

Expectations of Men of Mars and Women of Venus at BPOs of Bangalore

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Abstract

Gender issues in workplace are the inevitable challenges an organization has to face in the context of ever growing workforce in order to achieve the sustainable growth. Lot of study is conducted all over the world in each industry segment on this issue. The challenge posed by LPG (Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization) has made it imperative for every industry to make its products and services most efficient, cost effective and of highest quality standards. Hence, an industry cannot afford to ignore any potential advantage it has, peculiar to its geography, society and culture. To meet the challenges of sustainability and inclusive growth, a business concern has to address these gender issues in order to tap the best talent in both the genders. Addressing the gender issues, therefore, is in the interest of every organization.

Each industry has unique ways to address the gender issues. One needs to study the characteristic features of the industry before arriving to any conclusions. An effort is made in this work to study these issues in the context of BPOs of Bangalore. General characteristics of BPO workforce are explored. The expectations of BPO employees, gender wise, are analyzed on various expectation factors. Gender differences are analyzed in the context of employee composition, content and of expectations. The final emerged picture enables us to provide some remedial suggestions.

Keywords: *Gender issues, LPG, BPOs, Employee Expectations, Expectation Factors, Organizational Growth.*

1. PREAMBLE

The non-discrimination or inclusiveness in workplaces is one of the frequently discussed topics in the organizational context. Various policies or norms that augment discrimination based on gender, race, color, community, province, are sometimes most provocative topics, as they are capable of creating unrest in the organization as well as in the society. Prominent among these are the issues related to the gender. The discrimination based on Gender in

the workplace is as old as the industrial revolution itself. The topics like gender stereotypes, gender identity, glass ceiling, etc, are being discussed, debated, and researched ever since.

Though a modern industry wants to bring in fair treatment to its employees irrespective of gender, the issue remains with the dissimilar physical, social, and economic conditions. As it is said, Men are from Mars and Women are from Venus, their expectations are different and it needs a focused study. Hence, in this study, the gender

issues are discussed in the context of one of the most prominent industries of our modern economy, Business Process Outsourcing (BPO), with reference to Bangalore city, known as the hub of BPO industries of India. Addressing these issues is imperative for the sustainability and growth in the long run.

2. INTRODUCTION TO BPOs

The article in Wikipedia(Wikipedia, 2016)explains Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) as a subset of outsourcing that involves the contracting of the operations and responsibilities of specific business functions (or processes) to a third-party service provider. Originally, this was associated with manufacturing firms. In the contemporary context, it is primarily used to refer to the outsourcing of business processing services to an outside firm, replacing in-house services with labor from an outside firm.

BPO is typically categorized into back office outsourcing - which includes internal business functions such as human resources or finance and accounting, and front office outsourcing - which includes customer-related services such as contact center services. BPO that is contracted outside a company's country is called offshore outsourcing. Given the proximity of BPO to the Information Technology industry, it is also categorized as an Information Technology Enabled Service or ITES. Knowledge Process Outsourcing (KPO) and Legal Process Outsourcing (LPO) are some of the sub-segments of Business Process Outsourcing industry.

3. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Inclusive growth is imperative for sustainability. Lack of inclusion always ignores vast talent in majority chunk. The growing literacy rate among women, awareness about gender equality and questioning attitude about the gender stereotypes gave rise to movements against gender discrimination all over. The workplace was no

exception. This led to the intervention of many legislative measures, rules and laws. Yet, the dream of gender equality still remains elusive. But the core question is, are the expectations same for both genders? This problem is analyzed in the context of BPOs of Bangalore.

4. LITERATURE REVIEW

Gender equality in a workplace, a movement to bring the equality between the genders, has a long history. Different nations perceived it in different ways in the context of their cultures, history and protagonists. A book edited by Blau & Ehrenberg(1997)Gender and Family Issues in the Workplace reveals, motherhood remains a primary obstacle to women's economic success. It offers fascinating and provocative new analyses of women's status in the labor market. Kaul(2009) opines the workplace culture has been created by men and is naturally "masculine"with a language competency and ethostypically favoring men.

