

Acknowledgments

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Abstract

This project is focused on labour turnover and human resource management in the call centre industry, particularly in financial call centres in the Czech Republic.

Theoretical background for this piece of work is engaged in two main areas. Firstly, the modern approach to human resource management and its link to the retention policy are discussed. Two basic models of human resource management are emphasised to be developed in the primary research. Secondly, the unique world of the call centre industry is investigated. The central challenge of call centre management is to achieve a trade-off between cost minimisation and high-quality customer service. The authors consider achieving this balance to be problematic and the debate surrounding which concept of human resource management is typical of modern call centres is lively and controversial. The corresponding researches report relatively high job satisfaction but a serious degree of job stress and high labour turnover in the call centre industry.

Primary research of this work is aimed to investigate the labour turnover rate, applied concept of human resource management, employee well-being and the linkages to each other. To meet the scope of this research interviews with managers as well as an employee survey were realised.

The results of this project seem to be relatively optimistic. The labour turnover rate is surprisingly low in both investigated call centres probably due to use the soft model of human resource management. The employee survey indicates high job satisfaction but a substantial degree of perceived job stress at the same time.

This study shows that the view of the call centre industry should not be black and white. The investigated call centres prove that it is possible to manage the call centre more or less humanly, in a satisfactory manner.

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1.Introduction

It is possible to say that the call centre services have become one of the attributes of modern-day life. Many organisations have been establishing call centres to satisfy the increasing customers' requirements. The financial telephone services are a typical example.

But is there any general awareness of the other side of the line i.e. the call centre internal operation and of its employees? Many specifics are comprehended in the call centre world. Sophisticated IT technologies go hand in hand with the human touch of customer interaction. The need for efficiency conditioned by high telecommunication charges must be cohered with high-quality customer service. It seems to be very difficult to achieve the balance between these two needs. There is no clear proof which model of human resource management is (or should be) used to reach the compromise of quality and efficiency. There are two main models of human resource management: 'soft model of HRM' and 'hard model of HRM'. The soft model of HRM emphasises to the quality whereas the hard model of HRM tends to focus on efficiency.

A large number of researches considering this topic report hyper labour turnover and absenteeism in the call centre industry. Employee surveys indicate high job satisfaction but a high degree of job stress at the same time.

The intent of this primary research is to investigate labour turnover rate and its link to the model of human resource management. Management perception and employee perception is compared. The employee survey is developed to indicate: level of job satisfaction, main job likes and dislikes and degree of perceived job stress. Two financial call centres are investigated and both interviews with human resource managers and employee questionnaire surveys are realised.

The main aim of this paper is to evaluate the linkage between the labour turnover rate and the concept of human resource management which is applied in the financial call centres.

The research has several more objectives, as listed below:

- To find out and assess labour turnover rate in the call centres.
- To detect which model of human resource management is used in the call centres.
- To compare management and employee perception on which concept of human resource management is used.
- To evaluate the impact of call centre work on front-line employees.

This paper is divided into four broad parts that are literature review, methodology, results, conclusion and research limitations and recommendations.

The literature review enables a consideration of the necessary theoretical background. This part is structured into two main sub-chapters. Firstly, modern approach to human resource management and its link to corporate strategy are explained. The soft model of HRM and the hard model of HRM are compared to be developed in further parts of the work. Retention policy as one component of human resource management is discussed. The aim of this is to provide evidence about the existence of a close relationship between the hard model of HRM and a high labour turnover rate and vice-versa between the soft model of HRM and a low labour turnover rate.

The second sub-chapter aims to investigate the call centre industry. Specifics such as modern technologies, high intensity of work and not face-to-face customer service are described. The balancing of volume of calls (and thereby efficiency) and high-quality of service (and thereby customer satisfaction) is a leitmotiv in the literature considering human resource management in call centres. In addition, results of previous surveys are presented to compare them with the primary research. Several research questions and hypotheses are set down at the end of the literature review.

The purpose of the methodology chapter is to bridge over the theoretical background and the primary research. The choice of research strategies and methods is vindicated and a realisation of the primary research is sketched. In addition, the methods of analysis are described.

The third chapter presents the results of the primary research. Information gained from interviews is summarised and analysed. The data gained from the questionnaire survey enables statistical analysis. The outputs are illustrated by graphs and the hypotheses are statistically tested. The goal of the analysis is to answer the research questions corresponding with the research aims.

Finally, the reasons influencing the results are discussed and several improvements for the future researches are recommended in the conclusion.

2. Literature review

2.1 Human resource management

“How come when I want a pair of hands I get a human being as well.”

Henry Ford (cited by Financial Times, 2001)

2.1.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce human resource management. According to the quotation under heading the people management seems to be a specific area. Henry Ford probably wanted to tell that the manager jobs bring an additional responsibility. Particularly human resource managers should take care not only of corporate interests but as well as of employee well-being.

The effort of balance between employee welfare and the organisational interests seems to be different in each company, depending on its individual conditions and hence strategies. Thus this chapter aims to make clear the link between human resource management (HRM) and corporate strategy.

2.1.2 Definition of management

Many authors agree that management presents such large and comprehensive activity that it is not easy to find the most appropriate definition. Kubias (2002:8) prefers a classical version below which seems to be the most relevant to this work:

„The management of organisations is a process of organisation, planning, decision making, communication, motivation and control. This process aims to state and achieve the goals and objectives of organisation through the use of all available resources. “

Kubias (2002:8) emphasises the importance of human interaction and communication in all manager jobs and notes aspect of good sense and wide experience as an essence of a good manager.

2.1.3 Definition of human resources

Professor Harry Scarborough of Warwick Business School (cited by Foot and Hook, 2002:10) apprehends the ‘human resources’ as a ‘human capital’ and uses following definition:

“Human capital is the contribution of people, their skills and knowledge, in the production of goods and services“.

Heery and Noon (2001:165) observe that human resources have been viewed like one of the main production factors recently. It means that they are managed as effectively as possible alongside traditionally resources of the organisation such as capital or raw materials.

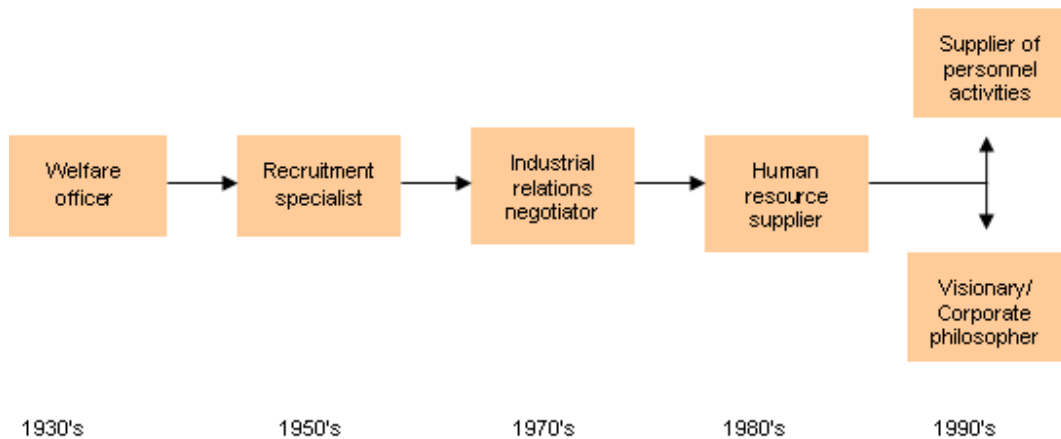
However, Beer et al. (1984) take a different view and consider the employees rather as organisational ‘*asset*’ than the production factor.

Heery and Noon (2001:165) agree that the view of the workforce as the production factor seems to be a sensitive issue. That is why some companies prefer to reflect employees as “associates, members, partners, or stakeholders”.

2.1.4 Historical background of human resource/ personnel management

Approach to the people management is not a static value, it has been moving in time according to trends and revolutions in technology, industry or society (Foot and Hook, 2002:4). Redman and Wilkinson (2006:4) notice this process like an ‘evolution’.

The following figure illustrates the development of people management:

Figure 1- Historical development of HR/ personnel management

Source: Developed by Cole (1997)

The authors point out that the first personnel activities are found in the nineteenth century in capitalist markets. It is generally known that the work conditions were fully unregulated. First individuals negotiated with employers to improve workers' well-being. World Wars paradoxically supported the development of many personnel management activities. It was crucial to manage the properly selected, highly motivated and well rewarded work force. Personnel departments started to be formed (Bratton and Gold, 1999; Cole, 1997; Foot and Hook, 2004).

During the 1960's and 1970's the rising position of trade unions was significant and industrial relations negotiation has become a further personnel activity. In the 1980's first concept of human resource management appeared and its link to corporate strategy was defined. This concept has been developed since 1990's (Bratton and Gold, 1999; Cole, 1997; Foot and Hook, 2004).

2.1.4.1 Current issues of HRM

Foot and Hook (2002:7-8) observe the employee flexibility and diversify as a current trend. The flexibility is necessary due to extremely changeable business environment (Aghazadeh,

2003). Vanhala (2005:35) notes that the changeability is caused by development of new technologies, for example. Foot and Hook (2006:7) say that these „new ways of working” require higher number of part-time employees, temporary contracts and out-sourcing.

2.1.5 Personnel management as a precursor of HRM

According to the historical view, the personnel management seems to be a precursor of HRM or in other words a lower stage in HRM evolution (Redman and Wilkinson, 2006:4).

Heery and Noon (2001:267-8) put forward these snowballing definitions of personnel management:

1. Activities used in all management jobs to manage people.
2. Group of specialists in managing people who are concentrated on the development of these activities.
3. Managing people linked to the corporate or business strategy but in contrast with human resource management rather on operational and bureaucratic level.

According to the definition above, the personnel manager realise the *activities*. Armstrong (2006:72) suggests a list of main personnel activities as follows:

- *Human resource planning*
- *Recruitment and selection*
- *Employee development*
- *Designing work and jobs*
- *Employee rewarding*
- *Employee relations*
- *Health and safety management*
- *Employee welfare*

2.1.6 Definition of human resource management

The academics debating the concept of HRM are not able to find the common definition. Heery and Noon (2001) proclaim that many definitions overlap or even contradict each other. The concept of HRM seems to be elusive (Armstrong, 2006; Foot and Hook, 2004; Heery and Noon, 2001). On the other hand, in the quanta of definitions a leitmotiv can be

found. Many authors emphasise the linkage to corporate strategy as the main feature of the modern approach to HRM (Armstrong, 2006; Foot and Hook, 2004; Heery and Noon, 2001; Redman and Wilkinson, 2006). That is why some authors prefer to use the term ‘strategic human resource management’ (Heery and Noon, 2001; Armstrong and Baron, 2002).

Redman and Wilkinson (2006:4) consider the link to the corporate strategy as the main difference between the traditional personnel management and the current human resource management.

2.1.6.1 Linkage between HRM and corporate strategy

For the purpose of this work it is necessary to describe the relationship between HRM and corporate strategy.

2.1.6.1.1 Strategy

Regarding to Foot and Hook (2006:27), this definition of strategy is used in this work:

“Strategy is a long-term plan of action for the future, answering the questions, firstly of what to do, then of how to do it, aims to create a competitive advantage”.

A new term is included in this definition of strategy which is the ‘competitive advantage’. According to Porter (1985, cited by Gunnigle and Moore 1994:64) the competitive advantage is defined:

“Competitive advantage is any factor which allows the organisation to differentiate its product or service from its competitors to increase market share”.

2.1.6.1.1.1 Strategy levels

The authors agree that the strategy is formulated and implemented at three different levels that are: corporate strategy, business strategy and functional strategy (Armstrong, 2006;

Foot and Hook, 2002:28, Gunnigle and Moore, 1994:63; Johnson et al., 2005:11). These levels have different goals as illustrated and discussed below:

Figure 2- Strategy levels



Source: Adapted from Gunnigle and Moore (1994:63)

Corporate strategy takes an overall direction and allocates in which branch the organisation or its divisions are engaged (Armstrong, 2006; Foot and Hook, 2002:28, Gunnigle and Moore, 1994:63; Johnson et al., 2005:11).

Business strategy is concerned in the particular markets. Individual strategies for each market are created and implemented (Armstrong, 2006; Foot and Hook, 2002:28, Gunnigle and Moore, 1994:63; Johnson et al., 2005:11). Gunnigle and Moore (1994:64) emphasise the need of achieving the competitive advantage at this level.

Functional strategy as the last level covers different functions within the organisation e.g. production, marketing, finance or human resource management. Strategic decisions on this level are called 'operational' (Armstrong, 2006; Foot and Hook, 2002:28, Gunnigle and Moore, 1994:63; Johnson et al., 2005:12). Gunnigle and Moore (1994) note that both strategy formulation and strategy implementation are essential on the functional level. Caulkin (2001, cited by Armstrong and Baron, 2002: xvii) concurs:

“The how of people management (doing things right) is at least as important as the what (doing the right things)”.

However, Gunnigle and Moore (1994) point out that the consistency between the formulation and the implementation is often not achieved.

2.1.6.1.1.2 Subordination of strategy levels

According to the authors (Armstrong, 2006; Foot and Hook, 2002:28, Gunnigle and Moore, 1994:63; Johnson et al., 2005:11), the levels are dependent on each other. The authors emphasise that the decisions on the lower level must be made with awareness of compatibility with the higher levels. This subordination is shown in the scheme below:

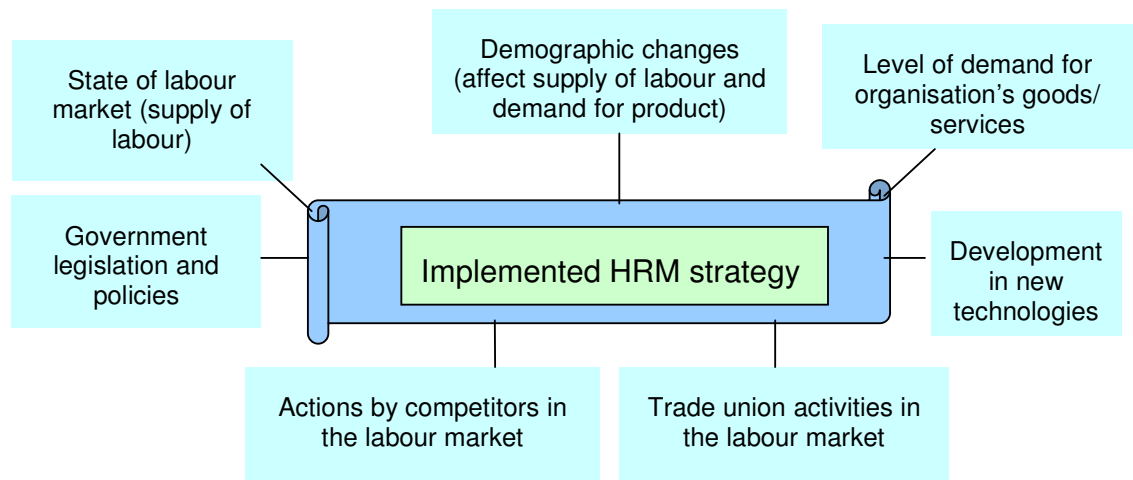
Figure 3- Subordination of strategy levels



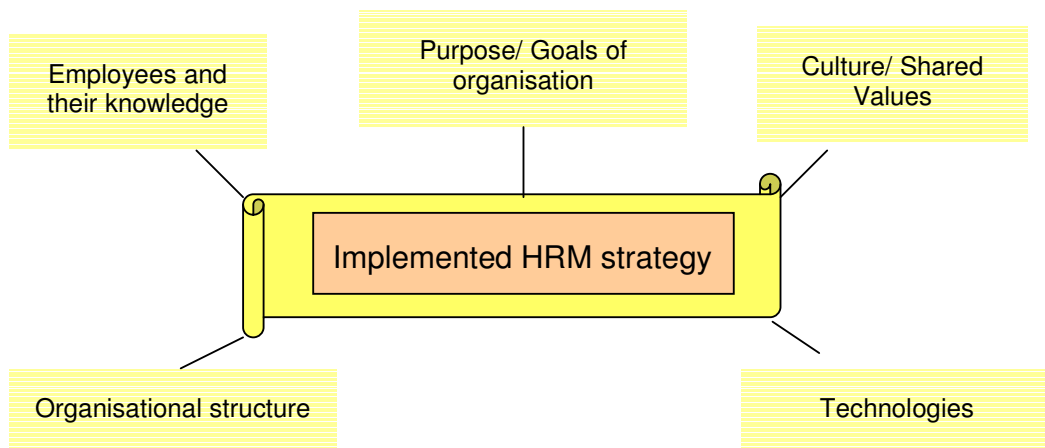
Source: Adapted from Gunnigle and Moore (1994:63)

As mentioned above, the HRM is implemented on the functional level. Thus according to this scheme the HRM strategy is subordinated to the business strategies and to the overall corporate strategy.

However, the implemented HRM strategy is influenced by many others external and internal affects, not exclusively by the corporate strategy. The schemes below illustrate firstly the external and secondly internal factors affecting the HRM strategy.

Figure 4- External factors influencing HRM strategy

Source: Developed by Cole (1998:11)

Figure 5- Internal factors influencing HRM strategy

Source: Developed by Cole (1998:30)

2.1.6.1.1.3 Achieving a competitive advantage

As defined above the strategy aims to establish a competitive advantage. Regarding to the authors (Armstrong, 2006; Gunnigle and Moore, 1994; Johnson et al., 2005; Porter, 1985, 1987) there are two basic strategies for establishing the competitive advantage:

- Cost leadership

The organisation aims to attract buyers with the lowest price in the particular market. The “no frills products” (Gunnigle and Moore, 1994:64) keep a standard level and must be cheaper than all the competitive products. Tight control, cost minimisation and economies of scale are the key factors. Organisational culture mirrors then in “frugality, discipline and attention to detail” (Gunnigle and Moore, 1994:64).

- Product differentiation

The organisation aims to succeed with a unique and high-quality product. Buyers value above the quality and thereby they are willing to pay premium price. Atmosphere in the company is more relaxed with emphasis on “innovation, individuality and risk taking” (Gunnigle and Moore, 1994:64).

The main characteristics of these reverse strategies are summarised in the following table to demonstrate how they differ from each other:

Figure 6- Strategies for achieving the competitive advantage

	<u>Cost leadership</u>	<u>Differentiation</u>
The aim	The lowest price in the market	A unique product
How to achieve	Cost cutting in production ➤ Economy of scale (quantity)	High-quality product

2.1.6.2 Models of HRM

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the linkage between human resource management and the corporate strategy. Two basic strategies for reaching the competitive advantage are described above. If the linkage exists, at least two different approaches to HRM should correspond with these strategies.

To evaluate this linkage, the authors really observe two basic concepts of human resource management: soft model of HRM and hard model of HRM (Armstrong, 2006; Armstrong and Baron, 2002; Foot and Hook, 2002; Gunnigle and Moore, 1994; Heery and Noon, 2001). These contrary models of HRM are described as follows:

- Hard model of HRM

The hard model of HRM is connected with quantity and thus with economy of scale. The workforce is maximally used to achieve the cost compression (Gunnigle and Moore, 1994:64). Employees considered as the production factor are “acquired, deployed and dispensed” (Legge, 1998 cited by Armstrong 2006). Thereby the focus on employee training, development, motivation and empowerment seems to be a little and employee well-being is not the priority (Armstrong, 2006:12; Armstrong and Baron, 2002; Foot and Hook, 2006:12; Heery and Noon, 2001:340).

- Soft model of HRM

By contrast, the soft model of HRM emphasises the human touch and the employee care. Motivation, communication and leadership seem to be the key challenges for the HR managers using this model. To dispose of high qualified workforce, the employees are well trained, developed and empowered. Thus the employees regarded as a rare asset are treasured and looked after (Armstrong, 2006:12; Armstrong and Baron, 2002; Foot and Hook, 2006:12; Heery and Noon, 2001:339).

