

## **Quality of Working Life of BPO employees: Literature Review**

**\*Madhavi Challa**

*Ushodaya Business school, Hyderabad, Telangana*

### **Abstract**

QWL is short form of Quality of Working Life, Quality means 'what something is like or how good or bad something is. BPO (Business Process Outsourcing) is the assignment of responsibility of one or more IT-Enabled Services to a service provider that in turn owns, administers and manages the selected process based on defined and measurable performance criteria.

BPO is one of the quick growing sectors of the IT-Enabled Services (ITES) in India in general and Hyderabad in particular. National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM) reported impressive Compound Annual Growth Rate (CARG) in the BPO sector in the India.

Quality of Working Life, an employee is said to be satisfied if he has quality life with better standard of living, better lifestyle and good work life balance. During the past few years researchers focused on QWL more from the perspective of the employees and fulfilment of their needs rather than focussing on the differentiated work culture from the place of actual work.

The purpose is to bring the following

1. To identify negative impacts of the work culture.
2. Problems faced by the techies of BPOs in Hyderabad.

Scope: Deals with QWL in BPO employees in Hyderabad, Telangana.

Limitations: Limited to Hyderabad and Secunderabad cities.

Implications: The findings and directions for further studies are discussed.

**Keywords:** QWL, BPO sector, Call Centres, ITES, NASSCOM, Techies.

Autonomy, ITES and Job Satisfaction.

## 1. Introduction

BPO is one of the fastest growing sectors of the ITES industry (Sharma, 2004), further propelled by ongoing worldwide economic downturn, the drive to cut costs, and heralded by technological advances (Sankoorikal & Jonnalagadda, 2010).

Some Statistics of the BPO Industry say that Over 25,000 people are employed in the BPO sector Revenue of the sector touches \$ 3.6 billion Burn out Stress Syndrome is common among BPO employees BPO industry lacks a regulatory framework from Foreign Direct Investment.

Since beginning the BPO industry was facing a lot of problems, both internally and externally. The internal troubles include shortage of competent personnel and the high attrition rates. The external challenge is in the form of opposition from the US and the UK governments against transferring the BPO operations by Indian companies to motherland (Sen Gupta and Gupta, 2009). According to Mehta et al (2006), of all the 59 challenges posed to BPO organizations at various levels, attrition, absenteeism and motivating employees are the major ones that pinpoint the trouble. All these factors at some point or the other does effect the QWL.As per NASSCOM report (2004), the outsourcing industry would have a shortage of around two lakhs of professionals. Despite potential for tremendous growth, BPO industry continues to suffer from high level of attrition stemming from factors like high levels of stress and lack of opportunities for growth.

While outsourcing has been extensively researched from a cost-efficiency based transactional perspective, it has rarely been considered from an ethical perspective (Chen, 2008; Gilley & Rasheed, 2000). Even as the sector grows at a breakneck pace over of 50 per cent per annum in terms of job creation, sucking in thousands of young, barely-educated workers from all over the country, it is spawning social and ergonomic problems on an unprecedented scale.

Stories abound of young BPO workers losing control over their lives and straying into drugs, crime, unfettered promiscuity, and eventual depression and severe suicidal tendencies. Sure, there have been workplace-related problems as long as there have been workplaces.

What makes the BPO's case so alarming and pervasive is the unique nature of the industry. Work conditions found in BPO sector are different from conventional industrial mould. The entry of the employees is strictly restricted to their work area and the common spaces earmarked for recreation and refreshment. During the working hours, the superiors are directed to observe punctuality in taking the admissible breaks, which are also tracked regularly, through systems. Emotional tiring adds to the physical and mental strain of the workers, leading to increasing the levels of stress and burnout under the electronically monitored work and tightly bureaucratised work regime. Despite all these the number of people employed in the BPO sector is increasing. The business has grown up to forty six percent. Never before have young workers run an entire industry almost on their own; never before has an entire generation of young, white-collar workers worked only in the night, often away from their small-town families; and never before has any industry pulled so many

youngsters into a world of make-believe, glamour and relative affluence like BPO has (Nalini Bikkina 2010). The job is all about the BIG money. The educational progress and future of the young employees is really a million Dollar question.

