Motivating Language and Intent to Stay in a Backsourced Information Technology Environment

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ABSTRACT

Information technology (IT) backsourcing is a recent phenomenon that is gaining momentum because effective sourcing strategy can have major implications for organizations regarding financial investments, IT infrastructure, and changes in employee outcomes. Recent studies suggest that organizations are bringing their previously outsourced IT operations and services back in-house with one reason being employee dissatisfaction with prior outsourcing experiences. The results of this study indicate that for every 10% increase in motivating language, one can expect to see a 4.3% increase in an IT employee's intent to stay with an organization during a time when backsourcing is occurring.

KEYWORDS

Backsourcing, Intent to Stay, Job Satisfaction, Motivating Language, Sourcing

INTRODUCTION

Organizations have outsourced information technology (IT) services and support for over three decades expecting gains in efficiency, flexibility, innovation, and quality while reducing costs (Benaroch, Dai, & Kauffman, 2010; Benaroch, Webster, & Kazaz, 2011; Butler, Slack, & Walton, 2011; Freytag et al, 2012; Gorla & Mei, 2010). While some outsourcing arrangements have attained the anticipated outcomes without major problems, others have not, which has led organizations to evaluate the outsourcing problems encountered and re-evaluate their sourcing strategies.

Recent organizational sourcing strategy re-evaluation has resulted in one in four organizations bringing their previously outsourced IT operations back in-house to regain control over the management of those services, regain control of costs, and improve employee outcomes (Bhagwatwar, Hackney, & Desouza, 2011; Freytag et al., 2012). IT backsourcing is the process of bringing IT operations, previously performed by an outside vendor, back in-house with the goal of rebuilding internal capabilities (Veltri, Saunders, & Kavan, 2008; Whitten & Leidner, 2006). This backsourcing is becoming a continuing trend in organizations that have outsourced their products and services.

IT backsourcing is a change in IT business operations during times of organizational change where policies, procedures, culture, and values often shift resulting in poor alignment and structure to include

diminished employee outcomes such as reduced job satisfaction and retention levels (Bellou, 2007). Additionally, with the backsourced IT changes, the IT management function transitions from managing outsourcing contracts, to managing the internal business of IT. The backsourced management focus requires effective leadership communication skills because poor leadership communications during times of change can result in diminished employee outcomes such as lower levels of job satisfaction and retention (Homburg, Klarmann, & Staritz, 2012).

Leadership communications using Sullivan's (1988) motivating language framework is an organizational tool that can improve the impact of strategic leader language on many employee outcomes to include job satisfaction and retention (Mayfield, 2009). Because employees who provide IT services and support are integral to an organization's performance and productivity, the potential loss of these employees can have harmful effects on an organization's overall success (Premalatha, 2011). Therefore, retaining IT employees during and after a backsourcing transition is an important determinant of backsourcing success, and understanding leadership communications using motivating language is important.

The purpose of this research study is to investigate whether employee job satisfaction tests the relationship between a supervisor's use of motivating language and an IT employee's intent to stay with an organization during a period in which IT backsourcing is occurring. Given the gap in the body of knowledge and research examining the human-side of backsourcing, this research provides an understanding of the leading communications skills needed in the backsourcing change process, and strategies to increase backsourced employee job satisfaction levels.

Numerous studies have been done on the relationships between the variables of leadership communications, job satisfaction, and intent to stay in varying environments and scenarios (Bartels, Douwes, De Jong, & Pruyn, 2006; Bellou, 2007; Homburg, Klarmann, & Staritz, 2012; Mayfield & Mayfield, 2002, 2006, 2007, 2009; Premalatha, 2011). However, backsourcing is a relatively new phenomenon where there is minimal information about how to accomplish the process successfully (Garske, 2010; Kotlarsky & Bognar, 2012). Research on backsourcing has focused primarily on the business and financial factors that influence an organization's decision to bring IT services and support back in-house (Bhagwatwar, Hackney, & Desouza, 2011; Kern & Willcocks, 2001; McLaughlin & Peppard, 2006; Veltri, Saunders, & Kavan, 2008; Wong & Jaya, 2008). Furthermore, understanding what determines an organization's sourcing decisions in favor of backsourcing is currently being discussed in the literature (Richmond & Carton, 2010; Whitten, Chakrabarty, & Wakefield, 2010; Whitten & Wakefield, 2006). Finally, backsourcing flexibility value (Benaroch, Webster, & Kazaz, 2011), and backsourcing knowledge re-integration (Bhagwatwar, Hackney, & Desouza, 2011) are additional topics currently under discussion in the literature as they relate to backsourcing processes and strategies. Minimal research that examines the human-side of backsourcing exists in the literature; therefore, a gap remains.

Understanding how a supervisor's use of motivating language in an organization during and after a backsourcing event is a relevant topic of discussion given the impact of sourcing policy change on IT employee satisfaction and retention (Majovski, 2007; Sarros, Luca, Densten, & Santora, 2014). Additionally, maintaining a skilled IT staff is critical to organizational success during organizational change (Kotlarsky & Bognar, 2012). Longenecker and Scazzero (2003) argued, "An organization's survival may be at stake and could hinge on its ability to effectively manage the issues associated with turnover and retention of its IT managers" (p. 64). Bhagwatwar, Hackney, and Desouza (2011) supported the study's relevance by indicating the need for further research to understand how backsourcing decisions affect the job satisfaction of IT employees.