The main features of these models are summarised in the following table to demonstrate how they differ from each other and to be developed later, in the primary research:

Figure 7- Models of HRM

	<u>Hard model of HRM</u>	<u>Soft model of HRM</u>
Employees	Regarded as a 'resource' ➤ Low developed and looked after	Regarded as an 'asset' ➤ High developed and looked after
Aim	Cost cutting through maximally use of workforce (quantity)	High quality through high qualified employees

2.1.6.2.1.1 Linkage between models of HRM and corporate strategy

Referred to the purpose of this chapter, two strategies of establishing a competitive advantage and two models of HRM were described above. However, there stays the question if these strategies and these models are *linked* to each other. If the schemes presented above are put together, the linkage will be observed:

Figure 8- Linkage between strategies for reaching a competitive advantage and models of HRM

	<u>Cost leadership</u>	<u>Differentiation</u>
The aim	The lowest price in the market	A unique product
How to achieve	Cost cutting in production ➤ Economy of scale (quantity)	High-quality product
	<u>Hard model of HRM</u>	<u>Soft model of HRM</u>
Employees	Regarded as a 'resource' ➤ Low developed and looked after	Regarded as an 'asset' ➤ High developed and looked after
Aim	Cost cutting through maximally use of workforce (quantity)	High quality through high qualified employees

This final scheme supports the connection between the models of HRM and the strategies for reaching the competitive advantage:

- It seems that the hard model of HRM is connected with the cost leadership strategy. The need of overall cost cutting probably causes the low investment in employee development and the priority of employee quantitative performance. In addition, the low investment in the employees is linked to their easy substitutability.
- It seems that the soft model of HRM is connected with the product differentiation. The unique product is achieved through high qualified, motivated and empowered workforce. As was said, the investment in employee development is high and thus the employees are rare and looked after.

On the other hand all the authors agree that rather *combination* of these models is used in practice (Legge, 1995:66-7; Armstrong, 2006:12, citing Gratton et al., 1999; Armstrong and Baron, 2002). In addition, Truss (1999, cited by Armstrong 2006:12) observes that „even if the rhetoric of HRM is soft, the reality is often hard“.

2.1.7 Summary

The aim of the first subchapter of the literature review was to investigate a relationship between the people management and the company itself or more precisely its strategy.

Most the literature considering this circumstance found a strong link between the corporate strategy and the people management. Connection with the strategy seems to be essential in the current concept of HRM.

The comparison of the strategies for establishing the competitive advantage and the models of HRM only gave a strong evidence of this connection. Moreover, the description of these two models is very relevant for the further parts of this work.

2.1.8 Labour turnover

One of human resource management responsibilities is to influence labour turnover, mainly on the operational level. Cowling and Mailer (1998:33) suggest following process of the labour turnover managing: *measurement, location of the problem, finding the reason, implementation of remedial action and feedback*.

2.1.8.1 Definition and measurement of labour turnover

Above all it is necessary to define the labour turnover. Heery and Noon (2001:199) use following definition:

“Labour turnover is an index of the number of employees who leave the organisation during a particular period, expressed as a percentage of the average number of employees during that period.”

As mentioned above the measurement is the first stage of the labour turnover controlling process. According to Cowling and Mailer (1998:30) the ‘crude labour turnover rate’ is used as the most common measure. Formula for this usually annual or quarter rate is represented on a practical example below:

„Staff turnover of clerical officers employed in a local authority

Average number employed during the year = 1000

Number who left employment during the year = 100

Turnover is $(100/1000) \times 100 = 10\%$ ”

(Cowling and Mailer, 1998:30)

Several authors point out that this method can be misleading and prefer further measures, for example “stability index” (Armstrong, 2006:377; Cowling and Mailer, 1998:30; Foot and Hook, 2002:46). However, for the purpose of this work it is sufficient to consider the basic crude labour turnover rate

The authors agree that it is very suitable to calculate the turnover rate for specific employee categories (Armstrong, 2006; Cowling and Mailer, 1998; Foot and Hook, 2002). Foot and Hook (2002:47) add that the employees should be fragmented according to their job positions or their personal characteristics such as age, gender or marital status. Foot and Hook (2006:46) see that this segmentation can highlight the reason for the fluctuation.

2.1.8.2 Reasons for labour turnover

2.1.8.2.1 Location of the reason

The detection of the reason seems to be a crucial issue. Cowling and Mailer (1998:33) observe that employees leaving the organisation are usually not willing to communicate their motives because they may not want to upset people around or they are afraid to place in jeopardy the references needed for the next employer. Armstrong (2006:380-381)

concur that the 'exit interviews' can be problematical. Armstrong (2006:381) and Cowling and Mailer (1998:34) accord that the 'attitude surveys' asking the current staff about their job pleasures and displeasures may be more appropriate way how to find the reason for labour turnover. Cowling and Mailer (1998:34) call the employee attitude surveys as a "positive way".

2.1.8.2.2 Inside and outside reasons

Sutherland (2001) distinguishes between „organisational” and „environmental” factors influencing the labour turnover rate.

Traditionally factors situated inside company are associated with job description, work conditions, rewards or prospects of promotion (Sutherland, 2001:713). Armstrong (2006:380) adds relationships with leaders and colleagues. Next variables from the internal dimension are psychological factors such as: „job involvement, positive or negative affectivity of the job and job satisfaction” (Sutherland, 2001:713). And Armstrong (2006:380) finishes with personal issues such as “pregnancy, illness or moving”.

Foot and Hook (2002:47) represent some typical internal causes and remedies associated with high labour turnover in the table below:

Figure 9- Causes of labour turnover and the remedies

<u>Cause</u>	<u>Remedy</u>
Poor handling of new recruits	Design and implement induction process
Unfavourable salary/ terms and conditions of employment	Revise reward strategies
Job dissatisfaction	Improved job design
Low morale	Organisational culture change Employee involvement Attitude surveys
Recruits not equipped for work demands	Improve recruitment and selection practices Improve training

Further dimension which influences the labour turnover rate are environmental, in other words external, variables. External factors are associated with labour economics e.g. with unemployment rate. The quit decision can be affected by number of alternative employers in the region and their work conditions or by their skill's requirements to the job searchers (Sutherland, 2001:713).

2.1.8.2.3 Summary

According what was mentioned, the HR managers should monitor the internal as well as the external determinants. The internal variables ought to be realised from employee attitude surveys. Convenient remedies should be implemented if needed. Feedback seems to be an essential part of the labour turnover controlling process.

Although the organisation may not influence the outside factors it seems to be possible to follow up these external trends and answer to them with an appropriate adaptation of the inside conditions.

2.1.8.3 Impact of labour turnover

Lashley (2001:122) comments an adverse impact of labour turnover on achieving of the organisational goals. Armstrong (2006:381) accents the turnover as “costly”; it causes leaving costs and increases recruitment and training costs. Lashley (2001:122) notes that the rotation of individuals may discourage customers and decrease employee moral. In addition, if the company foresees early quitting, the willingness to employee training and development will be low (Lashley, 2001:122).

Cowling and Mailer (1998:32) agree and add that the fall of employee moral will decrease work efficiency and on the contrary increase absenteeism. Lashley (2001:121) calls the labour turnover like a “barrier to the creation of employee commitment”.

Lashley (2001:122) summarises that the labour turnover represents an indication as well as a reason for employee dissatisfaction and should be reduced. Armstrong (2006:376, citing

CIDP, 2000) shares the negative essence of high labour turnover but on the other hand refer that a certain level of employee rotation is normal and moreover healthy characteristic of each organisation.

2.1.8.4 Summary

With regard to what was said, too excess high labour turnover rate seems to be a negative feature needed to be suppressed. It causes higher costs, lower efficiency, absenteeism and poor morale within the organisation. Too quick fluctuation may bring down company's appeal for customers and job searchers with the appropriate skills.

The manager attitude to labour turnover probably depend on the branch in which company makes business, type of production as well as on the macro environment.

The effort of staff retention seems to be more pressing in highly specialised branches and/or by employees with special skills. On the other hand in the branches or positions where is not so difficult to recruit the suitable candidates and the training costs are not so high, there the turnover minimisation seems to be less important (Wallace et al., 2000).

Wallace et al. (2000) consecrate that the negative impact of staff rotation on customers is more significant in branches where a regular interaction between employees and clients is, it means in services. Beyond lots of modern services via telephone or Internet not call for any visual human touch and thereby for the stable worker.

If the theories of HRM models and of the retention policy are drown together, again the relationship can be observed.

- Soft model of HRM seems to be connected with low labour turnover rate. The low labour turnover is a characteristic of the soft model of HRM and at the same time this soft model *aims* to decrease the labour turnover rate.

- Hard HRM seems to be connected with high labour turnover rate. The hard model of HRM tends to the quick rotation of employees and thus it can be used when more carefree retention policy is implemented.

2.2 Call centre industry

2.2.1 Introduction

The second part of the literature review is focused on the call centre industry and aims to implement the theory of human resource management into the call centre business.

The call centre services have become a common activity of modern-day life. Customers require quickly access to information, in ideal case “at any time, from anywhere, in any form and for free” (Anton et al., 1999; Feinberg et al., 2005). Recently, managers of most organisations have started to view the call centres as a vital part of their businesses. The attitude to the call centres has changed; the previous ‘cost centre’ is usually considered as a ‘profit centre’ at the present time (Anton et al., 1999). According D’Ausilio (2005) the call centres are operating in many branches. The financial call centres that are developed in the primary research of this work are one of the most common examples.

The number of call centres employees has been constantly growing in last decades (Anton et al., 1999; D’Ausilio, 2005; Deery and Kinnie, 2004; Feinberg et al., 2005). With reference to Income Data Services (2001), the call centres occupy 2 per cent of workforce in the United Kingdom and 1 per cent in the EU.

In addition, the call centre industry has been extensively studied in recent years but the authors can find the common attitude. They present the call centres as a unique world with many specifics.

2.2.2 Definition of call centres

It is possible to define the call centre in the view of its physical form but the definitions included its function seem to be more relevant to this work.

Jack et al. (2006:477) use this suitable definition:

„A call centre is a voice operations centre that interfaces with customer in a variety of ways from customer support, billing, provisioning, directory assistance, to technical support.“

2.2.3 Call centre as an efficient instrument of customer service

The authors discuss the reason for the widespread establishment of the call centres. Dawson (1997, cited by D'Ausilio 2005:6) emphasises that „the primary function of call centre is to create and keep customers“. Also many other authors agree that the benefit from customer loyalty and retention is the primary aim of each one call centre (Anton et al., 1999; D'Ausilio, 2005; Feinberg et al., 2005).

By contrast, Deery and Kinnie (2004) speculate that the organisations mainly aim to reduce costs through replacement of expensive branch stores by cheaper technologies used in the call centres.

2.2.4 Balancing the efficiency and the quality in service work

As mentioned above, the reason for the call centre establishment may be debatable but all the authors agree that the effort to achieve trade-off between cost minimisation and high-quality customer service has become an essential management challenge in every one call centre (Anton et al., 1999; D'Ausilio, 2005; Deery and Kinnie, 2004; Jack et. al, 2006; Korczynski, 2002 and Wallace et al., 2000). By the word 'trade-off' the authors express that the effectiveness (cost minimisation) and the quality are antagonistic.

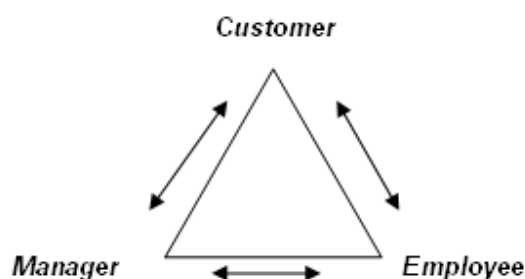
Actually, Korczynski (2002) observes the conflict of the efficiency and the high-quality customer service in all the services, not exclusively in the call centre industry.

Korczynski (2002) regards two totally contradictory attitudes to the preferences of quality or efficiency in the service industry. He distinguishes between ‘new service management school’ represented by HRM academics in opposition on many supporters of ‘critical perspectives’.

2.2.4.1 New service management school

New service management school is based on customer entrance into the direct interaction with front-line employees. The authors observe a new “three way relationship” (see Figure 10) in which the triangle’s sides are represented by management, employees and customers (Whyte, 1946:123 cited by Korczynski, 2002:2).

Figure 10- Three way service relationship



According to Korczynski (2002:3), the approach of new service management school is embodied in persuasion that “the three way relationship is a win-win-win one”.

Firstly, the employee satisfaction is achieved through “new ways of working” adopting following activities: *“careful selection; high-quality training; well-designed support IT systems; empowerment; teamwork; appropriate measurement, rewards and recognition; and the development of a service culture”* (Korczynski, 2002:21). According to the theory mentioned above, these activities represent the soft model of HRM.

Secondly, the customers are delighted via high-quality service provided by the satisfied employees (Schneider and Bowen, 1995 cited by Korczynski 2002:3).

2.2.4.1.1 Satisfaction mirror

In addition, the worker-customer interaction seems to be bilateral. The concept of the “customer satisfaction-workforce satisfaction mirror” has been accepted by many authors (Zemke and Schaaf, 1989; Barbee and Bott, 1991; Schneider and Bowen, 1993; Zeithaml und Bitner, 1996 all cited by Korczynski 2002; Heskett et al., 1997). The term ‘mirror’ illustrates the double-faced principle. Regarding to Korczynski (2002:20) only the satisfied employees are able to provide a high-quality customer service and vice versa the satisfied customers give a reason to improve this service. The mirror idea can be illustrated by this scheme:

Figure 11- Satisfaction mirror



Source: Adapted from Heskett et al. (1997:113)

Finally, from the view of management, the company wins with the loyal and coming back customers who create the profit (Korczynski, 2002:3).

2.2.4.1.2 Summary

In the context with HRM models, the approach of new service management school is built on the concept of the soft model of HRM. Employees are well trained, developed, motivated and empowered to provide the high-quality service.

2.2.4.2 Critical perspectives

The authors of the critical perspectives take a wholly different view. According to Lashley (2001), the cost minimisation seems to be essential in modern services. The cost cutting leads to “*low levels of training, sloppy recruitment, poor induction and remarkably high levels of staff turnover*” in the customer services (Lashley, 2001:212). Referred to Wood (1992, cited by Lashley 2001:221), the part time contracts or “ready acceptance” of high labour turnover rate are often adopted in the service industry.

Critical perspectives accord that the striving for efficiency may be significantly dangerous for the employees (Korczynski, 2002:3). Ritzer (1996) points out high level of routinisation in the service jobs. He goes so far to claim that this routinisation has caused degradation of the service front-line workers to “human robots” (Ritzer, 1998:60).

2.2.4.2.1 Summary

To sum up the point of view of the critical authors, they proclaim that the hard model of HRM dominates in the service industry. According to the critical perspectives the push to cost cutting seems to be essential in the customer service. In addition, the critics highlight the quick rotation of the service workers.

2.2.4.2.2 Specific of the call centre industry

As described above, the hard model of HRM seems to be connected with the strategy of cost leadership. However, for the purpose of this work it seems to be necessary to point out a specific of the call centre industry. Since all the call centre services are free of charge or the service price is fixed according to the tariffs of telecommunication operators the cost leadership strategy may be not relevant to the call centre business. The cost leadership seems to be modified to the pure cost minimisation in this industry. The reasons for the importance of cost cutting in the call centres are discussed in the following subchapter.

2.2.5 The nature of front-line call centre work

Korczynski (2002:90) reports that the contrary approaches to the service work diverge even more in the literature considering the call centres. The need of efficiency is emphasised by the “consuming of one critical resource- time” (Anton et al., 1999:23).

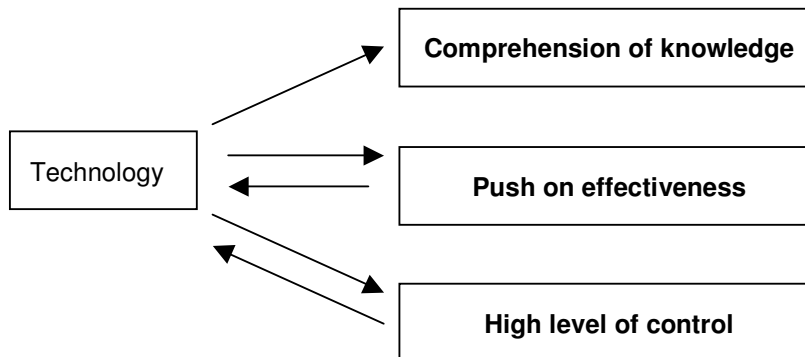
In parallel to the new service management school the management writers provide “saccharine analysis” illustrated by “harmonious picture” reflecting the customer orientation linked with the employee care in the call centres (Korczynski, 2002:91).

In contrast, the critics go so far as to label the call centres as “electronic sweatshops” (Garson, 1998 cited by Deery and Kinnie 2004:3), “assembly lines in the head” (Taylor and Bain, 1999 cited by Deery and Kinnie, 2004:3) as far as to “bright satanic offices” (Baldry et al., 1998 cited by Korczynski, 2002). These critical authors explain that the call centre specifics *drive* the management to the cost cutting and the performance orientation (Callaghan and Thompson, 2000; Mulholland, 2000 and Rose, 2000 all cited by Korczynski 2002).

On the other hand, Korczynski (2002) finds both these approaches one-sided and observe that rather their combination is usually applied in the modern call centres.

2.2.5.1 Technology

The technology acts an essential role in the call centre industry. The technology *requires* and at the same time *enables* the efficiency, high comprehension of knowledge and high level of control, as the following figure illustrates:

Figure 12- Affect of call centre technology

2.2.5.1.1 Push on effectiveness

Regarding to Korczynski (2002:93-94), the implementation of advanced IT technologies and thereby emphasis on the speed of service has influenced everyday run of the call centre. Mizzo and Ramirez (2003 cited by Deery and Kinnie, 2004:6) note a duplex role of the technology. The technologies enable quick flow of the calls but they require the speed of the service at the same time (Anton et al., 1999). The authors explain that the necessity of the speed is given by phenomenal losses following from the possible slack times (Anton et al., 1999; Mizzo and Ramirez, 2003 cited by Deery and Kinnie, 2004:6).

With reference to Korczynski (2002:94) the need of the quick calls' attention leads to "high intensity of labour". The high intensity of labour is achieved through the modern technologies enabling e.g. automatic routing of calls which means that the operator is given by the next call in the shortest possible time (Wickham and Collins, 2004:3)

On the other hand, the service quality should be substantial in the call centres too. According to Fernie and Metcalf (1997, cited by Korczynski 2002), the quality of customer service seems to be decreased by the emphasis on the time efficiency. However, D'Ausilio (2005:69) encloses that also the customers often push to be served in the shortest possible time.

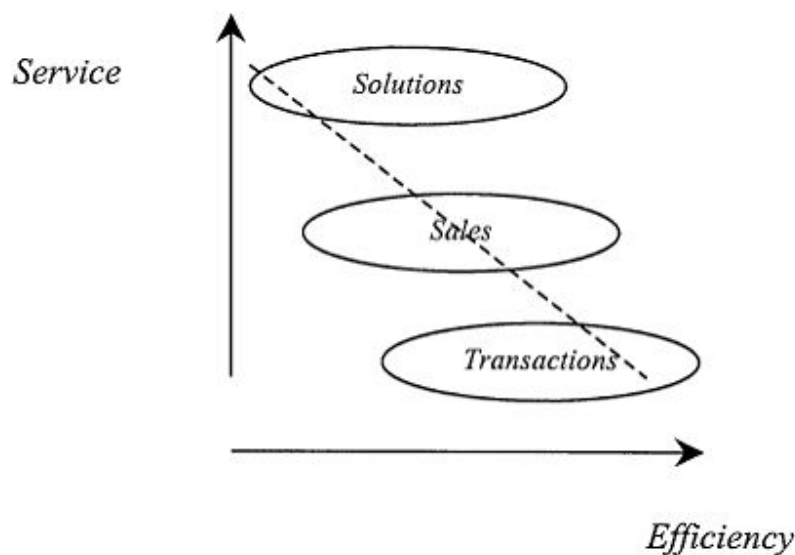
2.2.5.1.1.1 Dependence of the need of efficiency on particular job positions

Referred to Wallace et al. (2000), the quantitative or qualitative priority is different according to the particular call centre position. Wallace et al. (2000) distinguish three main call centre positions:

- **Transaction jobs (in-bound calls)**. The customers call the line to make some routine transaction (e.g. to pay a bill).
- **Sales jobs (out-bound calls)**. The agents are calling the customers to offer them some product (e.g. credit card)
- **Solutions jobs (helpdesk; in-bound calls)**. The customers call the helpdesk if they are in some technical trouble with the goods or services (e.g. with Internet banking).

