

Effect of Lay-off Survivor Sickness on Survivors' Job Performance at Non-Managerial Level

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Abstract

Changing dynamics of economies like recession, intense competition, political situations and adaptability have created an urge for organizations to go for downsizing or lay-off. Not only the victims of lay-off suffer from anxiety, stress, depression and fear of uncertain future but also the survivors who remain within the organization go through the same feelings. These psychological and emotional conditions are termed as "Lay-off Survivor Sickness" which does not only affect the employees (Survivors) but ultimately the organization which sometimes fails to achieve its desirable objectives through downsizing.

Keywords: Lay-off survivor sickness, depression, anxiety, job insecurity, sense of losing friends, survivors' job performance

1-Introduction

Lay-off process in any organization leads to assume that survivors of lay-off being lucky not to be part of those who have been fired will make more efforts and exert higher energy level to perform well. Downsizing produces a "new breed of individuals", i.e. survivors. These lay-off survivors are expected to perform better by the management in relatively changed and generally antagonistic environment (Noer 1993). Previous researches are evident that in reality the situation is quite different from what is expected. Lay-off survivors experience the same feelings or sometime worse than those who have been fired. Sense of losing friends, anxiety, fear about uncertain future, anger for the management, mental depression, stress of extra workload are the feelings which are known as "Lay-off Survivor Sickness" (Bravenec 2006, Cemalcilar et al. 2003, Holmes 2007, Sahibzada 2006, Lahner 2004). It is expected from survivors to perform new work tasks, be more innovative, adaptable and imaginative but at the same time work in a changed environment with work over-burden and having a sense of job insecurity (Hamel & Prahalad, 1994; Keenoy, 1994). Under such circumstances workers fail to maintain high level of performance execution and these results in decrease in performance. These conditions vary from situation to situation depending upon in which circumstances redundancies take place, was the reason for going towards downsizing genuine? Was it communicated to the stakeholders properly? Was it justified? Was

lay-off the only choice available? If yes, was proper counseling provided to survivors to cope up with the psychological instability? Treatment by management and line managers also affect survivors' reaction and attempt to look for a new job to secure them from next phase of downsizing. Survivors self perception also makes an impact on their behavior. In spite of the variation in behavior, redundancy does affect performance and productivity of survivors that ultimately hurts organizational objectives.

2- Significance of the study

No such study, especially in the context of Pakistan has been conducted with the model that we have developed. Study of the existence of lay-off survivor sickness syndrome among non-managerial staff is going to help HR managers to prevent decline in productivity and efficiency of survivors by taking appropriate measures. This is going to lead organization to achieve its desired objectives. The degree of association between lay-off survivor sickness and level of job performance can help HR managers to devise strategies to cope up the situation according to its severity. This study can also help to develop new theories addressing lay-off survivor sickness syndrome. Recommendations can be given to management organizations which are going to be privatized which have high probability of lay-off for instance PIA and Pakistan Steel Mill.

2.1-Contribution of the study

Since Human Resource Management (HRM) is all about people. Its domain is people oriented and its studies revolve around people. People are full of emotions that do impact in all aspects of their lives including their jobs. When people lose their jobs it is obvious that they feel its impact but the thing is greater concern is that their colleagues who have survived from downsizing are also affected by lay-offs. Survivors' emotional instability affects their performance which gives researcher a motivation to study their varied work behavior of lay-off survivors and its strength of association with their job performance.

2.2-Objectives of the study

1. To find out if lay-off survivors suffer from survivor sickness in terms of anxiety, depression, uncertainty about future, insecurity, confusion, shock and sense of losing friends, working in local firm at non-managerial level.
2. To find out if lay-off survivors are the victim of lay-off survivor sickness whether it affects their job performance according to their own evaluation.

2.3-Research questions

1. Is there any association between lay-off survivor sickness and survivors' job performance?
2. Does lay-off survivor sickness affect the performance of lay-off survivors?

3-Lay-off

Technological advancement, political and economical instability, intense competition, customer driven markets, financial crisis and many more other factors have urged organizations to make quantum or radical shifts in how they manage their resources. There is a continuous pressure on organizations to provide goods and services of high at competitive price. This insists organizations to restructure their processes, practices and utilization of available resources to work efficiently and effectively (Rugman & Verbeke, 1991). In current global economy characterized by Political instability and recession, it has become a common practice to carry out downsizing/lay-offs to remain competitive in the market.

