A STUDY ON WORKING ENVIRONMENT OF
INDIAN WOMEN PROFESSIONAL IN I.T. & B.P.O. INDUSTRY

Mrs. Kirti Kalra[*]
Dr. Renu Pareek[**]

ABSTRACT

Today, India is a force in global economy with high demand for talent; a key talent is Indian professional women. According to national sample survey organization (NSSO) 2009-10, the Indian size of workforce is between 430 to 471 million & in it around 24 percent are females. The total aggregate revenue of IT & BPO sector in 2016 is USD 154 billion, growing at10.3 percent. India has increased its market share in global 56%.in 2011 & its total contribution in GDP is 7.7 percent (NSSCOM Report- strategic review 2017). It means India has been continuing in maintaining its competitive effectiveness in global IT & BPO industry. And the key driving force behind this success is our Indian professional women. In spite of that only 5% of women reach the top management as compared to global average of 20%. A recent report by McKinsey said that –if men & women in India are to be equally employed India's GDP can grow up to 60 percent by 2025, so the question arises that why are the Indian women have not been fully recognized & considered in corporate world, even though cultural and societal changes are supporting to increase opportunities for them. So this article tries to analyses those working environment factors which creates obstacles or hindrances in the career of Indian women with special reference to I.T. and BPO industry.

KEYWORDS: Global Economy, NSSCOM, NSSO, GDP, IT & BPO Industry, Working Environment.

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Introduction

IT and BPO: Why this Sector

In India, Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) and IT is the fastest growing segment of the ITES (Information Technology Enabled Services) industry. Factors such as economy of scale, business risk mitigation, cost advantage; utilization improvement and superior competency have all lead to the growth of the Indian BPO and IT industry. The sector is estimated to aggregate revenues of USD 130 billion in FY2015-16, with the IT software and services sector (excluding hardware) and accounting for USD 154 billion of revenues in FY2016-17. As per NASSCOM, 2.5-3 million new job will be created by IT and BPO industry till 2025 and in 2017 formed 1,70,000 new jobs and boasted total employee base of 3.9 billion. As a proportion of national GDP, the sector revenues have grown from 1.2 per cent in FY1998 to an estimated 7.8 percent in FY 2017(NASSCOM Strategic Review 2017).

Objective of the Study

- To analyze the working environment of IT & BPO sectors.
- To study main causes of stress among the women employee in these sector.
- To suggests the possible remedial measures to overcome stresses.

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[*]   Research Scholar, Suresh Gyan Vihar University, Jaipur, Rajasthan, India.
[**]   Principal, ISBM, Suresh Gyan Vihar University, Jaipur, Rajasthan, India.

Along with if we see profile of IT and BPO's employee, they are referred as 'Gold collar' employee. Earning huge salaries and generally leading flashy lifestyle. Research conducted by the ASSOCHAM reports that around 85% of respondents in BPOs and call centers were disconnected with their job, primarily due to work life balance issues. They work for more than 60 hours a week, as compared to the 40-48 hours standards in the US and Europe . This phenomenon is indeed a wake call for IT and BPO companies. The impression seems to be that the IT/ BPO employees who work in the "US/ UK shifts" have no life beyond 30 to 35 years.

These industries have associated with high purchasing power and flashy life, long and odd working hours, work pressure, tough deadlines, eating disorders, monotonous work, sedentary lifestyle and lack of physical exercise. All these take their toll on the health of the employee. Physical illness such as: backache, constipation, BP, diabetes and psychological problems like stress, short temper, and depression are the one related hazards of a BPO and IT jobs, their unreachable works hours leave little time for family and friends, no leisure pursuit and few and brief vacation.

These trends are applied for the all IT professionals across software and BPO, which shows an imbalance in their professional work life. If we see an Indian working woman in above mentioned life, woman cannot sustain her career life for longer time due to social culture constraints. A woman has to play multiple roles in her life – that of a wife, mother, an employee, sister, daughter, and daughter in law etc. The most conflicting role that she has to simultaneously play is balancing the roles of a mother and the employee. As a result she does not able to perform any of her roles of life properly and this creates frustration and irritation. So when she is performing different roles, there are different types of stress she has to face, both from the side of work and the family.

Main Causes of Stress among the Women Professionals

- **Work Pressure:** work pressure arises from the work place due to job stress, role ambiguity, and poor relationship with superior/peers, Odd timings, Family responsibilities etc. In the current scenario Women has to work 10 to 12 Hour in the office, both mentally and physically. Even when she is at her Home, A Women may be mentally in her office. She has to manage the work pressure, along with pressure that arises due to different relations in her personal life.