Sullivan's (1988) motivating language framework, which includes three speech types used to influence employee outcomes, is the basis for this research. The three motivating language speech types are direction-giving, empathetic, and meaning-making, as demonstrated through communications such as defining tasks and giving direction, providing emotional compassion and support, and defining cultural aspects by way of stories and symbolism respectively. In this

study, the motivating language framework was used to show the impact of supervisor's effective use of motivating language impart on the IT workforce during backsourcing. In this backsourcing context, if IT management uses the right words, at the right time, they can optimize outcomes in employee job satisfaction and retention (Mayfield, 2009).

Past research on backsourcing has focused primarily on the business and financial factors that influence an organization's decision to bring IT services and support back in-house (Benaroch et al., 2010; Bhagwatwar, Hackney, & Desouza, 2011; Freytag et al, 2012; Kotlarsky & Bognar, 2012; McLaughlin & Peppard, 2006; Veltri, Saunders, & Kavan, 2008; Wong & Jaya, 2008). There is minimal research examining the human-side of backsourcing in the literature. Bhagwatwar, Hackney, and Desouza (2011) supported the study's relevance by indicating the need for further research to understand how backsourcing decisions affect the job satisfaction of employees who provide IT services and support.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study examined the mediating effect of employee job satisfaction on the relationship between a supervisor's use of motivating language and an IT employee's intent to stay with an organization during and after a backsourcing transition. Multiple theoretical frameworks guide this study: motivating language theory (Sullivan, 1988), leader-member exchange (LMX) theory (Dansereau et al., 1975), Herzberg's (1959) two-factor theory, and Price and Mueller's (1981) theory of employee turnover.

Sullivan's (1988) motivating language theory guides the analysis of the supervisor motivating language construct, which is a form of strategic verbal communications that consists of three main types of communication between the supervisor and employee. The first speech type is direction-giving language, which reduces uncertainty through goal setting, management by objectives, and vision sharing. The second speech type, empathetic language, expresses compassion and respect for employees through praise and positive validation of emotions. Finally, the third speech type, meaning-making language, provides clarification of organizational cultural norms often through subtle or symbolic means such as rituals or stories. Motivational language theory offers that leaders can affect subordinates' work performance through effective use of each of the three speech types (Mayfield, Mayfield, & Kopf, 1998). Motivational language is a natural extension of modern theories on leadership and research on turnover. For example, LMX theory asserts that employee behaviors, including retention, substantially affect the relational quality of supervisor-employee dyads (Graen & Scandura, 1987).

LMX focuses on the dyadic relationship between leaders and subordinates (Dansereau et al., 1975). It suggests that a leader develop an individualized relationship with subordinates through effective behaviors (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Findings from LMX research identified positive outcomes from effective leadership communications training (Graen et al., 1982; Graen & Scandura, 1987; Graen et al., 1986). Moreover, previous motivating language research found that leader communications have a significant effect on employee job satisfaction (Mayfield & Mayfield 2007; Sarros, Luca, Densten, & Santora, 2014). LMX is one of the most valid leadership theories today on leader behavior and is congruent with motivating language theory (Mayfield & Mayfield, 2009; Miner, 2005). Motivating language theory focuses specifically on the speech acts of leader-to-subordinate communications; yet, findings from Mayfield and Mayfield (2009) provided evidence for the necessity of leader communications and behavior congruence to affect positive employee outcomes. Thus, leaders who demonstrate poor behavior can negate good leader communications, and "good leader communications cannot take place without good leader-subordinate relationships" (Mayfield & Mayfield, 2009, p. 76). Therefore, the effective use of motivating language theory coupled with LMX theory could result in positive employee outcomes such as job satisfaction and retention.

Much of the job satisfaction literature traces back to Herzberg's (1959) two-factor theory, which ties employee job satisfaction to two sets of factors. The first set of factors is motivator factors that

might include recognition, responsibility, and challenging work (intrinsic motivators). The second set of factors is hygiene factors that might include benefits, job security, and pay (extrinsic motivators). While the second set of factors may not cause direct job satisfaction, their removal can cause employee job dissatisfaction. Further, job satisfaction is an attitude closely linked to an employee's intent to leave or stay (Mayfield, Mayfield, & Kopf, 1998). As job satisfaction increases, an employee's intent to stay also increases (Mayfield et al., 1998; Price & Mueller, 1981).

Price and Mueller's (1981) theory of employee turnover guides the analyses on the intent to stay construct and is based on Price's (1977) synthesis of the literature on employee turnover with a major revision. This revision involved adding intent to stay as an intervening variable between job satisfaction and turnover because of the work of Porter, and his colleagues (Koch & Steers, 1978; Porter, Steers, Mowday, & Boulian, 1974; Steers, 1977) who asserted intent to stay was a dimension of commitment. The aforementioned theoretical frameworks guide the study that investigates the mediating effect employee job satisfaction has on the relationship between a supervisor's use of motivating language and an IT employee's intent to stay with the organization in a backsourced environment.

The purpose of the study is to investigate the mediating effect of employee job satisfaction on a supervisor's use of motivating language and an employee's intent to stay with an organization during a period in which IT backsourcing is occurring. Using a quantitative approach, the relationship between the independent variables of supervisor motivating language and employee job satisfaction, and the dependent variable of employee intent to stay is explored (Trochim, 2006). Does an IT employee's job satisfaction mediate the effect of motivating language on intent to stay in a backsourced environment? Here are the hypotheses as shown in Figure 1.

