

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN COMPUTER APPLICATION & MANAGEMENT

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STRESS MANAGEMENT IN BPO SECTOR

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ABSTRACT

The BPO industry in India is one of the major job providers. It offers jobs not just to first time job seekers, but also to retired professionals and persons working from home. Indian BPO industry faces high work pressure. Due to globalization and competition, work pressures are higher than ever. Due to these challenges workforce are working longer than they were doing earlier to meet up with their career demands. Working in night shifts, excessive workload, unreachable targets are few factors which have been causes of severe stress among BPO employees. This paper attempts to understand the factors causing stress and how these employees manage their stress.

KEYWORDS

stress management, BPO, employees, work pressure.

INTRODUCTION

BPO stands for business process outsourcing. It involves outsourcing of operations and responsibilities of any business to a third party. It can be also said that the company has replaced in-house services and hired an outside firm for hiring its services. The back office functions, like accounting, finance, writing and human resources are some of the services done through the business process outsourcing by the firms.

Increase in global technology spending and opportunities created through adoption of disruptive technologies are expected to propel growth in FY2014. NASSCOM expects the industry to clock export revenues of USD 84-87 bn maintaining a growth rate of 12-14 per cent. Domestic revenues will also grow at a rate of 13-15 per cent and are expected to reach INR 1180-1200 bn.

Changing business models, emergence of new technologies, buyer segments and solutions for emerging markets will help India retain its position as the global sourcing leader and an emerging trustworthy innovation hub.

FY 2013 – REVIEW

Despite challenges in the global market, Indian IT-BPM industry sustained its growth trajectory and is expected to clock export revenues of USD 75.8 bn with a Y-o-Y growth rate of 10.2 per cent. Domestic market also witnessed Y-o-Y growth rate of 14.1 per cent taking the domestic revenues to INR 1,047 bn. The Indian IT-BPM sector continues to be one of the largest employers in the country directly employing nearly 3 million professionals, adding over 180,000 employees. FY2013 can be characterized as the year of rapid transition and transformation leading the industry into expanding into newer verticals and geographies, attracting new customer segments, and transforming from technology partners to strategic business partners.

STRESS MANAGEMENT**THE CONCEPT OF STRESS**

Hans Selye was one of the founding fathers of stress research. His view in 1956 was that “stress is not necessarily something bad – it all depends on how you take it. The stress of exhilarating, creative successful work is beneficial, while that of failure, humiliation or infection is detrimental.” Selye believed that the biochemical effects of stress would be experienced irrespective of whether the situation was positive or negative.

Since then, a great deal of further research has been conducted, and ideas have moved on. Stress is now viewed as a “bad thing”, with a range of harmful biochemical and long-term effects. These effects have rarely been observed in positive situations.

The most commonly accepted definition of stress (mainly attributed to Richard S Lazarus) is that stress is a condition or feeling experienced when a person perceives that “demands exceed the personal and social resources the individual is able to mobilize.” In short, it’s what we feel when we think we’ve lost control of events.

Employees in the Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) industry, who account for 25 per cent of the information technology (IT) and IT-enabled services personnel in the city, may suffer from low self-esteem.

According to a study published in the Human Resources Management journal of the Indian Institute of Planning and Management (IIPM), BPO work, which is just a relief from unemployment, is viewed poorly in society as it is easily available and because it involves night shifts.

(Hindu Online edition July 28th 2005)

Few factors that have caused stress among BPO employees

Long working hours in BPO is a combination of workload, call volume and travel time. Any average agent puts in 11-12 hours of work per day and at times it reaches 14 hours in case of companies that encourage overtime. Operational heads regularly work 17-18 hours per day besides staying back for customer conference calls.

Stress due to Work Timing: The geographical time difference with the US and the UK gives Indian industry one of the biggest advantages to remain a dominant player in the BPO. Hence the employees have to work in nights for long. This creates stress and causes a drastic change in the activities of body.

Stress due to Repetitive Nature of Work: Monotony is another important reason for stress. Possible solutions can be hiring retired personnel or housewives, since these groups with more experience tend to get frustrated the least. Since other innovative measures can be periodic job rotation.