Downsizing or redundancy has been characterized as conscious authoritative choice to shorten the workforce so as to increase organization's

performance (Noer, 2001). Budgetary decrease can trigger the choice employees' retrenchment (Budros, 2002) while different elements which contribute are acquisitions and (Appelbaum, Everard and Hung, 1999) or market regulations (Michael, 1997)

3.1-Impact of lay-off

Lay-off does not only affect the victims but create a significant impact on survivors which remain in organization. Lay-off survivors experience many psychological, emotional and physical issues. There are additional job responsibilities and workload along with anger, guilt, anxiety, uncertainty and remorse.

3.2-Lay-off survivor sickness

Results of a study indicate that lay-off survivors burden broad range of attitudinal, emotional and behavioral reactions to the downsizing process. All the individual who were interviewed reported that they had sense of stress, confusion, feelings of insecurity, uncertainty, frustration and shock. The feelings were similar to those who were laid-off and those who were survived such as vagueness, confusion, worried, sickness, impatience, disbelief, insecure, shock and stress. Obviously feelings contrast essentially as for their individual experience and closeness to the lay-off process itself (Noer, 1993; Nixon, Hitt, Lee and Jeong, 2004).

The cluster of reactions among survivors of redundancy which have been described earlier are termed as "survivor sickness" (Noer, 1993) or "survivor sickness survivor sickness syndrome" (Cascio, 1993). Most Organizations fail to achieve desirable corporate objectives as an outcome of downsizing because of survivor sickness (Appelbaum et al., 1999).

Noer (1993) writes: "Lay-off survivor sickness is a serious, pervasive, and underestimated problem" (p. 211). Emotions of loss of control over the circumstances and instability due to conceivable loss of their own employment cause extreme stress in the lay-off survivors (Mone, 1999).

The lay-off survivor sickness syndrome shows itself in many ways. These incorporate risk aversion, depression, anger, trepidation of questionable future, distrust, loss of moral and motivation,

burden of excessive work load and reduced organizational commitment (Nixon, Hitt, Lee and Jeong, 2004).

Brockner (1988) found that managers in organizations ought to anticipate that lay-off survivors will confront a broad blend of mental conditions which may prompt a significant change in survivors' conduct and decrease in their creativity. Armstrong-Stassen and Latack (1992) and Latack (1986) proposed that redundancies enhance level of sadness, stress, outrage and nervousness from lay-off survivors.

3.3-Work life balance

Additional workload and responsibilities resulting from lay-off can disturb work-life balance of survivors. Strong positive and significant relationship exists between lay-off survivors and their work life balance (Saif, Malik and Awan, 2011). It is clear that the associations which deal with their workers by giving them work life parity and facilities normally have a greater numbers of satisfied employees (Malik, Ahmad & Hussain, 2010) which leads to the organizational long-term success.

3.4-Survivor sickness and performance

Research proposed by (Brockner et al, 1985, 1986) and (Gutknecht & Keys, 1993) also suggested that lay-off creates impact on work behaviors for instance performance and productivity.

Empirical evidences prove that downsizing is connected with reduced work exertion and in this way work execution. For instance, Armstrong-Stassen (1994) has indicated that apparent job insecurity is specifically related to the amount of work effort exerted and lowers job performance. In spite of the fact that many research work has been done on downsizing/lay-off/redundancy but the effect of downsizing on survivors are still little understood.

3.5-Effect of communication

Organizations' adaptability helps them to create a good fit to remain competitive or leading organization in the industry. One of the key aspects of an adaptive organization is to change itself according to the changing dynamics of the environment. Downsizing does fall in the category

of change process. Resistance to change is a natural phenomenon and communication plays a very vital role to reduce this resistance to change. If properly communicated and the benefits of downsizing to all stakeholders are conveyed, employees who remain in the organization (survivors) least resist the process. Brockner et al, (1994); Brockner, (1992) found out that lay-off survivors are less inclined to show negative disposition and practices if there has been sufficient and clear explanation for the downsizing process.

O'Neill and Lenn (1995) and Brockner and Wiesenfeld (1993) argue and provide compelling reason that administration needs to characterize an acceptable way to the future state of the organization. At the point when lay-off survivors see proper planning, for the new association, future vision will be seen by them and they will feel that there is a need for this due process (lay-offs), trust in management will be the result which will certainly result in lower level of negative attitude. Survivors are more inclined to acknowledge choices, even unfavorable ones, if they are given a sufficient and genuine reason for the change (Saunders and Thornhill, 2003).