As the following figure shows, the transactions jobs are highly focused on the efficiency at the expense of quality, the sales jobs require a compromise and the need of quality dominates in the solutions jobs (Wallace et al., 2000:181).

Figure 13- Dependence of the quantitative/ qualitative priority on particular job position



Source: Developed by Wallace et al. (2000:181)

2.2.5.1.2 Comprehension of knowledge

High comprehension of knowledge in the IT systems supports the implementation of the hard model of HRM too. Much lower claims on employee knowledge skills decrease the recruitment claims and the training costs (Wallace et al., 2000:181).

2.2.5.1.3 Control

Agents-callers interactions are by help of technology systematically monitored and thereby the performance control as well as the quality control can be absolute (Deery and Kinnie, 2004; Wallace et al., 2000; Wickham and Collins, 2004). Taylor and Bain (1999) cited by Deery and Kinnie (2004) add that the control of quality often means the correspondence with communication scripts and instructions.

Heery and Noon (2001) use the term “panopticon control” in the case when supervisors are able to observe the staff performance at any time and without workers’ awareness. If the employees are not alerted when they are observed, the impact is the same as the constantly monitoring would have. In addition to this theory the recording of calls in the call centres shifts the panopticon control to a higher level because really all the conversations are captured (Korczynski, 2002:93; Wickham and Collins, 2004). Wickham and Collins (2004:4) call this way of control as “the all-hearing central ear” and many authors find this kind of control very stressful for the operators (Wickham and Collins, 2004; Deery and Kinnie, 2004; Taylor and Bain’s, 1999:115 cited by Korczynski, 2002:91).

On the other hand the taping of calls can help “as part of training or also protection against abusive customers” (Wickham and Collins, 2004).

Wickham and Collins (2004) note that the supervisors’ listening of records is time demanding and hence the technologies are often used to provide statistics about efficiency, call length or ‘wrap time’ of particular employees. The ‘wrap time’ is considered as the time after call needed for the necessary administration connected with the call (e.g. setting information to the IT system).

2.2.5.2 Emotional labour in call centres

The unique call centre atmosphere is caused not only by the technologies discussed above but also by emotional labour that is required. It seems that the customers are calling not only to pay the bill, for instance, but to be delighted too. It is possible to say that the call centre services are something like theatre where an operator and a customer act the main roles. The only aim of this is to satisfy the customer.

2.2.5.2.1 *Social skills*

Many authors point out that the most crucial recruitment claims are not technical but social skills (Hochschild, 1983 cited by Deery and Kinnie 2004; MacDonald and Sirianni, 1996; Wickham and Collins, 2004; Wallace et al., 2000). Management looks for “an ability to interact with the customer” (Wickham and Collins, 2004 citing Servemploi, 2002:68) or “ability to ‘smile down the phone’” (Marshall and Richardson, 1996 cited by Wickham and Collins, 2004). Frenkel et al. (1998:963 cited by Deery and Kinnie, 2004:8) list “the ability to remain calm under pressure... having a friendly, positive and tactful attitude... active listening... [and] being patient and emphatic... particularly when customers are upset”.

In summary the call centre management aims to recruit people with developed emotional labour skills (Deery and Kinnie, 2004:9 and Wickham and Collins, 2004:4). The technical and knowledge skills have been replaced to the IT systems, as explained above.

2.2.5.2.1.1 Female nature of call centre work

Several authors speculate that women are better predestined to the call centre work since they are familiar with looking after people, are used to being patient and have better ability of empathy (Belt et al., 2002:28 and Wickham and Collins, 2004:4). Actually, the high percentage of female agents is a typical feature of the call centres (Wickham and Collins, 2004).

2.2.5.2.2 *Emotions in customer-agent interaction*

Authors emphasise the work with emotions is crucial in the call centre jobs. They demonstrate the fake expression of emotions during the interaction with customers (Deery and Kinnie, 2004:9; Lashley, 2001:181-182). The agent has to act feelings such “as being friendly or happy” and to keep down negative emotions “such as anger or frustration” (Deery and Kinnie, 2004:9).

In addition Leidner (1993:37 cited by Deery and Kinnie, 2004:6) observes “transforming workers’ characters and personalities” in the call centres. The mantra ‘first and foremost customer’ is often the headstone of the organisational culture (Deery and Kinnie, 2004:6).

Critical authors supported by literature considering psychology agree that this unnatural behaviour can cause mental problems (Deery and Kinnie, 2004; Kirby, 2006; Lashley, 2001; Wallace et al., 2000). The fake expression of emotions and the repression of own personality can lead to emotional dissonance and feeling of in authenticity. These can caused seriously mental troubles such as anxiety or burnout (Deery and Kinnie, 2004:9, Wharton, 1993 cited by Deery and Kinnie, 2004:10). Lashley (2001:182) calls the harm of the service work as ‘Have a nice day syndrome’.

Although managers aim to achieve customer gladness, this kind of communication may have a contrary effect. The survey in Guardian (1997, cited by Deery and Kinnie, 2004:11) indicates that mainly reason for customer irritation was the “insincere tone of voice from the person handling the query”. In this context Ashkansy and Daus (2002:79 cited by Deery and Kinnie, 2004:11) mention the term ‘emotional contagion’ what means that the mood of the agents is transferred to the customers. According to this, management taking care of employee mentally well-being is on the right way to have satisfied customers (Schneider and Bowen, 1993 cited by Deery and Kinnie, 2004).

2.2.5.2.3 *Different impact of emotional work according to employees' characteristics*

According to Deery and Kinnie (2004), not all the individuals respond to the stressful and emotional exhausting nature of call centre work to the same degree.

2.2.5.2.3.1 Females

Authors agree that women are more threatened because they are, or at least they are expected, to be more emphatic and patient than men (Deery and Kinnie 2004:10 citing Hochschild 1983; MacDonald and Sirianni, 1996). Deery and Kinnie (2004:10) add that the women often continue with “the second shift of emotional work at home “.

2.2.5.2.3.2 Particular job positions

Referred to the authors (Deery et al., 2002 cited by Deery and Kinnie 2004; Wallace et al., 2000; Wickham and Collins, 2004:6), the level of job stress is linked to the specified job positions, too.

As discussed above the need of efficiency differs according to the particular job positions. In addition, the authors observe a relationship between these positions and the employee mentally well-being:

- **Transaction jobs (in-bound calls)**. The conversations are strictly scripted and thus there is little space to creativity. This stereotype leads to fatigue and boredom (Morris and Feldman, 1996 cited by Deery and Kinnie, 2004:10).
- **Sales jobs (out-bound calls)**. More varied and therefore less mentally exhausting are the sales jobs. More flexible interaction is required; the main aim is to lead the customer to buy the product (Wallace et al., 2000:181).
- **Solutions jobs (helpdesk)**. The helpdesk's positions offer the highest independence from the conversational scripts. The only aim is to help the customer (Wallace et al., 2000:181).

Having summarised, the linkage between the job stress and the pressure on efficiency is observed. The qualitative orientated skills e.g. sales and helpdesk require higher degree of creativity and thereby seem to be less mentally exhausting.

2.2.6 Employee responses to the call centre work

It seems to be obvious that the unique of call centre work discussed above lead to certain responses of the front-line employees. For the purpose of this work it seems to be advantageous to meet the results of several previous employee surveys realised in the call centres to compare them with the results of the primary research of this project.

2.2.6.1 Job satisfaction

The employee surveys maybe surprisingly indicate rather high level of job satisfaction. According to research of Korczynski (2002:95), 73 per cent of respondents mentioned some degree of the job satisfaction. The surveys referred that the social interaction with peers and with delighted customers are the key reasons for employee satisfaction (Frenkel et al., 1999 cited by Deery and Kinnie, 2004: 12; Korczynski, 2002:94; Wallace et al., 2000:177).

However, the customer interaction seems to be two-edged issue. In contrast to the pleasant clients there are abusive customers causing employee pain and stress (Korczynski, 2002:95).

2.2.6.2 Job stress

Although the employees perceive high job satisfaction, they admitted to high degree of job stress at the same time. Regarding to the survey of Korczynski (2002: 95), 69 per cent of respondents indicated some degree of job stress. ACA Research (1998 cited by Wallace et al., 2000:178) discovered that 70 per cent of respondents indicated at least one stress symptom. In addition, 60 per cent of these respondents had not indicated any stress

symptom prior they started to work in the call centre. In other words 60 per cent of them directly linked the stress symptoms 'occurrence to the call centre job.

The stress symptoms seem to be very various. The examples are: physical disorders such as headache or cardiac problems; psychosomatic disorders such as tiredness and lack of energy, sleeplessness or problems with food intake and finally mental disorders such as problems with communication, anxiety, fragmentariness or irritation (Foot and Hook, 2002:300; Kubias, 2002:78-79).

2.2.6.3 Labour turnover

High level of labour turnover has been widely observed in the call centre industry. Deery and Kinnie (2004:12, citing Call Centres, 2002) present results of survey in British call centre industry; the average annual turnover rate in the year 2002 was more than 30 per cent. Wallace et al. (2000:178) cover that the call centre agents stay in average 18 months in the job. ACA Report (1998, cited by Wallace et al. 2000:178) mention even lower median, only 15 months. For primary research of this work it is very important to mention that the highest labour turnover rates have been observed in the financial services (Call Centres, 2002:34-5 cited by Deery and Kinnie 2004:12; D'Ausilio, 2005:19-20).

According to Deery and Kinnie (2004:12) the main reason for employee withdrawal is the "exit" from ugly work conditions. D'Ausilio (2005:20) indicates the high level of job stress as the primary reason for the labour turnover. Kirby (2006) agree that stress and boredom are the main labour turnover promoters.

2.2.7 Call centre managing

As discussed above, the call centre management is challenged by the need of balance between the operating efficiency and the high-quality customer service. Regarding to the discussed approach of new service management school and the critical perspectives there

are found two basic concepts of human resource management in the call centres. The following table summarises the main features of these contrary concepts:

Figure 14- Models of HRM applied in call centres

<u>Soft HRM (new service management school)</u>	<u>Hard HRM (critical perspectives)</u>
High minimal job requirements	Low minimal job requirements
Careful recruitment	Sloppy recruitment
High-quality training	Low level of training
High level of next employee development	Low level of next employee development
Empowerment	Employees are not interested in the organisational aims
Team work	Individual work
Appropriate rewards and recognition	Poor rewards and recognition
High development of service culture	Low development of service culture
Careful retention policy	Carefree retention policy
Low labour turnover rate	High labour turnover rate

Wickham and Collins (2004:6) suggest similar models that are called “qualitative” and “quantitative”. The main characteristics are summarised in the table below:

Figure 15- Qualitative versus quantitative call centres

<u><i>Quantity call centre</i></u>	<u><i>Quality call centre</i></u>
Simple customer interaction	Complex customer interaction
Routinisation	Individualisation/ customisation
Targets hard	Targets soft
Strict script adherence	Flexible or no scripts
Tight call handling times	Relaxed call handling times
Tight 'wrap-up' times	Customer satisfaction a priority
High percentage of time on phone/ ready	Possibility of off-phone task completion
Statistics driven	Statistics modified by quality criteria
Volume	Value

Source: Wickham and Collins (2004:6)

Regarding to these two tables, the hard model of HRM seems to correspond with the quantitative model and vice-versa the soft model of HRM seems to correspond with qualitative model.

Wallace et al. (2007) take interest in a special kind of call centre HRM strategy called ‘sacrificial strategy’. He characterises this strategy as an extremely ‘hard’ one. The employees are maximally used and their quick rotation is supported.

However, many authors disagree with these black and white view and they find that the compromise model is usually applied in the modern call centres. They observe that the reality is situated somewhere between the hard and the soft model of HRM (Arzbacher et al., 2000; Knights et al., 1999 and URCOT, 2000 all cited by Korczynski 2000;

Korczynski, 2000; Mulholland, 2002 cited by Deery and Kinnie 2004; Wickham and Collins, 2004)

Finally, Wallace et al. (2000:176) detected an interesting circumstance in their research. They observed a clash between “espoused and perceived objectives”. Although customer satisfaction was formally written as the pivotal objective in the investigated call centres, more than 90 per cent of front-line employees perceived the “high call efficiency” as the real priority of management.

2.3 Conclusion

In conclusion, the literature review has been engaged in several areas: firstly in human resource management from the view of corporate strategy; secondly in definition of labour turnover and in retention policies and finally in induction of these theories into the call centre industry.

Firstly the HRM models and their links to the corporate strategy were discussed. It was demonstrated that the hard model of HRM seems to correspond with the cost leadership strategy and the soft HRM seems to correspond with the product diversification. The retention policy was considered as a part of these models. The hard model of HRM seems to be connected with the high labour turnover rate whereas the soft model of HRM seems to be connected with the low labour turnover rate.

The nature of call centre work was described in the second part. There were covered many specifics of the call centre industry. In summary, all the authors considered the effort to achieve the trade-off between cost minimisation and high-quality customer service as the main challenge of the call centre management.

However, the authors were not able to accord on which side of the equilibrium the modern call centres are usually found. There were two writers’ groups; first one proclaimed the soft model of HRM used to achieve high-quality customer service whereas the second one gave a strong evidence of the hard model’s application. The critical authors demonstrated that

the specifics of the call centre industry logically drove to the cost minimisation and hence to the implementation of the hard model of HRM. In addition, many other authors observed that the halfway model was usually used in the modern call centres.

Also the corresponding researches were not able to give clear evidence; they referred to high level of job satisfaction but to the high degree of perceived job stress at the same time. High intensity of labour, strict measurement and routine were discussed as the dark-sides of call centre work. Contrary the social interaction with customers and peers were discovered as the main job pleasures.

For the purpose of this work it seems to be very important that the high labour turnover rates were widely observed in the call centre industry; the researches referred to the crude labour turnover rate around 30 per cent. This fact may support the view of critical authors. It can be supposed that if the employees were really satisfied, they would not leave so quickly.

The substantial divergence of views in published academically literature and the ambiguous results of related surveys seem to offer a great challenge to further investigation in this area.

2.4 Research questions and hypotheses

Having considered the findings from the literature review, several research questions and hypotheses were set down to be investigated in the primary research. The research questions were usually answered in the interviews and the hypotheses were covered by help of questionnaire employee survey.

Question 1

How is crude labour turnover rate in the investigated call centres?

It is assumed that the labour turnover is high.

Question 2

Which model of HRM is applied in the investigated call centres?

It is assumed that the hard model of HRM with emphasise on quantity is used.

Question 3

Does the applied model of HRM influence the labour turnover rate?

It is assumed that the used model influences the labour turnover rate. Two alternatives are covered:

- There is applied soft model of HRM and the labour turnover rate is low.
- There is applied hard model of HRM and the labour turnover is high.

Question 4

Are the call centre jobs highly stressful and mentally exhausting?

It is assumed that the call centre jobs are highly stressful and mentally exhausting.

Hypothesis 1

H0: The level of employee satisfaction is low.

H1: The level of employee satisfaction is high.

Hypothesis 2

H0: Employees most job pleasure is not the interaction with peers and customers.

H1: Employees most job pleasure is the interaction with peers and customers.

Hypothesis 3

H0: Employees most job displeasures are not high intensity of labour, angry customers and job stereotype.

H1: Employees most job displeasures are high intensity of labour, angry customers and job stereotype.

Hypothesis 4

H0: Employees do not perceive high degree of job stress.

H1: Employees perceive high degree of job stress.

Hypothesis 5

H0: There is a relationship between the degree of perceived job stress and the overall job satisfaction.

H1: There is a relationship between the degree of perceived job stress and the overall job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 6

H0: The level of perceived job stress does not depend on the job position.

H1: The level of perceived job stress depends on the job position.

Hypothesis 7

H0: The degree of job stress does not depend on gender.

H1: The degree of job stress depends on gender.

Hypothesis 8

H0: There is no gap between espoused and perceived priorities.

H1: There is a gap between espoused and perceived priorities.

3. Methodology

“The wheel of learning consists of question, theory, test and reflection.”

Handy (1989) cited by Remenyi et al. (1998)

3.1 Introduction

The methodology chapter was design to bridge over the theoretical part of this work and the primary research.

This chapter aims to describe the research design structured as follows:

- Research approach
- Research strategy
- Sampling strategy
- Methods of data collection
- Analysis of data

The methodology also argues several general principles that should be considered in any research that are: *research validity*, *reliability*, *practicality* and *ethics*. Finally the *research limitations* are discussed.

3.2 Research approach

According to Aaker et al. (2001) it is necessary to reflect the general research approach as the initiatory stage of the research process because the chosen approach determinates the further stages. There are found several contrast couples of the approaches.

Firstly the authors distinguish between *qualitative* and *quantitative* approach. The quantitative one is focused on the collection of numerical data (Oliver, 1997). Blaxter et al. (1996:60) note that the aim of the quantitative approach is to “gather the facts”. They add that the quantitative approach is usually used to ask the large number of respondents.

Contrary the data in the form of spoken words and smaller number of respondents are the main characteristics of the qualitative approach (Blaxter et al., 1996; Oliver, 1997; Robson, 2002). Citing Blaxter et al. (1996:60) the qualitative approach aims “to achieve ‘depth’ rather than ‘breadth’”. They add that the qualitative approach enables to gain some new information.

Secondly the authors differentiate between *deductive* and *inductive* approach. They agree that the deductive approach is built on “testing” of existing theories whereas the inductive approach is used to develop a new theory (Bryman, 1988a; Robson, 2002).

According to Bryman (1998a), it is possible to observe connection between these twice:

- **Quantitative approach ↔ Deductive approach**
- **Qualitative approach ↔ Inductive approach**

3.2.1 The research approach of this research

All the approaches mentioned above were used in this research. Employee questionnaire survey presented the quantitative (deductive) approach. The interviews with HR managers and a psychologist corresponded with the qualitative (inductive) approach.

3.3 Research strategy

Although the number of research strategies and tactics is broad (Remenyi et al., 1998), three basic strategies are usually found: *experiment*, *case study* and *survey* (Blaxter et al., 1996; Denscombe, 1998; Robson, 1993). Regarding to Remenyi et al. (1998), having considered the research approach, the research questions and some further aspects (e.g. the practicality or the researcher’s skills) the most appropriate strategy is chosen.

Referred to Robson (1993) and Blaxter et al. (1996), it is convenient to use more than one strategy within one research to increase the research value.

3.3.1 Case study

The case study is realised to gain detailed information on the particular case. It focuses on one or on a small number of instances. This strategy aims to get rather qualitative data (Blaxter et al., 1996; Oliver, 1997; Remenyi et al., 1998). Citing Yin (1989, cited by Remeneyi et al., 1998:50) the case study “investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real context”. In the case of this research the high labour turnover rate in the call centre industry can be considered as the ‘contemporary theoretical phenomenon’.

According to Denscombe (1998) and Oliver (1997) the case study enables to gain the complex and reliable data. On the other hand, the “credibility of generalisation” is questionable (Denscombe, 1998:40). However, Denscombe (1998) demonstrates that if the case is typical to the others of the same area the generalisation will be possible.