Research Question: An IT employee's job satisfaction significantly mediates the relationship between motivating language and intent to stay in a backsourced environment:

H1 = There is a statistically significant positive relationship between motivating language and intent to stay in a backsourced environment

Subquestion 1b: Is there a relationship between motivating language and job satisfaction in a backsourced environment? The following hypotheses pertain to this question:

H1b = There is a statistically significant positive relationship between motivating language and job satisfaction in a backsourced environment

Figure 1. Research model
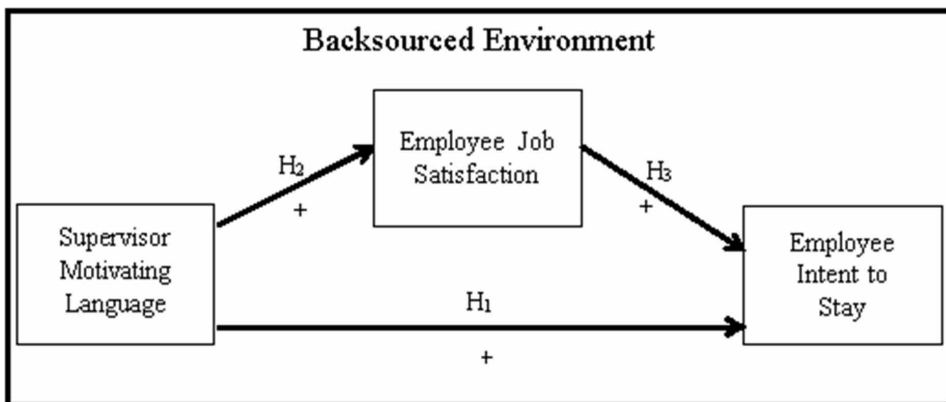
Subquestion 1c: Is there a relationship between job satisfaction and intent to stay in a backsourced environment? The following hypotheses pertain to this question:

H1c = There is a statistically significant positive relationship between job satisfaction and intent to stay in a backsourced environment

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The quantitative design approach is appropriate for the research question because the purpose of the study is to find relationships among multiple variables and to test the hypotheses after implementation of backsourcing. There will be no manipulation of the independent variable to determine the dependent variable, and a single survey instrument will collect the data (Field, 2009; Trochim, 2006). The study is both descriptive and inferential to explain how a supervisor's use of motivating language during a backsourcing event affects an employee's job satisfaction and intent to stay with the backsourcing organization.

The following validated surveys were used: (1) the Motivating Language Reduced Scale (Mayfield & Mayfield, 2007), (2) the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire Job Satisfaction Subscale (MOAQ-JSS) (Cammann, Fichman, Jenkins, & Klesh, 1983; Survey Research Center, 1975), and (3) the Intent to Stay Questionnaire (Mayfield & Mayfield, 2007). Demographic questions are also included as part of the survey instrument so that descriptive statistics can be obtained and analyzed.

Previous research has shown that job satisfaction had a mediating effect on relationships between leadership communications strategies and retention. Because recent research uses newer statistical methods such as bootstrap confidence intervals to test mediating effects in regression analysis (Hayes, 2013), this study used the Hayes' PROCESS macro for SPSS to test the potential mediating effect that job satisfaction has on the relationship between motivating language and intent to stay.

A single survey instrument collected the data, which consisted of qualifying questions, demographic questions, and a compilation of the four existing validated survey instruments using Likert-type scales. Prior studies used these three survey instruments due to their high validity and reliability (Madlock, 2008). The researcher found two instruments in multiple research studies that measured a supervisor's use of motivating language: Motivating Language Scale and the Motivating Language Reduced Scale. Mayfield and Mayfield (2007) developed each of the instruments. The original instrument, Motivating Language Scale, originally contained 24 items and maintained acceptable validity and reliability when reduced to seven items in the Motivating Language Reduced scale. The researcher chose the reduced scale for use in the current study because of its high validity and reliability, ease of use and understanding, and brevity. There were multiple instruments identified in the literature that measure job satisfaction; however, the researcher selected the MOAQ-JSS for use in the study because of its brevity, face-valid measure of the affective component of job satisfaction, and ability to assess global job satisfaction. Several popular job satisfaction scales examined were lengthy; however, the MOAQ-JSS is short with only three items. The Job Description Index (JDI) (Smith, Kendall, & Hulin, 1969) contains 72 items. The long and short forms of the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) (Weiss, Dawis, England, & Lofquist, 1967) have 100 and 20 items, respectively. Often, the definition of job satisfaction has an affective component; however, many job satisfaction scales fail to measure it (Bowling & Hammond, 2008). The MOAQ-JSS reliably measures the affective component of job satisfaction. Finally, the MOAQ-SS measures job satisfaction on a global scale, while others, such as the JDI, measure specific facets of job satisfaction. This study was interested in the global measurement of job satisfaction. For these reasons, the researcher selected the MOAQ-JSS for use in this study to measure job satisfaction. This study focused on an employee's intent to stay because it is the positive and desired result of retention strategies. The researcher selected the Intent to Stay Questionnaire (Mayfield & Mayfield, 2007) for use in the current study

because of its ability to test the positive affect of retention, high validity and reliability, ease of use and understanding, and brevity.

Each of the survey instruments used Likert-type scales. The four instruments used were not modified and met Churchill's (1979) validity and reliability requirements; therefore, a pre-test, field-test, and post-test was not required (Field, 2009). Table 1 provides a summary of the reliability of each of the pre-validated surveys used in this study.