Stress due to Workload: It is argued that even IT services employees have tremendous workload, so why it is that only the BPO employees complain. Though IT services employees work for long and odd hours, the long working hours are interspersed with smoke breaks, coffee breaks or chat with colleagues. Unfortunately, this is not the case in call centers, a fresher gets a little respite, since the first few months on the job involves a lot of training time.

Stress due to Insufficient Holidays: Most of the employees have to work on Indian holidays. While some companies do celebrate Indian holidays there are a number of small and big call centers, which do not observe Indian holidays.

Stress due to Pressure to Perform on Metrics: Every single action in a call center needs to conform to a performance metric. This is because most call centers are keen on different standard certifications. It is more of business necessity for most companies to follow these quantifiable business metrics to attract customers. With experience, the stress level goes down, and more importantly, working on such quantifiable performance parameters helps the employees in their future careers.

Stress due to Travel Time: Most call centers are located on the outskirts of cities, and therefore most employees spend a long time traveling to and from their offices. Again, this is a unique problem of the Indian industry. Most call centers require large manpower in order to scale up and grow, and to support such huge workforces; they need lot of space. And exorbitant land prices in cities necessitate their movement to the outskirts.

Stress due to Call Volumes: While the overall workload is quite high, call volume itself is proving to be a major cause of stress. In most call centers, there is hardly any respite between two calls.

Stress Caused due to Overtime: Though most companies encourage overtime with incentives, this can be a major reason for stress. Initially, fresher's who are willing overtime for making more money feel stressed once they are into it and performing. Overtime, along with long working hours and travel time, is turning out to be a potent combination, causing call center related stresses.

Cultural Shifts: Though on one side we learn to become as professional as western world executives some other disturbing issues are arising. One such serious issue is the personal habits that have undergone a considerable change. The personal habits, discipline are changed due to western culture.

Detachment from the Family: Since the daytime is spent in sleep and recreational activities with friends. The employees are hardly able to give time for their families. Problems become more pronounced when they get married. Additional responsibilities of running a family demands more time and hence eventually people quit the industry. Most of the employees work on Indian holidays too, which causes frustration. Some employees even feel the need for inclusion in the family and the society. Hence it is important for family members to render support for their young sons and daughters and to help them with the stress that they are undergoing.

OBJECTIVES

1. To find out the reasons causing stress among the BPO employees
2. To understand the stress factors and their management by BPO employees
3. To suggest measures to cope up with the work stress

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Dr. K. Tamizharasi et al (2014) revealed that the competitive environment, technological advancements, HR Practices, economic development, social developments changes are causing the stress factors for BPO employees. Consequently, every employee is expected to work for long hours, perform multiple jobs, available for 24 hours in seven days. These reasons give a mentally as well as physical problems to the employees. When these problems increase, then it gives a pressure, strain, anxiety, tension, trauma to the employees and ultimately the productivity of the employee's decreases.

Mrs. Shilpa R et al (2013) research paper threw light that it is the responsibility of BPO companies, to take proper initiative to reduce the stress level among the employees by adapting some of the technique like Muscle Relaxation, Bio feed Back, Meditation, Cognitive Restructuring, Time Management, Employee Assistance Programme, and Wellness Programme.

Dr. S. M. Murali Krishna et al (2013) The key stressors which affect maximum number of BPO professionals are Poor Peer Relations, Intrinsic Impoverishment and Under-participation. This is because BPO employees are becoming more and more career conscious, they want to accept challenges, improve performance and want to become socially and economically independent

Geeta Kumari and K. M. Pandey et al (2011) emphasized that Stress in the work place has become the black plague of the present century. Much of the stress at work is caused not only by work overload and time pressure but also by lack of rewards and praise, and more importantly, by not providing individuals with the autonomy to do their work as they would like

