Work Organization and Work-Life Conflict in the BPO Sector: The Experiences of Selected BPO Workers with Reference to Chennai City

C.Ganaesan[1] and A.Gokulakarishnan[2]

[1]Professor & Head, Department of Management Studies in Loyola Institute of Technology, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India
[2]Research Scholar, Manonmaniam Sundarnar University, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India

Abstract - The success of any organization is highly dependent on its workforce. Especially the ITeS BPO industry needs to be flexible enough to develop commitment and talent in their workforce. They need to adopt a strategy to improve the employees. Work force and 'Work-life Conflict' to satisfy both the organizational objectives and employee needs. The data pertaining to the study has been collected from professionals working in BPO companies in Chennai to analyze the Work-life Conflict. This paper aims to investigate factors affecting Work-life Conflict, Work-life Conflict arrangements availed by the employees and impact of Work- life Conflict on employees' work life, family life, personal life and on employees' relationship with management and employees. Analysis of literature and available data reveals that many employees are facing problems in adjusting their family life and personal life with their Organizational workload.

Keywords: Work-life Conflict, family life, work life, relationships, Work Organization.

I.INTRODUCTION

India is one of the most preferred outsourcing destinations. Indian ITeS BPO industry has been increasingly contributing to the domestic economy over the years. It is also providing valuable contribution to the services sector (NASSCOM, 2011).Though cost reduction and availability of skilled English-speaking employees have been the key growth drivers in the industry, many other factors such as access to talent, service quality, and productivity have kept the Indian ITeS BPO industry competitive in the global market. Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) is receiving significant attention from all other sectors such as government, business, as well as from the academic. BPO is basically formulated to outsource processes to a third party that are not core to a company but are necessary in its everyday operations. India has the most number of BPO companies in the world and consequently the most studies and researches made on this subject. India also have its share of the BPO industry, being the third BPO center in the world. With the sustained growth of this industry, BPOs are now receiving considerable academic attention dealing with multiple aspects like work conditions, organizational environment and specific organization and work-related issues. Work-life Conflict is the stability characterized by the balancing of an individual's life complexity and dynamism with environmental and personal resources such as family, community, employer, profession, geography, information, economics, personality, or values (Crooker et al, 2002).

II.LITERATURE REVIEW

Thompson, (2002) classified work-life initiatives into five (5) categories namely, (1) Time-based strategies like flexi-time, telecommuting and job sharing; (2) Information-based strategies like relocation assistance, elder care resources, company work/life Conflict intranet; (3) Money-based strategies like leave with pay, scholarships for dependents;(4) Direct services like onsite childcare, concierge services and takeout dinners; and (5) Culture-change strategies like training or focus on employees' performance not office face time.

Hyman et al. (2004) observed that organizational pressures, combined with lack of work centrality, result in work intruding into non-work areas of employees' lives. Such interruptions often manifest themselves differently depending on the type of work, extent of autonomy and organizational support.

Burke, (2002) found out that both women and men prefer working in organizations that support work-life Conflict. Men appeared to benefit more than women. When work does not permit women to take care of their family, they feel unhappy, disappointed and frustrated. They draw tight boundaries between work and family and they do not like one crossing the other.

Helen De Cieri et. al. (2005) argue that an organizations need to attract and retain valued employees in a highly competitive labour market is a strong motivating factor for increased organizational awareness and action with regard to implementation and management of WLB strategies. While some achievements have been made over the years, there remain substantial challenges for the uptake and management of WLB strategies.

R. Baral and S. Bhargava (2011) have analyzed that family-friendliness of employers in India have been reflected in various welfare provisions which has been a matter of concern for employers since industrialization. With time, the scope and coverage of such initiatives have broadened and have become more individual growth and family well-being oriented.

Rakesh Yadav, (2011) analyzed that factors such as absence of personal life, physical strains, unscheduled work hours were affecting the attrition from HR perspective which could be minimized by giving extra break to employees who work continuously in night shift for five days, compensating workers with wellness programs and stress busters and aligning employees holidays with the clients' holidays.

III.OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

1. To study the perception of employees towards Factors affecting Work-life Conflict
2. To identify the Work-life Conflict arrangements availed of by Respondents
3. To analyze the impact of Work-life Conflict on employees work life, family life, personal life and on employees relationship with management and employees.

