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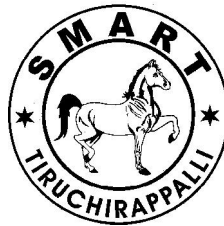**Chief Editor**

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A STUDY ON THE QUALITY OF WORKLIFE OF CALL CENTER EMPLOYEES WITH REFERENCE TO CHENNAI

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Abstract

The Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) industry is one that offers a tremendous growth prospect and quick returns. Today it has become one of the most sought after and highly paid industries. The continuously growing BPO industry in India is the new call for young generation of the country who are on the verge of making their career .This paper gives a detailed report on the BPO employees and their benefits and disadvantages in relation to their work life. The paper also gives an insight into the various human resource practices carried out in the BPO sector .The focus of the paper is on the problems faced by BPO employees to lead a quality life. The study analyses the physical and mental health related problems. The sample size is 100.The data from the respondents were collected through questionnaire. Descriptive Research was adopted in conducting this study. The data were being analyzed appropriately and findings and suggestions were formulated. This study also suggests ways to improve the quality of work life in BPO and ITES firms. This paper throws light on the human resource functions, practices followed by the HR department in various BPO contents.

Key words : QWL,BPO,HR Practices

Introduction

Quality of Work Life refers to the degree of individual satisfaction with his/her role, relationship and duties in the workplace. This satisfaction is predicated on a variety of factors affecting the individual, including but not limited to, personality variables, family expectations, social cultural norms and workplace culture. Striking a balance is the real fulfillment in life. In the rat race of our present day existence, especially in the long working hour ethos of our industry, we forget to maintain a balance between work and family. The result is devastating: high levels of stress, trauma, and even nervous breakdowns. The phrase, Work Life Balance, was coined in 1986 in USA. Until 1999 it remained on the fringes of corporate usage and public dissemination. Post 2000, work life balance has gone mainstream, with hundreds of dedicated internet sites, including those of mega corporations, helping spread its usage. There has been legislation enacted in many countries, making work life balance crucial to the functioning of a corporation.

Work-Life Balance policies are further validated by recent research. More than 46% of over 4000 job seekers in the UK would choose flexible work hours as the benefit they would most look for in their next job and 60% maintain that they would view Work-Life Balance as an important factor in assessing a potential new job. Organizations, that do not introduce Work-Life Balance policies, are at a distinct disadvantage. HR departments who are influenced by this new perspective, pay more and more attention to the aspirations of every employee and create parameters of social interactivity to enable them to constantly

discover their true potential. The BPO industry and other IT based businesses are constantly reframing their work life policies because of high attrition rates.

Review of literature

Md.Mosharraf Hossain& Md.Tariqual Islam(1999)investigated the correlation between QWL and job satisfaction, QWL and performance, job satisfaction and performance. A total number of 63 nurses were selected from three government hospitals on a stratified random sampling basis.. The findings reveal that there was significant positive relation between QWL and Job Satisfaction

David Efraty and M.Joseph Sirgy(2004) assert that Quality of Work Life was conceptualized in terms of need satisfaction, stemming from interaction of worker's need for survival, esteem, and self -actualization, with those organizational resources relevant for meeting them. A survey was conducted based on the sample of 219 service providers to the elderly in a large Mid Western City. It was found that need satisfaction was positively related to organizational identification, job satisfaction, job involvement, job effort, job performance and negatively related to personal alienation.

Raduan Che Rose,LooseeBeh,Jagak Uli(2006)conducted a research to discuss the relation between QWL and career related dimensions, among 475 managers from the Free Trade Zones in Malaysia .The study identified three significant heterogeneous variables, namely career satisfaction, career achievement and career balance.

Problem Focus

The BPO industry is touted as a magic wand that will ward off unemployment for thousands of young graduates. The rise of BPO Sector has brought in its wake enhanced standard of living, high purchasing power,

flamboyant lifestyle, etc. which were hitherto out of reach for the average Indian youth. On the flip side, the long and odd working hours, work pressure, tough deadline, eating disorders, sedentary lifestyle and lack of physical exercise are taking an early toll on the health of BPO employees. 90% of BPO employees are found to lead a poor quality of life. Physical ailments such as backache, constipation, BP and diabetes and emotional problems like stress, panic attacks and depression are the occupational hazards of a BPO job. Their unearthly working hours hardly leave any time for interaction with family or friends. On the other hand, call center ranked high for attrition due to health reasons, for sleeping disorders- 83% compared to industry average of 39.5%, voice loss 8.5%, ear problems (8.5%),digestive disorders (14.9%) and eyesight problems(10.6%). BOSS (Burn Out Stress Syndrome) is a common syndrome among the BPO employees and includes chronic fatigue, insomnia due to the complete alteration of 24-hour biological rhythm of the body. Crossing lines of gender, religion and caste, anyone can fit into this type of work, assuming they have good language skills. Lamenting on the stress factor, many call centre employees called for longer breaks during work hours, Loss of identity of employees is also a rising problem.