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

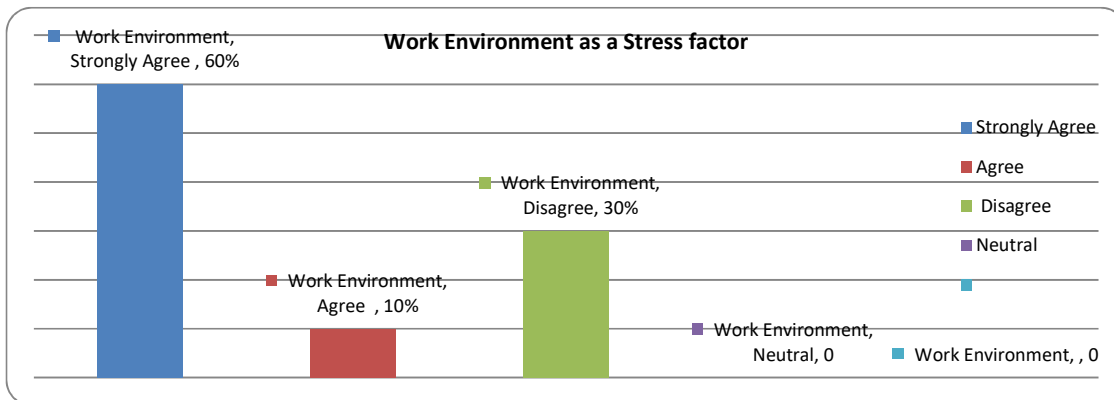
The study was conducted to examine the factors causing work life stress and stress management techniques of BPO employees. The scope of the study is limited to Bangalore only

METHODOLOGY

The primary data have been collected through the method of interview schedule and structured questionnaire from the employees at BPO sector in Bangalore. Out of 50 respondents, 30 responded to questionnaire.

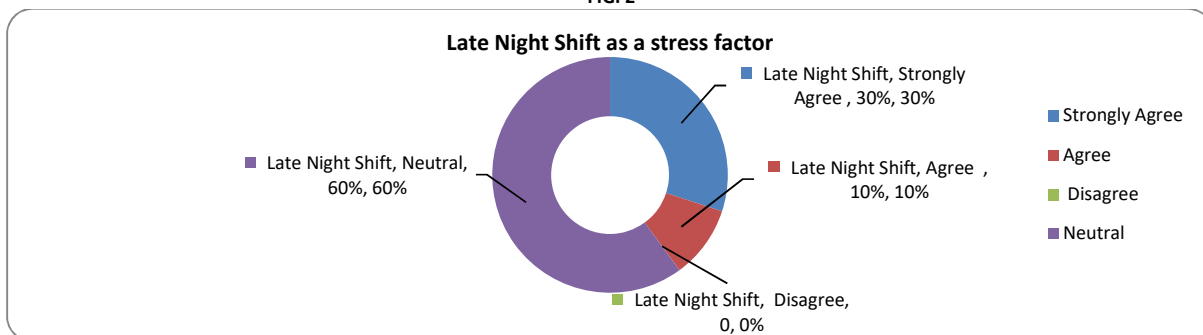
FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

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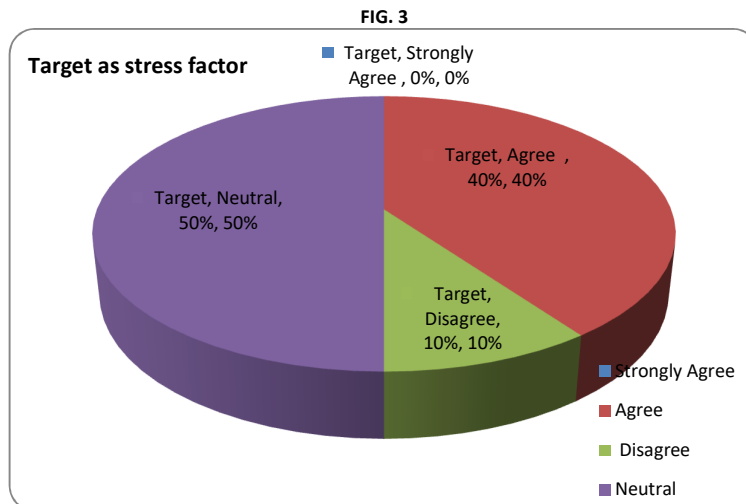


Out of the respondents 60% believed that work environment was a stress Factor.