In an article, Dagar (2011)discusses how women can overcome the obstacles they face in their climb to the top. Mishra(2009)finds, after a career break, women are more disadvantaged in their job searches than men as they are less integrated with professional networks, especially in male dominated organizations. Sweeney(2012) discusses issues related to gender diversity in the workplace in Great Britain and found that majority of big companies have women in their boardrooms. Chatman et al(2010) argue that being in the gender minority is not necessarily a disadvantage: it can actually enhance performance. Heeter(2012)discovered that Corporations with women on their boards and in leadership positions have a higher return on equity.

5. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Objectives address the purpose of the research work. They are the guiding spirits for the study. The objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To explore the General Characteristics BPO Workforce in Bangalore with reference to gender.
2. To analyze the expectations of BPO employees, gender wise, on various factors of employee satisfaction.
3. To analyze the differences between the opinions about employee expectation factors between both genders.

6. RESEARCH DESIGN

Scope: The present study is confined to BPOs that are operating from Bangalore. Since Bangalore holds the major chunk in BPO pie, it may represent a majority opinion as well.

Data Collection: The primary data was collected through a structured questionnaire prepared for this purpose. Data was also collected through some face to face discussions with many BPO employees and some entrepreneurs who are running BPOs. Secondary data was collected for this research from various journals, textbooks, magazines, newspapers, reports by NASSCOM and other professional bodies, conference proceedings, internet, etc., Secondary data is also collected from many online journals and databases like EBSCO, Sage Publications, ProQuest database, etc.

Sample: The BPO employees spread across Bangalore, across all levels in the organization.

Questionnaire Design: In this research, a detailed list of factors and variables were prepared based on extensive literature study and informal unstructured discussions had with industry veterans. After the reliability test, 46 variables under following 7 factors were retained in the final questionnaire by deleting the rest. The factors are, 1) Compensation Package 2) Working Environment 3) Interpersonal Relations 4) Work Content 5) Career Growth 6) Personal Reasons and 7) Top management.

Sample Size: The total sample considered - after the cleansing process - were 609 questionnaires of employees belonging to 28 BPO organizations, for further analysis.

Data Analysis: Data was analyzed using advanced statistical techniques using software packages like SPSS and MS-Excel.

7. PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

The objective of the analysis of the profile of respondent is to explore the general composition of workforce in BPOs of Bangalore and study their general characteristics.

Gender Composition in BPOs

Gender composition of the sample shows the proportion of both the genders.

Table 1: Gender Composition in BPOs

Gender	Frequency	Percent
MALE	392	64.37
FEMALE	217	35.63
Total	609	100

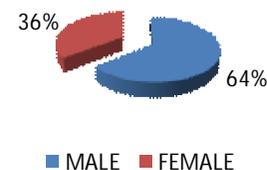


Figure 1: Gender Composition in BPOs

Inference 1: Like in all work places, in BPOs too, men outnumber women. But interesting observation is women constitute more than one third of BPO jobs.

Marital Status of the Respondents

Marital status of the respondents may reveal in many cases the changed mindset towards work with increased responsibility and an important variable to be considered.

Table 2: Marital Status of the Respondents

Marital Status	Frequency	Percent
SINGLE	433	71.10
MARRIED	176	28.90
Total	609	100

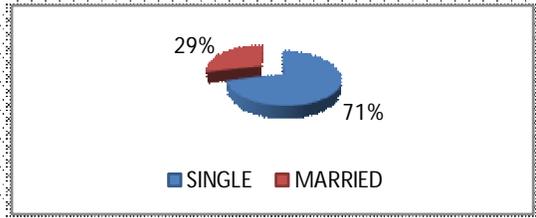


Figure 2: Marital Status of the Respondents

Inference 2: Confirming the popular belief that BPO jobs are for bachelors, more than 2/3rd of workforce of BPOs is unmarried.