Methodology

Research Design

The Researcher carried out the study with the descriptive type of research. This study was conducted among the Domestic and International call center employees on the production floor (junior level employees).

Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire was based on the primary and secondary objectives. Pilot study for a small sample of 25 employees was conducted. Based on the study, the questionnaire was revised and survey was conducted among

100 call center employees. Multiple choice Method was adopted to collect the data.

Sampling Methods

Random Sampling Method was used to choose respondents for the questionnaire. For analyzing the data from the questionnaire, Percentage Analysis and Chi Square Tests were used. Sample of 100 call center employees was taken for the study.

Tools for analysis

The data from the questionnaire were analyzed by means of Percentage Analysis and Chi Square Test. Cross Tabulation was used for data interpretation. An interactive calculation tool for chi-square tests of goodness of fit and independence was used to calculate the Chi Square values.

Objective of the Study

1. To find out the relation between Quality of Work Life and nature of organization

2. To give a detailed report on the employees and their benefits and disadvantages in relation to their work life

3. To analyze the health related problems faced by BPO employees based on years of experience

4. To study the relationship between mental health and quality of work life.

Hypotheses

H01=There is no association between reason to work and preference for career change

H02=There is no association between experience in year and health symptoms

H03=There is no association between years of experience and job satisfaction

H04=There is no association between mental health and job satisfaction

H05=There is no association between nature of organization and quality of work life

Results and discussion

Hypothesis No.1

H0=There is no association between reason to work and preference for career change.

Since calculated P value (.00001) is less than tabulated value (.05), there exists a significant relationship between reason to work and preference for career change. It is inferred from the table that among the 100 respondents of BPO employees, 61 respondents work for economic reasons and they prefer to take the chance for career change. It was analyzed that among the 100 respondents of BPO employees, only two respondents preferred to work for social space and they have stated the unwillingness for career change. The table reveals that majority of employees were ready to change their career when they get a chance.

Hypothesis No.2

H0=There is no association between experience and health symptoms.

It is inferred from the table that there is a significant relationship between experience and health symptoms as the tabulated value(00001) is less than the significant value (.05).It was further established that employees with more than 4 years of experience, (49 respondents) faced higher level of burnout compared to other employees. It is evident from the table that increase in years of experience leads to increase in burnout.

Hypothesis No.3

It is evident from the result that there exists a relationship between years of experience and job satisfaction, as the significant value(.00001) is less than the tabulated value (.05).It is inferred from the table that employees, having more than four years of experience, were not satisfied with the job. Among 49 respondents having 1-4 years of experience, ten respondents were somewhat satisfied in their job and 39

respondents were not satisfied in their job. Hence it is concluded that job satisfaction decreases as the years of experience increases and none of the employees was highly satisfied in the job.

Hypothesis No.4

It is inferred from Table 4 that P value (.0000) is less than Table value (.05) and therefore, there exists association between mental health and job satisfaction. From the table it is evident that employees who have poor mental health most of the days, do not have job satisfaction. Among the 56 respondents, who experienced poor mental health for 10-15 days, forty four respondents were somewhat satisfied in their job and twelve respondents were not satisfied in their job. Hence it is concluded that there exists association between mental health and job satisfaction.

Hypothesis No.5

From Table 5, it is inferred that P value (.0290) is less than Table value of (.05) and hence there is significant relationship between organization and Quality of Work Life The table reveals that from 50 respondents of domestic call centers,20 respondents experienced Quality of Work Life and 30 respondents did not experience Quality of Work Life. From the 50 respondents of International call centers,10 respondents felt that experience quality of work life and 40 respondents did not experience Quality of Work Life. The analysis makes it clear that BPO employees working in International call centers experienced less Quality of Work Life.