POPULATION AND SAMPLE

The target population consisted of approximately 600,000 IT employees in the U.S. (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014). The sample frame consisted of approximately 1,200 IT employees who were members of the Survey Monkey Audience who self-reported as being IT professionals. As many as one in four organizations brought previously outsourced operations back in-house (Bhagwatwar, Hackney, & Desouza, 2011). Also, 70% of respondents to a survey conducted by Deloitte Consulting in 2005 indicated a negative experience with outsourcing (Samuels, 2005). With approximately 600,000 IT employees in the U.S. (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014), it was assumed that a substantial number of IT employees had experienced an IT backsourcing event within the past five years. Therefore, the researcher assumed that the sample came from a total population equal to approximately 600,000 IT employees. Furthermore, the researcher anticipated achieving a minimum sample size of 107 respondents from the sample frame of approximately 1200 Survey Monkey Audience members who met the survey's selection criteria. Finally, the selection procedures and sample size were in keeping with those used in similar studies investigating motivating language, job satisfaction, and intent to stay variables (Freytag et al, 2012; Kanwar, Singh, & Kodwani, 2012; Kennedy, Holt, Ward, & Rehg, 2002; Khan & Lacity, 2012; Madlock, 2013; Mayfield & Mayfield, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2007, 2010, 2012). Using Cohen's (1988) criteria of .8 level of power, an expected medium effect ($r = .30$), and having multiple predictors such as in this study, the minimum recommended sample size is 70. The Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner, and Lang (2009) G*Power statistical analysis tool version 3.1.7 was used to perform a power analysis given a medium effect size of $p = .15$, $\alpha = .05$, and $\beta = .95$, with two predictor variables, which resulted in a recommended sample size of 107. Field (2009) argued that the larger the sample, the better, and the sample size calculated using G*Power is larger than Cohen's (1988) recommendation; therefore, the total sample size of 107 participants was appropriate for the research question. With this sample size, it is expected that a sufficiently robust analysis could achieve the necessary results for a ω of .3, $\alpha = 0.05$, and $1- \beta = 0.8$ (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). The pool of respondents was randomly sampled.

The three instruments constituted the single survey instrument used in the current study met Churchill's (1979) validity and reliability recommendations, which included validity and reliability scores above or equal to 0.74, and unmodified instruments used in their entirety; therefore, a pre-test, field-test, and post-test was not required (Field, 2009). However, the researcher conducted a pre-test with a small group of participants not included in the study to ensure survey instrument functionality, clarity, and comprehension.

Table 1. Instrument reliability summary

Scale Name	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Motivating Language Reduced Scale	9	0.72-0.94
MOAQ-JSS	3	0.77
Intent to Stay Questionnaire	7	0.77/0.66

DATA ANALYSIS

Because the researcher used multiple linear regression analysis to analyze multiple predictor variables on the outcome variable, several assumptions required investigation (Field, 2009). These assumptions included checking the data for normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity. The researcher used descriptive statistics to assess univariate normality of the data using SPSS to obtain the skewness and kurtosis indices for the motivating language for large sample sizes (over 100 cases), the absolute value of 2.58 should be used. As shown in Table 2, negative skew was evident in positive intent to stay, motivating language, and job satisfaction. The researcher performed transformations on each of the variables using Templeton's (2011) Two-Step approach for transforming continuous variables to normality. The researcher used the transformed variables in subsequent analyses because the skew indices of the transformed data fell below 1.96.

Multicollinearity was not an issue in the independent variables. Plots of the regression standardized regression showed that the relationships were not curvilinear.

MEDIATION TESTING

Mediation "equates to the relationship between two variables being 'explained' by a third" (Field, 2013, p. 419). This study investigated the mediating effect of employee job satisfaction on the relationship between supervisor motivating language and employee intent to stay with an organization where backsourcing is occurring. The researcher tested mediation using the Hayes' PROCESS macro for SPSS (Hayes, 2013) to assess the size of the indirect effect and confidence interval of motivating language and intent to stay through job satisfaction. A small effect is approximately .01, a medium effect is approximately .09, and a large effect is approximately .25 (Field, 2013). In this study, there was a significant indirect effect of motivating language on intent to stay through job satisfaction, $b =$ 0.135, BCa CI [0.042, 0.237]. This represented a medium effect, $k^2 = .135$, 95% BCa CI [.042, .237]. Figure 2 provides a model of motivating language as a predictor of intent to stay mediated by job satisfaction. The confidence interval for the indirect effect is a bootstrapped CI based on 1000 samples.

Multivariate analysis of covariance analysis further assessed the sample's generalizability by testing for differences between any sample demographic characteristic and model variables. The tests were not significant at the .05 level; thus, indicating that IT employee demographics did not influence variable scores.

DETAILS OF ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

A multiple linear regression using the hierarchical regression method was conducted on the independent variables (motivating language and job satisfaction) and the dependent variable (intent to stay) to test the hypotheses. Table 3 provides a correlation matrix between the variables. Both motivating language and job satisfaction significantly and positively correlated with intent to stay. The correlation between motivating language and intent to stay was $r = .503$, $p < .001$. The correlation

Table 2. Skewness and Kurtosis initial analysis for the study variables (N = 105)

Variable	Skewness	Skewness z-Score	Kurtosis	Kurtosis z-Score
Positive Intent to Stay (P_ITS)	-.634	-2.69	-.136	-.31
Motivating Language (ML)	-.576	-2.44	-.518	-1.17
Job Satisfaction (JS)	.677	2.87	-.237	-1.00