Designation-wise Gender divide

This analysis is performed to know about the existence of any 'glass ceiling' (An invisible upper limit in corporations and other organizations, above which it is difficult or impossible for women to rise in the ranks.) in BPOs.

Table 3: Cross tabulation Designation Level & Gender

Designation Level	GENDER		Total
	Male	Female	
CSRs	217	119	336
Team Leads	145	83	228
Managers	30	15	45
Total	392	217	609

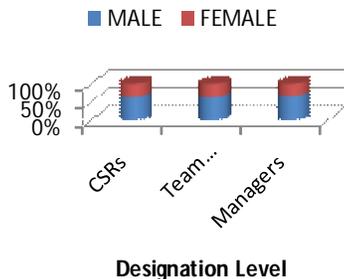


Figure 3: Designation-wise Gender divide

Inference 3: The good news from the BPOs is that the women are given almost the same proportion

of their representation in higher designation levels as their share in the total workforce, which is around 36%. Hence there is no glass ceiling exists in BPOs.

Qualification-wise Gender divide

This analysis intends to explore the existence of any gender discrimination in educational qualification at different levels.

Table 4: Cross tabulation of Qualification & Gender

Qualification Level	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Graduates	229	121	350
Professional Graduates	69	33	102
Post Graduates	94	63	157
Total	392	217	609

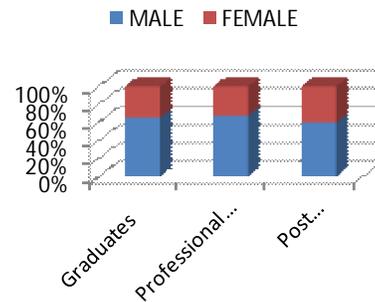


Figure 4: Qualification-wise Gender divide

Inference 4: The good news from here too, is that the women too are getting better qualified in equal proportion as their male counterparts in BPO jobs.

Gender-wise Marital Status

The purpose of this analysis is to see the preference of both the genders to work in BPOs after the marriage.

Table 5: Cross tabulation of Gender & Marital Status

Gender	Marital Status		Total
	SINGLE	MARRIED	
MALE	297	95	392
FEMALE	136	81	217
Total	433	176	609

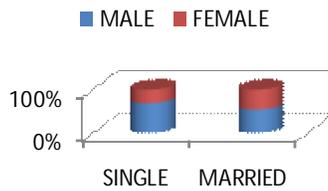


Figure 5: Gender-wise Marital Status

Inference 5: The analysis shows that after marriage, men prefer less to work in BPOs in comparison to married women.

Age wise Gender divide

The analysis intends to know the distribution of men and women in the BPO workforce in different age groups and to observe the existence of any pattern.

Table 6: Cross tabulation of Age & Gender

Age group	Gender		Total
	MALE	FEMALE	
Less than 24	74	47	121
24 - 28	190	108	298
28 - 32	87	48	135
32 - 36	33	8	41
36 and above	8	6	14
Total	392	217	609

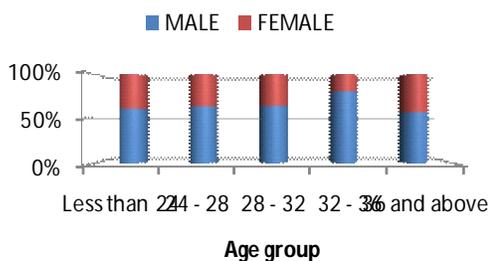


Figure 6: Age wise Gender divide

Inference 6: Very interesting finding here is that the women maintain the same percentage as their overall percentage up to the age level 32. But in age group 32-36, their percentage suddenly drops and after 36 shoots above their overall average. This

can be attributed to the fact that after marriage, (and a child in some cases) women leave the job and after child grows to a self-manageable level, they rejoin the work. Some women start their career in BPO at this stage and some men opt out of BPO job at the same age, resulting overall increase in the percentage of women.

Experience-wise Gender divide

The analysis is performed to find the tendency to stay for long with BPOs in both the genders.

