

## WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT- AN ELEMENT OF STRESS FOR BPO EMPLOYEES

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Manisha Sinha\*

### ABSTRACT

*The onset of globalization was first felt in the 1990s in India and with this India experienced remarkable drift from manufacturing to the Information Technology- based industry and BPO is the quickest growing phase of IT- industry. Today most companies in the US and UK outsource IT-related business processes to Indian BPO s. So in India, Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) is growing by leaps and bounds. But this service organization has been plagued by many problems including high stress level. Several studies have examined different causes and factors of stress. This study attempts to access the relation of workplace environment to stress and hence attrition of BPO employees.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Workplace Environment, BPO, Employees, Stress, Attrition.*

### Introduction

Grossman and Helpman's (2005: 135) statement, "we live in an age of outsourcing," clearly designates that outsourcing has now become an acknowledged, accepted and established business strategy. One of the most familiar form of outsourcing is Business Process Outsourcing (BPO), i.e., transferring the operational ownership of one or more of the firm's business process to an external supplier that in turn administer the processes according to some predefine metrics.

The global BPO market is transforming at speedy rate. Many principal business companies are adopting BPO as a strategic business solution. this outsourcing industry was of value \$7 billion in 2006, has currently grown to the value of about \$120 billion, this tremendous growth prospects in BPO and has shown a lot of promise. And India is no exception to this growth, The Information Technology (IT) and Information Technology based Services (ITES) industry are in their fastest growing phase in modern India. In India, the ITES (Information Technology Enabled Services) industry that started hardly 2 decades ago has now grown by leap and bounds. Particularly Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) is the fastest growing sector of ITES in India. Today Indian BPO has become the hot cake in global market. Looking at the hit side of this growing BPO industry, a number of leading software service companies also made a foray into the BPO domain, either directly or through merger and acquisitions route. Most Indian IT leaders such as Wipro, Patni, Satyam, HCL, have their presence in the global service market. This caused a shift of the Indian economy towards more service orientation economy and it suggest that in the long term, India will continue to be a major player in the global BPO industry. The number of people directly employed in BPO industry was 1.6 million in 2006-07 and indirectly employed was about 1.2 million in ancillary services like transportation, catering, infrastructure, etc. (Nasscom Strategic Review, 2007).

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\* PhD Research Scholar, Department of Management, Lalit Narayan Mithila University, Darbhanga, Bihar, India.

This sector provides a lot of job opportunities to a huge population because this industry does not require too high skill sets or qualifications. Even the under-graduates are accepted for certain job roles. The BPOs provide exciting salary package, attractive perks and a jazzy ambience that attract youngsters. They enjoy the advantage of working with reputed brands, the corporate culture that is only accessible to graduates from IIT/IIM, superior work environment and a wide range of facilities.

In spite of these advantages the BPO sector faces high attrition rate mainly because the BPO industry is one of the highly stressed out industries. BPO employees face job stress of heavy workloads, performance targets, large call volume, long travel time, unfriendly working environment along with tight rules and procedures. In addition to these factors there are many other factors which cause occupational stress among BPO employees.

### **Research Methodology**

BPO, is one of the highly competitive sectors in India but have been facing greater challenges since the beginning of this decade due to technological changes and global BPOs. The increased competition leads to job stress. The purpose of the study is to find out if working environment is the key factors responsible for creating the level of stress or not. The present study made use of secondary sources of data. The sources of secondary data include reports from NASSCOM, and the research reports on BPOs from various journals.

### **Literature Review**

Indian BPO industry has come to full circle but sadly, this industry is highly stressed out. As this BPO industry provides such enormous job opportunities but is paralyzed by high attrition rate and high job stress, so naturally much studies have been done to study and analyze the different aspect of job stress. Number of studies has attempted to explain work environment in various areas. Work environment is one of the factors that affect employee's decision to stay with the organization (Zeytinoglu & Denton, 2005). Employees' who are more satisfied with their physical office environment are more likely to be productive and produce better work outcomes. (Dole & Schroeder, 2001). Employees' satisfaction with their office environment is one of the key indicator of performance and success of an organization (Kamarulzaman et. Al., 2011).