- **Family Responsibility:** it considerably affects the career decision of women professionals. It is generally expected that the female spouse should take care of the family responsibility. Women professionals agree that children's responsibility hinders their ability to advance. They think that they are not able to utilize their full potential and at times they have to make career tradeoffs because of the family responsibilities. They also believe that putting career ahead of family leads to social disapproval and rejection.

- **Glass Ceiling**: The concept of "Glass ceiling" explains an invisible block that happens in career development path of Women, this can create emotional stress for women. Every individual will try to grow according to the capacity and abilities. In the case of Women, An invisible block in the career ladders can result in stress. Moreover it will affect their moral and create a drift in their career planning. When stress happen on one side, it will have its impact on other side.

- **Sexual Harassment:** sexual harassment is an obstacle to the proper integration of women into career life. Sexual harassment pollutes the working environment and can have a devastating effect upon the health, confidence, morale and performance of those affected by it.

- **Effects of Sexual Harassment**

  - Decreased work performance and efficiencies
  - Increased absenteeism to avoid harassment, or because of illness from the stress
  - Having to take more time off work, drop courses, or change job
  - Being objectified and humiliated by scrutiny and gossip
  - Defamation of character and reputation
  - Extreme stress upon relationships with significant others, sometimes resulting in divorce; extreme stress on peer relationships, or relationships with colleagues
  - Loss of career
  - Weakening of support network: colleagues, friends, and even family may distance themselves from the victim.

- **Stress Due to Travel Time:** Most IT & BPO sectors are locates on the outskirts of cities and therefore most Women employees spent a long travelling time to and from their office.

- **Workplace atmosphere:** Workplace atmosphere consists of working facilities, relationships with the colleagues, ventilation of building Etc, which can play a major part in the formation of stress. The most important element in this relationship with superior, peers, subordinates etc. They play a major role in maintaining the emotional balance. If an employee is emotionally relaxed then only she could produce quality and quantity performance. Key points to restrict upward mobility of women professionals are:
  - Stereotyping and perception of roles and abilities of women
  - Commitments of family responsibility.
  - Exclusion of women professionals from informal networks and communication
  - Lack of significant general or line experience
  - Lack of mentoring.
  - Lack of gender – sensitive policies by the employer.
  - Sexual harassment

- **Management Style:** The negative attitude and gender stereotypes at workplace create a significant negative impact on the position of women managers. This will affect the quality and quantity of work of women employees. The study suggests Indian male are viewed stereotypically as working in the areas of managers, Good leaders, Decision makers & Bosses. On the other hand Indian Women are viewed as working in Back office, HR, PR, Administrative role at low to junior level which create negative attitude physically and mentally both to the women employee.

- **Multitasking:** Women have to play different role at different times. Sometimes, she has to play as a worker or as a wife. Where she has to maintain Balance in work life as both are equally important. The whole future of the family lies in the hand of the wife, at the same time she is concern about achieving her career goals. These types of multiple roles bring stress, especially emotion among women employees. A small mistake in multiple roles will affect the life of many persons because a mother plays an important role in mounding the character of her children. So it is necessary to control the emotions and physical stress for women employees.

- **Stress due to overtime and odd time:** Company encourage overtime with incentives this can be a major reason for stress. Initially women fresher who are willing to do overtime for making more money feel stressed once they are into it and performing. The geographical time difference with US and UK makes Indian employees have to work in nights for long. This odd time creates stress and causes a drastic change in activities in the body.
  - **Stress due insufficient holidays:** The Indian women employee have to work on Indian holidays because US and UK process do not observe Indian holiday.
  - **Stress due to repetitive nature of work:** Monotonous work is also creating frustration and irritation among women employees because there is no creativeness and innovation into a work.

Here We Giving Some Facts Related Our Indian Women Professionals

If we analyze above mentioned facts our Indian women are not behind from men in terms of talent, performance and quality work. Along with if woman gets supportive family, both before and after marriage, gives boost to get success into her professional life. Today, most urban Indian men want educated and well- informed life partner, who supports him financially. Hence Indian culture is also changing and accepting working women in IT and BPO sectors especially in call centers. Here we are suggesting some tips that help her to manage the work life balance properly to achieve her objectives of life. Key strength of Indian Women as Managers are:

- Ability to network with colleagues
- Ability to perceive and understand situation
- Strong sense of dedication, loyalty an commitment to their organization
- Ability to multitask
- Collaborative work style – solicit input from other, with respect to ideas Crisis management skill
- Willingness to share information (interactive leadership style)
- Sensitivity in relationship(compassionate, empathetic, understanding)
- Behaving in gender neutral manner