Note. SE for skewness = .236. *SE* for kurtosis = .467.
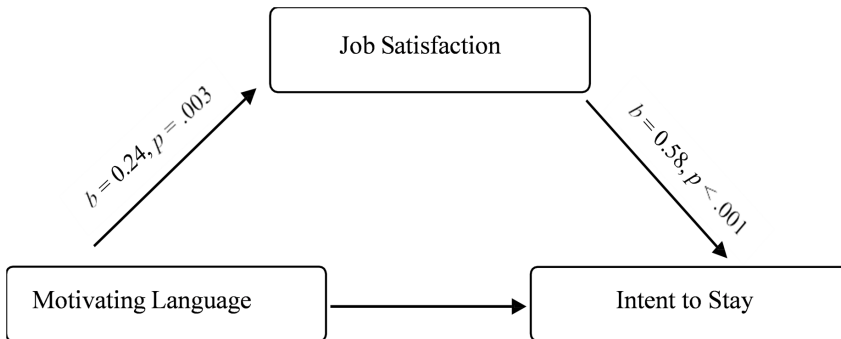
Figure 2. Mediation model

Table 3. Correlation Matrix (N = 105)

Variables	1	2	3
1. Intent to Stay	-		
2. Motivating Language	.503**	-	
3. Job Satisfaction	.579**	.284*	-

Note: *$p < .01$, **$p <.001$

between job satisfaction and intent to stay was $r = .579$, $p < .001$. In addition, there was a significant and positive correlation between motivating language and job satisfaction with $r = .284$, $p = .002$. These significant correlations indicated that both motivating language and job satisfaction significantly and positively predicted intent to stay. As motivating language increased, both job satisfaction and intent to stay increased. The correlations did not indicate multicollinearity because the correlations were not substantial ($r > .9$) between the predictors (Field, 2009).

HIERARCHICAL REGRESSION ANALYSIS

Multiple linear regression was conducted using the hierarchical regression method on a model to evaluate the relationship between predictor variables (motivating language and job satisfaction) and the outcome variable (intent to stay). Also, the researcher tested the model to examine whether job satisfaction had a mediating effect on the relationship between motivating language and intent to stay. The individual contribution of each variable to intent to stay in each step of the regression model is shown in Table 4. The first step of the hierarchical regression analysis included adding motivating language only to the model. The hypothesis for the first step of the hierarchical regression analysis was as follows: $H_0 1$ = There is a statistically significant relationship between motivating language and intent to stay in a backsourced environment. The results of the first step of the hierarchical regression analysis indicated that motivating language accounted for 25.3% of the variance in intent to stay with $R^2 = .253$, $F(1, 103) = 34.911$, $p < .001$. The adjusted R^2 describes how well a model generalizes to a population. If the R_2 and adjusted R^2 are similar; they generalize to the population and have good cross-validity (Field, 2009). For this step of the regression, the adjusted $R^2 = .246$, which was similar to the observed R^2 (.253) indicating that the model in the first step could generalize to the population with good cross-validity. For motivating language, $b = 0.40$ indicated that as the use of motivating language increased, intent to stay increased by 0.40 levels. For motivating language, $\beta = .50$, which indicated that as motivating language increased by one SD (1.02), intent to stay increased by .51

SDs. Motivating language significantly and positively predicted intent to stay, $\beta = .503$, $t\,(103) =$ 5.91, $p < .001$. Based on these findings, the researcher accepted hypothesis $H_0 1$. Table 4 provides the individual contribution of motivating language to intent to stay in the first step of the hierarchical regression analysis.

The second step of the hierarchical regression model added job satisfaction to the model to determine first, if there was a significant relationship between motivating language and job satisfaction, and second, whether R^2 was significantly increased by its addition to the model. There were two hypotheses for the second step. The first hypothesis for the second step of the regression analysis was as follows. $H_0 1b$ = There is a statistically significant relationship between motivating language and job satisfaction in a backsourced environment. The researcher performed a simple regression to test the relationship between motivating language and job satisfaction. The results indicated that motivating language was significantly and positively related to job satisfaction, with $r = .284$, $p = .002$. For motivating language, $b = 0.242$, which indicated that as the use of motivating language increased, intent to stay increased by 0.242 levels. For motivating language, $\beta = .284$, which indicated that as motivating language increased by one SD (1.02), job satisfaction increased by 0.30 SDs. Motivating language significantly and positively predicted job satisfaction, $\beta = .284$, $t\,(103) = 3.001$, $p = .003$. Based on these findings, the researcher accepted hypothesis $H_0 1b$. The second hypothesis for the second step of the regression analysis was as follows: $H_0 1c$ = There is a statistically significant relationship between job satisfaction and intent to stay in a backsourced environment. The results of the second step of the hierarchical regression analysis indicated that both motivating language and job satisfaction together accounted for 46.1% of the variance in intent to stay with $R^2 = .461$, $F\,(2, 102) = 39.228$, $p < .001$. The R^2 change in the model during the second step was .207 indicating that job satisfaction accounted for 20.7% of the variance in intent to stay. For this study, the adjusted $R^2 = .450$ was similar to the observed R^2 (.461), which indicated that the model in the second step could generalize to the population with good cross-validity. Job satisfaction significantly and positively predicted intent to stay, $\beta = .475$, $t\,(102) = 6.26$, $p < .001$. The smaller the significance of the t value, and the larger the value of t, indicates a greater contribution to the model (Field, 2009). Therefore, this finding indicated that job satisfaction ($t\,(102) = 6.26$, $p < .001$) had a greater contribution to intent to stay than motivating language ($t\,(103) = 4.86$, $p < .001$). Based on these findings, the researcher accepted hypothesis $H_0 1c$. Table 4 provides the individual contributions of motivating language and job satisfaction with intent to stay in step two of the hierarchical regression analysis.

