Research Paper Social Science

Women in BPO's and its Impact on Family: a Sociological Analysis

Dr. SUNITHA V GANIGER

Assistant Professor and Co-ordinator Department of Studies and Research in Sociology Centre for Rural Social documentation Tumkur University, Tumkur.

ABSTRACT

The rapid industrialization, urbanization, unlimited educational opportunities, migration to cities and so forth have brought a change for a women with in the four walls to go round the globe. In recent decades BPOs have emerged as India's new sunshine sector, which can also be portrayed as "Big Powerful Ocean". The superior image of work in the sector, high salary, the vibrant ambience of working place with the sweeping glass, air-conditioned cabins, concrete and well styled buildings, the cafeteria, internet kiosk, recreational club, gym, with limited educational qualifications, impressive voice and natural accent is enough to flourish in this field are wide enough to attract young potential especially women to work at BPOs. Thus this paper makes an attempt to understand the extent of allures, benefits and problems faced by the women working in BPO's.

KEYWORDS Ascribed status to achieved status, Nuptiality, Shaken Baby Syndrome and out-look

Introduction.

The Indian BPO industry accounts for a revenue of US $39.6 billion and has emerged as one of the largest private industries providing direct employment to 1.6 million professionals. The participation of women in BPO industry has been seen as a critical enabling factor for the continued growth of the industry. The women's voice, cool temperament, hard work, dedication, good interpersonal skills, willingness of the few companies to deal only if a women are there might all be fuelling for the increased intake of females in this sector. Therefore, BPO companies are trying to develop and involve women in higher roles and functions. It is said that women constitute over more than 30 % of the work force in BPO sectors and the present indications show that the percent is going to increase tremendously. Women employees constitute about one-third of the total workforce in Call Centres and BPOs in India.

The Indian BPO industry has been growing at rapid pace and in 2011; this industry has earned revenue worth 15 billion dollars and has provided employment to around 10 lakh young men and women. About 70% of the revenue of BPO Industry comes from call-centers. Large number of women is working in call centers in India. Exciting work and work environment attracts the young women to join this industry. The call center industry does not require high level skills and age at entry level can be 18 years with higher secondary certificate. The global expansion of software and IT enabled services has opened up new vistas for women. 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. As UNCTAD Report (2002) demonstrated, software and IT-enabled services has broadened job prospects for women, who can now work from home (assuming adequate infrastructure and bandwidth are available) or in a data centre or tele-centre close to home. The women belonging to poor and middleclass families can easily join the call centers and earn lucrative salaries.

Thus the phenomena of women being employed in BPO sectors are spreading fast. Although it began with low skilled activity such as answering routine telephone queries from customers on bank account balances, have now expanded to cover a wide range of high ended areas like tele-marketing, market research, billing and collection, cash and investment, legal case research, medical research testing and financial analyses are now emerging as important components of high-end out sourcing. Thus this paper highlights mainly on the impact of the BPOs on Indian family set up.

Now let us delve into the positive aspects of women in BPO's

Change in the out-look- In India's patriarchal society, the emergence of call centers is nothing less than a social reform movement as far as economic, social and cultural empowerment of women is concerned. Due to many positive factors in women BPOs prefer them. Thus a booming call center industry has provided employment to thousands of young women in urban locations, earning good salaries that are really good with Indian standards. Urban women, who otherwise might have remained unemployed and burden to their families are now seen to be assets to their families. The financial independence provided by these BPOs has empowered to be assertive and independent in their out-look, attitude and career choice. Thus these BPO centers have played as catalysts in quickly changing the socioeconomic status of the women in her families.

Change from ascribed to achieved status:

One of the functions of the family is to give an ascribed status to the new born individuals, which remains more or less permanent. Now a days due to upward occupational mobility, unlimited accountable income, enhanced socio- status are evaluated based upon the economic criteria. Now status is more of wealth, influence and money and this is availed in BPO's.

Attractive Benefits and ambience :

Aside from attractive salaries, the attractive work environment and benefits offered by the BPO sector have motivated many young adults to seek employment in this sector. The majority of BPOs provide provident fund, gratuity, group mediclaim insurance schemes (for employees as well as their spouse, non-earning parents and children), personal accident insurance scheme, subsidized food and transportation. Also provided by many BPOs are performance based incentives, flexi-time, flexible salary benefits, paid days off, maternity leave, and an employee stock option plan. Recreational facilities are also available in BPOs; these include pool tables, chess tables and coffee bars, and some even have well equipped gyms,

personal trainers and many organize regular get together and other cultural programs for staff. Some even provide company leased (shared) accommodation for out-station employees, corporate credit card facilities, cellular phones/laptops, medical check-ups, loans.