III.RESEARCH DESIGN

This is a descriptive study (Babbie, 2003; Mertens, 1998; Yin, 2003) employing a mixed-method approach (Babbie, 2003; Cresswell, 2006, 2008; Donaldson, et.al., 2008). Mixed method indicates "the direction of the collection and analysis of data and the mixture of qualitative and quantitative approaches in many phases of research process". (Cresswell, 2006: 5).

Sample Design

The present study was carried out in Chennai city by selecting BPO professionals. A sample of 200 employees was selected for gathering primary data. The respondents came from ten (10) BPO companies. To carry out the study in a more accurate and easier way, convenience sampling method was adopted.

Statistical tool used

The collected data had been analyzed by using mean rating scores.

Data Collection

Both primary and secondary data have been used to draw appropriate conclusions. The primary data was collected by using interview and questionnaire method. The secondary data was mainly drawn from available literature pertaining to the field of knowledge.

IV.ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

TABLE 1 GENERAL PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

Factors	Classification	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Age	20 – 25 Years	46	23%
	26 – 30 Years	108	54%
	31 – 35 Years	27	13%
	Above 35 Years	19	10%
Sex	Male	114	57%
	Female	86	43%
Civic Status	Single	97	48%
	Married	100	50%
	Separated	3	2%
Experience	1-2 years	110	55%
	3-5 years	29	15%
	5-7 years	33	17%
	7-9 years	21	10%
	Above 9 years	7	3%
Income-Level	Rs 10000 - Rs 15000	97	48.5%
	Rs 15001- Rs 20000	69	34.5%
	Rs 20001 – Rs 25000	28	14%
	More Than Rs 25000	6	3%

BPO Work Environment and Organization

General organizational and work environment in BPOs are largely different from traditional organizations as "the customer-oriented nature of work often challenges the traditional conceptions of control and coordination" (Tripathy, 2006: 3). It is fast-paced with a 24/7 operations leading to "possibilities for novel modes of conceptualizing and organizing work, leading to visible changes in work cultures" (Tripathy, 2006: 3).

Generally, organizational culture is highly informal; management and employees work together closely within participative decision-making and collaborative team-based organizational context. BPO organizations are inclined to high-performance and high productivity work team principles and tools; they subscribe to inclination towards operational and service excellence – promoting initiatives like total quality standards, Six Sigma, Customer

Operations Performance Center (COPC) , Capability Maturity Model Integration (CMMI), and the like. (Taylor et al. (2002) succinctly conveyed that in this work setting: "powerful implicit expectations of acceptable and output levels are embedded in the culture of each workflow, with managers and particularly, team leaders applying performance norms." These performance norms further reinforced in day-to-day operations even in individuals work practices. For example, Tripathy (2007:3) recalling a usual phenomenon in BPOs: "the entry of employees is strictly restricted to their work area and common spaces earmarked for recreation and refreshment during the working hours, punctuality and admissible breaks are tracked continuously through computers free time is limited. The structure prevents them from too many toilet and coffee breaks." The interplay between an informal workplace setting and the extreme rationalization of work makes the work environment appealing but at the same time confining and limiting to the BPO employees.

Work-Life Conflict

Maintaining work-life Conflict has been the focus of industries' human resource practitioners amidst the demanding nature of work and the workers' personal endeavors in the age of information and technology. The fast-paced life, the instant accessibility of almost anything does not put the individual in a more careless state; instead it pushes the person to do more with the seemingly more time in his/her hands. The individual engages himself/herself with more activities in and out of the office than usual as this seems to be supported by the adoption of flexibility measures in the workplace. The availability of technology anywhere which aids in the connectivity of people 24/7 further delineates the boundaries between work and personal life.

Work-life Conflict "is the stability characterized by the balancing of an individual's life complexity and dynamism with environmental and personal resources such as family, community, employer, profession, geography, information, economics, personality, or values" (Crooker et al, 2002: 389). The linkage of work and personal aspect of lives has always been emphasized (Bruck et al., 2002; Gibson, et al., 2006). Gibson et a. (2006: 197-198) offered two explanations regarding the interconnectedness of work and life in the organizational setting: (1) the compensation effect implies that employees tend to compensate for low work or personal life satisfaction by seeking contentment in the other domain; and (2) the spillover view that indicates that job satisfaction spills over into one's work life and vice versa.

