

**WOMEN EMPLOYEES IN BPOS AND CALL CENTERS:  
PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS  
(A CASE STUDY OF CHANDIGARH)**

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**Abstract**

Women employees constitute about one-third of the total workforce in Call Centres and BPOs in India. Though there is major economic contribution of women to the BPO industry, yet several challenges and problems faced by the women employees still remain to be addressed. Some of the major challenges include safe transportation, flexible working hours, night shifts, socio-cultural factors and sexual harassment. Though, Government of India has made certain strict rules and regulations regarding the safety and security of women working in the BPOs and Call Centers, yet the number of incidents of murders and rapes are increasing PAN India. The BPO and Call Centre industry in India has a bright future ahead. The women are an integral part of BPO and Call Centre industry, thus it is the responsibility of employer to address these challenges and problems at the earliest. In this paper attempt is made to study the problems and challenges faced by the women employees working in the BPOs and Call Centers of Chandigarh, steps taken by the employers to address the problems and issues and what is more expected by the women employees from their employers. This paper is original attempt of ours and has not been presented and published anywhere else.

**Introduction**

Women employees constitute about one-third of the total workforce in Call Centres and BPOs in India. Though there is major economic contribution of women to the BPO industry, yet several challenges and problems faced by the women employees still remain to be addressed. Some of the major challenges include safe transportation, flexible working hours, night shifts, socio-cultural factors and sexual harassment. Though, Government of India has made certain strict rules and regulations regarding the safety and security of women working in the BPOs and Call Centers, yet the number of incidents of murders and rapes are increasing pan India. The BPO and Call Centre industry in India has a bright future ahead. The women are an integral part of BPO and Call Centre industry, thus it is the responsibility of employer to address these challenges and problems at the earliest.

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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 women belonging to poor and middle class families can easily join the call centers and earn lucrative salaries.

Though, there are many attractions in the BPOs but there are many problems which are being faced by the women employees working in these call centers. The paper focuses on the problems of women employees in four selected call centers of Airtel, Vodafone, Tata Indicom and Docomo and Spice in Chandigarh, their expectations and satisfaction level regarding employer's efforts for their growth and security.

### About the Study

**1. Sample size** = 100 women employees in BPOs (Domestic Process) call centers executives.

**Table-1: Breakup of the respondents**

S.No	Rank	Number
1	Airtel	25
2	Vodafone	25
3	Tata Indicom and Docomo	25
4	Spice	25

**2. Location where the study is conducted:** Call Centers of Airtel, Vodafone, Tata Indicom and Docomo, Spice.

**3. Limitations:** Time was the major constraint and human behavior is unpredictable. There can be biasness while answering.

**4. Data collection:** Through Questionnaire.

### **5. Objectives:**

- a. To study the profile of women employees working in the BPOs.
- b. To study the problems faced by women employees in the BPOs.
- c. To study whether the employer is concerned about the problems of women employees.

- d. To study whether the women employees are satisfied with the efforts of employer for them.
- e. To study the expectations of women employees from the employer firm.
- f. To give suggestions how employers can solve the major issues relating to women employees.

## The Analysis

**1. Profile of Women Employees in the selected BPO:** In the profile of women employees in selected call centers, their age, their education, marital status and family's income data has been analyzed and the results are presented in Table-1.

**Table-1: Profile of Women Employees in the selected BPOs**

BPO	Age			Family Income			Education			Marital Status	
	Below 20 years	Between 20-25 years	Above 25 years	Below 2 Lakh p.a	Between 2-5 lakh	Above 5 lakh	Under Graduate	Graduate	Post Graduate	Married	Un-married
Airtel	4	17	4	8	10	7	10	12	3	2	23
Vodafone	3	16	6	6	13	6	9	14	2	3	22
Tata Indicom and Docomo	5	14	6	8	12	5	13	12	--	1	24
Spice	4	17	4	10	11	4	11	12	2	4	21

**Interpretation:** As per the data shown in Table-1, it is interpreted that generally the women employees working in the BPOs are between 20-25 years of age. Very few of them are below 20 years and above 25 years. The family income of these women employees is either below Rs. 2 lakh per annum or between 2-5 Lakh per annum. They are not belonging to very rich families. Very few of the women employees are post graduates. Most of them are either under graduates or graduates. Very few of the women employees are married. Most of them are unmarried.

