	13.33%

SALARY INCOME		
Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Less than ₹ 10,000	108	90.00%
₹ 10,001 - ₹ 20,000	10	08.33%
₹ 20,001 - ₹ 30,000	0	-
₹ 30,001 - above	2	01.66%

chain. A total number of 120 respondents were taken into consideration. Respondents who were involved in the sales and customer handling activities were considered for this study. The respondents had the designation of frontline sales executives, team leaders, asst. departmental managers, departmental managers etc. The data on demographic variables like age, sex, number of years of experience, qualification have been reported in Table 1. The sample observations are skewed in many respects. There was a large proportion of male employees' as compared to their female counterparts. Again, more than 93 percent of the respondents were below the age group of less than thirty five, which is not that uncommon, due to some obvious reasons that suit the HR requirement of the industry. However, the data reported in the Table 1 are self explanatory in nature and not much discussion of the demographic profiles of the respondents are discussed, keeping in view the homogeneity of the sample.

The responses were collected with the help of questionnaires from the chain retail outlet located in Siliguri, a small city in the district of Darjeeling in the state of West Bengal. During response collection, it was been found that some of the responses were collected prior to the date fixed as a due date of returning of the samples. There were some responses which were collected after the due date had expired. In order to test for non-response bias, the researchers compared the early-versus-late respondents on sex, age, sales experience, and tenure, and found no statistically significant differences between the two groups. The way the researchers administered the questionnaires mitigates the threat of a non-response bias (Armstrong and Overton, 1977).

✿ **Measures:** Scale items of the study were developed from reviewing prior literature, and were refined through various insights and knowledge acquired from many exploratory interviews and interactions we did with many sales professionals. The scale items were derived from various studies done for the purpose of measuring various variables considered in prior researches like organizational identification (Porter et al. 1974), experienced meaningfulness (Williams, 1998), pay satisfaction (Comer et. al. 1989), job stress (Crank, Regoli, Hewitt and Culbertson, 1995), customer orientation (Saxe and Weitz, 1982). All the theoretical constructs in the model were measured using multiple item five point (5 = fully disagree to 1 = fully agree) scales, since the scales that the researchers employed in the study had already been applied under more or less similar conditions.

✿ **Organizational Identification:** Experienced meaningfulness is not only the important variable that positively

influences productivity. According to **Thakor & Joshi (2005)**, organizational identification may be termed as a state of psychological congruence between the salesperson and the values of the organization. The researchers have used the scale in this study of organizational identification from Thakor & Joshi(2005), since organizational identification is commonly regarded as being at the core of the commitment construct (**Allen and Meyer, 1990 p. 1; Mathiew and Zajac, 1990; Mowday et al., 1979, p. 226**).

✿**Experienced Meaningfulness** : If the service personnel strongly believe that they would experience a feeling of accomplishment from their job, they would be motivated to expend additional effort required by customer oriented selling. In this study, the researchers have used the intrinsic job cognition scale used by **Thakor & Joshi (2005)** to measure experienced meaningfulness. The researchers used this scale because of its strong face validity in relation to the definition of experienced meaningfulness.

✿**Pay Satisfaction**: Pay satisfaction refers to the affective evaluation of the sales personnel to the pay that they receive over a period of time in exchange for their effort investment. Here, in this study, the researchers adopted four items from a pre-validated scale that measures pay satisfaction (**Thakor & Joshi (2005)**).

✿**Job Stress**: Job stress is generally defined in the literature as an employee's feelings of job-related hardness, tension, anxiety, frustration, worry, emotional exhaustion and distress (**Cartwright & Cooper 1997**). In this study, for measuring the job stress, the researchers had adopted a four item scale of job stress from **Crank, Regoli, Hewitt and Culbertson (1995)**.

✿**Customer Orientation** : For this study, the researchers used a seven item scale of customer orientation by adapting relevant items from the existing **Thakor & Joshi (2005)** scale. Adaptation of the customer orientation scale, such as those proposed in the study, is reported in prior published research (**Brown et al., 2002; Cravens et al., 1993**).

RESULTS & DISCUSSIONS

The results of descriptive measures have been presented in Table 2.