3.3.1.1 The case study in this research

For the purpose of this research the banking call centres in the Czech Republic were asked to join this project. However, only two from eight addressed organisations were willing to participate in it. Obviously, this number tends to the case study.

The authors agree that just the willingness of organisations to ventilate the internal information is the crucial issue (Oliver, 1997; Sekaran, 2003). Although the research may be beneficial for the company too, the management reactions are often refusing (Sekaran, 2003).

3.3.2 Survey strategy

In contrast to the case study the survey is appropriate to gain a large amount of quantitative data. The commonest form is the questionnaire survey (Oppenheim, 1966 cited by Remenyi et al., 1998).

3.3.2.1 Survey in this research

The questionnaire survey among the call centre front-line employees was realised to gain the quantitative data and to gain the employee point of view on the issues.

3.4 Sampling strategy

According to Robson (2002), the sampling strategy is an important point because it is in close connection with the research reliability.

Remenyi et al. (1998:192) defines the sample as “a set of individuals that provide the information”. The sample should create a model of population ideally without any proportional difference. If there is the convenient proportionality, the generalisation is allowed (Remenyi et al., 1998; Robson, 2002). In the statistical point of view, the population means a comprehensive list of all the individuals in which the research is engaged.

In the frame of this work all the financial call centres (including all their employees) in the Czech Republic created the population. Obviously, it was not possible to cover up all of them. Thus was necessary to establish the sample, by help of the most suitable sampling technique. There is indicated a large number of the sampling techniques but it seems to be not relevant to mention all of them in this paper.

3.4.1 Sampling techniques used in this research

In this project the choice of sampling techniques was highly limited by the financial and the time capabilities of the author. Moreover, the biggest limitation was the call centres' reluctance against disclosing information.

Having considered all these aspects, the judgement sampling in combination with the convenience sampling were used to choose the investigated call centres.

Another sampling strategy was used for the employee survey. There was used the simple random sampling because all the employees had the equal possibility to complete the questionnaire. This strategy guaranties relatively high level of reliability (Blaxter et al., 1996; Denscombe, 1998; Remenyi et al., 1998; Robson, 2002; Sekaran, 2003).

Sekaran (1992:253) suggests the sample size between 30 and 500 to be relevant for most surveys. The total numbers of respondents was 76 in the call centre A and 79 in the call centre B.

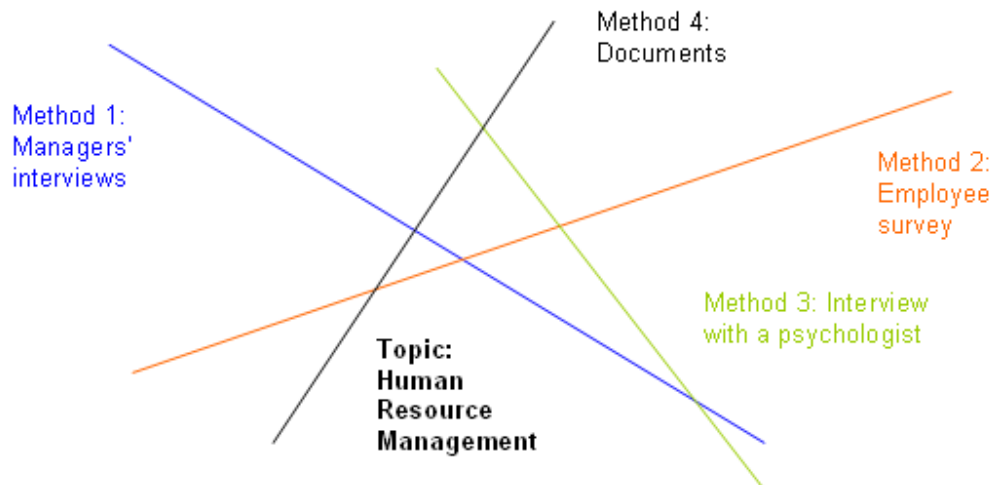
3.5 Methods of data collecting

There are described four basic methods of data collecting: *interviewing*, *administrating questionnaires* and *observing* (Sekaran, 2003). Denscombe (1998) adds *collecting of documents*.

3.5.1 Multi-method approach

Although some research strategies are traditionally connected with a certain method (for instance the survey and questionnaire), there is a growing support for using several different methods within one research (Denscombe, 1998; Moser and Kalton, 1971; Robson, 2002; Sekaran, 2003). The aim of this multi-method approach is to “see the thing from different perspectives” (Denscombe, 1998: 84) and thereby to achieve the possibility of comparison and contrast. The gaining of the different angles increases the validity of the data and the research quality as a whole (Robson, 2002). On the other hand, the authors agree that this approach is not suitable for all the researches (Robson, 2002; Sekaran, 2003).

Denscombe (2002:85) uses the term triangulation for the multi-method approach and represents it by help of the following figure, adapted for the purpose of this research.

Figure 16- Research Triangulation

Source: Adapted from Denscombe (2002:85)

The coordinates represent three methods that were used in this research:

- Documents (the literature review) that enabled the theoretical background and the results of previous researches.
- Interviews
 - with HR managers in the call centres to gain the qualitative information
 - with a psychologist to gain the qualitative information on the particular part of this research
- Questionnaires used in the employee survey to gain the qualitative data

3.5.2 Interviews

Interviewing is a very common method used in business researches (Remenyi et al., 1998)

The interviews offer lots of advantages but the same number of disadvantages how the following table illustrates:

Figure 17- Advantages and disadvantages of interview

<u>Advantages</u>	<u>Disadvantages</u>
Depth of information (qualitative data)	Non-standardized data (worse analysable)
Flexibility	Need of interviewer's skills and experience
Validity (relevant data)	Reliability (the opinion of one individual)
Informants' opinions (inductive approach)	Interviewer effect (gender, age; attitude)
High response rate	Costly method (time and travel costs)
Insights	Invasion of privacy
Non-verbal communication	Inhibitions (due to tape-recording)
A rewarding experience for the informant	Need of careful preparation

Source: Adapted from Denscombe (1998) and Robson (2003)

According to Denscombe (1998) and Robson (2003), there are three types of interviews:

- Structured interview (in the form of survey)
- Semi-structured interview (focused)
- Unstructured interview (open ended)

The unstructured interview enables high flexibility but the degree of interviewer's control is low. In addition, this type requires high level of interviewer's skills and lots of time. Contrary the structured interview tends to the form of survey and provides rather

quantitative information. The semi structured interview seems to be a half house; there are some pre-determined questions or topics, but the flexibility is allowed. The interviewee is usually asked if there is anything to add in the end (Ireland, C., 2006).

3.5.2.1 Interviews realised in this research

The interviews with the HR managers were arranged on 2nd of April in the call centres situated in Hradec Kralove and Prostějov. These towns were relatively far away from the author's residence (approximately 100 and 220 km) what caused relatively high travelling costs. Both the interviews were one-to-one and semi-structured. Interview with manager A took about 60 minutes; interview with manager B took about 40 minutes. The audiotape was made for the easier subsequent analysing. The author was aware of the need of careful preparation and made her best to reduce the possible threats following from the age gap and the gender gap between her and the interviewees.

The interview with a psychologist was realised to discuss the job stress. Interview with Mgr. Petr Moos was realised on 10th of April in Liberec. Again semi-structured interview was chosen.

3.5.2.2 Analysis of interviews

The qualitative data were obtained from the interviews. According to Denscombe (1998), the qualitative data should be organised first and then developed by finding of the main ideas and interconnections. It is not possible to analyse this data by help of statistical programmes but there are several word-processing packages (such as The Ethnograph or Nud.ist) for the qualitative data's storage and coding. However, these word packages were not used in this research; the qualitative data were summarised and subsequently discussed.

3.5.3 Questionnaire

The questionnaire surveys are as well as the interviewing a widespread method of doing the business research (Denscombe, 1998). The questionnaires seem to be contrary to the interviews in many cases, as described in the table below.

Figure 18- Advantages and disadvantages of questionnaire

<u>Advantages</u>	<u>Disadvantages</u>
Wide coverage	Poor response rate
Cheap, less time consuming	Incomplete or poorly completed answers
Pre-coded data (easier to analyse)	Limit and shape nature of answers
Eliminate effect of personal interaction with researcher	Cannot check truth of answers

Source: Adapted from Denscombe (1998:107)

According to Denscombe (1998), the questionnaire is not so appropriate method to ask the respondents about their feelings, perceptions or about some more complicated questions.

There is distinguished between two types of questions:

- Open-ended questions: the respondent is allowed to put down any answer
- Closed questions: the respondent has to choose among a certain number of alternatives that are set down

According to Denscombe (1998) the closed questions gaining the qualitative data are ideal for the post-statistical analysis. He adds that the wording of questions is the crucial issue because bad interpretation can cause considerable misunderstandings.

3.5.3.1 Questionnaire design

According to Easterby-Smith et al. (1991) it seems to be easy to distribute and analyse questionnaire but it is not so easy to design it. The right questionnaire design increases the research reliability significantly. On the other hand, badly chosen or worded questions may devalue all the research (Denscombe, 1998).

Sekaran (1992) and Saunders et al. (1997) list the questionnaires' principles that doing in the right way minimise the bias:

- Questionnaire administration
- The wording of questions
- Principles of measurement (for the subsequent process of categorisation, scaling and coding of the data)
- The general appearance of the paper (included graphic layout, length, introduction and instruction for the proper completion)

3.5.3.2 Questionnaire survey in this research

As mentioned above the method of questionnaire was realised to obtain large number of quantitative data and the employee point of view on the issue. The original version of the questionnaire is enclosed in Appendix B. The version translated into English is enclosed in Appendix C.

3.5.3.2.1 Questionnaire administration

In this research the employee participation was encouraged in advance through the 'motivation letter' (for the original version see Appendix A) that was distributed via intranet by help of management. The collecting in itself was realised in the week between 26th and 31st of April. Critical circumstance was that the author had been still in the UK, so it was not possible to distribute the questionnaires on her own. The questionnaires (150

paper copies) had been sent per post to the call centre B. The call centre A volunteered to print the questionnaires at their own expense.

Actually, the respondents' anonymity was the fundamental claim. The authors' concept of the administration was following: the managers or the team leaders would distribute the blank questionnaires to the front-line employees and the respondents would throw the filled-out questionnaires into an anonymous collecting-box on their own later (some paper box would be enough). The author would easily pick up the collecting-boxes in the day of the interviews. This plan was communicated to the HR managers in advance and they were willing to join it. But finally, the anonymity was not guaranteed in the call centre A because all the questionnaires were given back to the team leaders (!). Obviously, in the case of private questions about the job satisfaction and the mental well-being the non-anonymity caused destruction of this survey. But in the call centre B there was the anonymity kept perfectly, according to the plan. The questionnaires were thrown into a paper box located at a special place.

3.5.3.2.2 The wording of questions

There were used exclusively closed questions in the questionnaire to avoid excessive variability of answers and to enable easy and quick coding. The author targeted the positively wording and the avoidance of the leading questions.

3.5.3.2.3 Principles of measurement

The measurement of variables e.g. particular questions seems to be essential for the subsequent analysis.

According to Sekaran (1998) there is distinguished between several types of questions, as described below:

- Nominal scales: the respondent is asked to choose usually only (rather more) one from several offered answers, the typical example: personal data (age, gender, job position etc.).
 - **Single answers**- just one answer is allowed
 - **Multiple answers**- more than one answer is allowed
 - **Dichotomous scales**- Yes/ No answer

The data gained from the nominal scales are called categorical.

- Ordinal scales: rank-order the categories of answers from ‘the best to the worst’ by help of numbering
- Interval scales: enable the measurement of distance between any two points on the scale
 - **Likert scales**- the respondents are asked to indicate the extent of satisfaction with something or the extent of agreement with a particular statement
 - **Paired comparison**- the respondent is asked to choose one from two offered answers
 - **Graphic rating scale**- the respondent indicates the extent of e.g. satisfaction by help of situating a mark at the appropriate point on the line. It seems to be advantageous to use the graphic scale if the researcher is interested in the respondents’ feelings with respect to some aspect; the typical example is the issue of employee satisfaction.

The data gained from the interval scales are called continuously.

The following table assigns the types of measurement to the particular questions from the questionnaire:

Figure 19- Types of questions

Type of question	Question no.
Nominal scales	
Single answer	1.3., 1.4., 3.6., section 4. and 5.
Dichotomous	3.1., 3.2.
Interval scales	
Graphic scale	1.1.
Likert scale	1.2., section 3.
Paired comparison	3.3, 3.4., 3.5.

3.5.3.2.4 Questionnaire analysis

The quantitative data were gained from the questionnaires. In contrast to the qualitative data, it is possible to interpret the quantitative data by help of computer-aided statistical analyses. It is necessary to code and group the data first. Different variables' measurements enable different statistical operations, as the following table presents:

Figure 20- Properties of the scales

Scale	Highlights			Measures of Central Tendency	Measures of Dispersion	Some Tests of Significance
	Difference	Order	Distance			
Nominal	Yes	No	No	Mode	-----	χ^2
Ordinal	Yes	Yes	No	Median	Semi-interquartile range	Rank-order correlations
Interval	Yes	Yes	Yes	Arithmetic mean	Standard deviation, variance, coefficient of variation	t, F

Source: Adapted from Sekaran (2003:189)

According to the table it is visible that the “fine-tuning” is increased from the nominal scales to the interval scales that enable more sophisticated statistical operations (Sekaran, 2003).

For the purpose of this research the software SPSS was used to analyse the data. The following table demonstrates which statistical techniques were used to analyse the particular questions. The statistical techniques are explained in the results’ chapter more in detail.

Figure 21- Statistical techniques used in the analysis of data

Statistical technique	Type of variable	Output	Question no.
<u>Frequencies</u>	Categorical (eventually continuously)	Mode, Frequency of the values	1.1., 1.3., 1.4., 2.1., 2.3., all the section 3, 4 & 5
<u>Descriptive statistics</u>	Continuously	Median, Mean, Standard Deviation	1.1, 1.2., 2.1., 2.2, 2.3.
<u>Pearson correlation</u>	Two continuously variables	Relationship between the variables	Relationship between 1.1 & 2.3.
<u>Spearman correlation</u>	Two continuously variables	Relationship between the variables	Relationship between 1.1 & 2.3.
<u>One-way ANOVA test</u>	One continuously variable and one categorical variable	Dependency of the continuously variable on the categorical variable	Dependency of 2.3. on 4.1. Dependency of 2.3. on 5.1.

3.6 Validity, reliability, practicality and ethics of this research

3.6.1 Validity

According to Denscombe (1998) variability means the accuracy and relevance of the data. The researcher shall ask “if is researching what should be researched” (Ireland, 2006). The

author considered validity of this research as high. The interviews support the validity in general. In addition, all the interviewees seemed to be very competent and great oriented in the topic. An advantage was that the author was well familiar with the call centre work. The method of triangulation aimed to increase the validity too. The validity of the questionnaire was decreased by the piloting. The questionnaire pre-version was sent to the authors' ex-colleagues. The pre-versions are enclosed in Appendix D (the original version) and in Appendix E (the English version).

3.6.2 Reliability

According to Polyakov (2006), the reliability "is achieved if the data collection procedures can be repeated with the same result". Denscombe (1998) points out consistency and objectivity of data as the main determinant of research reliability. He adds that if the reliability is high it is possible to generalise the result. The possibility to generalise the results of this research is debatable. The research could be realised only in two call centres where the management was willing to enclose the internal information. It can be assumed that the possibility to present good results gave the reason to join this project. On the other hand, the call centre industry seems to be a highly homogenised one what proves the possibility of generalisation.

A big error that would negatively influence both the research validity and reliability was that the employee survey was not anonymous in the call centre A. Thus only data gained from the call centre B, where was the anonymity kept perfectly, could be used in the quantitative analysis.

3.6.3 Practicality

As outlined above, the practicality of this research was low. However, the author was interesting in this topic and was willing to overcome the time as well as the financial limitations.

3.6.4 Ethics

There were not used any unethical practices in this research. All the participants were well informed on the research purpose and the participation was strictly voluntary.

3.7 *Limitations of this research*

The research limitations were already mentioned above and are summarised as follow:

- *The possibility to generalise:* Only two participants were willing to join this project what negatively influenced the generalisability of this research.
- *Disadvantages of the questionnaire:* The questionnaire is not the best way to ask about the personal feelings, perceptions or some abstract questions.
- *Questionnaire administration:* The author was not able to administrate the questionnaires personally what caused the devaluation of employee survey in one call centre.
- *Low practicality:* The practicality was overall low. The research was relatively time and financial consuming. Moreover, the low practicality caused for instance the error in the questionnaire administration as mentioned below.

4. Results

As discussed in the methodology chapter, in this research were collected both qualitative and quantitative data and thus it was necessary to analyse the data in two different ways.

Firstly, the qualitative data gained from the interviews were summarised and subsequently developed by help of judgment analysis.

Secondly, the quantitative data from the employee questionnaire survey were statistical analysed in the SPSS software.

The aim of these analyses was to answer the research questions and to test the hypotheses. All the research questions and the hypotheses are listed at the end of the literature review.

4.1 Qualitative data

Two interviews with HR managers in two different call centres and one with a psychologist were realised. The essential information that was obtained is first summarised.

4.1.1 Interviews with HR managers

The interviews included four main areas: ground information on the call centre, level of labour turnover rate, implemented HRM concept and the awareness of the dangerous of employee job stress and emotional burnout.

4.1.1.1 Basic characteristics of the call centres

Both investigated organisations were banking call centres. The bank A as well as the bank B is one of the biggest and the most successful in the Czech banking market. The call centre A is situated in Hradec Kralove, a city in East Bohemia with about 160 000

inhabitants. The call centre B is situated in Prostějov, a Moravian city with about 110 000 inhabitants.

According to the managers' words, the call centre A was established in the year 2000 and the call centre B was established in the year 2001. Both call centres enabled only basic services such as transaction lines and info lines in the beginning. In the process of time they have started with out-bound calls (mainly provided product offers and sales) and with 'helpdesk' what is a consultancy line for clients that are in technical troubles with the Internet banking.

Both call centres are situated not in a capital. As managers told the choice of location was very carefully consulted with several external agencies. Particularly in the case of call-centre B, the region of Prostějov was chosen due to high unemployment what used to be there. Nowadays in both call centres' locations the unemployment rates are under the national average.

As the managers mentioned, the call centre A keeps 200 employees and the call centre B keeps 264 employees. In both call centres there are low age average (about 27 years) and significant majority of females. Both call centres support part time and student contracts. In the call centre A, situated in a university city, the students attend rather the transactions calls in the peak hours that are approximately from 9 to 11 a.m. and from 5 to 7 p.m. In the call centre B there are the students recruited rather additionally for the out-bound calls according to the need of particular campaigns.

The call centre A as well as the call centre B have left the concept of exclusively 'green lines' in other words of the client service free of charge. Nowadays the clients are still contacting the info line free of charge but they are paying half price if they require the transactions. The helpdesk is charged fully. According to both managers the give-up of the free customer service was necessary due to high telecommunication charges.

4.1.1.2 Labour turnover rate

Surprisingly, the labour turnover seems to be low in both investigated call centres. Referred to the managers, the crude labour turnover rate was 10.5 per cent in the call centre A and 10 per cent in the call centre B in the year 2006.

Both managers considered these levels of labour turnover rates as very low, especially in the frame of call centre industry. In addition, they both emphasised that these rates included movement within the organisations. As they told, the call centre employees often moved from the call centre to the bank branches. Both managers admitted that they were not interesting to decrease the labour turnover rates more.

Manager A mentioned that the level of fluctuation differed according to the particular job positions. Referred to him, the highest fluctuation is observed in the transactions jobs and the leaving decision is usually made in the first 6 months of employment. Actually, the manager A admitted that the fluctuation of the transactions' agents did not present any problem for the organisation because the investment in these employees was relatively low. He pointed out that the management would accept even higher labour turnover in the transaction positions.