**2. Experience of Working in BPOs and Shifts made: The experience and attrition rate in the selected call centers of women employees is presented in Table-2.**

**Table-2: Experience of Working in BPOs and Shifts made.**

BPO	Experience			No. of Times Shifts made from one Call Centre to another		
	Less than 1 Year	1-2 years	More than 2 years	No shift	Less than 2 shifts	More than 2 shifts
<b>Airtel</b>	14	8	3	3	15	7
<b>Vodafone</b>	11	12	2	5	18	2
<b>Tata Indicom and Docomo</b>	10	13	2	0	14	11
<b>Spice</b>	8	15	2	4	16	5

**Interpretation:** Most of the respondents said that they have started working very recently. In the BPOs Call Centers, generally the women employees have less than 2 years of experience and very few of them have the experience of more than 2 years. The iteration rate in call centers is always high and Table shows that generally women employees have made at least one shift from one call center to another in very less span of their work life and some of them have even taken more than 2 shifts also.

**3. Attractions for joining BPOs:** Call center industry is the employer of large section of women. The attractions in the call center industry which lure the women employees to enter this industry are presented in Table-3.

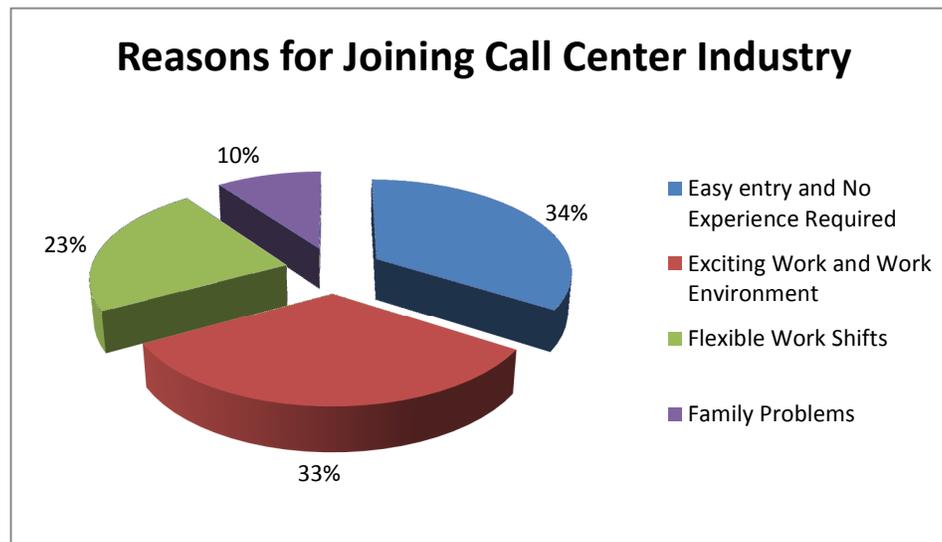
**Interpretation:** Both entry and exit in the call centers is easy as compared to other jobs. The above table shows that the young women employees who are at the verge of their starting point of career are highly attracted by high salaries, exciting work and interesting work environment. The young pass outs get the entry into this industry without any experience and the desired qualifications are very less. This also attracts the younger generation to enter into this industry. Moreover it is sitting job and not a marketing job. The women employees consider it to be the best as they have to attend the queries and complaints sitting in the office. Generally the employers organize parties and trips for the employees in call centers to celebrate their achievements, this also attracts them to enter in this industry.

**Table-3: Reasons/Benefits/Attractions for joining BPOs**

	<b>Attracts</b>	<b>Do not Attract</b>
<b>Flexible Shifts</b>	66%	34%
<b>Less Desired Qualification</b>	56%	44%
<b>Less Desired Experience</b>	62%	38%
<b>Exciting Work</b>	74%	26%
<b>Interesting Work Environment</b>	69%	31%
<b>Future prospects of growth</b>	32%	68%
<b>Intensive Training before Induction and Stipend during training</b>	74%	26%
<b>Improved Communication Skills</b>	77%	23%
<b>Perks and Requisites</b>	62%	38%
<b>High Salary at initial phase of work life</b>	84%	16%
<b>Parties, trips and other recreational facilities</b>	75%	25%

The communication skills also improve as they have to attend the queries of the customers in polite and sophisticated manner. But regarding the promotion prospects and growth in BPOs, there are very less chances of reaching high positions in call centers and the experience of call centers is not considered in any other industry.