Table 2 : Descriptive Statistics

		OI	EM	PS	JST	CO
Median		28.0000	14.0000	10.0000	10.0000	27.0000
Mode		30.00(a)	14.00	10.00	9.00	30.00
Mean		27.5083	13.0250	10.4667	12.1083	26.1250
Percentiles	25	25.2500	13.0000	9.0000	9.0000	23.2500
	50	28.0000	14.0000	10.0000	10.0000	27.0000
	75	31.0000	14.0000	12.0000	16.0000	30.0000

a Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown

OI=Organisational Identification, EM=Experienced Meaningfulness, PS=Pay Satisfaction, JST= Job Stress, CO=Customer Orientation

The researchers report various measures of central tendencies along with percentile values. The interval scale instruments generated data, which are more or less normal that can be evident from the various measures of central tendencies. The mean pay satisfaction score is quite low by any standard. Regarding job stress, a large number of employees exhibited a high stress syndrome, which is a bit alarming. One peculiar observation is evident from the Descriptive values reported in Table 2. The mean as well as the median score on the organizational identification and experienced meaningfulness scores are quite healthy, which are indicative of a sound organizational culture practiced by the upper level of the management.

In this study, organizational identification is measured using a seven point scale adapted by (**Thakor and Joshi 2005**). The alpha value is found to be 0.859, which is adequately high. In contrast, the internal consistency of the experienced meaningfulness scale is found to be satisfactory, despite a smaller number of scale items. Pay satisfaction that included 4 items, generated an alpha value of 0.899. Similarly, job stress and customer orientation exhibited high degree of reliability. The reliability coefficients, in general, show a good degree of internal consistency.

In order to establish scale dimensionality, the researchers used a factor analysis method using principal component analysis as the starting point. There are two objectives of factor analysis: the first objective is to reduce the data set to a manageable level and the second objective is to establish the underlying dimensions in the data. In an attempt to analyze factor analysis, the researchers preferred and oblique rotation instead of Varimax rotation, which is an orthogonal rotation. The variables that the researchers have used in the study are expected to have low to moderate degree of correlation with each other and for this, application of Varimax rotation procedure would not be an appropriate rotational method.

The results of the factor analysis amply demonstrate that the scales, which the researchers have used in the study, have sufficient degree of construct validity. In analyzing the structure matrix, one would discern number of split loadings and mis-loadings. The summary results of factor analysis revealed that 71% variation in the original variables is explained by the 5 factors extracted. In this process, both repeatability property of the instruments and construct validity were adequately established.

Table 3 : Reliability Statistics

RELIABILITY STATISTICS		
Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
Organisational Identification	.859	7
Experienced Meaningfulness	.766	3
Pay Satisfaction	.899	4
Job Stress	.924	7
Customer Orientation	.933	7

Table 4 : Factor Structure Matrix

	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
oi1	.264	.085	-.056	-.610	-.044
oi2	.289	.068	.146	-.746	.173
oi3	.360	-.244	-.002	-.631	-.074
oi4	.219	-.083	-.136	-.797	.032
oi5	.280	.051	.040	-.864	.045
oi6	.325	.016	.015	-.766	.040
oi7	.236	.114	.033	-.749	.091
ps1	.121	-.031	.780	-.068	-.037
ps2	.067	-.207	.923	.012	-.172
ps3	-.015	-.062	.859	.075	-.086
ps4	.023	-.128	.918	-.020	-.102
em1	.242	.024	-.136	-.051	.922
em2	.189	-.048	-.099	.012	.944
em3	.270	-.103	-.047	-.103	.527
jst1	-.300	.786	-.058	.102	-.053
jst2	-.257	.934	-.175	-.031	-.029
jst3	-.247	.930	-.085	-.102	-.040
jst4	-.230	.928	-.111	-.039	-.061
co1	.821	-.400	-.096	-.294	.288
co2	.888	-.109	.129	-.402	.247
co3	.773	-.393	-.024	-.200	.259
co4	.887	-.389	-.030	-.252	.320
co5	.887	-.219	.024	-.244	.206
co6	.889	-.155	.107	-.395	.204
co7	.828	-.127	.133	-.378	.225

Note i) Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization.

Note ii) Only loadings above 0.30 are reported in bold.

oi: organizational identification, ps: pay satisfaction, em: experienced meaningfulness, jst: job stress, co: customer orientation

Table 5 : Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	6.892	27.568	27.568
2	3.890	15.559	43.128
3	3.180	12.720	55.848
4	2.260	9.041	64.889
5	1.614	6.455	71.344

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

a When components are correlated, sums of squared loadings cannot be added to obtain a total variance.