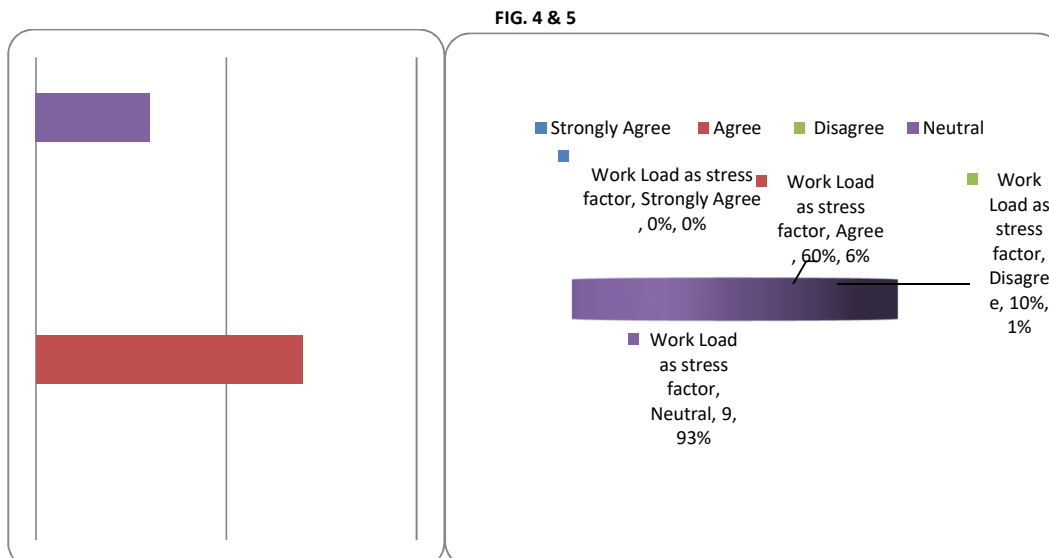
FIG. 2



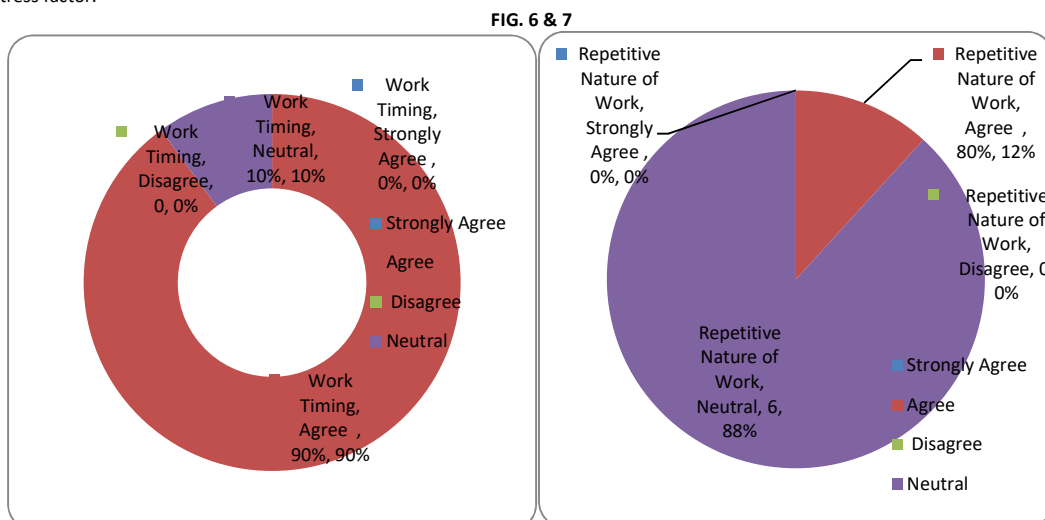
Out of respondents, 30% of them strongly agreed late night shift was a stress factor for them while 60% of respondents were neutral in their response.