The resulting regression equation follows:

$$\text{intent to stay}_i = b_{0} + b_{1}\text{motivating language}_i + b_{2}\text{job satisfaction}_i = .603$$
$$+ (0.293\ \text{motivating language}_i) + (0.442\ \text{job satisfaction}_i)$$

Table 4. Hierarchical linear regression results for the intent to stay model (N =105)

Variable	B	SE B	β	Collinearity Statistics	
Step 1					
Constant	2.50	0.25			
Motivating Language	0.40	0.07	.50*	1.000	1.000
Step 2					
Constant	0.60	0.37			
Motivating Language	0.29	0.06	.37*	.920	1.087
Job Satisfaction	0.44	0.07	.48*	.920	1.087

Note: $R^2 = .25$ for Step 1, $\Delta R^2 = .21$ for Step 2 ($p < .001$). * $p < .001$.

The overarching research question in the study was as follows. Does an IT employee's job satisfaction mediate the effect of motivating language on intent to stay in a backsourced environment? The following hypothesis pertained to the research question.

$H1_0$ = An IT employee's job satisfaction significantly mediates the relationship between motivating language and intent to stay in a backsourced environment. There are four conditions that indicate mediation is occurring: (1) the predictor variable significantly predicts the outcome variable, (2) the predictor variable significantly predicts the mediator, (3) the mediator significantly predicts the outcome variable, and (4) the predictor variable predicts the outcome variable less strongly in the subsequent steps of the hierarchical regression model than in prior steps (Field, 2013). The results of sub-hypotheses H_01, H_01a, and H_01b met each of the conditions indicating a mediating effect occurred in the research model; therefore, the researcher conducted mediation testing using the Hayes' PROCESS macro for SPSS (Hayes, 2013). These results indicate that an IT employee's job satisfaction significantly mediated the effect of motivating language on intent to stay in a backsourced environment, $b = 0.14$, 95% CI [0.042, 0.24]. In addition, motivating language significantly predicted job satisfaction, $b = 0.24$, $p = .003$; job satisfaction significantly predicted intent to stay, $b = 0.58$, $p < .001$; and motivating language significantly predicted intent to stay, $b = 0.29$, $p < .001$. Furthermore, job satisfaction had a medium effect (14%) on the relationship between motivating language and intent to stay, $k^2 = .135$, 95% BCa CI [.042, .238].

DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

The first stage of the regression analysis began by including only motivating language in the model. The significance of the bivariate relationship between intent to stay and motivating language was assessed at the end of step 1, $F(1, 103) = 34.91$, $p < .001$. The bivariate correlation was .50, accounting for 25% of the variance. Motivating language significantly and positively predicted intent to stay, $\beta = .503$, $t(103) = 5.91$, $p < .001$. These results indicated that as motivating language increased by one SD (1.02), intent to stay increased by .51 SDs. The derived metrics for step 1 translate as follows: For every 10% increase in a supervisor's use of motivating language, an employee's intent to stay increases by 5.1%. In addition, the adjusted R^2 (.246) was similar to the observed R^2 (.253), which indicated that the model in step 1 could generalize to the population with good cross-validity. Because the results of step 1 of the regression analysis were significant, the researcher accepted hypothesis H_01 and explored H_01c that proposed a significant relationship between job satisfaction and intent to stay in a backsourced environment. The second stage of the hierarchical regression analysis added job satisfaction to the model to determine whether R^2 significantly increased. After step 2, with both motivating language and job satisfaction in the equation, $F(1, 102) = 43.55$, $p < .001$, $R = .68$ and $R^2 = .46$, the increments in R^2 at each step are $sr^2_{motivating\ language} = .25$, $p < .001$, and $sr^2_{job\ satisfaction} = .21$, $p < .001$. Motivating language and job satisfaction together significantly and positively predicted intent to stay, $\beta = .475$, $t(102) = 6.26$, $p < .001$. These results indicated that both motivating language and job satisfaction together accounted for 46% of the variance in intent to stay, with motivating language accounting for 25% of the variance and job satisfaction accounting for 21% of the variance. The addition of job satisfaction to the model in step 2 was significant because the F value of 39.23 exceeded the critical F with 1 and 102 df; therefore, job satisfaction was making a significant contribution to the equation in step 2. For this study, the adjusted $R^2 = .450$ was similar to the observed R^2 (.461), which indicated that the model in the second stage could generalize to the population with good cross-validity. Based on these findings, the researcher accepted hypothesis H_01c and explored the hypothesis: H_01b that there is a significant relationship between motivating language and job satisfaction in a backsourced environment. Simple regression analysis to test the relationship between motivating language and job satisfaction was performed. The results indicated that motivating language was significantly and positively related to job satisfaction, with $r = .284$, $p = .002$. For motivating language, $b = 0.242$, which indicated as the use of motivating language

increased, intent to stay increased by 0.242 levels. Motivating language significantly and positively predicted job satisfaction, $\beta = .284$, t (103) = 3.001, $p = .003$. For motivating language, $\beta = .284$, which indicated that as motivating language increased by one SD (1.02), job satisfaction increased by 0.30 SDs. The derived metrics translate as follows: For every 10% increase in a supervisor's use of motivating language, an employee's job satisfaction increases by 3%. Based on these findings, the researcher accepted hypothesis $H_0 1b$.