In an attempt to measure the impact of the above mentioned job characteristic dimensions on customer orientation of sales personnel, a multiple regression analysis technique was adopted. The overall goodness of the fit measured by R^2 was found to be significant beyond $P < .000$. The organizational identification and experienced meaningfulness variables are found to be positively influencing the practice of customer orientation by the sales personnel. As expected, the level of stress perceived and customer orientation variables were inversely related. The coefficient is significant beyond $p < .001$, indicating that job related stress inversely affects the employees to provide customer oriented service. Pay satisfaction and customer orientation were found to be positively related, though the extent of association is very weak. Previous studies also reported similar findings in the literature. The researchers did not find any significant impact of sex measured by a dummy variable (male=1, female =0).However, the females are more likely to engage in customer oriented selling than males.

Table 6 : Model Summary (b)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.550(a)	.303	.272	3.74954

a Predictors: (Constant), Job Stress, Experienced Meaningfulness, Pay Satisfaction, Sex, Organizational identification

b Dependent Variable: Customer Orientation

Table 7 : ANOVA (b)

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	696.391	5	139.278	9.907	.000(a)
	Residual	1602.734	114	14.059		
	Total	2299.125	119			

a Predictors: (Constant), Job Stress, Experienced Meaningfulness, Pay Satisfaction, Organizational Identification, Sex

b Dependent Variable: Customer Orientation

Table 8 : Coefficients (a)

Model		Un-standardised Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	13.466	3.653		3.686	.000
	OI	.355	.079	.357	4.475	.000
	EM	.485	.145	.266	3.348	.001
	PS	.055	.128	.035	.429	.669
	JST	-.309	.086	-.284	-3.577	.001
	SEX	-.302	.864	-.028	-.350	.727

a Dependent Variable: Customer Orientation (CO)

OI=Organisational Identification, EM=Experienced Meaningfulness, PS=Pay Satisfaction, JST= Job Stress,

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

From the study, it can be said that the sales managers have to ensure that sales personnel in the retail sector should expend effort in developing and maintaining customer relationships over time. This research carried out on the retail sales personnel is very significant to the retail sales managers, because it identifies various job characteristics which can enhance the sales personnel work motivation. From the research, the key job characteristics like organizational identification, experienced meaningfulness, and job stress needs to be taken care of by the organizational managers, especially who are there in the retail sales. From the research, it can be seen that organizational identification, experienced meaningfulness and job stress are the strongest determinants of customer orientation of the retail sales personnel. This result highlights the managerial importance of ensuring that retail sales personnel find their work more meaningful. Managers can ensure experienced meaningfulness among retail sales personnel by reducing the job stress as well as by providing the employees with job autonomy. Further, the results highlight the importance of ensuring pay satisfaction among retail sales personnel, as this may enhance the effect of experienced meaningfulness of the job to the employees. Managers can foster pay satisfaction by providing a competitive level of pay and by ensuring fairness in pay management **(Chebat et al., 2002; Lawler, 1973)**.

When worker creativity is unleashed, problems are solved, productivity is improved, and both firms and workers benefit. This perspective builds on the earlier work redesign literature, that maintains that employees need work that provides them with greater skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback **(Hackman and Oldham, 1976)**. By being more satisfying for workers, such jobs are seen to produce better outcomes for firms (here the retail organizations) **(Hackman et al., 1975)**. **Lowe and Schellenberg (2001)** provide empirical evidence for the high performance work system model's arguments: Workers in their study, who enjoyed more intrinsically satisfying work, were more productive and reported higher levels of job satisfaction. The present study also corroborates the fact that job induced stress affects the performance of workers to practice customer orientation. The job must be made meaningful for the workers to enhance their level of perceived meaningfulness for the tasks they perform.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The study is limited by several factors that should be addressed in future researches on the same topic. Firstly, the major limitation of this empirical work is the use of a cross-section of sample to examine the relationship between the constructs, which may be dynamic in nature. Cross-sectional data do not reflect any ongoing transformations that may affect the relationships between these constructs. For example, a service firm like the retail organization could be moving towards a greater or lesser market orientation, but the effect of market orientation on job attitudes of its retail sales personnel may lag behind. A longitudinal study would better capture the dynamics of these constructs.

The implication of the research should be evaluated along with caveats pertaining to research design, data collection, and homogeneous subjects. In terms of research design, the researchers used a descriptive research design and as such, were unable to establish a causal relationship between experienced meaningfulness and customer orientation and other predictors. Secondly, with respect to data collection, the individual retail sales personnel provided data on both the independent and dependent variables. Such practice creates the potential for response bias. Finally, the conceptual framework does not take into consideration other possible moderators, such as sales personnel personality characteristics viz., extroversion **(Stewart, 1996)**, self-esteem etc. **(Sujan et al., 1994)**. Undoubtedly, more theoretical and empirical works are needed to understand the effects of job related and other perceptual variables on customer orientation.

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