Out of respondents, 40% agreed target were their stress factor while 10% disagreed it was not so.

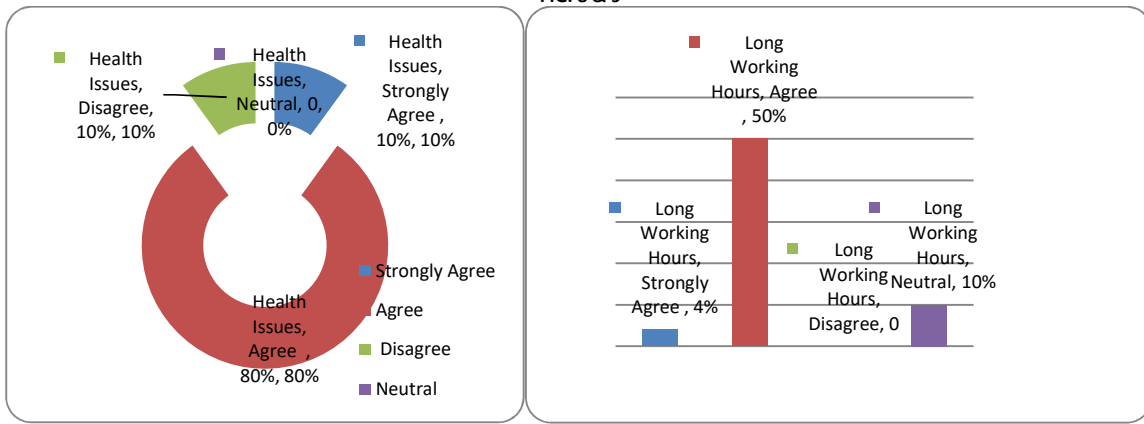


70% of respondents agreed that insufficient holidays were the reason for their stress in the work place and 93% of respondents were neutral in response to agree workload as a stress factor.



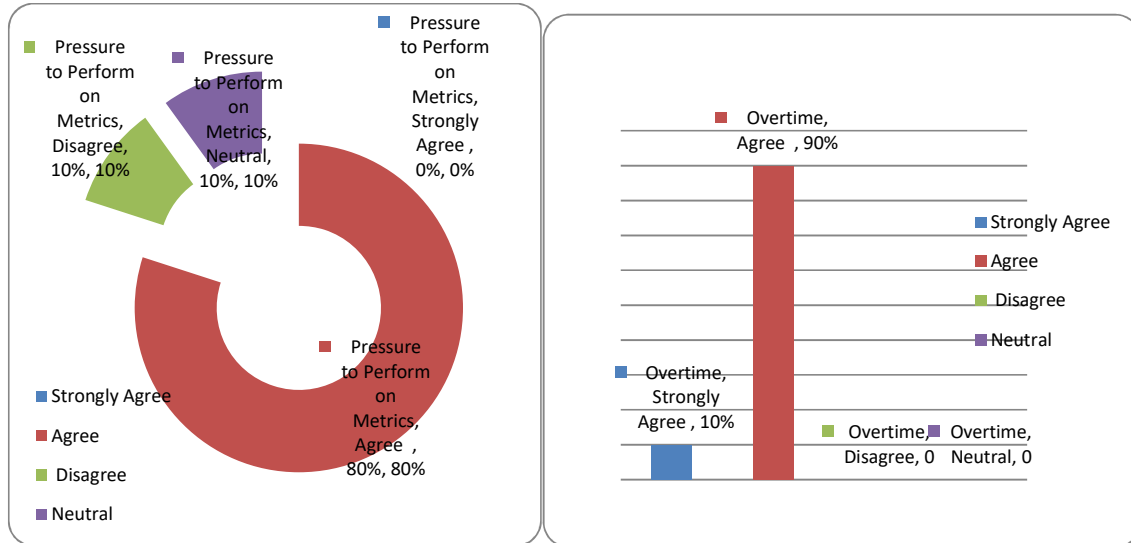
Work timing was a factor of stress for 90% of the respondents and 80% of respondents believed that repetitive nature of work as their stress factor.