**4. Reason for joining Call centers:** 34% of the respondents said that they joined the industry because entry was very easy and no experience was required. 33% of the respondents said exciting work and environment was the main reason for joining the industry. 23% of the respondents said that the main reason for joining the industry was flexible work shifts. 10% of the respondents said that the main reason for joining the industry was family's financial problems.

**Exhibit-1: Reasons for Joining Call Center Industry**

**5. Health Problems faced by Women Employees: Women employees face many health problems like head ache, back ache, nausea, stress, sleeplessness, eyesight and throat problems. The responses of the respondents are presented in Table-4.**

**Table-4: Health Problems faced by Women Employees**

Health Problems				
	Mild	Moderate	Extreme	Percentage
<b>Head ache</b>	60	24	16	100%
<b>Nausea</b>	4	40	4	48%
<b>Back ache</b>	52	36	12	100%
<b>Stress</b>	84	16	-	100%
<b>Eyesight Problems</b>	64	8	-	72%
<b>Throat Problems</b>	48	48	-	96%
<b>Sleeplessness</b>	40	16	-	56%

**Interpretation:** Generally women employees working in the call centers are facing the problems relating to health. 100% of the respondents said that they have the problem of headache, backache and stress. 16% of the respondents said they have severe head ache problem. 12% of the respondents have severe backache problem. 72% of the respondents said that they have eyesight problems because of long hours of working on computers and 96% of the respondents said that they have throat related problems as they have to

continuously attend the complaints and queries of the customers. 48% of the respondents said that they are having nausea and 56% of the respondents complained about sleeplessness.

**6. Social and Other Problems faced by women Employees:** There are many social and cultural problems faced by the women employees in call centers. The responses of the respondents regarding social and other problems are presented in Table-5.

**Table-5: Social and Other Problems faced by Women Employees**

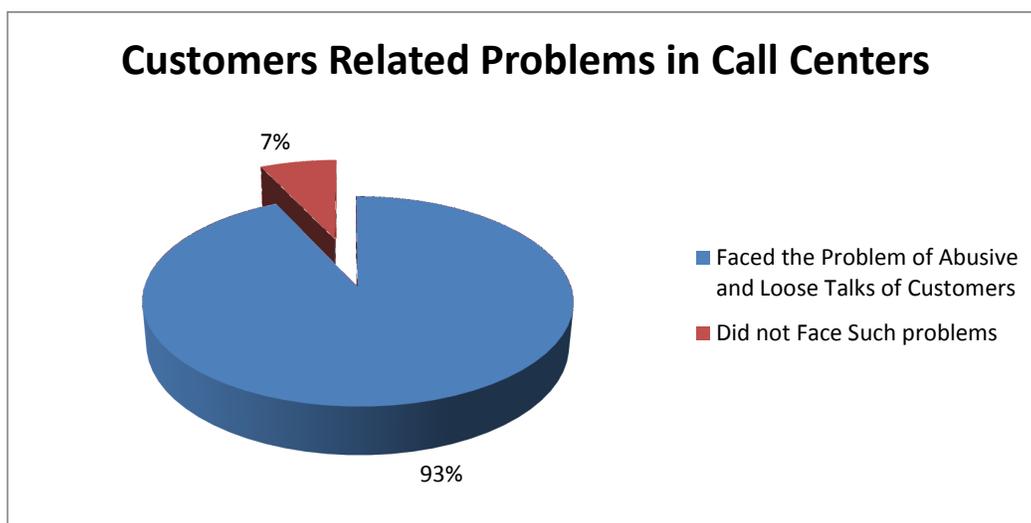
	Not faced the Problem at all	Faced the Problem	No answer
<b>Eve Teasing</b>	56	40 (40%)	4
<b>Sexual harassment</b>	60	12 (12%)	28
<b>Lack of family support</b>	72	28 (28%)	--
<b>Lack of socialization</b>	32	68 (68%)	--
<b>Financial problems</b>	64	24 (24%)	12
<b>Being Women (Gender Discrimination)</b>	56	44 (44%)	---
<b>Longer Duration of Night Shifts</b>	84	16 (16%)	--
<b>Commuting problems</b>	87	13 (13%)	---
<b>Illicit Relationships and Affairs</b>	78	13 (12%)	10
<b>Smoking, Drinking, Drugs at workplace</b>	93	7 (7%)	---
<b>Language problems</b>	73%	27%	---