Conclusion

The success of any organization is highly dependant on how it attracts, recruits, motivates, and retains its workforce. Today's organizations need to be more flexible so that they are equipped to develop their workforce and enable them to enjoy their commitment. Therefore, organizations are required to adopt a strategy to improve the employees"Quality of Work Life'(QWL) to satisfy both the organizational objectives and employee needs. Work-Life Balance is more than a buzzword - it is for real. Employers, who have responded to the changing social and business environment and built Work-Life Balance policies into their culture, have benefited. In India, there is hope because organizations have recognized the need for the value of Work-Life Balance policies. But the debate has to now move into implementation and the Government could play a critical role in being a catalyst of change. An advantage that Indian industry will, however, have is learning from the experiences of other countries. But as discussed earlier, there's no 'one size that fits all' and Indian companies will have to adapt policies to fit in with not just the nature of industry, profile of workforce and other such factors but also with the local culture and environment.

Implication

Organization must focus attention on employee health care. Counselors should be appointed for maintaining better mental health of employees, classes for meditation, yoga etc can be provided to the employees free of cost which can help in reducing the stress. Call handlers should be provided with information on the risks identified in the risk assessment and how these risks can be controlled. Length and frequency of breaks should be adequate. Establishment of welfare committee, where employees are an important part and where they can voice their concerns is a must. Organization should provide non monetary rewards based on employee preference. Under employment should be stopped which can eventually help in controlling attrition Work-Life Balance Policies must be built into the organization's vision or value statement Quality circles and involvement of employees in decision making and holding joint discussions with employees to evolve policy are also helpful in realizing the Quality of Work Life.

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Table - 1
Table showing relationship between reason to work and preference for career change

Reasons to work	Take the chance immediately for career change	Will give a second thought	Will not be interested	Row total
Economic reasons	9(14.8) (29.0)	52(85.2) (77.6)	-	61 (61.0)
Social Space	-	-	2(100.0) (100.0)	2 (2.0)
Self identity	2(100.5) (6.5)	-	-	2 (2.0)
Financial independence	20(57.1) 64.5	15(42.9) (22.4)	-	35 (35.0)
Column total	31	67	2	100

Chi - Square Value = 123.35730
DF = 6   Significance (P Value)   = .00001

Table - 2

Table showing relationship between experience of employee and health symptoms

Years of experience	Headache	Burnout	Gynecological problem	Row total
Less than a year	2(9.5) (100.0)	9(42.9) (10.2)	10(47.6) 9100.0)	21
1-4 Years	-	30(100.0) (55.7)	-	49
More than 4 years	-	49(100.0) (55.7)	-	30
Column total	2	88	10	100

Chi-Square Value = 51.2987

DF = 4   Significance (P Value) = ..00001

Table - 3

Table showing association between years of experience and job satisfaction

Years of experience	Highly satisfied	satisfied	somewhat satisfied	Not satisfied	Row total
Less than a year	Nil	Nil	12(57.1) (54.5)	9(42.9) (11.5)	21
1-4 Years	Nil	Nil	10(20.4) 45.5	39(79.6) (50.0)	49
More than 4 years	Nil	Nil	-	30(100.0) (38.5)	30
Column total	-	-	22	78	100

Chi-Square Value = 23.64778

DF = 2   Significance (P Value) = .00001

Table - 4

Table showing relationship between mental health and job satisfaction

Poor mental health in a month	Highly satisfied	somewhat satisfied	Not satisfied	Row total
<5 days in a month	Nil	15(100.0) (19.2)	Nil	15
5-10 days	Nil	19(100.0) (24.4)	Nil	19
10-15 days	Nil	44(78.6) (56.4)	12(21.4) (54.5)	56
Most of the days	Nil	-	10(100.0) 45.5	10
Column total	0	78	22	100

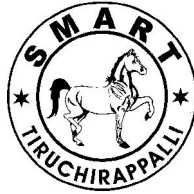Chi-Square Value = 45.05495   DF = 3   Significance (P Value = .00000

Table - 5

Table showing relationship between organization and quality of work life

H_0 = There is no association between organization and Quality of work life

Organization	Have quality of work life	No quality of work life	row total
Domestical call center	20(32.0) (40)	30(68.0) (60)	50
International call center	10(28.0) (20)	40(72.0) (80)	50
Column total	30	70	100

Chi-Square Value = 4.762 , DF =1, Significance (P Value) = .0290032