Manager A mentioned a particular problem which was leaving for the reason of pregnancy and maternity leave. The call centre A's typical employees are females about 26 years and thus it seems to be logical that this aspect appears there. Manager A emphasised that the management offered part time jobs for the women on maternity leave, for example for 2 hours a day.

In connection with the labour turnover, the external factors were discussed. The interviewer reported the statistical numbers prepared in advance. Referred to Český statistický úřad (2007) the unemployment rates were 5.39 per cent in Hradec Kralove (call centre A) and 6.17 per cent in Prostějov (call centre B) as per December 31st 2006. The unemployment rate in the Czech Republic was 7.5 per cent at the same date. According to these numbers

the low labour turnover rate was probably not supported by this external factor. On the other hand both managers pointed out the growing number of alternative employers in their locations. The managers emphasised that the influence on labour turnover had not been registered but both of them admitted of increasing troubles to recruit the suitable candidates.

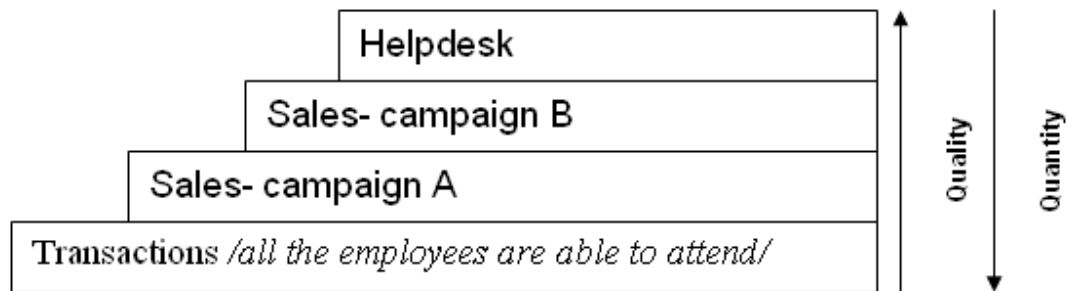
In the following part of the interviews the internal aspects influencing the labour turnover, particularly the applied concept of HRM were discussed. Having considered the research questions and assumptions from the end of the literature review, it was assumed that the low labour turnover rates that were discovered in both call centres would be connected with the soft model of HRM.

4.1.1.3 Applied concept of HRM

According to the main idea of literature considering the call centres, the managers were asked what is essential for them; if quality or quantity.

At this point their answers differed from each other.

Manager A answered that both quality and quantity are important and that the proportion of the priority differs according to the particular job position. He sketched this scheme on the paper:

Figure 22- Manager's sketch: Quantitative versus qualitative priority according to the job position

Manager A (personal communication, 2nd April 2007)

By help of this sketch the manager A explained that the emphasis on quantity was the most significant in the transactions jobs. In the numbers he admitted the proportion 70:30 on behalf of quantity. According to his words the importance of quality is increased in the higher skills e.g. in the sales' positions and in the helpdesk. However, the manager A pointed out:

“But the qualitative claims never overtop the importance of the quantity; the quantity never falls under the 50 per cent in the proportion which I mentioned.”

The manager A noted that the high volume of calls was necessary due to the operating efficiency. Regarding to his words, the expensive call centre technologies, the high telecommunication charges and the high number of calling clients require the need of efficiency.

On the other hand, the manager B responded to the question about the priorities very fast too. He proclaimed the proportion 80:20 on behalf of quality in all the positions. He explained that this proportion was something like strategy of the whole organisation. Referred to his words this number is communicated to all the employees, including the flexible parts of their rewards. He told that the aim of this strategy is to offer high-quality customer service.

At this point two tables prepared in advance were put forward to the managers. The first one represented quality versus quantity model of call centre; the second one represented the characteristics of soft and hard model of HRM. The managers were asked to classify their call centres into the suitable columns. Their answers are shown in the following table. The responses of the manager A are coloured in red; the responses of the manager B are coloured in blue:

Figure 23- Managers' responses: Quantity versus quality call centres

<u>Quantity call centre</u>		<u>Quality call centre</u>	
Simple customer interaction	A	Complex customer interaction	A B
Routinisation	A	Individualisation/customisation	B
Targets hard		Targets soft	A B
Strict script adherence		Flexible or no scripts	A B
Tight call handling times		Relaxed call handling times	A B
Strictly controlled "log-off"	A B	Relaxed "log off"	
Statistics driven	A B	Statistics modified by quality criteria	A B
High degree of control	A B	Low degree of control	
Volume	A	Value	B

Manager A, B (personal communication, 2 April 2007)

According to the table, the call centre A seems to be more quantity oriented than the call centre B. A question is if the managers did not want to show themselves in 'a better light'.

The particular rows were discussed and for instance in the case of the 'Target hard/ Target soft' the choice of the 'soft' variant seemed to be doubtful. The managers were asked about the length of the brakes. In the call centre A the employees had 30 minutes break for the lunch and double 15 minutes brake during the 8 hours working day. These double 15 minutes brake can be drawn continuously. After easy calculation, the employee has to be 'on phone' 56, 25 minutes from one hour at average. Although it does not usually mean that the operator is *speaking* all the time, this intensity of work seems to be high and may rather approach the 'Target hard'. The situation was similar in the call centre B; the employees had 30 minutes lunch brake and in summary 35 minutes during the shift.

However, in the call centre B was used 'wrap time' what means that the operator is 'protected' from immediately routing of next call. The 'wrap time' is about 20 seconds after each call.

The second table characterised soft versus hard model of HRM and the managers filled it out as follows:

Figure 24- Managers' responses: Soft versus hard model of HRM

<u>Soft model of HRM</u>		<u>Hard model of HRM</u>
High minimal job requirements	A B	Low minimal job requirements
Careful recruitment	A B	Sloppy recruitment
High-quality training	A B	Low level of training
High level of employee development	A B	Low level of employee development
Empowerment	A B	Employees are not interested in the organisational aims
Team work	A B	Individual work
Appropriate rewards and recognition	A B	Poor rewards and recognition
High development of service culture	A B	Low development of service culture

Manager A, B (personal communication, 2 April 2007)

As the table clearly illustrates, both managers convincingly declared that the soft HRM practices are used in the call centres. The particular elements (rows of the table) were discussed more in detail:

The rows 1 & 2: Both managers described that the selection had three degrees: firstly classifications of candidates CV's, secondly phone interview which aimed to evaluate the ability to communicate per phone and to discover possible speech imperfections and finally the personal interview. This recruitment interviews includes model calls or tests of IQ and EQ. According to both managers the basic claims on candidates are: 18 years, GCE examination "A" levels and clear conduct-book. Further essential claims are the communicational abilities and the ability to work on PC. English language is an advantage because the call centres enable the service in English too.

The rows 3 & 4: The initial training takes one month and referred to the manager B it is a very ambitious one. Both managers emphasised that also the emphasis on the employee development was high.

The row 5: Manager A as well as manager B expressed the belief that the employees endorsed the organisational aims. The manager B saw as the biggest proof of the employee loyalty their willingness to stay voluntary overtime if needed.

The row 6: Regarding to both managers the team organisational structure is used in both call centres on the front-line level. They added that the teams were usually created from about 20 operators and one team leader.

The rows 7 & 8: Both managers accorded that rewards were appropriate according to the branch and region and they underlined the importance of friendly atmosphere within the organisations.

4.1.1.4 Job stress

Another component of call centre work worthy of deeper interest is the level of job stress. The authors considering these circumstances observe high degree of job stress in the call centres. The managers were asked if they were aware of this fact and if they realised some trainings in stress management.

Both managers accorded that they were aware of these circumstances. The manager A pointed out that the candidates' mental resistance was a bit tested during the recruitment but rather "by help of primitive methods". The manager B mentioned that the employees quite often communicated the high level of the job stress to the management. According to both managers, the anti stress trainings and rarely some outdoor activities are the components of employee care. On the other hand they admitted that the anti stress programmes could be developed better.

4.1.2 Interview with a psychologist

Interview with Mgr. Petr Moos, a psychologist, was realised to gain a third view on the job stress and the emotional work in the call centres.

Mgr. Moos validated and interestingly developed all the assumptions of the academical authors discussed in the literature review.

Particularly, he accented the dangerous of stereotype in the combination with high intensity of labour and compared the call centre work to an assembly line production. He considered the stereotype as highly mentally exhausting and stressful circumstance. According to his words, there is a unique risk in the call centre jobs: *“...due to high intensity of work, the operators have no time to slow down and recognise how they are feeling”* (Moos, P., personal communication. 10 April 2007). He added that if the negative emotions such irritation, fatigue and others were overlooked, it would cause energy tensions in whole the organism. These tensions gradually cause large spectrum of psychosomatic symptoms such as tiredness and lack of energy, lack of taste to communicate wit others, or ‘making mistakes’. Subsequently, the somatic symptoms will appear. The examples are: head-ache, struck throat, back-ache, palpitation, tension around stomach (and many others).

Mgr. Moos supported the opinion on the specifics of service work. He told that the suppression of negative emotions and contrary simulation of the positive emotions such as never-ending optimism or willingness to help are emotional exhausting. In addition, the not face-to-face communication and the strictly following the conversational script in the call centres can cause feeling of in-authenticity.

Referred to his words, all these circumstances can evoke serious troubles such as anxiety disorder or burnout in the worst cases.

However, Mgr. Moos emphasised that right life-style can decrease the negative impacts of the call centre work significantly. According to his words, the appreciation of own reactions to the call centre work is the primary point of the solution. Then it is crucial to

harmonise the working and the free-time parts of a day. The harmonisation should be achieved by addition of some contrary free time activities such as being alone or just with a partner, be outside or run sport activities. He emphasised that it was needed to keep these activities regularly.

Finally, Mgr. Moos agreed that call centre management could support the employee well-being significantly, by help of the anti stress programmes. The employees should be well informed on the possible risks of the call centre work and the anti stress programmes should direct them to the right work-life balance.

4.1.3 Discussion

The interviews aimed to answer the research questions. Having summarised all the information, the questions can be developed in the discussion.

4.1.3.1 Question 1

How is crude labour turnover rate in the investigated call centres?

It was assumed that the labour turnover will be high because all the literature considering the call centre industry refers the extreme labour turnover rates. According to Call centres (2002) the crude annual labour turnover rate was 30 per cent. The highest rates were observed in the financial call centres. Moreover, in the Czech Republic there was the general crude labour turnover rate about 15.8 per cent in the year 2006. In comparison with the EU, there was the general labour turnover rate 9.1 per cent in the same year (Pricewaterhouse Coopers, 2007).

However, very surprisingly both investigated call centres are not suffered by too excess labour turnover rate. In the last year, the crude labour turnover rate was about 10 per cent in both these call centres. In addition, significant part of the employee rotation run within the organisations (from the call centre to the bank branch). One of the managers mentioned that the employee fluctuation differed according to the job positions. The transactions positions

are left most commonly, particularly in the first 6 months of employment. However, both managers mentioned that they did not feel any problem with the fluctuation; they considered this level as a healthy characteristic.

As discussed in the literature review both external and internal factors influence the labour turnover rate. From the external factors the unemployment rate and the number of alternative employers were considered in this research. The unemployment rate has been under national average in both the regions where are the investigated call centres situated. Thus the unemployment rate can not be considered as supporting the low labour turnover rate. However, both managers mentioned that the number of alternative employees had been growing. They have not felt any influence of this on the labour turnover but they recognised the particular troubles to recruit the suitable candidates. Maybe thereby the careful retention policy ought to become more important.

Having considered that the external factors probably do not support the low labour turnover rate, it was possible to assume that the reason for it would be situated within the organisation. This assumption has been developed by two following questions.

4.1.3.2 Question 2 & 3

Which model of HRM is applied in the investigated call centres?

Does the applied model of HRM influence the labour turnover rate?

According to the literature review, one of the main internal affects of the labour turnover is the applied model of human resource management. It was assumed that the low labour turnover rate would be connected with the 'employee friendly' soft model of HRM.

Both managers confirmed this assumption; they put across that the soft model of HRM was used in their call centres.

On the other hand their responses about the quality and quantity preferences differed. The manager A expressed the proportion 70:30 on behalf of quantity. The manager A

mentioned that the high operating costs required the efficiency and hence the high calls' volume in the call centre industry.

Contrary the manager B did not hesitate about the proportion 80:20 on behalf of quality.

According to the theory, the soft model of HRM ought to be connected with the quality whereas the hard model of HRM ought to be connected with the quantity. As mentioned above, the manager of the call centre B demonstrated the traditional combination of the qualitative approach and the soft model of HRM. However, in the call centre A the combination between the quantitative approach and the soft model of HRM was observed.

Having considered all these circumstances, the application of the soft model of HRM was evaluated as the main reason for the low labour turnover rate in the investigated call centres.

4.1.3.3 Question 4

Are the call centre jobs are high stressful and mentally exhausting?

Regarding to the literature, the call centre work is due to the stereotype, the high intensity of labour and the emotional work highly mentally exhausting. The previous surveys discussed in the literature review indicated the job stress as the main reason for the employee withdrawal in the call centre industry. The interview with a psychologist definitely supported the assumptions of the high stress level in the call centre work. Mgr. Moos emphasised that the anti stress programmes directing the employees to the right work-life balance could significantly decrease the negative impacts of the call centre work.

According to the interviews with the managers, the anti stress trainings are at certain level realised in both investigated call centres. This fact may take a share in the low labour turnover rate. On the other hand it seems that these programmes could be developed better.

4.2 Quantitative data

This section provides analysis of quantitative data gained from the questionnaire employee survey. Total number of respondents was 79. Only the questionnaires from the call centre B can be used because the respondents' anonymity was not met in the call centre A, as discussed in the methodology chapter. The author was considering whether the non-anonymous survey could be compared with the anonymous one to demonstrate the difference. Finally this idea was relinquished because this effort could be very misleading.

Several hypotheses were set down to be tested in the analysis of qualitative data. All the hypotheses are listed at the end of the literature review.

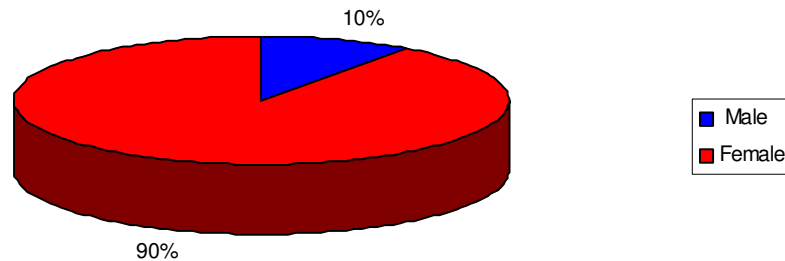
4.2.1 Ground characteristic of respondents

4.2.1.1 Gender

According to general awareness, phenomenal majority of females is observed in the call centre industry. This research sample only proved this feature; 90 per cent of the respondents were females.

Table 1- Frequencies: Gender

	Frequency	Percentage
Male	8	10, 1
Female	71	89,9
Total	79	100

Graph 1- Gender

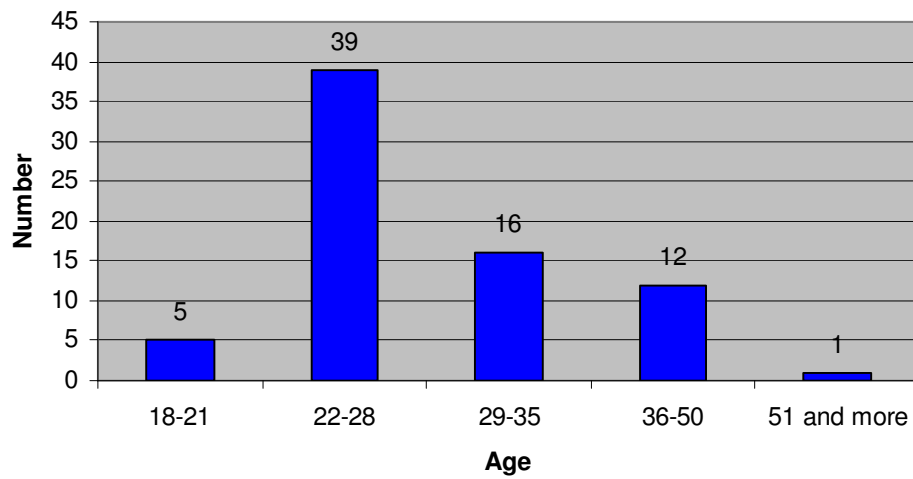
4.2.1.2 Age

During interview the manager mentioned that there was low age average in the call centre. He added that this fact in combination with the predominance of females caused leaving from the reason of pregnancy and maternity leave.

The sample great illustrates this circumstance. More than 50 per cent of respondents fall into the group 22 - 28 years. The sharp decrease observed in the group 29 – 35 years is probably caused by the family issues.

Table 2- Frequencies: Age groups

	Frequency	Percentage
18-21	1	1,3
22-28	42	54,5
29-35	15	19,5
36-50	19	24,7
51 and more	0	0
Total	77	100

Graph 2- Age groups

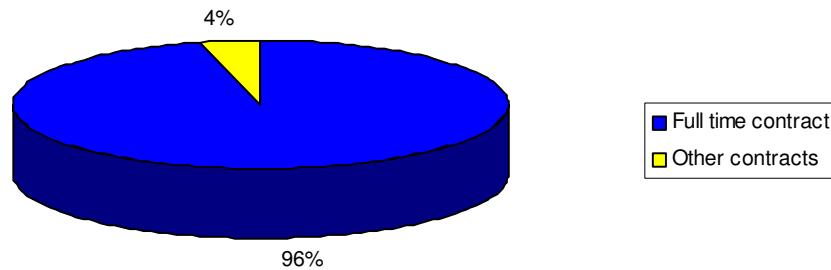
4.2.1.3 Type of employment contract

The manager confirmed that there were four possible types of contracts in the call centres: full time, part time, student's contract of work and non-student's contract of work.

However, the sample is almost explicitly represented by the full time workers (96.2 per cent).

Table 3- Frequencies: Type of contract

	Frequency	Percentage
Full time	76	96,2
Part time	2	2,5
Student's contract of work	0	0
Non-student's contract of work	1	1,3
Total	78	100

Graph 3- Type of contract

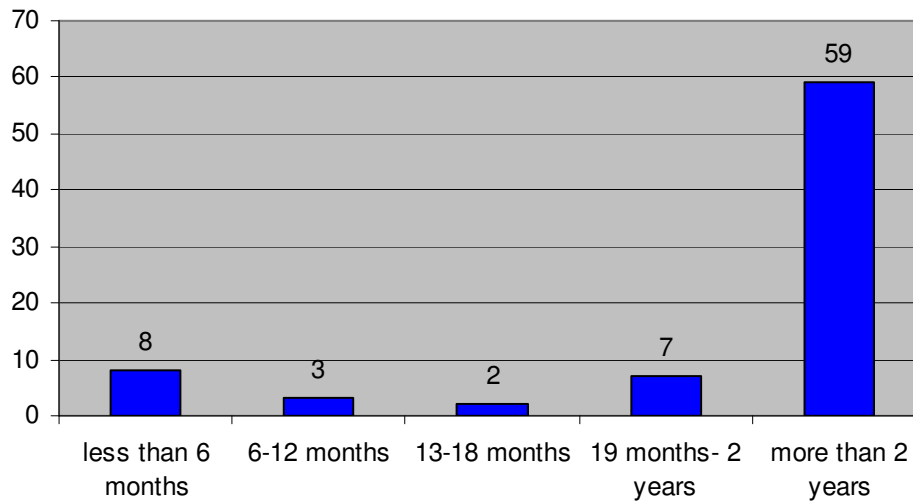
4.2.1.4 Length of employment contract

Research sample confirms the findings from the interview again. According to the manager's words there is low labour turnover rate in the call centre and if the employees leave, it is usually in the first 6 months of the employment.