**Hytter (2008)** analyzed that the work environment has commonly been discussed by industrial perspective, i.e. with a focus on physical aspects such as noise, exposure to toxic substance etc. the interesting part is that the characteristics of work environment vary in services sector as compared to production sector because it has to interact with clients/consumer (**Norman 1986**). Depending on the kind of business, interaction will be more or less frequent and intense. This interaction between employee and clients hence demand move of focus from physical to psycho social dimension of workplace environment. So It's very important to recognize the emerging needs of individuals to keep them committed and provide the work environment as necessitate (Ramlall, 2003) **Milory (2004)** reported that people enjoy working and strive to work in those organizations that provide positive work environment where they feel that they are making difference and most people in the organization are proficient and pulling together to move the organization forward.

Work environment is a very broad term that includes physical environment as well as well-being of the employees. The BPO industry is characterized by hostile working condition, unusual working hours that increases the stress. During peak hours the workplace condition inside the BPO is hectic. Everybody is working to come up to deadlines inside the office it is very cold, the systems are kept very close, employees sit very close. There is no pick and drop facility, poor cafeteria, proper parking in domestic **BPOs (Ghazi, 2006)**. Dash, Chopra, Krishnan, Singh & Muthyala (2014) said that attrition due to work environment factors and attrition due to compensation- related factors were the only factors with significant impact on the attrition rate.

**R. Neelamegam and S.Asrafi (2010)** in their article said that Stress is a general term applied to the pressures felt in life. Stress at work is almost inevitable in many jobs. According to N Kathirvel (2009) Stress is the reaction that people take due to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them. According to Pratibha Garg (2010) Job or occupational stress is mismatch between the individual capabilities and organizational demands stress is caused due to work overload, an expected high work pace, difficult work schedules, role conflict, job insecurity, poor inter personal relationships and unpleasant working conditions.

### Workplace Environment

Workplace environment means physical and geographical location as well as the immediate surroundings of the workplace. Workplace environment include other factors relating to place of employment, such as the noise level, quality of air, lightening, hygiene, other physical facilities and amenities including additional perks and benefits of employment as free childcare or unlimited coffee or adequate parking. A workplace environment can be identified as the place that one works i.e. in an office building in a cube, at home, at kitchen table, from a car or truck, at construction site. All are workplace environments. However, " a healthy workplace environment " points to other factors of workplace environment as co-workers, air quality, car parking, ergonomic seating, management, child care, noise and even the size of one's cube. A workplace environment doesn't require a job but it requires that work has to be done in some place.

Workplace environment must be safe and healthy and must provide the resources necessary to complete the task assigned. An ideal environment is stimulated with all the necessary job tools present and ready for use. Some factors of workplace environment could exert positive effect on working capacity of the employee like better working atmosphere and some factors could exert negative effect on the employees like unhygienic working interiors. People enjoy working and strive to work in those organizations that provide positive work environment. *Goswami and Jha (2012) observed that women employees are much less possible to switch job, simply for a modest (10-15%) hike in salaries. If given proper workplace environment, women tend to live longer than men in action<sup>1</sup>.* so workplace environment is one of the important factors controlling stress and hence affects attrition in an organization.

### Stress

Stress is defined as the state, in which is accompanied by physical, psychological or social complaints or dysfunctions and which results from individuals feeling unable to bridge a gap with the requirements or expectations placed on them.... Stress is not a disease but prolonged exposure to dissatisfaction and it may reduce effectiveness at work and may cause ill- health. BPO jobs are inherently stressful due to long working hours, night shifts, irate clients, work overload and disturbed biorhythm. Overtime, continued job stress is resulting in employee burnout. BPO employees faces constant pressure to ensure the quality of service by performing on metrics, i.e., shorter call times, higher call volumes, lower cost, reutilizing, centralizing, conformance to standards, higher customer satisfaction, etc. they have a hard time in maintaining a balance between quality and quantity of calls handled. Their motivation gets fast depleted due to monotonous nature of work and lack of opportunities for personal and professional growth. New employee enters a BPO with matchless enthusiasm and vigor which fades as job stress kicks in.

### Conclusion

The call centers provide lots of opportunities, but the employees are clear about their needs. It is a fact that the life of many employees in BPO industry is more stressful than others working in other industry working environment, job security, physical facilities etc. create medium stress among them. So, the organization should identify the source of stress. Stress due to poor working environment and high workload can cause much stress and result in high attrition rate. So, better and conductive environment can help positive attitude of employees. Providing better hygienic sanitation, temperature control, work space, cafeteria, holiday etc. can reduce stress and thus can help in retaining employees.

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