

PROBLEMS FACED BY WORKING WOMEN EMPLOYEES IN BPOS SECTOR

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ABSTRACT:

The growth of the BPO industry has been tremendous when compared to other industries in India. Women employees constitute about one-third of the total workforce in BPOs in India. The main objective of the study was to understand the problems faced by women employees in BPOs sector. The study was based on primary data collected from Pune. Questionnaire technique was chosen for effective elicitation of data from the respondents. The results of the study showed that women employees in BPOs have different kinds of problems and challenges in the workplace. Some problems are definitely common, like mental and physical stress, lack of proper balance between employment and family care, unfair treatment in the workplace, stressful life and work place discrimination etc. But some challenges are age or category specific, like prejudiced and stereotyped thinking, safety and security issues, etc.

Key Words: Women, Employees, BPO, Information Technology.

INTRODUCTION:

The global expansion of software and IT enabled services has opened up new vistas for women in India. The major resource required by the software and services outsourcing in India is a steady supply of educated technical labour or 'knowledge workers'. The industry is considered to provide a good avenue for the employment of women, who have conventionally not opted for technical occupations, but have the essential knowledge base and flexibility to adjust themselves to the outsourcing industry.

Women are now occupying a prominent position in the labour force. According to NASSCOM, the focus on women by the IT-BPO industry is in part an acknowledgment of their growing role in India's economy. The Indian IT-BPO industry, in fact, has become synonymous with some truly pioneering work related to women

employees, and the sector, more than other industries in India, has been launching initiatives designed to promote the interests of women in their workplace.

The important factors that encourage women workforce to participate in IT sector are for embracing a white-collar job with comparatively high salary, easy international mobility, gender-neutral policy based on knowledge-centric skills possession, flexible work routine and physically less demanding work process in comfortable indoor work- environment (Upadhy: 2006). NASSCOM report says that BPO industry prefers women, due to more pleasant voice and demeanor when interacting with customers. In India, almost 70% of the total youngster population is doing job in the BPO. Women employees constitute about one-third of the total workforce in BPOs in India.

Though there is major economic contribution of women to the BPO industry, yet several challenges and problems faced by the women employees still remain to be addressed. Some of the major challenges include safe transportation, flexible working hours, night shifts, socio-cultural factors and sexual harassment. Though, Government of India has made certain strict rules and regulations regarding the safety and security of women working in the BPOs and Call Centers, yet the number of incidents of murders and rapes are increasing in India. On this background the main objective of the study was to understand the problems faced by women employees in BPOs sector.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study attempts to address the following key research objectives:

1. To study the socio-economic profile of women employees working in the BPOs.
2. To study the socio-economic, socio-cultural and health related problems faced by working women in the BPOs sector.

METHODOLOGY:

The following methodological procedure was used for conducting the present study:

a) Type of Research Design:

For this study descriptive type research design was adopted.

b) The Universe and the Sampling Design:

The present study was carried out in Pune and suburban area of this city by selecting BPO professionals. To carry out the study in a more accurate and easier way, convenience sampling method was adopted. A sample of 60 women employees was selected for gathering primary data.

c) Methods of Data Collection:

Primary data were collected with the help of structured questionnaire, discussions with the BPO employees and personal observation as a tool for data collection. Secondary data were collected from books, journals, magazine, articles, published reports, newspaper, internet, unpublished reports, etc.

d) Analysis and Interpretation of Data:

The statistical tools like percentages and averages used to analyze the data. The collected data were analyzed with the help of computer by means of SPSS software and Excel. The out-put was utilized for analysis and interpretation.

MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY:**A) Respondent's Profile:**

The profile of women employees in BPOs, their age, caste category, family residence, their education, marital status and family's monthly income data has been analyzed and the results are presented in Table-1.

Variables		Frequency	(%)
1) Age	18-21	17	28.33
	22-25	33	55.00
	26-30	07	11.67
	30 and above	03	05.00
2) Caste category	Open	32	53.33
	SC	14	23.33
	OBC	09	15.00
	Other	05	08.34
3) Family residence	Rural	13	21.67
	Urban	47	78.33

4) Education	Graduate	34	56.67
	Post-Graduate	08	13.33
	Diploma	12	20.00
	Other (ITI, etc.)	06	10.00
5) Marital status	Married	17	28.33
	Unmarried	43	71.67