Table 7: Cross tabulation of Experience & Gender

Experience in years	Gender		Total
	MALE	FEMALE	
Less than 2	60	41	101
2 - 4	168	91	259
4 - 6	92	50	142
6 - 8	45	23	68
8 and more	27	12	39
Total	392	217	609

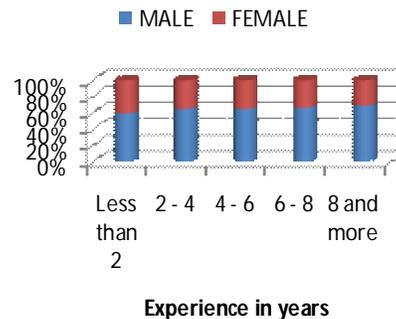


Figure 7: Experience-wise Gender divide

Inference 7: Another interesting finding here is that the women do not serve for long in BPOs in comparison with men.

Gender-wise number of Organizations worked

The purpose of this analysis is to examine the tendency to change the job in both the genders.

Table 8: Cross tabulation of Gender & Organizations worked

Total number of Organizations Worked	Gender		Total
	MALE	FEMALE	
1 org	190	117	307
2 org	140	70	210
3 org	43	21	64
4 org	14	6	20
5 or more	5	3	8
Total	392	217	609

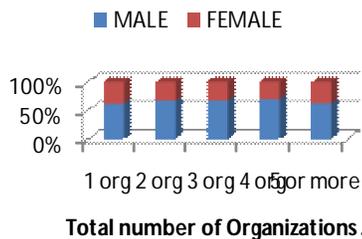


Figure 8: Gender-wise Organizational Experience

Inference 8: The analysis shows that the tendency to change the job in percentage is almost same in both the genders. This is due to the fact that, irrespective of the gender, one tends to move on, as soon as one finds, monetarily, a better alternative as every BPO job is equal non-monetarily, that is, monotonous and uninspiring.

8. DESCRIPTIVES' ANALYSIS BY GENDER

In this section, the descriptions of all organizational expectation factors are analyzed across different genders to assess their central tendency and the extent of dispersion.

Table 9: Descriptions of all factors for both genders

Employee Satisfaction Factors	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
F1: Compensation Package Factor	MALE	391	3.4267	0.9132	0.0462
	FEMALE	217	3.3572	0.8975	0.0609
	Total	608	3.4019	0.9075	0.0368
F2: Working Environment Factor	MALE	391	3.2280	0.7281	0.0368
	FEMALE	217	3.1034	0.7425	0.0504
	Total	608	3.1835	0.7351	0.0298
F3: Interpersonal Relations Factor	MALE	391	2.9900	0.8596	0.0435
	FEMALE	217	2.8744	0.8914	0.0605
	Total	608	2.9487	0.8721	0.0354
F4: Work Content Factor	MALE	391	3.4406	0.6869	0.0347
	FEMALE	217	3.3390	0.7001	0.0475
	Total	608	3.4043	0.6928	0.0281
F5: Career Growth Factor	MALE	390	3.0699	0.7385	0.0374
	FEMALE	217	2.9383	0.7617	0.0517
	Total	607	3.0229	0.7489	0.0304
F6: Personal Reasons Factor	MALE	390	3.1865	0.7542	0.0382
	FEMALE	217	3.2139	0.7363	0.0500
	Total	607	3.1963	0.7474	0.0303
F7: Top management Factor	MALE	389	3.2604	0.7371	0.0374
	FEMALE	217	3.1257	0.7196	0.0488
	Total	606	3.2121	0.7331	0.0298

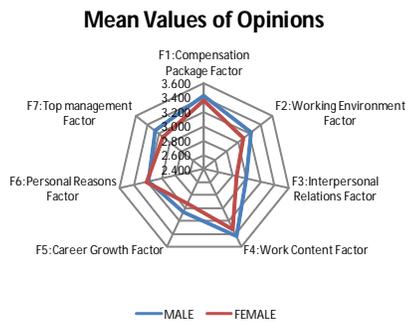


Figure 9: Means Plots of all factors for both Genders

Inference 9: In mean plot analysis (Table 9 and Figure 9) for all factors men have stronger feelings than women with only exception of personal reasons factors. The maximum difference of opinions is observed for Top management Factor and Career Growth Factor. But for Compensation Package Factor and Work Content Factor, they too have the same level of expectations as men.