3.6-Effect of relationship

According to Campbell (1999) the results of the research suggested that survivors' responses are subject to the interpersonal treatment which is gained from both the administration and their prompt line supervisor. Further investigation demonstrates that the measure of connection and correspondence with survivors from their bosses impacts their level of organizational commitment, work fulfillment, turnover proposition and employment shakiness. Lay-off survivors who accepted that their connections were great with their line directors were less inclined to carry on contrarily to the lay-offs. The exploration additionally shows that survivors are impacted by their work surroundings and their associates. The examination found that when survivors perceived their work partners to respond in negative path to the downsizing procedure, they were more likely to react in the same way. The current outcomes about likewise give solid implication that it may not just the level of companionship to ones work however their budgetary need to work. The effects suggest

that the individuals who required staying inside livelihood fiscally responded adversely to the vulnerability of lay-off methodology than the individuals who were most certainly not.

At last, with respect to co-workers connections, past research (Brockner et al, 1987) proposes that redundancy survivors who were comparatively "close" to the individuals who have been fired as the result of downsizing are more inclined to view the redundancies in negative way. The recent research backs these outcomes and additionally found that survivors were very impacted by the behaviors of those encompassing them who stayed inside the association.

3.7-Sense of injustice

Brockner and Greenberg (1990) propose that the selection criteria (decisional bias) for downsizing must be seen to be reasonable; in addition survivors are prone to be indeterminate about the authenticity of this procedure (downsizing process). Brockner et al (1992) recommend that the individuals who saw they buckled down in the association were less averse to feel more excellent feeling of treachery if downsizing happens. On the other hand, the investigation of Campbell (1999) found that all the respondents saw redundancies as uncalled for independent of their apparent work endeavors.

For the positive relationship between saw equity of the lay-off execution, there exists solid backing and the mental and behavioral results of the lay-off for survivors (Fried et al. 1996; Brockner and Greenberg 1990; Brockner and Wiesenfeld 1993; Brockner, Davy, and Carter 1985; Brockner et al. 1986; Brockner et al. 1987). Preceding the lay-off perception, the recognition that administration has engaged in appropriate planning that management has engaged in proper planning prior to the lay-off which has also been communicated properly, has a closed link to trust in management. A survivor who sees that administration had some long term plan at the top of the priority list when they chose to downsize the association will have greater confidence in management's capabilities and more confidence in their aims.

3.8-Self perception & Motivation

Past examination (Brockner et al, 1985) suggests that lay-off survivors with a high amount of self – esteem responded less contrarily in a downsizing circumstance. The current discoveries (Campbell, 1999) seemed to help this view that, the individuals who saw themselves positively, discovered the redundancies less debilitating. Regarding the current study, survivors self esteem appeared to be backed by their self discernment of their capacity to discover an alternative employment. Frydenberg and Lewis (2002) suggest that the attitudes towards the new work situation, motivation to carry out the new tasks and commitment towards the organization often frequently experience change as downsizing starts or after it closes. Such changes can result in expanded level of anxiety which in turn influence work execution and therefore performance.

Extra research has demonstrated that survivors are more inclined to have job dissatisfaction, low morale and decreased productivity, especially around the individuals who were firmly attached to an organization (Noer, 1993). There is further confirmation that long term results of lay-off survivor's sickness syndrome can continue and exacerbate, which further exasperate issues in the organization (Noer, 1993; Woodward, Shannon, Cunningham, McIntosh, Lendrum, Rosenbloom, & Brown, 1999).

Moore, Grunberg and Greenberg (2006) distinguished the long term effect of downsizing around survivors. They reported that even five years after the fact issues concerning job security and anxiety were present around survivors. Moore et al. write: "Our discoveries show rather obviously that the average worker is not developing inured to working in a chronically tenuous and ever-changing work environment" (p. 326).

4-Research Methodology

Nature of our research is primary. Target population is all the lay-off survivors went through downsizing and experience survivor sickness syndrome in Karachi. We have focused on non-managerial staff only, as they constitute majority of organization population and enjoy comparatively less privileges. Data has been gathered through convenience sampling technique. Three organizations were identified which have had lay-off process in recent

past. A sample of 100 lay-off survivors has been drawn as a sample, taking 10% lay-off survivors from each (See Table #1). We are examining the emotions, psychological states and work attitudes aspect of lay-off survivor sickness at non-managerial level in terms of Sense of losing friends, Depression, Insecurity, Uncertainty, Confusion, shocked And Anxiety. Model has been developed by taking above described variables depicting presence of layoff survivor sickness as independent variable and lay-off survivors' job performance a dependent variable. Previous researches in this domain have focused on different dimensions of lay-off survivor sickness such as examining the relationship between lay-off survivor sickness and motivation, self-concept, moral, work-life balance and justice perception, stress management etc while our model deals with the entirely different dimension.

