"PSYCHOLGICAL RISK FACTORS IN CALL CENTERS, AN EVALUATION OF WORK DESIGN AND WELL BEING WITH REFERENCE TO SAFETY AND HEALTH REFERENCES TO SAFETY AND HEALTH MEASURES OF WOMEN EMPLOYEES IN CALL CENTERS AT BANGALORE"

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Abstract

"A good safety and health culture is built over time. It is never given" *this slogan helps us to understand important of safety and health measures in any organization. The safety and health measures are occurring issues in call centers and other sectors. Most employees fail to provide adequate safety and health measures in place at their work environment to safe guard. Infective occupational work design, health and safety policy have a negative effect on the organizational as well as the workforce. This study helps us to examine the effect of occupational health and safety on call centers in Bangalore. This research helps to identify the inadequacies in the call centers health and safety measures.*

Keywords: Bangalore, Psychological risk factors, safety, heath, Call center.

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INTRODUCTION

Every organization for the smooth and effective functioning various provisions should be provided to employees. In this core one is Health and safety measures. There is a saying "health is Wealth". According to Factory Act of 1948, the health provisions are incorporated in the Act is based on "Preventation is better than cure" principle". Section 11 to 20 deals with provisions of health like, cleanliness, ventilation, dust and fume artificial humidification, overcrowding, lighting, drinking water, urinals etc.

Work design:

Work design is used by organizations to boost productivity by offering employees non-monetary rewards such as satisfaction from a greater sense of personal achievement.

"In reality they are characterized by low pay, poor application of health and safety practices and aggressive management techniques. This breeds low morale and illness, and high staff turnover putting huge pressure on the existing workforce."

Call centers workers in both the public and private sector regularly face a variety of difficult workplace issues including attacks on pay, inflexible working arrangements, and deskilling from top-down initiatives such as LEAN which is simply on oppressive time and motion technique.

ILO set various standards for the betterment of employees by considering economic and social welfare to employees. The key issues can be grouped into,

- Pay
- Health and safety issues
- Work environment

Occupational safety and Health Act:

Congress passed the occupational and safety health act 1970 to ensure worker and workplace safety. Their goal was to make sure employees provide their workers a place of employment free from recognize hazards to safety and health such as explosure to toxic chemicals, excessive noise levels, mechanical dangers, heat or cold stress, or unsanitary conditions.

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In order to establish standards for workplace health and safety, the Act also created the "National Institute for occupational safety and Health (NIOSH) as the research institute for the occupational safety and health administration. OSHA is a division of the U.S department of Labour that oversees the administration of the Act and enforces standards in all 50 states.

Literature Review:

Emerging Services: Occupational safety and Health risks. European agency for safety and Health at work, October 2011, the report shows that emergency workers have a high risk of suffering fatal accidents, injuries, and other occupational Deceases Past disasters demonstrate that both communities and companies are often not fully prepared for major accident and cat strops. Better protection for emergency workers against occupational hazards should be given high priority, as current environmental, economic, and political development, economic and political developments suggest an increase in severity and frequency of future disasters.

The Cambridge advanced Learners Dictionary defines "Welfare as "Well being". Therefore, health and safety are strictly aspects of employee welfare, which have been separately indentified as being significant areas of welfare provision for sometimes.

Cascio, Wayne (1986) defines safety hazards as those aspects of the work environment that have the potential of immediate and sometimes violent harm to an employee, for example loss of hearing, eye sight, or body parts, cuts, sprains, burses, broken bones, burns and electric shock.

Health Hazards as those aspects of work environment that slowly and cumulating lead to deterioration of an employee's health, for example: Cancer, Poisoning and respiratory diseases.

Typical causes include Physical and biological hazards, toxic and carcinogenic dusts and chemicals and stressful working conditions (core1991).

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Statement of Problem:

Organizations outsource to address specific business issues and opportunities. Executives need to be conscious of their organization's specific motivations for outsourcing.