**Interpretation:** The major problem faced by women employees is lack of socialization. 68% of the respondents said that they have no time to socialize and many of them have lost many friends as they are unable to spend time with them. 44% of the respondents said that they have faced many problems because of being a woman. They are denied promotions and are not considered at par with their male counterparts. 40% of the respondents have complained about eve teasing. 28% of the respondents said that due to odd timings and less salaries they have faced the problem of lack of family support. 24% of the respondents said that they have faced financial problems also as the salaries drawn by them are very less to meet their own expenses, then savings and rearing families is out of question. 12% of the women employees have complained about sexual harassment and to surprise 28% of the respondents they have not answered this question. Regarding the night shifts, 84% of the respondents are satisfied

with the duration of night shifts and they said that they are generally given day shifts and night shifts are up to 12:00 pm. But 16% of the respondents said that they are given more night shifts and are harassed as compared to others. 87% of the respondents said that they have faced no problem in commuting as the cabs are quite safe and the drivers are well trained and behaved. 13% of the respondents said that sometimes cabs are over occupied and they reach home very late as the cab routes are definite and they follow those routes only. 12% of the respondents said that they have faced the problem of illicit relationships and 10% of the respondents have not given any answer to this question. 7% of the respondents said that they have faced the problem of smoking and drinking at the workplace but 93% of the respondents said that this has become the part of work culture and they are comfortable with it. 23% of the respondents said that they faced the problem of communicating with their co-employees as they use jargon about which they were not aware of and they use slangs which are not common with them.

**7. Customer/Client Related Problems:** 93% of the respondents in the selected Call Centers complained that the clients misbehave with the women call center executives. They said that sometimes customers use abusive language and ask for their personal numbers. They have to attend all the calls and they cannot drop the calls as soon as the call comes. They have to take the call and attend the customer initially. The respondents said that sometimes customers become so adamant that they keep on talking and talking and sometimes indulge in loose talks. 7% of the respondents said that they have not faced such problems while taking the calls.

**Exhibit-2: Responses Regarding Customer Related Problems**



### 8. Satisfiers and Dissatisfiers in Call centers: Women Employees' Perspective

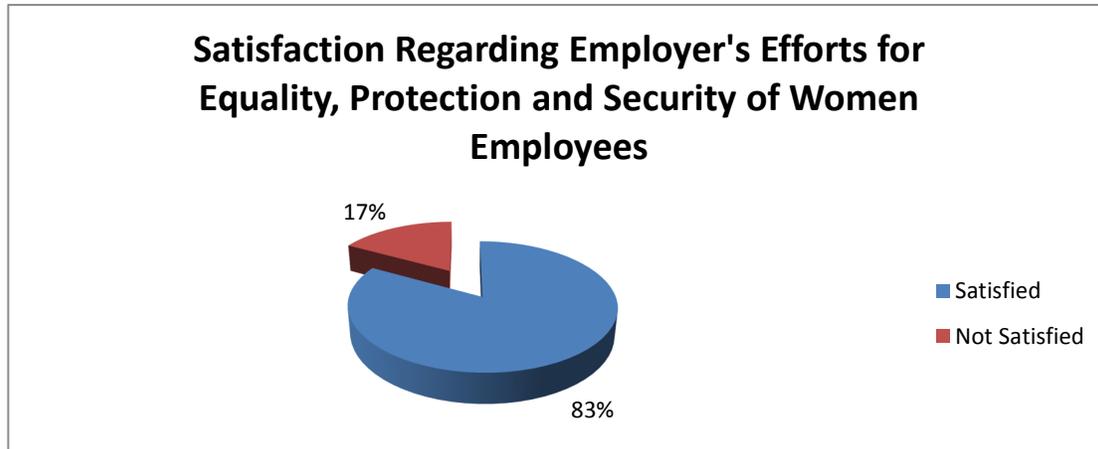
Parameter	Satisfied	Not Satisfied
Job security	83%	17%
Security during Night shifts	87%	13%
Infrastructure	95%	5%
Employer-Employee Relationship	67%	33%
Work Culture	68%	32%
Supervision	75%	25%
Grievance Redressal	45%	55%
Salary	24%	76%
Perks and Requisites	34%	66%
Promotion prospects	27%	73%
Recreational Facilities	79%	21%
Training	86%	14%
Commuting facilities	88%	12%
Allocation of shifts	64%	36%
Duration of shifts and breaks in shifts	56%	44%
Crèches or day care center for the kids of married women	83%	17%
Gymnasium, Yoga and Aerobics and Health Center	64%	36%
Inter Employee Relationships	73%	27%
Sanction of Leaves and Off days	62%	38%