Source: Adopted from budhwar P.S., Saini, D.S., & Bhatnagar, J (2005, June). Women in management in new economic environment: the case of India . Asia pacific business review, 11(2), 179-193

Significant Steps for Women Employees to Managing Stress into IT and BPO Sector

- **Self Awareness:** who am I? The answer of this question will increase the self –esteem and self respect. Try to understand the strength and weakness of your own personality then reduce the weakness and increase the strength of the character. This self perception increases the confidence level and it finally helps to maintain an emotional balance. Emotional balance plays a very important role in one's life, more so far a woman. If she is emotionally fit, she can handle any problem that occurs in her life.
- **Meditation:** meditation is another type of strategy that reduces the tension to cope with work-life balance. It helps to prioritize the work or activities that a person has to do in multitasking. Proper prioritizing helps to reduce the stress.
- **Time Management:** it helps an employee to do the activities at proper time in good quality. Women have to perform different roles, which are equally important. To maintain quality in different roles, she has to maintain a good time management. Therefore, it helps her to list the important activities and fix different times for each activity according to its importance
- **Yoga:** Yoga is a physical exercise that helps to control our emotions. There are different types of yoga which help to reduce tension and help to create a good mental health. It helps to concentrate and helps to stay focused on the career goals. It control anger, anxiety, frustration, etc. and maintain a good balance between personal needs and the professional requirements.
- **Recreations:** recreation is the most important strategy that is used to reduce the stress. Occasional family outings could help strengthen family relationship. This is also applicable at the workplace. A trip with the colleagues in the office will help to decrease the tension existing in the work atmospheres.

Organization Support for Managing Work: Family Challenge of Working Women

Managing stress and work–family challenges is not only personal responsibility of the employee; it is also the responsibility of the employers. IT and BPO sector have to concentrate on the welfare of its women employees. They should provide fringe benefits according to the need of the women employees. Some recommendations for Indian organization to promote a supportive workplace for a woman are:

- **Flexi Time:** flexi time is a type of fringe benefits that allows the employee to choose their working hours but within a specified period. The most important advantage of the women employee from this is that she can choose the starting time and finishing time of the job according to her wish. She can spend enough time with her family and at the same time concentrate on her career planning.
- **Telecommunication:** the development in the field of information technology has helped women employee to work from home or while travelling this is an important and feasible concept, which provide a great freedom of work to the employee.
- **Condensed work week:** This technique involve compressing the work week by increasing the number of work hours per day, So a women employee can choose the working hours according to her wishes. Normally 40hours work period are condensed in to five days by increasing the number of working hours from eight to ten working hours per day. One of the most important advantages is it will reduce the absenteeism and tardiness at the workplace and gives the women employee more time for her personal needs.
- **Work from home:** The employee can work on a normal basis and visit the office only once or twice in a week. This will help employee in saving a lot of time and resources, as they need to spend time and money travelling to and from the office. The biggest advantage for the women employee is they can serve the need of their family members and their professional life.
- **Job sharing:** in this type of technique the female employee can share the work of a full time employee, can reorganize her working time to suit her personal need, and concentrate on her job.
- **Special Training Program**: establish training programs for women, such as mentorship, career guidance, leadership management, stress management, yoga classes to reduce her work – family tension.
- **Awareness**: promote an awareness initiative that highlights the value of women mangers.
- **Involvement in Business decision:** Elicit input from the woman employee regarding polices, promotion and performance review processes. Have true commitment to hire and promote

women and include women in annual business strategy, which create a trust for the organization.

- **Women Cell: Every organization should make a women cell into their organization for following purpose:**
  - Uphold the dignity of women at workplace.
  - To facilitate a gender-sensitive and congenial working environment to not create gender specific discrimination.
  - To take action against complaints of the informal and formal means by any female employee.
  - To provide information regarding counseling and support services on organization.
  - Interaction with women's to give them motivation and information regarding law and rules which protect them from harassment and violence.

Conclusion

In the modern era, there is no discrimination between men and women. Both have to work equally for the well being of the family. In order to reduce the stress, the woman employee should make use of the fringe benefits that are provided to her. Therefore she can manage both the work and life. Woman has the capacity to manage everything if she feels that it is challenge to her. She knows how to manage work life and play a good role in these areas. On other hand promoting diverse management practices and opening doors to women in management- through proactive human resource policies and program- is one way for Indian organizations to expand their talent pool. A good education, mentoring, family support, boldness, strong communication, strong emotion and lifelong learning are essential factors for Indian working professionals today. If she carries all these quality no one can stop her to make her position into corporate world.

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