Outsourcing indeed is a profitable mantra in the global scenario but, the companies are far ahead not meeting the psychological needs of the employees specially the weaker gender of the workforce.

The work design has to catter the need of the recipient, after all the productivity in concern. There is alarming increase in causalities in the physical, social, mental agonies and security concerns among these call centers employees, specially the women in particular.

There is often violation of the women work force by their opposite counter parts which increases the reason for frequent turn over and work-peer pressure which ultimately leads to higher rate of stress- stigma among the employees.

There are increasing number of sensitive issues which the call center needs to take care of, and thus arises the need of the hour": Psychological risk factors in call centers, an evaluation of work- design and well-being.

Objectives of the study:

To survive today, organisations must transform themselves and their markets in an ever daunting challenge to redefine the world before it redefines them. And BPO sector has once again, emerged as the single most powerful tool available to executives seeking this level of business change.

The following are the specific objectives of this research work.

1. To find out the safety and health measures adopted by the call center
2. To analyse whether the working environment is conductive for women employees.

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3. To find out how does these call center effect the health of the employees and are given standard and flexible working times.

4. Identifying the percentage of women in the workforce, their frequent turnover rates, and the reason joining the call center, and to make sure that there is enquiry of payment in terms of performance and skills.

5. To identify the stress level of women employees and what are the steps taken to reduce it, by the management.

6. To find out whether the company provide opportunity for personal growth and social interactions with the co-workers.

Scope of the study:

The importance of this study can be seen in different ways. The study could provide bases for the formulation of effective occupational health and safety policies in call centers in Bangalore.

This piece of work will also provide the opportunity for employees, employers to identify their specific respective roles in health and safety issues.

It will also provide bases for other health institutions in Bangalore to adopt the recommendations in the formulation of effective health and safety measures in their sectors as well.

The work will be used as reference material for policy makers in making decisions concerning healthy and safety practices and policies.

Data and Methodology:

Data is gathered through Primary data, a survey through questionnaire has been conducted from Call Canters among a group of 343 respondents located in Bangalore city.

Questionnaire:

The questionnaire was used to collect the required information. The respondents were asked to evaluate the ideas using 5 point likert scale, where 1- strongly agree, 2- Agree,3- neutral,4- disagree 5- strongly disagree. The likert scale questionnaire provides a consistent means of obtaining data. It helps to reduce bias.

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The survey of questionnaire has been sent to 465 employees working in the Call Centres in Bangalore. In this we received response rate is 74 percent that is 343 respondents...

Call Canters Covered for taking Respondents:		
1	Justdial.com	45
2	HCL Technologies	47
3	Aspect Technology Center India Pvt Ltd	50
4	Get it Info services Pvt Ltd	42
5	Get it Info media solutions	53
6	Infosys	54
7	Cognizant	52
Total		**343**

The survey asked about 25 Likert scale questions relating to employees work design, safety measures, health measures. In this research we have applied Mean and standard deviation for interface the results. The 25 questions have been divided into three indicators. The first four (1-8) questions will give information about employees' work design in Call Canter. Second four (9-16) questions will give information about safety measures to females working in call canters. Third (17-25) questions will give information about employees' health measures.

In overall this study helps to understand Safety and health measures in Call Canters in Bangalore and its Psychological consequences

Results:

1.1 Evaluation criteria and results:

Criteria	Mean	Variance	Standard deviation	Ranking of criteria
1. Psychological risk factors				