In the sample there are almost 75 per cent of respondents with more than two years working experience. However, the group 'less than 6 months' is the second largest what proves the common leaving in the first 6 months. The graph below well illustrates these circumstances.

Table 4- Frequencies: Length of employment contract

	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 6 months	8	10,1
6 - 12 months	3	3,8
13 - 18 months	2	2,5
19 months - 2 years	7	8,9
More than 2 years	59	74,7
Total	79	100

Graph 4- Length of employment contract

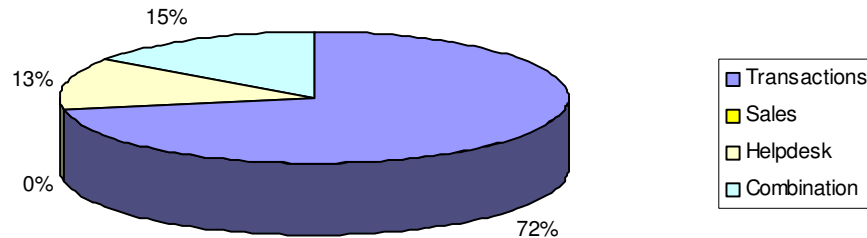
4.2.1.5 Job position

All these positions are included in the call centre in certain proportion: transactions, sales, helpdesk and combination of them.

However, the respondents attending the transactions too predominate in the sample and there is no sales' representative.

Table 5- Frequencies: Job position

	Frequency	Percentage
Transactions	57	72,2
Sales	0	0
Helpdesk	10	12,7
Combination	12	15,2
Total	79	100

Graph 5- Job position

In summary, the ground characteristics are very homogenous. It confirms general awareness of a young woman as the typical call centre employee. On the other hand the homogeneity of this sample constitutes a bit limitation on subsequent analysis. It will be not so appropriate to find the relationships between some variables (e.g. job satisfaction or perceived job stress) and the ground characteristics (e.g. gender, age or job position).

4.2.2 Job satisfaction

In this section the employees were asked about overall job satisfaction, satisfaction with particular job elements and about their biggest likes and dislikes in the job.

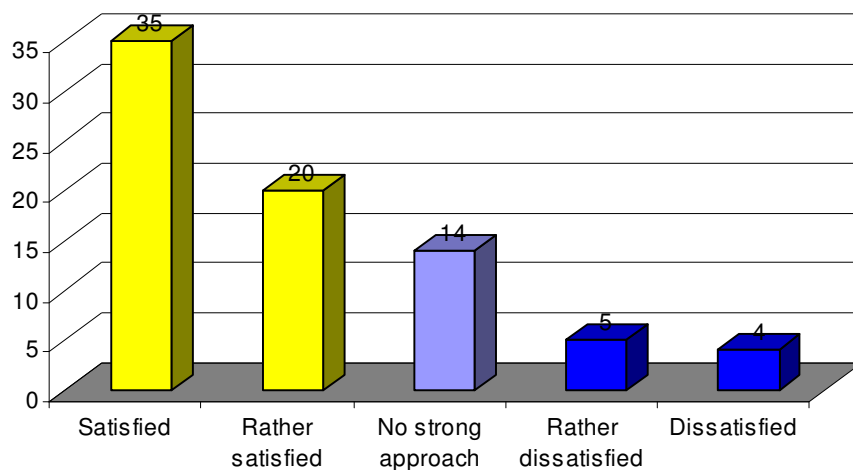
4.2.2.1 Overall job satisfaction

The respondents were asked to mark the level of job satisfaction on a graphical scale. For the purpose of the analysis the scale was parted later and the graphic marks were transformed into five values: 'satisfied', 'rather satisfied', 'no strong approach', 'rather dissatisfied' and 'dissatisfied'.

First the frequencies were computed. According to this output, 70.5 of respondents are 'satisfied' or 'rather satisfied'; 17.9 per cent of them are not satisfied nor dissatisfied and only 11.5 per cent are 'rather dissatisfied' or 'dissatisfied'.

Table 6- Frequencies: Overall job satisfaction

	Frequency	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Satisfied	35	44.9	44.9
Rather satisfied	20	25.6	70.5
No strong approach	14	17.9	88.5
Rather dissatisfied	5	6.4	94.9
Dissatisfied	4	5.1	100
Total	78	100	-----

Graph 6- Overall job satisfaction

Because this question was measured by help of the scale it was possible to compute the descriptive statistics. Mean and standard deviation are the typical out puts of the descriptive. In this case the mean is 2.01 and the standard deviation 1.168. If *all* the respondents answered 'satisfied' the mean would be 1.00; if *all* the respondents answered 'dissatisfied' the value would be 5.00. The value 2.01 is very is very close to the value 2.00 what was 'rather satisfied'.

Table 7- Descriptive statistics: Overall job satisfaction

	N	Min	Max	Mean	St. Deviation
Job satisfaction	78	1	5	2,01	1,168
Valid N (listwise)	78				

4.2.2.2 Satisfaction with particular job elements

This question was created by set of Likert scales. Eight scales were set up to locate the main job likes and dislikes. The results were interpreted by help of particular means that are highlighted in the following table. Again the side values were ‘satisfied’ (1) and ‘dissatisfied’ (5).

Table 8- Descriptive statistics: Satisfaction with particular job elements

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	St. Deviation
Customer interaction	79	1	5	1,90	,871
Peer interaction	79	1	3	1,22	,443
Length of relax between calls	79	1	5	3,30	1,223
Continuously taping	78	1	5	2,86	1,078
Quantity measurement	79	1	5	3,16	,980
Quality measurement	79	1	5	2,75	1,006
Following of conversational script	79	1	5	3,24	1,015
Optimism and willingness that are expected of me at any time	78	1	5	2,82	1,137
Valid N (listwise)	76				

According to the means, the job elements were divided into three groups:

- **Pleasures** - the mean is from interval <1; 2>
- **Neutral elements** – the mean is from interval (2; 3>
- **Displeasures** – the mean is from interval (3; 5>

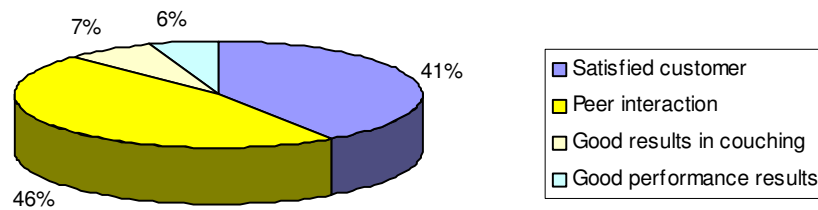
Having used this guideline, the respondents appreciated the job elements as follows:

- **Pleasures**
 - Peer interaction and customer interaction
- **Neutral elements**
 - Taping of calls
 - Qualitative measurement ('coaching')
 - Optimism and willingness that are expected of them at any time
- **Displeasures**
 - Length of relax between calls
 - Quantity measurement
 - Following the conversational script

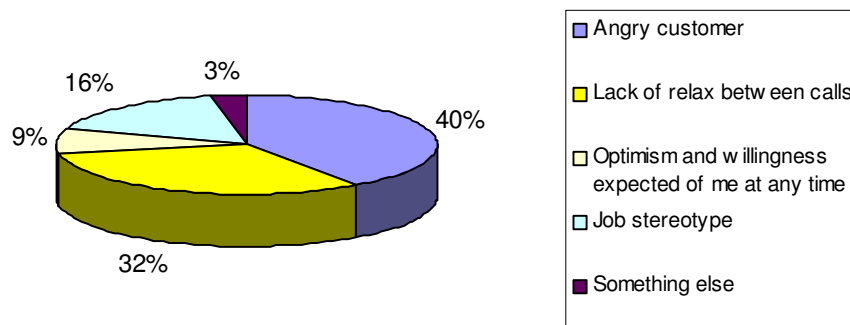
4.2.2.3 Biggest job pleasures and displeasures

Next two questions offered four possible pleasures and four possible displeasures of call centre job. Respondents were asked to choose one biggest pleasure/ displeasure. The possibility 'nothing' or 'something else' was offered too.

Respondents indicated the 'peer interaction' (46 per cent) and the 'satisfy customer' (41 per cent) as the main job pleasures again. Only 7 per cent of respondents mentioned the 'good result in couching' as the main pleasure and only 6 per cent of them liked most the 'good result in the performance statistics'. Obviously, the respondents liked much more the social aspects of their work than the satisfaction from good results. The percentages are illustrated by the graph below:

Graph 7- The biggest job pleasures

On the other hand the customer interaction seems to be two-edged issue because the answer ‘angry customers’ (40 per cent) represented the biggest job displeasure at the same time. Second biggest dislike was ‘lack of relax between calls’ (32 per cent) following by ‘job stereotype’ (16 per cent). Only 9 per cent of the respondents disliked most the ‘optimism and willingness that are expected of me at any time’. In addition, 3 per cent of respondents mentioned ‘something else’ that was specified as “my team-leader” or “low wage”.

Graph 8- The biggest job displeasures

Having summarised the findings about job satisfaction and about the main job likes and dislikes, all corresponding assumption (hypotheses) are confirmed:

- H1: The level of overall employee satisfaction is high.
- H1: Employee most job pleasure is the interaction with peers and customers.
- H1: Employee most job displeasures are high intensity of labour, quantitative measurement and job stereotype.

4.2.3 Perceived job stress

The aim of next questionnaire section included three questions was to investigate the degree of perceived job stress.

4.2.3.1 Perceived level of general job stress

Firstly, the employees were asked if they agree that the call centre occupation as an increasingly stressful one. At this point they were asked about their general opinion, not yet about their personal situation. More than 80 per cent of respondents (82.3 per cent) agreed or rather agreed that the occupation was increasingly stressful. Only 16.5 per cent of respondents chose the value 'rather no'. Actually, there was no respondent answering 'definitely no' and only one person checked 'I don't know, I've never thought about it'.

Table 9- Frequencies: Perceived general level of job stress

	Frequencies	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Definitely Yes	36	45,6	45,6
Rather Yes	29	36,7	82,3
I don't know	1	1,3	83,5
Rather no	13	16,5	100,0
Definitely no	0	0	
Total	79	100,0	

Graph 9- Perceived general level of job stress

Second part of this section included 5 Likert scales that were related to the stress symptoms occurrence. The respondents were asked how often they experience certain stress symptoms. The values 'very often', 'often', 'sometimes', 'rarely' and 'almost never' may be very subjective. Especially the value 'sometimes' was very wide but the purpose of these questions was to evaluate if the respondents perceived the symptoms as annoying for them. At least the values 'very often' and 'often' can be definitely considered as the annoying. The following table summarizes the means of the particular stress symptoms. According to the means the respondents are suffering most from the lack of energy following by headaches and distaste to communicate with others if they do not have to.

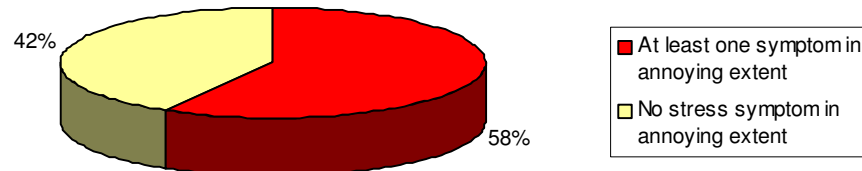
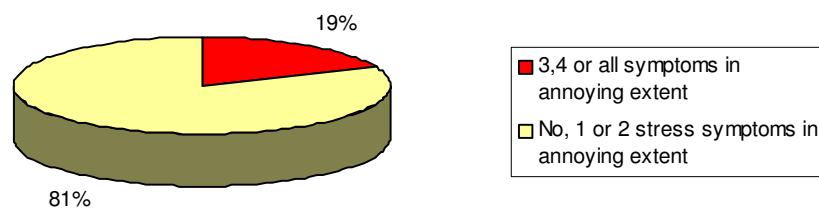
Table 10- Occurrence of stress symptoms

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Headache (symptom A)	79	1	5	3,08	1,071
Tiredness (symptom B)	79	1	4	2,58	,856
Distaste to communicate (symptom C)	78	1	5	3,14	1,203
Speech impediment (symptom D)	79	1	5	3,27	,930
Negative emotions (symptom E)	79	1	5	3,34	1,108
Valid N (listwise)	78				

According to the table, the means around the middle value ('sometimes') do not look dramatically at all. However, from the respondents' answers there was created a new variable. The total occurrence of 'very often' and 'often' values was easily (just by help of look on the questionnaire) summarised for each respondent. After computing the frequencies of this new variable, new circumstances can be taken into the consideration. It seems to be quite serious that 58.2 per cent of respondents mentioned occurrence of at least one symptom in the annoying extent ('very often' or 'often'). As the following table and graph show, 21.5 per cent of respondents are suffered from two symptoms in the annoying extent, 17.7 per cent from one annoying stress symptom. Actually, almost 20 per cent of respondents perceived 3, 4 or all the listed stress symptoms in the annoying extent. It seems to be an alarming number.

Table 11- Occurrence of stress symptoms in annoying extent

	Frequencies	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
5 stress symptoms in annoying extent	1	1,3	1,3
4 stress symptoms in annoying extent	7	8,9	10,2
3 stress symptoms in annoying extent	7	8,9	19,1
2 stress symptoms in annoying extent	17	21,5	40,6
1 stress symptom in annoying extent	14	17,7	58,3
No stress symptom in annoying extent	33	41,8	100,0
Total	79	100	

Graph 10- Occurrence of stress symptoms in annoying extent A**Graph 11- Occurrence of stress symptoms in annoying extent B**

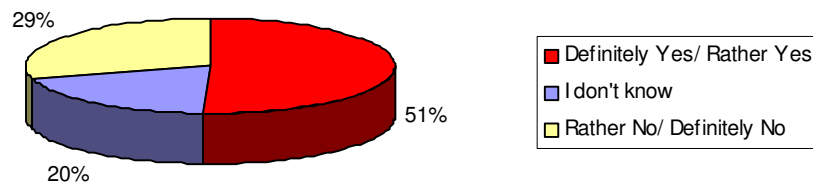
According to the results above high stress symptoms' occurrence was referred. However, high stress level can be considered as a general feature of modern-day life. At this point it was necessary to evaluate the *link* between the stress symptoms' occurrence and the call centre job. That was why the respondents were asked if they observed higher stress symptoms occurrence or worsening of the stress symptoms since they had started to work in the call centre. More than half of all the respondents (50.6 per cent) referred the stress symptoms occurrence or the worsening since they had started the call centre job. Only 30.1 per cent of respondents refused this fact and 20 per cent did not know.

Table 12- Frequencies: Stress symptoms occurrence linked to the call centre job

	Frequencies	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Definitely Yes	18	22,8	22,8
Rather Yes	22	27,8	50,6
I don't know	16	20,3	70,9
Rather No	15	19,0	89,9
Definitely No	8	10,1	100,0
Total	79	100,0	

Graph 12- Stress symptoms occurrence linked to the call centre job

Do you observe that some of the stress symptoms have appeared or got worst since you started to work in the call centre?



Having summarised this section, 82 per cent of respondents considered the occupation as an increasingly stressful one, 58 per cent of respondents admitted that they perceived at least one stress symptom in annoying extent and 50.6 per cent of all the respondents linked the stress symptoms' occurrence to the call centre work. Next one hypothesis is accepted:

- **H1: Call centre employees perceive high degree of job stress.**

4.2.3.2 Relationship between overall job satisfaction and perceived job stress

There are several statistical hypotheses connected with the job stress. The first one is:

H0: There is not a relationship between the degree of perceived job stress and overall job satisfaction.

H1: There is a relationship between the degree of perceived job stress and overall job satisfaction.

All above, several initial steps to choose the most suitable analysis should be provided:

Firstly, it was necessary to consider which types of data are used. Both variables (the overall job satisfaction and the degree of perceived job stress) are the Likert's scales and thereby *continuously variables*.

Secondly, the normality of distribution was tested because many of the statistical methods assume the normal distribution. According to Gravetter and Wallnau (2000:52) the normality means "a symmetrical, bell shaped curve, which has the greatest frequency of scores in the middle". However, Pallant (2001) notes that the normal distribution is rather rare in the social sciences.

The distribution of both analysed variables was tested. The output generated from this testing is presented below:

Table 13- Test of normality

Tests of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov(a)			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Job satisfaction	,256	78	,000	,805	78	,000
Stress symptoms' growth since starting the call centre job	,200	79	,000	,894	79	,000

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

The *Kolmogorov-Smirnov test* is crucial for the testing of normality. If the Sig. value is greater than 0.05, the normal distribution is indicated. In this case the value for both scales is .000 thereby the normality of distribution is refused.

Having considered these circumstances, the appropriate analysis was chosen.

4.2.3.2.1 Parametric test

Person product-moment correlation was chosen to test this hypothesis because this analysis is appropriate to analyse the relationship between *two continuously variables*.

Employee overall satisfaction represents one continuously variable and the 'stress symptoms' growth linked to the call centre work' (alias the degree of perceived job stress) represents another categorical variable. The Pearson correlation is one of the parametrical tests. All the parametric statistics assume normal distribution of the variables. Although the overall job satisfaction is not normally distributed, this violence was ignored. Pallant (2001) admits to ignore the violence of normality for the parametric tests.

The output generated from the Pearson correlation test is shown below:

Table 14- Pearson correlation

Correlations			
		Overall job satisfaction	Degree of perceived job stress
Overall job satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	1	-.524(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	78	78
Degree of perceived job stress	Pearson Correlation	-.524(**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	78	79

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The value of Pearson coefficient r ranges from -1.00 to +1.00. The value indicates the strength of correlation; the sign + or – indicates the direction of correlation. Cohen (1998)

cited by Pallant (2001:120) suggests the following guidelines for interpretation of the strength of correlation:

Figure 25- Guidelines for Pearson correlation

$r = .10 \text{ to } .29 \text{ or } r = -.10 \text{ to } -.29$	small
$r = .30 \text{ to } .49 \text{ or } r = -.30 \text{ to } -.49$	medium
$r = .50 \text{ to } 1.0 \text{ or } r = -.50 \text{ to } -1.0$	large

Source: Developed by Pallant (2001:120)

In this case the $r = -.524$ indicated the large negative correlation what means that the variables are in the contrary relationship. Obviously, lower the degree of perceived job stress is higher the overall job satisfaction and vice-versa.

Finally, it is possible to calculate the coefficient of determination. Regarding to Pallant (2001), this coefficient gives the information how much variance the two variables share. The calculating is very easy; all what is needed is the Pearson coefficient (r). The value is just multiply ($r \times r$). In this case the coefficient of determination is $.524 \times .524 = 0.274576$. To have the expression in percentage: $0.274576 \times 100 = 27$ per cent shared variance. According to Pallant (2001) such value is relatively respectable amount in the social researches.

4.2.3.2.2 Non-parametric test

The non-parametric alternative to the Pearson correlation is the Spearman's rank order correlation (Pallant, 2001). According to Pallant (2001), the non-parametric tests enable to test the variables that are not normally distributed. As discussed above the analysed variables were not normally distributed but this limitation was ignored and the variables were tested by help of the parametrical test. However, for the non-parametric Spearman's correlation was used for the purpose of control too.

The output generated from the Spearman's rank order correlation is shown below:

Table 15- Spearman's correlation**Correlations**

		Overall job satisfaction	Degree of perceived job stress
Overall job satisfaction	Correlation Coefficient	1,000	-,530(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	,000
	N	78	78
Degree of perceived job stress	Correlation Coefficient	-,530(**)	1,000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	.
	N	78	79

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The $r = -.530$ is almost identical to the Pearson coefficient and the interpretation of the result is the same (see above).

According to the results of both Pearson coefficient and Spearman's rank order correlation the null hypothesis is refused and the contrary hypothesis is accepted.

- **H1: There is a relationship between the degree of perceived job stress and the overall job satisfaction.**

4.2.3.3 Dependence of the level of perceived job stress on particular job positions

Next hypothesis connected with the job stress is following:

H0: The level of perceived job stress does not depend on the job position.