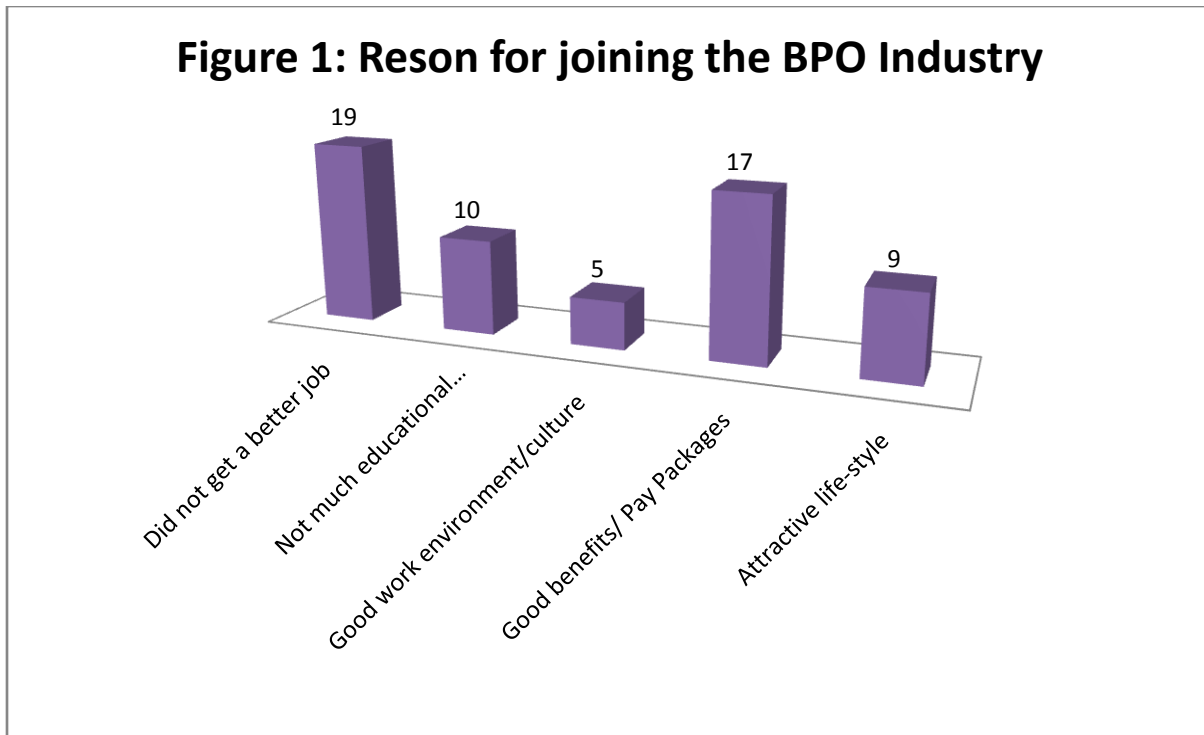
As per the data shown in Table-1, it is interpreted that generally the majority (33 or 55%) women employees working in the BPOs are between 22-25 years of age. Very few of them are above 30 years. Majority (32 or 53.33%) women employees belong to open category and their family residence from urban area (47 or 78.33%). Majority (34 or 56.67 %) respondents have completed graduation, 12 (20%) respondents have completed diploma, 8 (13.33 %) respondents have completed Post-graduation and remaining 6 (10%) respondents have completed ITI education. Very few of the women employees are married (17 or 28.33%). Most of them are unmarried (43 or 71.67%).

Reason for joining BPO industry:

It was very interesting in this study to know the reason behind joining the BPO industry from women respondents. Multiple responses are reported by respondents and these are distributed in table no. 2

Table No. 2: Reason of the joining the industry

Reason	Frequency	Percentage
Did not get a better job	19	31.67
Not much educational qualification required	10	16.67
Good work environment/culture	05	08.33
Good benefits/ Pay Packages	17	28.33
Attractive life-style	09	15.00
Total	60	100.0



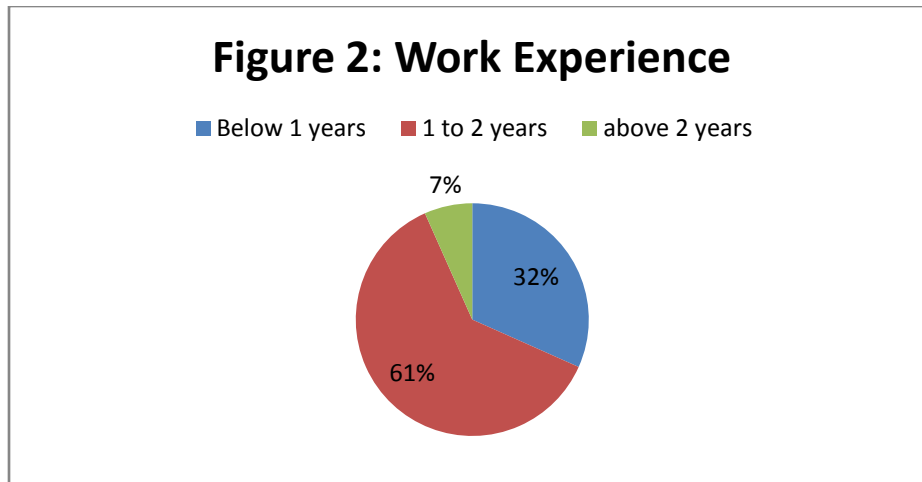
The above data reveal that according to majority (19 or 31.67 %) of respondents, the most predominant reason why employees choose the BPO industry is that, they did not get a better job than that of this industry. While, 17 (28.33%) reported that good pay packages are their major factor behind joining the industry, 10 (16.67 %) respondents give preference to this industry because not much qualification required here and 9 (15%) because of attractive life style. Respondents, also cite reasons of work-culture, as other contributing factors in decreasing order of priority.