A. Work Design				
1. The degree of autonomy in the work place monotonous	2.93	0.27	0.52	5
2. The degree of autonomy in the work place is free style	2.70	0.29	0.54	7
3. Skill utilization is done to a great extent	3.52	0.41	0.64	3
4. Work load is increasing the stress level	2.09	0.33	0.57	8
5. The goals and objectives of your team is very clear	2.74	0.32	0.56	6
6. Role conflicts are causing interpersonal problems.	4	0.24	0.49	1
7. The working environment is friendly and follows open door communication	3.11	0.13	0.37	4
8. The call canter employees are given adequate training programs on the job and off the job.	3.63	1.25	1.11	2
B. Safety Measures				
1. The company provides employee assistance program to meet the issues faced by women employees	2.86	0.45	0.67	6
2. The company maintains confidentiality to deal with personal problems.	3.87	0.10	0.32	2
3. Social stigma exits to let women work at night shifts.	3.34	0.40	0.63	5
4. The women who travel back in the	3.86	0.38	0.61	3

	night are given security escorts.				
5.	Flexible working patterns	3.70	0.39	0.62	4
6.	Day care facilities provided for the children of the woman employees	2.19	0.23	0.48	8
7.	The company follows equal pay structure	2.66	0.39	0.63	7
8.	Rest breaks and changes of activity is provided in a timely manner.	4.02	1.18	1.08	1
C.Health Measures					
1.	Vocal health problem experienced	2.80	0.45	0.67	7
2.	Optical health problems identified	2.61	0.23	0.48	8
3.	Musculoskeletal disorders faced.	3.99	0.17	0.41	1
4.	High targets set for the women employees causing stress and imbalance in personal life	3.29	0.47	0.69	6
5.	DSE (display screen equipment) assessment provided frequently.	3.53	0.24	0.49	5
6.	Canteen facilities are provided at all times, especially during the nights shifts.	3.68	0.95	0.75	4
7.	Restroom facilities are hygienic	3.98	0.017	0.13	2
8.	First aid facilities are provided at the time of need	3.92	0.06	0.26	3
9.	Convenient with the working hours	2.09	0.08	0.29	9

1.2 Main group criteria and results:

Main group criteria's		Mean	Variance	Standard deviation
1	Work Design	4	0.24	0.49
2	Safety Measures	4.02	1.18	1.08
3	Health Measures	3.99	1.17	0.41

1.3 Top 5 evaluation criteria's and results:

S.l no.	Criteria's	Mean	Variance	Standard deviation	Ranking
1	Rest breaks and changes of activity is provided in a timely manner.	4.02	1.18	1.08	1
2	Role conflicts are causing interpersonal problems.	4	0.24	0.49	2
3	Musculoskeletal disorders faced.	3.99	0.17	0.41	3
4	Restroom facilities are hygienic	3.98	0.017	0.13	4
5	First aid facilities are provided at the time of need	3.92	0.06	0.26	5
6	The company maintains confidentiality to deal with personal problems.	3.87	0.10	0.32	6
7.	The women who travel back in the night are given security escorts.	3.86	0.38	0.61	7

Finding:

1. Role conflicts can cause interpersonal problems among employees and can create an unfavourable environment for the employees. The study reveals that role conflicts is not present in most of the work places.

2. The study reveals that rest breaks and changes of activities is provided in a timely manner.

3. Musculoskeletal disorder faced in call canters in Bangalore: call canters work would require these women to use computer of hours and hence few of them to face problems but no series issue are faced by the women employees.

Further scope of study: This study is limited to call canters in Bangalore. If anyone wants to do a further study they can tap other cities like Pune, Mumbai, Delhi etc. This study is limited to following BPO: Justdial.com, HCL Technologies, Aspect Technology Canter India Pvt Ltd., Get it Info services Pvt Ltd, Infosys, Cognizant only.

Limitation of the study:

1. **The study is conducted in Bangalore city and hence the results are limited to the city only.**

2. **It has been assumed that, the respondents given true and fair information.**

3. **The survey was restricted to only 343 female call- center employees, in 7 BPO companies.**

Conclusion: call center strategies have to be built around human capital and therefore, HRD strategies need to be integrated with the overall business strategy of an organization. Women employees working in call centers should be considered with well health and safety measures for effective flow of work.

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