Standard Deviations of Opinions

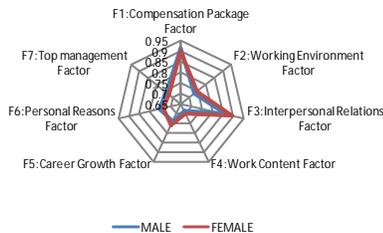


Figure 10: Standard Deviations of all factors for both Genders

Table 10: ANOVA Table of comparison of means between both genders for all factors

Employee Expectation Factors		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
F1: Compensation Package Factor	Between Groups	0.673	1	0.673	0.817	0.366
	Within Groups	499.234	606	0.824		
	Total	499.907	607			
F2: Working Environment Factor	Between Groups	2.170	1	2.170	4.036	0.045
	Within Groups	325.802	606	0.538		
	Total	327.971	607			
F3: Interpersonal Relations Factor	Between Groups	1.864	1	1.864	2.456	0.118
	Within Groups	459.803	606	0.759		
	Total	461.666	607			
F4: Work Content Factor	Between Groups	1.439	1	1.439	3.007	0.083
	Within Groups	289.901	606	0.478		
	Total	291.339	607			

Inference 10: Standard Deviations' analysis (Table 9 and Figure 10) shows the dispersion of opinions within the gender. It is observed that for all factors, there is hardly any difference in their standard deviations values. But it is curious to observe that both of them are varying in tandem for all the factors. That is, the same level of differences lies within both the genders.

ANOVA Analysis

ANOVA analysis is performed to test all organizational expectation factors with both genders to see if they are significant or not and its interpretation.

Null Hypothesis, Ho: There is no significant difference between both the genders on the opinions about all Employee Expectation Factors.

Alternate Hypothesis, HA: There is significant difference between both the genders on the opinions about all Employee Expectation Factors.

F5:Career Growth Factor	Between Groups	2.414	1	2.414	4.328	0.038
	Within Groups	337.469	605	0.558		
	Total	339.883	606			
F6:Personal Reasons Factor	Between Groups	0.104	1	0.104	0.187	0.666
	Within Groups	338.379	605	0.559		
	Total	338.483	606			
F7:Top management Factor	Between Groups	2.527	1	2.527	4.731	0.030
	Within Groups	322.624	604	0.534		
	Total	325.151	605			

Inference 11: At 5% level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected for Working Environment Factor (F2), Career Growth Factor (F5) and Top management Factor (F7). For all other factors the null hypothesis is accepted. That is, there is significant difference between both the genders on the opinions about Working Environment, Career Growth and Top management Factors.

9. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The findings of the study obtained from various inferences, have been discussed for each of the objectives, the research was set forth with. They are as below:

Objective 1: General Characteristics BPO industry and its Workforce

Unique characteristics of BPO industry and the composition of its workforce in Bangalore based on inferences in the analysis phase are as below:

- a) Women constituting more than 1/3rd of BPO jobs (Inference 1) and more than 2/3rd of workforce of BPOs being unmarried (Inference 2) indicates the uniqueness of the BPO industry. This has given the BPO a reputation of industry for bachelors, women and unemployed. The reasons attributed to this are the BPO job is unchallenging, monotonous, and lacking growth.
- b) Women constitute about 36% of BPO workforce in all designation levels and there is no glass ceiling exists in BPOs (Inference 3). Women too are getting better qualified in equal proportion as their male counterparts in BPO jobs (Inference 4).

c) After marriage, men prefer less to work in BPOs in comparison to married women (Inference 5). After marriage, (and a child in some cases) women leave the job and after child grows to a self-manageable level, they rejoin the work (Inference 6). Despite this fact, the women do not serve for long in BPOs in comparison with men (Inference 7). This may be due to the privilege of women to remain as housewife or join another industry irrespective of salary. Moreover, the very nature of BPO job itself (like unscheduled late night working hours) discourages the women employees to refrain from continuing for long.

d) Women too, change the job in equally frequently (Inference 8) speaks about their urge to excel despite all limitations.