Work Experience:

The classification of respondents on the basis of their work experience has been given in Table no. 3.

Table No. 3: Work Experience of the Respondents

Experience (Yr.)	Frequency	Percentage
Below 1 years	19	31.67
1 to 2 years	37	61.66
above 2 years	04	06.67
Total	60	100.0



Most of the respondents (37 or 61.66%) are new in the BPO sector with an average of 1-2 years experience of service. The next most numbered years of service experience are below 1 year (19 or 31.67%).

B) Problems Faced by Women Employees

There are many socio-economic, socio-cultural and health related problems faced by the women employees in call centers. The responses of the respondents regarding these problems are presented below.

Socio-economic problems:

The responses of the respondents regarding socio-economic problems are presented in table no. 4.

Table-4: Socio-economic Problems faced by Women Employees

Problems	Agree	Disagree	No opinion
Lack of family support	46 (76.67%)	14 (23.33%)	--
Work-Life Imbalance	52 (86.67%)	08 (13.33%)	--
Lack of socialization	58 (96.67%)	02 (3.33%)	--
Gender Discrimination	38 (63.33%)	17 (28.33%)	05(8.34%)
Financial problems	41 (68.33%)	19 (31.67%)	--

The major socio-economic problem faced by women employees is lack of socialization. 96.67% of the respondents agree for they have no time to socialize and many of them have lost many friends as they are unable to spend time with them. 86.67% of the respondents agree that they have faced many problems related to their work-life imbalance. 76.67% of the respondents said that due to odd timings and less salaries they have faced the problem of lack of family support. 68.33% of the respondents said that they have faced financial problems also as

the salaries drawn by them are very less to meet their own expenses, then savings and rearing families is out of question. 63.33% of the respondents have complained about gender discrimination and to surprise 8.34% of the respondents they have not answered this question.

Socio-Cultural Problems:

The responses of the respondents regarding socio-cultural problems are presented in table no. 5.

Table-5: Cultural Problems faced by Women Employees

Problems	Yes	No	No opinion
Unequal respect	37 (61.67%)	23 (38.33%)	--
Sexual harassment	35 (58.33%)	14 (23.33%)	11 (18.34%)
Drug addiction	26 (43.33%)	31 (51.67%)	03 (5.00%)
Illegal Relationships and Affairs	23 (38.33%)	35 (58.34%)	02 (3.33%)
Unhealthy Comments by co-workers	45 (75.00%)	15 (25.00%)	--

The above table no. 5 shows, majority (37 or 61.67 %) of respondents feel that they have faced the problem of unequal respect from the male co-worker. 58.33% reported that they faced sexual harassment at the workplace. 43.33% of the respondents reported that they have faced the problem of drug addiction e.g. smoking and drinking at the workplace but 51.67% of the respondents said that this has become the part of work culture and they are comfortable with it. 38.33% of the respondents said that they have faced the problem of illegal relationships and affairs with partner. 75% of the respondents said that they faced the problem of communicating with their co-workers as they use language about which they were not aware of and they use slangs which are not common with them.

Health Problems:

Stress has affected employees working in all sectors, especially the service sector. Professional stress or job stress poses a threat to physical and mental health. Work related stress in the life of employees, would affect the well-being of the organizations as well. The most important stress causing factors are: the pressure to achieve the targets, work timings, work load, irate customer, etc. Therefore it is interesting in this study to know that the employees who works in BPO are face any health problem due to their nature of work.

The classification of respondents on the basis of their opinion about facing health problems due to nature

of their work has been given in Table no. 6.

Table No. 6: **Opinion about Facing Health Problems**

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	58	96.67
No	02	03.33
Total	60	100.00

The above table no. 6 shows, majority (58 or 96.67 %) of respondents feel that due to their nature of work they face various health hazards/problems like: nervousness, chronic fatigue, body ache, insomnia, anxiety, restlessness, depression, digestive problems, etc. But only 2 (3.33 %) respondent's feel that they have not face any health problem due to nature of work.

CONCLUSION

Conclusions related to the problems faced by working women in BPO sector drawn from the analysis of responses: Women are discriminated against in all walks of life. Women are subjugated, dominated and exploited both at work places and home. Women are generally unable to give proper and quality time to her family so they unable to maintain work-life balance and family support. Working women generally face workplace sexual harassment, gender discrimination and financial problems. Due to work related stress they face various health related problems in their life. The woman is a creator and now she has adopted the role of earner for the family. The society and family support is must for boosting their spirits and equal treatment at work place is equally important for them to achieve success in their life.

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