After step 1, with motivating language in the equation, $R^2 = .25$, F (1, 103) = 34.91, $p < .001$, and after step 2, with job satisfaction added to the equation, $R^2 = .461$, F (2, 102) = 43.55, $p < .001$ the addition of job satisfaction to the equation resulted in a significant increment in R^2. This pattern of results indicated that motivating language accounted for 25% of the variability in an employee's intent to stay with an organization during a time when backsourcing is occurring, and job satisfaction accounted for an additional 21% of the variability. Table 5 provides the correlations between variables, the unstandardized regression coefficients (B), the intercept, the standardized regression coefficients (β), the semi-partial correlations (sr_i^2), R, R^2, and adjusted R^2 after entry of both variables into the model. At the end of each step, R was significantly different from zero. After step 2, with both independent variables in the equation, $R^2 = .461$ with 95% confidence limits from .30 to .58, F (1, 102) = 43.55, $p < .001$. The adjusted R^2 value of .450 indicated that motivating language and job satisfaction combined predicted more than 45% of the variability in intent to stay.

A simple regression was performed with job satisfaction as the only independent variable and intent to stay as the dependent variable, $R^2 = .34$, F (1, 103) = 52.06, $p < .00$. This indicated that 14% of the variability was unaccounted for between the simple regression model with job satisfaction alone, and the hierarchical regression model with both motivating language and job satisfaction combined. The study results suggested mediation in the model since the conditions for mediation were indicated in the results of sub-hypotheses $H_0 1$, $H_0 1b$, and $H_0 1c$. Thus, mediation testing using the Hayes' PROCESS macro for SPSS (Hayes, 2013) addressed the omnibus question for this study: $H_0 1$ where an IT employee's job satisfaction significantly mediates the relationship between motivating language and intent to stay in a backsourced environment.

The researcher tested mediation in the model using the Hayes' PROCESS macro for SPSS (Hayes, 2013) to assess the size of the indirect effect and confidence interval of motivating language and intent to stay through job satisfaction. A small effect is approximately .01, a medium effect is approximately .09, and a large effect is approximately .25 (Field, 2013). In this study, there was a significant indirect effect of motivating language on intent to stay through job satisfaction, $b = 0.135$, BCa CI [0.042, 0.237]. This represented a medium effect, $k^2 = .135$ (14%), 95% BCa CI [.042, .237].

The derived metrics for the final model translate as follows: when considering the indirect effects of a supervisor's use of motivating language on an IT employee's actual intent to stay during a time when backsourcing is occurring, there is an expected 1.4% increase in intent to stay for every 10% increase in motivating language use. Total effects show an approximate 4.3% increase in an IT

Table 5. Hierarchical regression of motivating language variables on intent to stay (N = 105)

Variables	Intent to Stay	Motivating Language	Job Satisfaction	B	SE B	β	sr^2 (incr.)
Motivating Language	.50			.293	.060*	.368	.25*
Job Satisfaction	.58	.28		.442	.071*	.475	.21*
Intercept				.603	.371		
M	3.9	3.6	5.1				
SD	.82	1.0	.87				

$R^2 = .461$, $\Delta R^2 = .450*$, $R = .679$, *$p < .001$

employee's intent to stay with an organization when backsourcing is occurring for every 10% increase in a supervisor's use of motivating language. Table 6 presents the direct, indirect, and total effects.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY RESULTS

The overreaching research question asked, "Does an IT employee's job satisfaction mediate the effect of motivating language on intent to stay in a backsourced environment?" This study contributes to the theory of motivating language and expands the research to IT employees who have experienced IT backsourcing. The results from this study remain consistent with previous literature (Mayfield & Mayfield, 2007, 2009) finding a significant and positive relationship between motivating language and intent to stay, with job satisfaction partially mediating this relationship. As anticipated by the study hypotheses, although there is a significant relationship between motivating language and intent to stay, the link between the two is not direct. Job satisfaction partially mediates the relationship.

This study suggests that motivating language, as it relates to an employee's intent to stay at an organization where backsourcing is occurring, operates through job satisfaction. The results appear to be consistent with Sullivan's (1988) original conceptualization of motivating language as having an attitudinal impact on employee behaviors through a path between leader language use and a change in employee attitudes. This means that the change in an IT employee's intent to stay (behavior) with an organization where backsourcing is occurring happens through a path between leader language use (motivating language) and a change in the IT employee's job satisfaction (attitude). These findings are also consistent with the findings in Mayfield and Mayfield (2009), which revealed that motivating language operated through a change in employee job satisfaction to affect a different employee outcome, absenteeism. However, Mayfield and Mayfield's (2009) results indicated that the relationship between motivating language and the employee outcome, absenteeism, was fully mediated by job satisfaction.

From a broad, practical viewpoint, a supervisor's use of motivating language has a significant and mediating link to an IT employee's intent to stay at an organization when backsourcing is occurring. The results of this study indicate that for every 10% increase in a supervisor's motivating language use, one can expect to see a 4.3% total increase in an IT employee's intent to stay with an organization during a time when backsourcing is occurring. Accordingly, one can predict that even small improvements in a supervisor's use of motivating language will have a positive and appreciable impact on an IT employee's intent to stay during a time when backsourcing is occurring. This finding is consistent with the findings of Mayfield and Mayfield (2007) where every 10% increase in motivating language use resulted in a 5% increase in a worker's intent to stay.