Objective 2: Analysis of the expectations of BPO employees, gender wise, on various factors of employee satisfaction.

The expectations of BPO employees, differentiated by gender, on various factors of employee expectation are discussed below:

- a) In all factors, men have stronger feelings than women with only exception of personal reasons factors (Inference 9). This indicates, understandably, women have more personal reasons to feel strongly than men. The maximum difference of opinions is observed for Top Management Factor and Career Growth Factor. This indicates the women are not that affected by the top management policies and have lesser

expectation in comparison to men. But in case of Compensation Package Factor and Work Content Factor, they too have the same level of expectations as men. That is, there is similarity in monetary expectations for both genders.

- b) Levels of differences are almost same within both the genders (Inference 10). It means the same level of heterogeneity exists in both genders. This adds to the complexity of the problem and indicates that the workgroup in BPOs is highly diversified, not only in terms of qualification, experience, etc, but also for viewpoints about expectations.

Objective 3: To analyze the differences between the opinions about employee expectation factors between both genders.

- a) That is, there is significant difference between both the genders on the opinions about Working Environment, Career Growth and Top Management Factors. For all other factors, there is no significant difference between the opinions of both the genders (Inference 11). This indicates that, women have a different expectation from Working Environment. They have different concerns about their Career Growth. Women's expectation from Topmanagement also, differs significantly from that of men. In totality, the men have stronger concerns in these areas while women are lenient on these factors.

10. SUGGESTIONS

On the basis of the findings of the study and conclusions, the following suggestions are being offered to manage the employee satisfaction/attrition level in BPOs.

- i. The BPO workforce is highly diversified. Hence to manage this extremely diversified mix of employees at same levels and in teams; management needs to employ new tools and techniques. Hence any measure or HR practice that applies uniformly to all may not yield results.

In this regard, it is highly suggested that an organization need to look into the composition of its workforce and decide about appropriate HR initiatives.

- ii. The monotony of BPO job is uninspiring and unchallenging, for young and men. In this direction the BPOs can look for literate and willing educated housewives and train them. They can form an asset to the organization.
- iii. The BPO job is viewed only as a gap filler or temporary alternative, till they get a better job in this city of opportunities, Bangalore. In this regard, it is suggested that the BPOs need to set up their units in interior parts of Karnataka, wherein, gaining many advantages of Metro city like Bangalore, they can get competent women employees who - as they have limited opportunities - will provide the companies cost effective alternatives.
- iv. The BPO organizations can think of providing a mentorship support to its employees, especially women, so that they can overcome workplace stresses efficiently.
- v. The safety and security being the main concerns of women employees, organizations need to take maximum care especially in the overnight shifts.

11. CONCLUSION

Inclusiveness signifies sustainability and growth, exclusiveness signifies non-sustainability and stagnation. Gender inclusiveness is an imperative strategy for any industry if it wishes to have a sustainable growth. If any organization ignores the talent and potential available in the half of the population, it runs risk of remaining a mediocre player with stagnated growth. Addressing the gender issues, therefore, is in the interest of the sustainability and growth of the organization. This study is conducted for BPOs, who are facing the challenges of sustainability and growth at present, after their initial boom period. BPO, which was conceived to

reduce the burden of overheads of western industrial world, has come as a boon to Indian middle class. It is working as great economic leveler for lesser privileged and women in particular. There is no glass ceiling observed in the industry. Women too are getting better qualified in equal proportion as their male counterparts in BPO jobs is a positive signal. To take this to next level and to make their growth sustainable, BPOs need to make their job, a long term career option, by focusing more on the needs of their women employees.

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