H1: The level of perceived job stress depends on the job position.

One-way ANOVA test was chosen to test this hypothesis because this non-parametric test is appropriate to analyse the linkage between one continuously and one categorical variable. The perceived degree of job stress represents the dependent continuously variable and the job position represents the independent categorical variable. The categories of the job

position were three: transactions, helpdesk and combination of more types. Although the continuously variable did not have the normally distribution, the parametric test was used.

The out put generated from One-way ANOVA test is shown below:

Table 16- Output from test of homogeneity of variances (A)

Test of Homogeneity of Variances

Degree of percieved job stress

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
1,263	2	76	.289

Firstly the homogeneity of variance should be considered. The test of homogeneity of variances tests “whether the variance in scores is the same for each of the three groups” (Pallant, 2001). If the value Sig. is greater than .05, the assumption of homogeneity is not violated. The value .289 is definitely greater than .05 and thus it is possible to continue with the interpretation of the One-way ANOVA test.

The result of the One-way ANOVA test is as follows:

Table 17- Output from One-way ANOVA test (A)

ANOVA

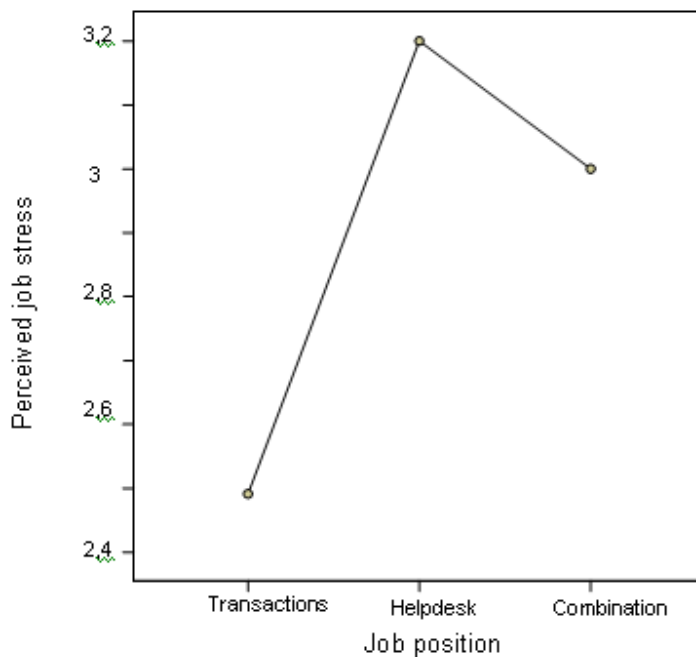
Degree of percieved job stress

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	5,927	2	2,963	1,790	.174
Within Groups	125,846	76	1,656		
Total	131,772	78			

The main value is the significance level (Sig.). According to Pallant (2001), “if this value is less than or equal to .05, there is a significant difference somewhere among the mean scores on the dependent variable for the independent groups”. In this case the value of Sig. is .174 is not less than .05 and thus the dependence of the degree of perceived job stress on the job position is not statistically significant.

The means plot (see the Graph 13 below) is used to provide “as easy way to compare the mean scores for the different groups” (Pallant, 2001). The means plot below illustrates that there is a difference between the means (axe y) on the perceived job stress for the job positions (axe x). The plot clearly shows that the transactions job corresponds with the *lower mean* which (look here!) means the *higher degree* of job stress (because the value 1 represents that the respondents definitely perceived the job stress). The best situation seems to be in the helpdesk position and the mixed jobs are somewhere between. But this difference is not statistically significant and thereby statistically acceptable as mentioned above.

Graph 13- Means Plot: Dependence of the degree of perceived job stress on particular job positions



Regarding the result of the One-way ANOVA test, the null hypothesis is not refused and thus the alternative hypothesis is not accepted. However, the frequencies of the particular job positions were very unequal (the transactions too predominated) what may affect the result.

4.2.3.4 Dependence of the level of perceived job stress on gender

The last one hypothesis connected with the perceived job stress is as follows:

H0: The degree of job stress does not depend on gender.

H1: The degree of job stress depends on gender.

Again the linkage between *one continuously* variable and *one categorical variable* was tested and thus the *One-way ANOVA test* was used. The perceived job stress was the dependent variable and the gender was the independent variable with two categories.

The out put generated from the one way- ANOVA test is shown below:

Table 18- Output from test of homogeneity of variances (B)

Test of Homogeneity of Variances

Degree of perceived job stress

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
2,528	1	77	.116

The Sig. value is greater than .05 and thus the assumption of homogeneity is not violated and thus it is possible to interpret the one-way ANOVA test.

The result of the one-way ANOVA is shown below:

Table 19- Output from One-way ANOVA test (B)

ANOVA

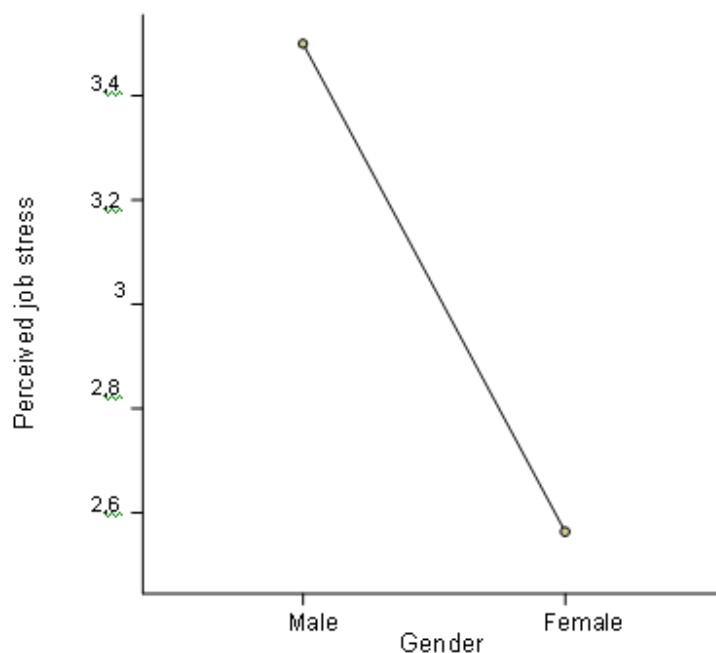
Degree of perceived job stress

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	6,307	1	6,307	3,871	.053
Within Groups	125,465	77	1,629		
Total	131,772	78			

The Sig. value .053 is not less than .05 and thus the dependence of the degree of perceived job stress on the gender is not statistically significant. Obviously, the value is really almost statistically significant but the statistics is the exact science and thus this result can not be statistically acceptable.

The means plot (see the Graph 14) shows that the female perceived higher degrees of job stress than the male respondents. However, this result is not statistically significant.

Graph 14- Dependence of the degree of perceived job stress on gender



Regarding the result of the One-way ANOVA test, the null hypothesis can not be refused and thus the alternative hypothesis can not be accepted. It was not proved that the degree of perceived job stress depends on gender. However, the frequencies of the gender were very unequal (90 per cent of respondents were females) what may affect the result.

4.2.4 Employee perception of the applied model of HRM

4.2.4.1 Employee survey

The initial two questions of the final section asked the respondents if they had experienced some employee survey in the call centre and if they would appreciate such survey. The aim of these questions was to evaluate if the management is interested in the employees and vice-versa if the employees appreciate or would appreciate this interest. Some respondents indicated the experience with the survey, some of them not. It probably means that the survey was realised but sometimes in the past and thus not all the respondents could experience it. The second graph clearly shows that the respondents have positive approach to the surveys.

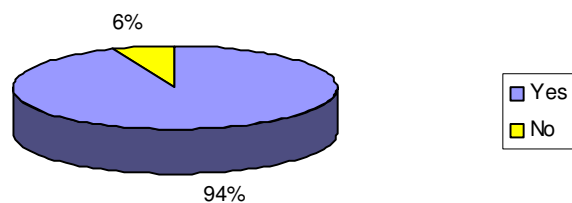
Graph 15- Experience with employee survey

Have you experienced any employee survey in your call centre?



Graph 16- Approach to employee surveys

Would you appreciate such survey?

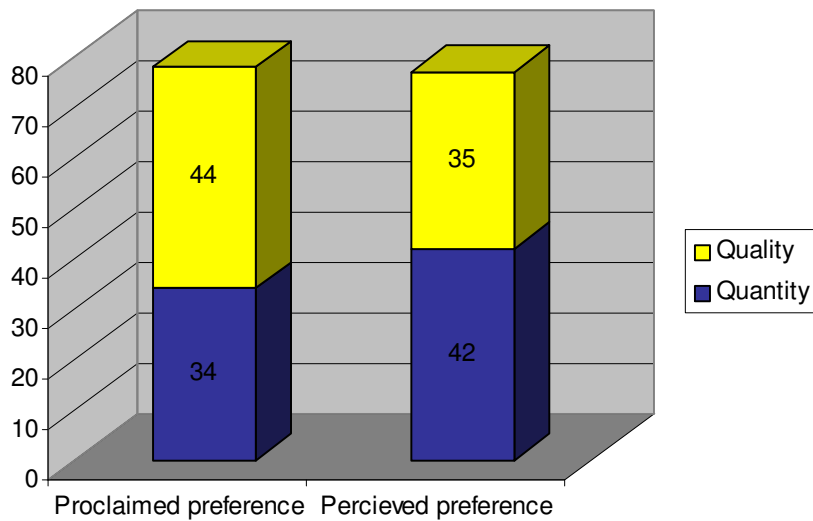


4.2.4.2 Proclaimed and perceived priority

The purpose of next pair of questions was to discover if there is some difference between the proclaimed and perceived priorities. The employees were asked which priority (if quality or quantity) is communicated to them and which one they perceive as the real priority of the management. The HR manager mentioned in the interview that management very clearly communicated the preference of quality versus quantity in the proportion 80:20.

But it is assumed that there may be a gap between the proclaimed and perceived priorities. According to the literature review, the employees may perceive the quantity (not proclaimed quality) as the real preference of management.

The results confirm this assumption. 56.4 per cent of respondents found the quality as the communicated priority but only 45.5 per cent of respondents apprehended the quality as the real priority at the present time. Vice-versa, only 43.6 per cent of respondents indicated the quantity as the communicated priority but 54.5 per cent of respondents apprehended the quantity as the real priority. This gap is well demonstrated by the graph below. The numbers in the graph represent the real values, not percentage.

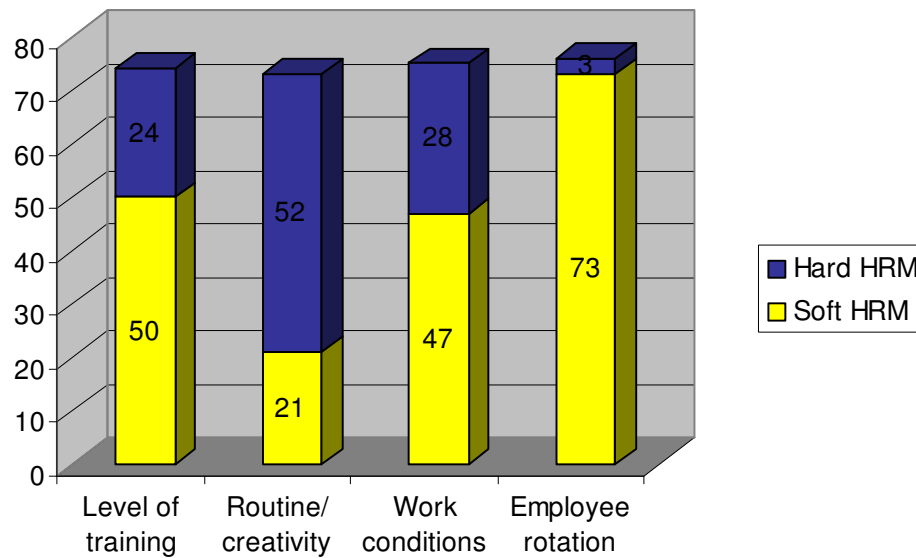
Graph 17- Gap between proclaimed and perceived priorities

Having considered the result, the last one hypothesis was confirmed:

- **H1: There is a gap between espoused and perceived priorities.**

4.2.4.3 Applied model of HRM

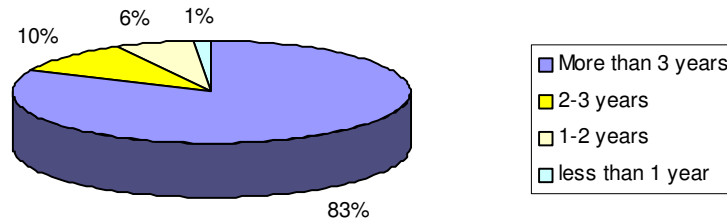
Further question created from four paired comparisons aimed to evaluate if the employees consider the call centre as an 'employee friendly place' (soft HRM) or 'employee unfriendly place' (hard HRM). The pairs were constructed by help of the following contrasts: high/ low level of training; creativity/ routine; soft work conditions/ hard work conditions; high rotation of employees/ low rotation of employees. The results are presented by the graph below (the numbers represent real values, not percentage).



As the chart illustrates the respondents apprehend that rather soft HRM practices are used in the call centre. However, the comparison of routine and creativity is an exception; 66.6 per cent of respondents perceive the routine in their job. The perception of low employee rotation is huge (96 per cent).

4.2.4.4 Job expectation

In the last one question the respondents were asked how long they suppose to stay in the current job. As graphically presented below, 82 per cent of respondents supposed to stay more than 3 years.

Graph 18- Job expectation

The soft HRM practices as well as the low labour turnover rate were proclaimed in the interview and according to the survey the employee perceive the same.

4.2.5 Discussion

The analysis of qualitative data seems to be very valuable for this piece of work. The employee point of view was investigated to be linked with the findings from the interviews. Several assumptions and statistical hypotheses were tested.

4.2.5.1 Hypothesis 1

H1: The level of overall employee satisfaction is high.

The assumption of high overall job satisfaction was confirmed. The survey reports that 70.5 per cent of respondents indicated high or rather high degree of job satisfaction. This result is very similar to the outputs of the previous researches discussed in the literature review. The research of Korczynski (2002) referred to 73 per cent of respondents that mentioned some degree of job satisfaction. However, the level of the overall job satisfaction does not indicate the reason for the satisfaction. In addition, it is possible that the respondents a bit overestimated the overall job satisfaction to present themselves in a 'positive light'. According to the social expectation, the satisfaction with the job may be a proof of a personal success.

4.2.5.2 Hypothesis 2 & 3

H1: Employee most job pleasure is the interaction with peers and customers.

H1: Employee most job displeasures are high intensity of labour, quantitative measurement and job stereotype.

Subsequently the respondents were asked about the satisfaction with particular job elements. The results of this survey closely correspond with the literature. Respondents mentioned the interaction with peers and customers as the main job pleasure. Contrary the lack of relax between calls (quasi high intensity of labour), the quantitative measurement and the routine following the conversational script were reported as the dark-sides of call centre work. Respondents did not have any strong approach to the continuously taping of calls, qualitative control ('coaching') and to the expectation of never-dying optimism and willingness to help the customer. However, the customer interaction seems to be a two-edged issue. Most of the respondents checked the satisfied customer as the main particular job pleasure whereas the angry customers were considered as the main particular job displeasure. In summary, the hypotheses of the main job pleasures and displeasures were confirmed.

4.2.5.3 Hypothesis 4

H1: Call centre employees perceive high degree of job stress.

According to the literature and to the interviewed psychologist, the call centre work is highly mentally exhausting and stressful. The stereotype, the push on volume of calls and the emotional work were discussed as the main reasons for the job stress. Previous researches observed substantial degree of perceived job stress. Referred to the ACA Research (1998 cited by Wallace et al., 2000: 178), 70 per cent of respondents perceived at least one stress symptom whereas 60 per cent of them had not indicated any stress symptoms prior the call centre work. The results of this primary survey seem to be very similar to the previous surveys again: 58 per cent of respondents indicated that they perceived at least one stress symptom in the annoying extent and 51 per cent of them

directly linked the stress symptoms' occurrence to the call centre work. If the job displeasures are recalled, the job stress seems to be caused by the high intensity of labour, stereotype and rude customers.

4.2.5.4 Hypothesis 5

H1: There is a relationship between the degree of perceived job stress and the overall job satisfaction.

Referred to the hypothesis 4, the degree of perceived job stress is high. But is there any relationship between the perceived job stress and the overall job satisfaction? The alternative e.g. assumed hypothesis spoke on side of the relationship. The linkage between these two variables was statistically tested and the assumed hypothesis was accepted. Obviously, the stress symptoms such as head-aches, lack of energy, distaste to communicate with others or negative feelings are very unpleasant and influence all the life's spheres including the job satisfaction. It can be assumed that the stressed employee's working performance is lower. As discussed in the literature review, the job stress is the main reason for labour turnover and absenteeism in the call centre industry.

4.2.5.5 Hypothesis 6 & 7

H0: The degree of perceived job stress does not depend on the job position.

H0: The degree of job stress does not depend on gender.

Regarding the literature as well as the interview with manager A, the push on efficiency (calls' volume) differs according to the particular job position. In the sales' or helpdesk' positions, the intensity of labour is lower and the work is less stereotype than in the transactions' jobs. Thus it was assumed that the level of job stress would be lower in the sales' or helpdesk's positions. According to this the alternative hypothesis assumed that the particular job position influences the degree of perceived job stress. However, this hypothesis could not be confirmed at the statistically acceptable level. The analysis of this dependence may be strong influenced by the non-equal distribution of the job positions in the sample.

The similar situation was with the linkage between gender and the degree of perceived job stress. According to the literature, it was assumed that the females are suffered by the negative impacts of the call centre work more than the men. Neither this hypothesis could be confirmed as the statistically acceptable level. Again the categories were not equal. There were 90 per cent of the females in the sample what may influence the result. It would be advisable to test these two hypotheses in a future research with more suitable sample.

4.2.5.6 Hypothesis 8

H1: There is a gap between espoused and perceived priorities.

Referred to the previous surveys, Wallace et al. (2000:176) disclosed a clash between espoused and perceived objectives in their research considering the call centres. To support this clash they reported that 90 per cent of the respondents perceived high calls' volume as the priority of the management, although the customer satisfaction was formally declared as the main objective. Similarly the respondents of this survey were firstly asked which one element of their work (if the high-quality customer service or the high volume of calls) was *communicated* to them as the priority objective and secondly which one they *perceived* as the priority of management. To remember, the manager B declared the proportion 80:20 on behalf of quantity in the interview and he emphasised that this proportion was very clearly communicated to the employees (including the flexible part of their wages). However, 56.4 per cent of the respondents recognised the quality as the communicated priority but only 43.6 per cent of them perceived the quality as the real priority too. According to these numbers the gap between the proclaimed and the perceived priorities was supported in this research. This gap seems to smack of insincerity of the management and may create a barrier of employee loyalty. In addition, it may be surprisingly that only 56.4 of respondents indicated the quality as the communicated priority, although the manager strongly proclaimed that the quantitative priority was clearly communicated to the employees. Where can be the reason for this dissonance? It seems to be highly speculative question but may be possible that both the customer satisfaction and the volume of calls are so important in the call centre that is difficult to specify the preference. However, the

questionnaire may be not the most appropriate method to ask such abstract question. It is possible that some respondents understood the question in another way than the author what may cause the bias.

On the other hand, the respondents rather accorded with the management in the question which model of HRM is applied in the call centre. According to the interview, the soft model of HRM was proclaimed. The respondents were asked to evaluate four contrary pairs to recognise their perception on the applied model. They indicated the soft HRM practices such as high level of training and employee development, soft work conditions and low fluctuation of employees. Only one exception from the soft model of HRM was the indication of job routine.

Finally, more than 80 per cent of respondents referred that they supposed to stay more than three years in the current job. In addition, 74.7 of respondents had been employed more than two years in the call centre. These results only support the findings of low labour turnover rate in the investigated call centres.