**Interpretation:** The satisfaction level of women employees working in BPOs is quite high. Almost on all the parameters they are satisfied like infrastructure, job security and security during night shifts, commuting facilities, day care centers, gymnasium and health oriented efforts and training. The major areas where the women employees are not satisfied are salaries, perks and requisites, promotion prospects and grievance redressal. 36% of the respondents are not satisfied with the allocation of shifts, 44% of the respondents are not satisfied with the duration of night shifts, 38% of the respondents are not satisfied with the sanctioning of leaves and day offs.

**9. Employers Efforts:** The women employees working in the call centers are quite satisfied with the efforts of their employers regarding their safety and security, provision of day care centers, gymnasiums and health centers, duration of night shifts, number of women in night shifts and safe cabs with proper GPS locators and trained drivers. 83% of the respondents said that their employers are fulfilling the provisions laid down in Factories Act, 1948 and

other acts for equality at work and protection of women employees. 17% of the respondents said that the employers lack in providing safe and secure environment to women employees and equality at work.

**Exhibit-3: Satisfaction Regarding Employer's Efforts**



**10. Expectations of Women Employees in Call Centers:**

Most of the women employees are satisfied with the work culture and the facilities for them. There are certain expectations of women employees which are under mentioned:

- a. Increase in the salary, perks and requisites.
- b. Day shifts for the women employees should be preferred as there are large number of male employees who can be considered for night shifts.
- c. Grievance Redressal cell to handle the complaints of women employees on all issues.
- d. Promotion prospects especially for women employees in BPOs.
- e. Equality at work and treatment at par with their male counterparts.

**Findings and Suggestions**

1. The study shows that women employees are not satisfied with salary, perks and requisites. The employers should design the pay packages according to the volume of work and retain the employees for longer period of time.
2. The employers should organize proper grievance and stress management sessions in which women employees can discuss their problems. Moreover a proper grievance redressal cell can help in solving many problems.

3. The women employees are not satisfied with the promotion prospects. The employers shall design the jobs in such a way that there are more challenges and opportunities for the women employees and more growth prospects in future.
4. Equality at work is also major issue. Many women have faced the problem of being women and unequal treatment. The employers shall look into this matter and organize competitions which will definitely boost up women employees' spirits and inculcate sense of achievement.
5. On security front, the employers shall arrange for proper security check and shall stop the employees to drink and smoke in the premises. A code of ethics should be circulated and strict punishments should be given to the offenders.
6. Health issues are of major concern. Most of the women employees are facing health problems. Though there are gymnasiums and health centers yet very few are using them. The employers should develop the health oriented culture and should call the physiotherapists and doctors to impart knowledge to the women employees regarding unsafe sex, sitting postures and stress management techniques.
7. The respondents complained regarding duration of night shifts and allocation of shifts. The women employees shall be given day shifts and the maximum time should be fixed up to 11:00 pm to avoid any mishappening.
8. Most of the women employees in call centers face the problem of abusive language and loose talks on the customer front. The employers shall implement the proper system of dropping such calls and the numbers of such customers should be barred or restricted to avoid any inconvenience to the employees.

### **Conclusion**

Women employees constitute about one-third of the total workforce in Call Centres and BPOs in India. Though there is major economic contribution of women to the BPO industry, yet several challenges and problems faced by the women employees still remain to be addressed. The study shows that that the women employees working in Chandigarh are satisfied with the safety and security measures. They are quite satisfied with the infrastructure, supervision, employee-employer relationships, commuting facilities etc. They are not satisfied with the salary, perks, requisites and promotion prospects. They are also not satisfied with the grievance redressal system. But the employers are continuously making efforts to provide the safe and secure work environment to women employees. The efforts

are in accordance with various laws and legislations enacted in Indian for security, protection and equality at work. Still there are certain expectations which need to be looked upon and the congenial work environment and culture should be provided to women employees. The woman is a creator and now she has adopted the role of earner for the family. The society and family support is must for boosting their spirits and equal treatment at work place is equally important for them to achieve success. Employee satisfaction and retention is major challenge these days and employers shall concentrate primarily on satisfaction of the employees.

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