Questionnaires were distributed physically among respondents by meeting them. Questionnaire contains 16 questions that will measure the date collected on nominal scale. Qualitative data will be gathered to study relationship between "impact of lay-off survivor sickness" (Independent variable) on employees' job performance (Dependant variable). Respondents were asked to describe whether they felt depressed during the phase of downsizing and what other symptoms they had during the phase of downsizing, including Sense of losing friends, Depression, Insecurity, Uncertainty, Confusion, Anxiety and Shocked. Survivors were asked to

describe their performance according to their own evaluation during the phase of downsizing.

The responses were gathered in a time span of 2 weeks. Later the data gathered was screened and processed through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Quai Square and Regression analysis performed to determine the level of association among variables and how much change occurred in dependant variable (job performance) with the change in independent variable (lay-off Survivor Sickness)

4.1-Limitations of the study:

1. Since no official statistical data related to downsized firms neither in Karachi nor in entire Pakistan is available, personal efforts were made to locate organizations which have had lay-offs.
2. Since organizations do not disclose downsizing process due to some legal reasons and are reluctant to disclose facts regarding lay-off, simple random sampling or stratified sampling technique can not be applied.
3. One of the limitations of convenience sampling technique which has been adopted in this study is that its results are not generalizable to entire population. But we are studying psychological and emotional behaviors of respondents which remain universal in the same circumstances; therefore we can generalize the results of our study.

Table 1: Selection of Sample

Name of Organization	Number of Non-Managerial Staff	10% Sample
Denpak Confectionaries, Karachi	300	30
Jang Newspaper (Khi Office)	450	45
Geo News, Karachi	250	25
Total	1000	100

5-Statement of Hypothesis

H₁: There is a significant relationship between lay-off survivor sickness and survivors' job performance.

5.1-Data Analysis

- "Regression" and "Chi Square" analysis tests were performed to test the fitness of the model, level of association between two attributes and cause and effect relationship between Independent and Dependent variables.

- Following are the results with interpretation of the statistical tests performed on SPSS v 17.0.

**5.2-Regression Analysis:
Impact of Lay-off Survivor Sickness on Survivors’ Job Performance**

Variables Entered/Removed

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	Sense of loosing friends, Depression, Insecurity, Uncertainty, Confusion, Anxiety, Shocked ^a		Enter

a. All requested variables entered.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.780 ^a	.608	.578	.142

a. Predictors: (Constant), Sense of loosing friends, Lay-off Survivor Sickness, Insecurity, Uncertainty, Confusion, Anxiety, Shocked

- 1) R = 78.0 (Describing how well the model fit is)
- 2) R (Adjusted) = 57.8% is Moderate correlation between DV(Job Performance) and IV(Lay-off survivor Sickness Syndrome)
- 3) DV (Job Performance) is explained 57.8% through IV (Lay off survivor sickness). It is moderate value

ANOVA^b

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2.888	7	.413	20.382	.000 ^a
	Residual	1.862	92	.020		
	Total	4.750	99			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Sense of loosing friends, Lay-off Survivor Sickness, Insecurity, Uncertainty, Confusion, Anxiety, Shocked.

b. Dependent Variable: Job Performance During Downsizing

- 1) $p < 0.05$ (Sig.) indicates that, overall, the model applied can statistically significantly predict the outcome

variable therefore the independent variable (Lay-off survivor sickness) reliably predicts the dependent variable (Job Performance).

Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.982	.113		26.310	.000
	Depression	-.969	.087	-.759	-11.159	.000
	Anxiety	-.013	.031	-.030	-.434	.666
	Uncertainty	.035	.031	.075	1.123	.264
	Confusion	-.048	.031	-.109	-1.547	.125
	Insecurity	-.037	.034	-.071	-1.069	.288
	Shocked	.029	.034	.062	.845	.400
	Sense of loosing friends	.008	.031	.018	.264	.792

a. Dependent Variable: Job Performance During Downsizing

- 1) Depression is the only Independent variable (IV) for lay-off survivor sickness that significantly impacts Dependent Variable (DV) Job performance. Negative/inverse relationship between IV (Depression, Anxiety, Confusion and Insecurity) and DV (Job Performance), so every unit increase in depression will result in 0.969 decreases in Job Performance. In the same way every unit increase in Anxiety, Confusion and Insecurity will result in decline in Job performance respectively 0.13, 0.48 and 0.37.