Work-life Conflict is different for every individual in different stages of life. An individual who is fresh out from college and single would have a different notion of work-life Conflict compared with an individual who may be single but have certain 'obligations' to his/her family and again different for a married individual with kids, more so

for single parents. According to Johnson (2005) the employees' age, lifestyle, and environment play important role in one's perception of work-life Conflict. The conflict between work and family spheres is also considered especially when there is role conflict and strain (Friede and Ryan 2005; Kossek and Lambert 2005); added to this is the productivity requirements in the workplace that often interferes with family responsibilities of individuals employed in sectors relying heavily on shift work (Williams 2008).

WorkLifeConflictPractice andProgramme

Studies suggest that employee morale, satisfaction, and performance are improved among employees who have received work/life programs such as onsite child care, time for elder care, opportunity to study, opportunities for telecommuting as these reduce the level and intensity of stress that employees experience (Bruck, et al., 2002; Harmon, 2001; Garvey, 2001; Gibson et al., 2006). Consequently, organizations are paying more attention to work and personal/family life-friendly programs, and are developing other benefits and activities that may help alleviate workplace stress and conflict between work-life.

BPO and Work-Life Conflict in Chennai

With its 24/7 operations BPO companies has higher turnover rates compared to most other industries in the Chennai. In a recent study, Hechanova (2008) explained that 1 of 2 call center representatives has turnover intent; this turnover intent is associated with age, career commitment, burnout, satisfaction with pay, boss, promotions, job responsibilities, firm management and promotions. Given the results of the research, she recommended that call centers and BPO companies should ensure effective rewards management, helping employees find the right fit and rethinking job design, as well as provide fun atmosphere and Employee Wellbeing Programs. Work-Life Conflict in Indian BPO organizations, are seen in these terms focusing on the extent to which benefits are not only commensurate and competitive but are also relevant to the needs of employees. Moreover, as BPO employees belong to fairly young age group, a supportive workplace and fun work environment is imperative to address the work-related stressors (Hechanova, 2008).

V.CONCLUSION

In the BPO sector work schedule is unusual. There are excessive targets to be achieved like. Employees need to interact with different types of callers. Some of whom may be overbearing and irritated. At the same time quality of the service needs to be maintained. All this may lead to burn - out and stress in the employees. BPO companies are trying to bring in work life Conflict of the employees by taking care of the factors like working from home, flexi time and swap in order to retain talent, enhance quality of work and

to keep the employees happy. The flexibility of work alleviates stress and helps in better time management. Employees living with joint families are more comfortable when compared to those from nuclear families. Work- life Conflict requires cooperation and coordination at national, governmental, organizational, as well as the individual level.

REFERENCES

[1]   Bruck, C. et al. (2002). The Relation between Work–Family Conflict and Job Satisfaction: A Finer-Grained Analysis.
      Journal of Vocational Behavior, Vol.60(3),pp.336-353

[2]   Burke, R. J. (2002). Organizational values, job experiences and satisfaction among managerial and professional women and men: Advantage men? *Women inManagement Review,* Vol.17 (5), pp.5–6.

[3]   Crooker K., Smith, F. L., and Tabak, F.(2002). Creating work-life Conflict: A model of pluralism across life mains.HRD Review. Vol.1, pp. 387-419.

[4]   Gibson, J. et al. (2006). Organizations: Behavior, Structure, Processes. New York: McGraw-Hill.

[5]   Helen De Cieri et.al. (2005). Achievements and challenges for work/life Conflict strategies in Australian organizations, The International Journal of Human Resource Management, Vol.16(1), pp. 90-103

[6]   Hyman, J., and J. Summers. (2004). Lacking Conflict. Personal Review, Vol.33(4), pp. 418–429.

[7]   R. Baral and S. Bhargava. (2011). HR interventions for work-life Conflict: evidences from organisations in India. International Journal of Business, Management and Social Sciences, Vol. 2(1), pp. 33-42.

[8]   Rakesh Yadav, (2011). Attrition & HR Initiatives in INDIAN ITES BPO Industry. Research Journal of Social Science & Management, Vol. (1)2.

[9]   Thompson, et al. (2002). Formal Organizational Initiatives and Informal Workplace Practices: Links to Work-Family Conflict and Job-Related Outcomes. Journal of Management, Vol. 28(6), pp. 787-810.

[10] NASSCOM, (2011). The IT-BPO Sector in India, Strategic Review, 2011.