5. Conclusion

The purpose of this piece of work was to evaluate the linkage between the labour turnover rate and the concept of human resource management applied in the financial call centres. The particular research objectives were to compare management and employee perception on the used model and to evaluate the impact of call centre work on front-line employees.

It is important to emphasise that the labour turnover rate was surprisingly low in both call centres investigated in the primary research of this paper. The crude annual labour turnover rates were about 10 per cent. This was below the average of general labour turnover rate in the Czech Republic.

Based on the interviews with managers as well as the surveys of employees' perception it was investigated that the soft model of HRM was applied in both call centres. However, the soft model was cohered with emphasis on the high volume of calls. This need of quantity caused high intensity of work; the employees perceived 'lack of relax between calls' as one of the main job dislikes. On the other hand, the soft HRM practices such as careful recruitment, high level of training and employee development, empowerment or teamwork were observed. This synergy between the soft HRM practices and the emphasis on quantity supports the opinion of Korczynski (2000) claiming that the call centre reality is somewhere 'in between' and should not be considered as black and white. However, in the investigated call centres the applied model of HRM was evaluated rather as the soft one.

Having considered the low unemployment rate and the high number of alternative employers in the call centres' locations, the reason for the low labour turnover seems to have been situated inside the organisations. The application of the soft model of HRM was concluded to be the main determinant of this.

The results of the employee survey indicated that the front-line workers perceived high degree of overall job satisfaction but on the other hand they admitted high degree of job

stress at the same time. In addition, it was statistically proved in this research that there was a strong relationship between the job satisfaction and the level of job stress. According to the interview with a psychologist the call centre employees' stress springs from the stereotype, the high intensity of work and the emotional work. To decrease the stress level may be the biggest challenge for the management in the investigated call centres. From the management point of view the stressed employees work less efficiently. From the social point of view high level of job stress is not acceptable either. It seems that the development of anti-stress trainings is the most appropriate solution in the investigated call centres. In addition, the employees indicated the peer interaction as their favourite part of the job. Thus, it could be advantageous to include the peer interaction in the anti-stress programmes for instance in form of out-door activities.

In summary, it seems that the investigated call centres have been managed in a good direction. The low labour turnover rate and the employee satisfaction are the positive signs of this. The management has probably broadly profited from this situation because experienced and satisfied employees are able to provide better customer service (Heskett et al., 1997). According to Lashley (2001), the low labour turnover enables to reduce the recruitment and training costs and to increase the working morals.

The relatively optimistic results of this research prove that it is possible to combine the operating efficiency with the employee wellbeing in the call centre industry.

6. Limitations and recommendations

The purpose of this section is to identify the limitations of this research and to reasons for their origin. Subsequently few recommendations for possible future researches are given.

6.1 *Limitations*

6.1.1 Generalisability

The possibility to generalise the results of this research seems to be questionable. Eight financial call centres in the Czech Republic were asked to join this project but only two of them were willing to participate this project e.g. to enclose their internal information. This point comprehends two possible risks. Firstly, the quantity of the actual cooperating call centres is closer to the number suitable for the case study not for the generalisable research. Secondly it seems to be highly probable that the participation was connected to the management awareness of possibility to publish the optimistic results. However, the call centre industry seems to be highly homogenised. This fact supports the possibility to generalise. This judgment seems to be supported by the fact that the results of both investigated call centres were very similar.

6.1.2 Employee survey

The employee questionnaire survey comprehended several research limitations too.

Firstly, the questionnaire method is not the most appropriate one when asking about personal perceptions (e.g. perceived job stress) or about some abstract ideas (in this case the communicated and the perceived priorities of management). The interviews may have been more appropriate. However their realisation seemed to be highly problematical within the scope of this project since the author was limited by time and financial resources. On the

other hand the questionnaire was created on the grounds of the author's personal experience with all the aspects of the call centre work, which may increase the research validity.

The second crucial issue was distribution of the questionnaires. The author was not able to distribute the questionnaires personally. This circumstance caused the fatal error in one of the investigated call centres; the respondents' anonymity was broken. For the purpose of this research the anonymity was crucial and thus it was not possible to use this basically useless data.

Thirdly, some employee categories (e.g. transactions jobs or full time workers) dominated too much in the sample. This caused another limitation for the subsequent analysis.

6.1.3 Low practicality

Many of the limitations mentioned above were caused by low practicality of this research. The author was limited by time, financial resources as well as the geographical distance.

6.2 Recommendations for the future researches

According to the author's experience, the willingness of the organisations to participate this project represented the biggest difficulty. It seems to be obvious that the organisations are slightly concerned about publishing the sensitive internal information such as the labour turnover rate or the working conditions. Actually, it was quite difficult to overcome this barrier. The author's recommendation is to provide the management with sufficient and honest information regarding the purpose of the research and to assure the anonymity of the company.

Further author's recommendation is to distribute the questionnaires personally if possible. In this type of research it is crucial to be highly aware of the necessity of the respondents' anonymity. The researcher should be careful about the equal proportionality of the categories in the sample, too. In addition, it would be advantageous to realise at least completing employee interviews about their personal perceptions, attitudes and feelings.

Finally, the author would like to encourage the future researchers to develop this research. The topic of this research seems to highly relevant to nowadays boom in the call centre industry. Having considered that the recent trend is to move the call centres to the countries with cheap labour force, it might be interesting to find out whether the soft model of HRM is applied in the call centres in these countries just like in the investigated call centres in the Czech Republic.

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Appendix A

Vážení zaměstnanci telefonního centra ČSOB,

Jmenuji se Jana Karásková a ráda bych Vás touto cestou požádala o **vyplnění dotazníku** pro moji bakalářskou práci.

Tato práce je vypracovávána na **University of Huddersfield** ve Velké Británii, kde tímto rokem v rámci zahraničního projektu podporovaného mojí domovskou Technickou univerzitou v Liberci studuji.

V Liberci jsem při studiu více než dva roky pracovala jako telefonní bankéřka, a proto jsem se rozhodla zvolit si tematiku telefonních center i pro tuto bakalářskou práci. Přesný název práce zní „Přístup k managementu lidských zdrojů v telefonních centrech a jeho vliv na fluktuaci zaměstnanců.“

Součástí práce je vlastní výzkum. Vedení Vašeho telefonního centra mi velice ochotně vyšlo vstříc a umožnilo provést rozhovor s manažerem a dotazníkové šetření mezi zaměstnanci.

Dotazník se týká **zaměstnanecké** (tedy Vaší) **spokojenosti**, toho co se Vám v práci líbí, co méně apod. Vyplnění dotazníku je samozřejmě **dobrovolné** a **zcela anonymní**, **nezabere Vám více než 15 minut**.

Souhrnná analýza včetně zhodnocení bude poskytnuta vedení Vašeho telefonního centra a může tak pomoci k případnému zlepšení Vašich pracovních podmínek.

Velice Vám děkuji za Vaši případnou spolupráci!

Jana Karásková

Appendix B

Vážený telefonní bankéři/ bankéřko,

Jmenuji se Jana Karásková a v rámci zahraničního projektu umožněného Technickou Univerzitou v Liberci studuji tímto rokem na University of Huddersfield ve Velké Británii.

Ráda bych Vás touto cestou požádala o spolupráci na vypracování mé závěrečné disertační práci na téma „Management lidských zdrojů v telefonních centrech“. Vzhledem k čistě akademickému charakteru této práce Vám mohu zaručit **naprostou anonymitu** veškerých Vašich poskytnutých odpovědí, které budou použity pro souhrnné statistické zpracování.

Tato souhrnná data budou také poskytnuta managementu Vašeho telefonního centra a mohou tedy přispět ke zlepšení Vašich pracovních podmínek.

Vyplnění dotazníku Vám nezabere více než 15 minut.

Pro snadné vyplnění dotazníku prosím následujte tyto **instrukce**:

1. U většiny odpovědí vyhovuje pouze 1 odpověď, kterou označte ☒.
2. Pokud je tomu jinak, instrukce jsou uvedeny za zněním otázky v závorce.

1. Spokojenost se zaměstnáním.

1.1. **Jak Vás celkově uspokojuje Vaše současné zaměstnání?** (označte prosím křížkem odpovídající místo na následující ose)

Zcela

Vůbec



1.2. Jak hodnotíte jednotlivé složky Vaší pracovní náplně? (pro každý řádek vyberte prosím 1 variantu)

Složka práce	Uspokojuje mě	Spíše mě uspokojuje	Nemám vyhraněný vztah	Spíše mi vadí	Vadí mi
Kontakt se zákazníky	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Kontakt s kolegy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Množství povoleného času odlogování, délka přestávek	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Soustavné nahrávání hovorů	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Měření výkonu (statistiky v počtu hovorů, vytíženosti...)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Měření kvality projevu („kaučing“, „zpětná vazba“)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Následování komunikačního skriptu	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stálý optimismus a ochota, které jsou ode mě očekávány	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

1.3. Co Vás na Vaší práci baví nejvíce? (vyberte prosím *jednu* odpovídající odpověď)

- ☐ spokojený zákazník
- ☐ dobrý pracovní kolektiv
- ☐ dosažení dobrých výsledků v „kaučingu“
- ☐ dosažení dobrých výsledků ve statistikách vytíženosti, počtu prodejů apod.
- ☐ jiné, prosím specifikujte
- ☐ nic

1.4. Co Vám na Vaší práci nejvíce vadí? (vyberte prosím *jednu* odpovídající odpověď)

- ☐ rozčílení, netaktní zákazníci
- ☐ stálý optimismus a ochota, které jsou ode mě očekávány
- ☐ málo odpočinku mezi hovory
- ☐ rutina, stále stejné konverzace se zákazníky jsou nudné
- ☐ jiné, prosím specifikujte
- ☐ nic

2. Povolání telefonního bankéře a stres

2.1. Vnímáte povolání telefonního bankéře jako zvýšeně stresující?

- ☐ rozhodně ano
- ☐ spíše ano
- ☐ nevím, nikdy jsem o tom nepřemýšlel(a)
- ☐ spíše ne
- ☐ rozhodně ne

2.2. Pociťujete stresové příznaky? (*Stres se projevuje velice různorodě, zamyslete se prosím, zda a v jaké míře pociťujete některé z uvedených příznaků. Uveďte prosím na každou otázku 1 vhodnou odpověď*)

Bolí vás hlava?

- ☐ velmi často
- ☐ často
- ☐ občas
- ☐ zřídka
- ☐ téměř nikdy

Cítíte se unaveni a bez energie?

- ☐ velmi často
- ☐ často
- ☐ občas
- ☐ zřídka
- ☐ téměř nikdy

Nechce se Vám komunikovat s ostatními, pokud vyloženě nemusíte?

- ☐ velmi často
- ☐ často
- ☐ občas
- ☐ zřídka
- ☐ téměř nikdy

Přeříkáváte se nebo zadržáváte se v řeči?

- ☐ velmi často
- ☐ často
- ☐ občas
- ☐ zřídka
- ☐ téměř nikdy

Pociťujete negativní emoce jako je smutek, úzkost, nervozita či neklid?

- ☐ velmi často
- ☐ často
- ☐ občas
- ☐ zřídka
- ☐ téměř nikdy

2.3. Pozorujete, že se u Vás některé stresové příznaky projevují ve větší míře od doby, kdy jste začali pracovat v telefonním centru?

- ☐ rozhodně ano
- ☐ spíše ano
- ☐ nevím, nikdy jsem o tom nepřemýšlel(a)
- ☐ spíše ne
- ☐ rozhodně ne

3. Přístup managementu

3.1. Víte o tom, že by se ve Vašem telefonním centru někdy prováděl výzkum spokojenosti zaměstnanců?

- ☐ ano ☐ ne

3.2. Uvítali byste takový výzkum?

- ☐ ano ☐ ne

3.3. Která složka Vaší práce je Vašimi nadřízenými *prezentována* (Vám *sdělována*) jako **důležitější**? (před zodpovězením této otázky si prosím přečtěte také otázku 3. 4.)

- ☐ co nejvyšší množství odbavených hovorů v co nejkratším čase (*kvantita*)
☐ spokojený zákazník (*kvalita*)

3.4. Která složka Vaší práce je podle Vás pro Vaše nadřízené **důležitější** ve *skutečnosti*?

- ☐ co nejvyšší množství odbavených hovorů v co nejkratším čase (*kvantita*)
☐ spokojený zákazník (*kvalita*)

3.5. Jak by se dala charakterizovat atmosféra ve Vašem telefonním centru? (z každé dvojice vyberte prosím 1 odpovídající variantu)

- ☐ vysoká úroveň školení a další rozvíjení znalostí a schopností zaměstnanců
☐ nízká úroveň školení, další rozvíjení znalostí a schopností zaměstnanců je nedostatečné
- ☐ tvůrčí atmosféra, možnost sebe prosazení
☐ rutina
- ☐ příjemné pracovní podmínky
☐ „tvrdé“ pracovní podmínky
- ☐ zaměstnanci zůstávají v pracovním poměru dlouho
☐ zaměstnanci pracovní poměr rychle ukončují

3.6. Jak dlouho předpokládáte setrvat v telefonním centru?

- ☐ více než 3 roky
☐ 2–3 roky
☐ 1–2 roky
☐ méně než 1 rok

4. Vaše pracovní pozice

4.2. Jaký typ hovorů převážně obstaráváte?

- ☐ příchozí hovory (úhrady, ověření zůstatku na účtu atd.)
- ☐ odchozí hovory (prodej, nabídka produktů)
- ☐ příchozí hovory (helpdesk)
- ☐ kombinace více typů, ani jeden nepřevažuje

4.3. Jak dlouho jste v tomto telefonním centru zaměstnán(a)?

- ☐ méně než 6 měsíců
- ☐ 6–12 měsíců
- ☐ 12–18 měsíců
- ☐ 18 měsíců–2 roky
- ☐ více než 2 roky

4.4. Na jaký typ pracovního úvazku jste zaměstnán(a)?

- ☐ plný úvazek
- ☐ zkrácený úvazek
- ☐ dohoda o pracovní činnosti (student)
- ☐ dohoda o pracovní činnosti (nestudent)

5. Obecné informace

5.2. Jaké je Vaše pohlaví?

- ☐ muž
- ☐ žena

5.3. Do které věkové skupiny patříte?

- ☐ 18–21 let
- ☐ 22–28 let
- ☐ 29–35 let
- ☐ 36–50 let
- ☐ 50 let a více

6. Jak se Vám tento dotazník vyplňoval?

- ☐ 
- ☐ 

Další komentář:

Velice děkuji za Váš čas a ochotu!

Jana Karásková

Appendix C

Dear phone banker,

My name is Jana Karaskova and I have been studying at the University of Huddersfield in the United Kingdom for this year. This project for international students is supported by my home university that is Technicka Univerzita in Liberec.

I would like to ask you for your kind co-operation with my final dissertation work. The topic of the dissertation is “Labour turnover and Human Resource Management in Financial call centres”. Having considered the purely academic purpose of this work, **absolute anonymity** of all your answers is guaranteed. The answers will be used only for overall statistical processing.

These overall data will be handed to your management and thus your participation can help to improvement of your working conditions.

The filling of questionnaire will not take more than 15 minutes of your time.

The following **instructions** will help you to complete this questionnaire easily:

1. Most of the questions enable just one answer. Please check the answer in this way
☒.
2. If there is another type of question, the instructions are mentioned after wording of the particular question in the brackets.

1. Job satisfaction.

1.1. How are you satisfied with your job? (*mark please the corresponding point on the line*)

At all
●
●
 Not at all

1.2. How would you evaluate the particular elements of your work? (*choose please one appropriate answer in each row*)

The job element	I like it	I rather like it	I don't mind	I rather dislike it	I dislike it
The interaction with customers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The interaction with peers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The length of „log-out“, the length of brakes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Continuously taping of calls	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Measurement of performance (efficiency, number of sales...)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Measurement of quality („couching“, „feed-back“)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Following the conversational script	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The optimism and willingness that are expected of me at any time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

1.3. What do you like most in your job? (*choose please only one answer*)

- ☐ Satisfied customer
- ☐ Interaction with peers
- ☐ Achievement of good results in the „couching“
- ☐ Achievement of good results in the performance statistics
- ☐ Something else, please specify
- ☐ Nothing

1.4. What do you dislike most in your job? (*choose please only one answer*)

- ☐ Angry and impolite customers
- ☐ The optimism and willingness that are expected of me at any time
- ☐ Lack of relax between the calls
- ☐ Routine, the repeating conversations with customers are boring
- ☐ Something else, please specify
- ☐ Nothing

2. Call centre job and stress

2.1. Do you think that the call centre job as an increasingly stressful one?

- ☐ Definitely yes
- ☐ Rather yes
- ☐ I don't know, I've never thought about it
- ☐ Rather no
- ☐ Definitely no

2.2. Do you perceive the stress symptoms? *(The stress symptoms are very various, take a think please if or may how intensive you perceive the particular symptoms. Please check one appropriate answer to each question.)*

Do you have head-ache?

- ☐ Very often
- ☐ often
- ☐ sometimes
- ☐ rarely
- ☐ almost never

Do you perceive lack of energy or tiredness?

- ☐ Very often
- ☐ often
- ☐ sometimes
- ☐ rarely
- ☐ almost never

Do you have no taste to communicate with the others if you don't have to?

- ☐ Very often
- ☐ often
- ☐ sometimes
- ☐ rarely
- ☐ almost never

Do you make a slip of the tongue?

- ☐ Very often
- ☐ often
- ☐ sometimes
- ☐ rarely
- ☐ almost never

Do you feel negative emotions such as sadness, anxiety, tizzy or unease?

- ☐ Very often
- ☐ often
- ☐ sometimes
- ☐ rarely
- ☐ almost never

2.3. Do you observe that some of the stress symptoms have appeared or get worst since you have been starting to work in the call centre?

- ☐ Definitely yes
- ☐ Rather yes
- ☐ I don't know, I've never thought about it
- ☐ Rather no
- ☐ Definitely no

3. Approach of management

3.1. Have you experienced any employee survey in your call centre?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

3.2. Would you appreciate such survey?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

3.3. Which aspect of your work does the management of your call centre *present* (*communicate to you*) as the more important one? (Read please the question 3.4. before answering this question.)

- ☐ Volume of calls (*quantity*)
☐ Satisfied customer (*quality*)

3.4. Which aspect of your work do you *perceive* as the priority of the management?

- ☐ Volume of calls (*quantity*)
☐ Satisfied customer (*quality*)

3.5. How would you describe the atmosphere in your call centre? (Please choose one appropriate answer from each *pair*.)

- ☐ High-quality training; high level of employee development
☐ Low-quality training; low level of employee development
- ☐ Creative atmosphere
☐ Routine
- ☐ Soft work conditions
☐ Hard work conditions
- ☐ Employees usually stay in the job for a long time
☐ Employees usually leave the job early

3.6. How long do you suppose to stay in your current job?

- ☐ More than 3 years
☐ 2–3 years
☐ 1–2 years
☐ Less than 1 year

4. Job position

4.1. What type of calls do you mainly attend?

- ☐ Transactions (in-bound calls)
- ☐ Sales (out-bound calls)
- ☐ Helpdesk (in-bound calls)
- ☐ More of them, anyone has the priority

4.2. How long have you been in your current job?

- ☐ Less than 6 months
- ☐ 6–12 months
- ☐ 12–18 months
- ☐ 18 months–2 years
- ☐ More than 2 years

4.3. Which type of the employment contract do you have?

- ☐ Full time job
- ☐ Part time job
- ☐ Contract for work (a student)
- ☐ Contract for work (not student)

5. Overall information

5.1. What's your gender?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

5.2. What's your age?

- ☐ 18–21 years
- ☐ 22–28 years
- ☐ 29–35 years
- ☐ 36–50 years
- ☐ 50 years and more

6. Did you like this questionnaire?

- ☐ 
- ☐ 

Your comments:

Thank you very much for your time and
kindliness!

Jana Karáskova