Increased age at nuptiality:
An upward shift in nuptiality is found. Late marriages are becoming common. Now we find a shift from family based relationships to career based relationships. BPO's are giving a space to young and vibrant women who are willing to work enthusiastically. Due to increased dowry rate, inability of the parents to pay the dowry, unlimited demands from the prospective in-laws, fear of being ridiculed are all compelling young lady to post pone her marriage. However, this increased age at marriage effects fertility schedule and family building pattern So we can ascertain that the increased age at marriage can also have an impact on the population pattern also. She is able to decide her own life partner and play a decisive role in family development.

Learning, earning and emergence of single jobs:
Today's young ladies are taking a bold decision in terms of education, career, shopping, family set-up, place of settling, etc. These young ladies are able to go on with dual work from night to morning they toil at work and due to the emergence of many distance educational and evening classes are able to study further. So learning and earning are almost going together. No BPO employee is stopped from pursuing higher studies and realizing their dreams. Moreover they have strict 9-hour schedule on one hand giving ample time to pursue their goals and money to actually realize them without depending on parents. Today's youth are powered by attraction towards the fat purse and advantages of liberalization and privatization. Due to influence of BPOs many other professions or work like teachers, clerks, office' assistants, receptionists, engineering and medical are fading away. To put in few words these BPOs are just engulfing the other occupations and if these are not checked it can also lead to loosing of many professions. A women who due to economic crisis were not able to study, BPO's has enabled them so. Thus earn while you learn are the emerging trends.

However, all that shines are not gold . BPO's women tend to have a lot of problems and to mention a few are

Work Pressure and stress:
While employment in the BPO sector has meant that young women are reaching their career milestones and financial goals much earlier than before, women employees in the BPO sector experience high levels of stress as a result of working in closely monitored environments with pressure to meet ambitious performance targets. Strict deadlines and ambitious targets have also resulted in women employee "burnout". Repetitive tasks, such as responding to telephone calls more than 100 times a shift have resulted in absenteeism and attrition among many young women employees. A growing number of women employees also experience physical and emotional problems such as panic attacks, depression, relationship problems, alcoholism and sleeping and eating disorders

Rates of illegitimacy, divorce, unmarried couple households.
Due to over-independence or misuse of independence we find young females in all these things. These changes could have many causes. Perhaps the influence of western style, new parental attitudes, and the economic changes are real culprits behind the increase in troubled families. Again marriage has bolstering effects on a person's health when the marriage is satisfactory and potential adverse effects when the relationship is abrasive or of poor quality, which can lead to separations, divorce and establishment of illegal relationship. Now a days people would not want to take the responsibility of permanent relationship as husband and wife which can also lead to live-in relations or unmarried couple households. Here as far as they are able adjust with each other they are together and once the relationship fades they would not regret to depart from each other.

Shaken baby syndrome and Burn-Out Syndrome:
This is a pattern that is common in the west has set its foot in India in the early 21' century. Frustration at work, extreme stress, unhappy marriage, and marital discord are all the reasons for this type for this sort of syndrome. The prospective caretaker of the child due to extreme stress starts mishandling the newborn infant characterizes this. Due to low patience the child is handled in a violent way where in out of range the child's veins in the brain are torn open and there is a heavy bleeding within. There is also bleeding in the eyes. The infant is either a vegetable or dead. Bum-out stress syndrome is a common syndrome among the empioyees and includes chronic fatigue, insomnia due to alteration of 24 hour biological thythm of the body.

Influence of media:
These people enjoy new economy, unlimited and unfettered access to information through the sources ranging from satellite, TV to net. Families that were source of information are taken away by many recruiting agencies. Today's teens are also protesting against parental control. Thus in today's generation we find the disintegrating value systems, breakdown of families and increased divorce rates, a growing pub and drug culture, increasing sex crimes are also found.

Problem of working women:
Now-a-days more women are employed in this sector. These people do not get sufficient time to look after family and children. Returning home exhausted from their work have no energy left to take care of themselves first and be it their families later which hinders the development of self and family members. Many ladies enter after work while the children and husbands are going out. So here we can find that both are not meeting each other for many days also. There is also increase in family violence due to lots of stress and strains.

Influence of socio-cultural behavior:
The call centers have a profound impact on socio-cultural behavior of young Indian and their families. Many call centers are reconstructing in terms of western culture, accent, language, social patterns, traditions, customs and so forth, which indirectly influences others. The very out- sourcing is inspiring the young Indians to adopt western cultures and lifestyle and thereby they are criticizing our culture. Conducting the festivals like Deepavali, Sankranthi, Ganapathi is itself considered as waste of time

Conclusion:
The BPO employment does not only provide young women with a profitable and challenging work environment, but also has other positive outcomes: many young BPO women employees associated their increased independence and self-efficacy to their employment in this sector many reported close peer networks and savings orientation. Thus in conclusion call center or the BPOs are not fully good for India. Working late nights, the 'odd hours, too much involvement of phones and computer have a profound socio-psychological effect on the future family, which in turn can affect the society.

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