When examining only motivating language's relationship with intent to stay, results indicated for every 10% increase in a supervisor's use of motivating language, one can expect a 3% increase in an IT employee's intent to stay. The results further indicate that job satisfaction indirectly affects the relationship between motivating language and intent to stay by 14%, which is a medium effect according to Field (2013). Therefore, job satisfaction accounts for 14% of the effect on the relationship between a supervisor's use of motivating language and an IT employee's intent to stay with an organization when backsourcing is occurring.

Table 6. Direct, indirect, and total effects between variables (N = 105)

Variable	Direct Effects	Indirect Effects	Total Effects
Motivating Language to Intent to Stay	.29**	.14	.43
Motivating Language to Job Satisfaction	.24*	N/A	.24
Job Satisfaction to Intent to Say	.58**	N/A	.58

* $p < .01$, ** $p < .001$

While the results of this study indicate that there is a significant direct and indirect relationship between a supervisor's use of motivating language and an IT employee's intent to stay, there is also a significant direct affect between a supervisor's motivating language use and an IT employee's job satisfaction. The results indicate that for every 10% increase in a supervisor's motivating language use, one can expect to see a 2.4% increase in an IT employee's job satisfaction. However, job satisfaction appears to have the largest direct effect on intent to stay because the results of the study indicate that for every 10% increase in an IT employee's job satisfaction, one can expect a 5.8% increase in their intent to stay with an organization during a time when backsourcing is occurring. These results are lower than Mayfield, Mayfield, and Kopf's (1998) findings on the relationship between motivating language use and worker job satisfaction, where for every 10% increase in a leader's use of motivating language, one could expect to see a 7% increase in worker job satisfaction.

This study adds to the investigation and understanding of the leader-subordinate communications process. Sullivan's (1988) original conceptualization provided a strong foundation for examining employee outcomes via an attitudinal path between a leader's use of language and an employee's behavior. This study's research indicates that a supervisor's use of motivating language with IT employees in a backsourced environment operates through employee attitudinal change, job satisfaction, which adds to the body of knowledge.

Prior research has shown that motivating language significantly and positively predicted job satisfaction and intent to stay separately (Mayfield & Mayfield, 1998; Mayfield & Mayfield, 2007). This study indicates there is a mediating link between motivating language and intent to stay through job satisfaction; therefore, this study extends the range of the relationship between motivating language and employee outcome variables.

These findings also improve the theoretical understanding of the potential organizational value that a supervisor's use of motivating language has in a backsourced environment. By understanding that an increase in a supervisor's use of motivating language increases IT employee job satisfaction levels, which, in turn, increases their intent to stay with the organization during backsourcing, IT employee retention can be better managed and improved. From a practitioner viewpoint, and as discussed in this study's background section, IT employee retention continues to be a costly and pervasive problem in organizations today, with costs of IT turnover ranging from 50 to 200 percent of the IT employee's salary (Von Hagel & Miller, 2011). In addition, the loss of skilled IT employees is more expensive due to the high indirect costs of missed technological advances, loss of tactic knowledge, and project delays (Ghapanchi & Aurum, 2011). Consequently, these risks and costs can become very apparent when organizations are undergoing change.

The retention of IT employees during a change transition, such as backsourcing, may be a critical component to its success; therefore, understanding how leadership communications using motivating language can affect and improve IT employee outcomes is important. Organizations can use the understanding gained from the findings of this study as a significant resource leading to recommendations for organizations on effective backsourcing implementations and communication strategies that maintain or increase an IT employee's job satisfaction; thus, maximizing their intent to stay employed with the organization. Finally, findings from this study identify opportunities to enhance leadership communications training programs to support the retention of a high-performing IT staff during a backsourcing transition, which ultimately affects the mission and success of the organization.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

These limitations direct the study's recommendations for future research toward more credible and generalizable results. For instance, the sample only included respondents who worked for medium-to-large, domestic, for-profit organizations. Future investigations of motivating language use in a backsourced environment might be better suited using a longitudinal design. Additionally, because job satisfaction has a significant impact on an IT employee's intent to stay during a time when

backsourcing is occurring, investigating which of the three motivating language speech types has a greater influence on job satisfaction during backsourcing would be valuable. Finally, researchers are encouraged to investigate other organizational constructs that affect the relationship between a supervisor's use of motiving language on an IT employee's intent to stay during a time when backsourcing is occurring. While motivating language and job satisfaction explained 46% of the variation in an IT employee's intent to stay during a time when backsourcing was occurring, 54% of the variation remains unexplained in this study.

CONCLUSION

Because motivating language significantly predicted intent to stay, motivating language significantly predicted job satisfaction, job satisfaction significantly predicted intent to stay, and the predictive power of motivating language decreased with the addition of job satisfaction into the model, there appeared to be mediation within the model. Tests for mediation on the model indicated that there was a significant, indirect, medium effect (14%) of motivating language on intent to stay through job satisfaction.

The results of this study indicate that for every 10% increase in motivating language, one can expect to see a 4.3% increase in an IT employee's intent to stay with an organization during a time when backsourcing is occurring. Accordingly, even small improvements in a supervisor's use of motivating language can have a positive and appreciable impact on an IT employee's intent to stay during a time when backsourcing is occurring. If the implications from this study's findings are true, a leader's strategic use of motivating language can make significant improvements in an IT employee's job satisfaction and retention; therefore, organizational communications strategies using motivating language, and the effective use of leadership communications training programs, will be crucial to operationalizing this process during backsourcing.

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