5.3-Chi Square:

Impact of Lay-off Survivor Sickness on Survivors' Job Performance

Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Job Performance During Downsizing * Lay-off Survivor Sickness	100	100.0%	0	.0%	100	100.0%

Job Performance During Downsizing * Lay-off Survivor Sickness Cross tabulation

Count		Lay-off Survivor Sickness		Total
		Yes	No	
Job Performance During Downsizing	Good Performance	2	3	5
	Poor Performance	95	0	95
Total		97	3	100

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	58.763 ^a	1	.000		
Continuity Correction ^b	39.953	1	.000		
Likelihood Ratio	20.218	1	.000		
Fisher's Exact Test				.000	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	58.175	1	.000		
N of Valid Cases	100				

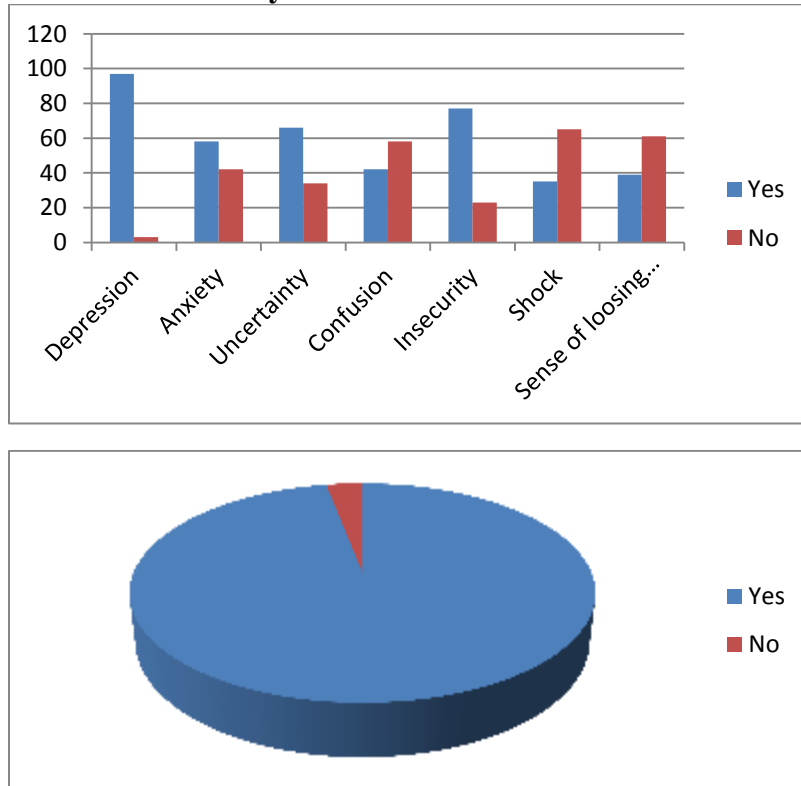
a. 3 cells (75.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .15.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

- 1) Since $p < 0.05$ therefore we reject null hypothesis. There is a strong relationship between Lay-off Survivor Sickness (IV) and Job Performance (DV) during downsizing. Results of the study based on the data collected from three organizations of sample of 100 respondents support the results of previous studies that propose that lay-off survivors also suffer from depression, anxiety, shock, insecurity, sense of losing friends and uncertainty which are termed as "Lay-off Survivor Sickness" and this sickness affects their performance during and after the phase of downsizing and there is a strong negative relationship between

lay-off survivor sickness and survivors' job performance. However "Depression" in our context is the most significant variable that contributes the most in lay-off survivor sickness while "Anxiety", "Uncertainty about future", "Confusion", "Shock", "Insecurity" and "Sense of losing friends" contribute insignificantly to the sickness and hence job performance.

Responses to different factors constitute layoff Survivor Sickness:



- Most of the respondents (97 out of 100) claimed that they were depressed during the phase of downsizing while only three (3) claimed that they did not have any depression.
- The other relatively significant factor is sense of insecurity (claimed by 77 respondents)

6-Suggestions and recommendations

- To avoid facing undesirable consequences organizations should take all precautionary measures that may include consultation and proper communication to employees about redundancy and why it is necessary to take place.
- Implementation of culture of change also help organizations to embrace the change open heartedly.
- Organizations should justify the lay-off process to their employees, so there should not be feelings of injustice that decreases the moral of both victims and survivors.

- Counseling of survivors is also helpful for taking them out of depression, anxiety and other mental and psychological disorders.
- Downsizing should only be taken place when there is no choice left. In countries like Pakistan where unemployment rate is higher, downsizing can make the economic situation worse.

7-Future scope of the study

1. This study is going to help to understand in future the work behaviors of lay-off survivors in terms of absenteeism, intention to leave organization, family home conflicts due to depression can be measured.

2. Impact of layoff-survivor sickness on middle level management's performance can also be determined.
3. What impact of lay-off is created on the customers of the firm which might not be receiving promised quality of the product or services due to decline in performance of employees? Can be ascertained?

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