More often, fresh graduates were recruited with salaries, comparatively higher than in any other industry for a non-professional degree. As attrition began and started to rise, under-graduates too were recruited. This resulted in a sudden transition from being a student to being employed with relatively higher purchasing power. Though the high packages and sophisticated work environment in BPO's succeeded to attract a large number of youngsters, they failed to sustain the pool. And the reasons behind it range from physiological fatigue, psychological un-satisfaction to fear of an illusive future (Pillai, 2006).

## **2. Review of Literature**

### **2.1 Definitions and Concepts of QWL**

Keith Davis in his book "Human behaviour at Work" discussed the concept of QWL in detail. As per him, QWL refers to the favourable or unfavourable of the job environment for public. The people and environment have changed, increased attention needs to be given to improving the QWL.

Edwin B. Flippo in his book, "Personnel Management" explained the significance of QWL. As per him, 'A QWL program is a catch all term that includes any improvement in organizational culture that advances the dignity and growth of employees.

Cascio. F Wayne in his book, "Managing Human Resources" stated that there are two ways of looking QWL. The first way equates QWL with a set of objective organizational conditions and practices such as job enrichment, democratic supervision, employee involvement and safe working conditions. While the other way equates QWL with employees perceptions that they are safe, relatively well satisfied and able to grow good and develop as human beings.

Ranjit Sastry (2004) writes that while the steady supply of new recruits has helped the growth of the industry but maintain a QWL is still a challenge as it is the one of the main reason for high attrition. He keeps on adding that tight deadlines, repetitive nature of job and late night shifts the graveyard timings are seriously affecting the QWL.

Dr. Kumuda in her research paper says there is a need for more explicit, detailed and relevant regulations, guidance specific to this industry. Health risk assessments both pre-employment and periodic for employees should be conducted. There is a need for more detailed study to collect data from larger number of employees working in a bigger range of sectors spread over a beyond a geographic area, so that the research findings will be useful to provide initial advice to this industry.

Sangeeta Jain in her book, "Quality of Working Life" felt that QWL inherent in any organization will have a strong determining impact on group behaviour. Further, he felt that group cohesiveness of any group may be a direct result of the extent of QWL present in the working environment.

## References

- [1] Cascio, W. F. (1992). *Managing Human Resources: Productivity, Quality of Work Life, Profits*, 22. New York: MC Graw-Hill, Inc.
- [2] Davis, Keith." *Human Behavioral Work*". Tata McGraw-Hill Publishing Company, New Delhi, 1981.
- [3] Sangeeta Jain, "Quality of Work Life of Indian Industrial Workers" in Arya and Tandon. B.B, *Resource Development*, Deep & Deep publications, New Delhi, 2004, pp. 420-422.
- [4] Brown, S.P. and Peterson, R.A. (1993) "Antecedents and consequences of sales person job satisfaction: meta analysis and assessment of causal effects", *Journal of Marketing Research*, 30, pp.63-77.
- [5] Chiu, R.K. and Fransesco, A.M. (2003) "Dispositional traits and turnover intentions: examining the mediating role of Job satisfaction and affective commitment". *International Journal of Manpower*, 24, pp 284-298.
- [6] Dittrich, J.E., Couger, J.D., and Zawacki, R.A. (1985) "Perceptions of Equity, Job Satisfaction, and Intention to Quit among Data Processors," *Information & Management* (9:2), pp. 67-75.
- [7] Mehta A, Armenakis A, Mehta N and Irani F (2006), "Challenges and Opportunities of Business Process Outsourcing in India", *Journal of Labor Research*, Vol. 27, No. 3, pp. 324-33.
- [8] Mobley, W. (1977) "Intermediate linkages in the relationship between job satisfaction and employee turnover", *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 67 (1), pp.53-9
- [9] Lakshmi Jaganathan and Akhila "Predictors of QWL of sales force in Direct Selling Organizations" 2009, The ICFAI University Press.
- [10] Dr. Kumuda Tripathy "A Study on the Worklife of BPO Employees and the various Human Resource Practices in a BPO - A Case Study of Convergys"
- [11] K Ramachandran and Sudhir Voleti (2004) "Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) Emerging Scenario and Strategic Options for IT-enabled Services" by VIKALPA • Volume 29 • No 1 • January – March pp 49-62.
- [13] Nalini Bikkina (2010) "BPO Call Centres: Psychosocial Issues and Related Ethical Conundrums" *Turkish Journal of Business Ethics* Vol. 3 Issue 5, p7-14.