FIG. 8 & 9



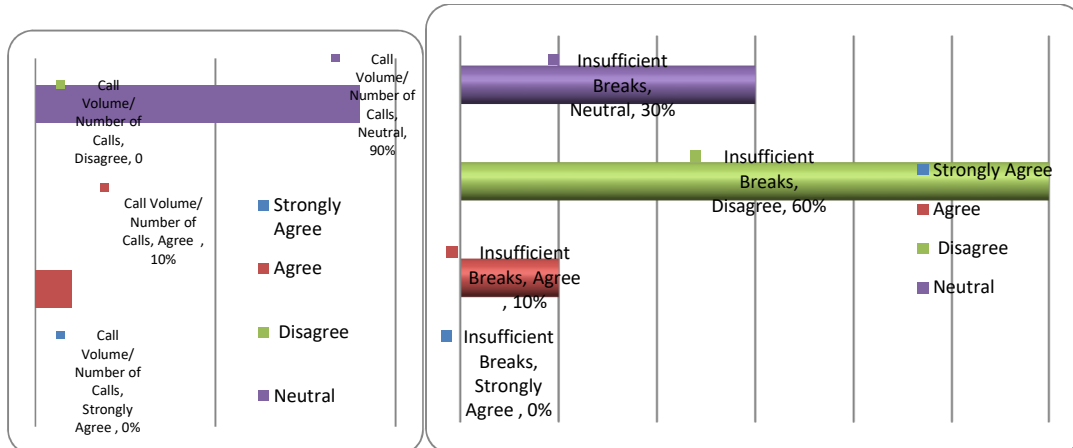
Health issues was a concern of majority of 80% of the respondents and 50% of them respondents agreed that long working hours were causing stress in their work place.

FIG. 10 & 11



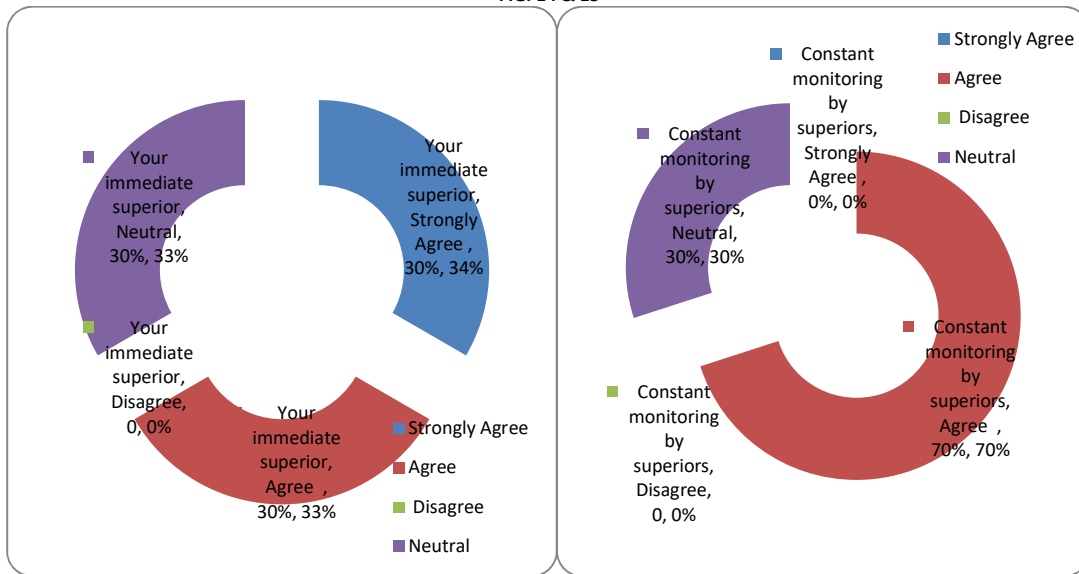
80% of the respondents believed that pressure to perform on metrics was a major stress factor and 90% of the respondents agreed that over time was their stress factor.

FIG. 12 & 13



Only 10% agreed that number of calls was a stress factor in their work place.

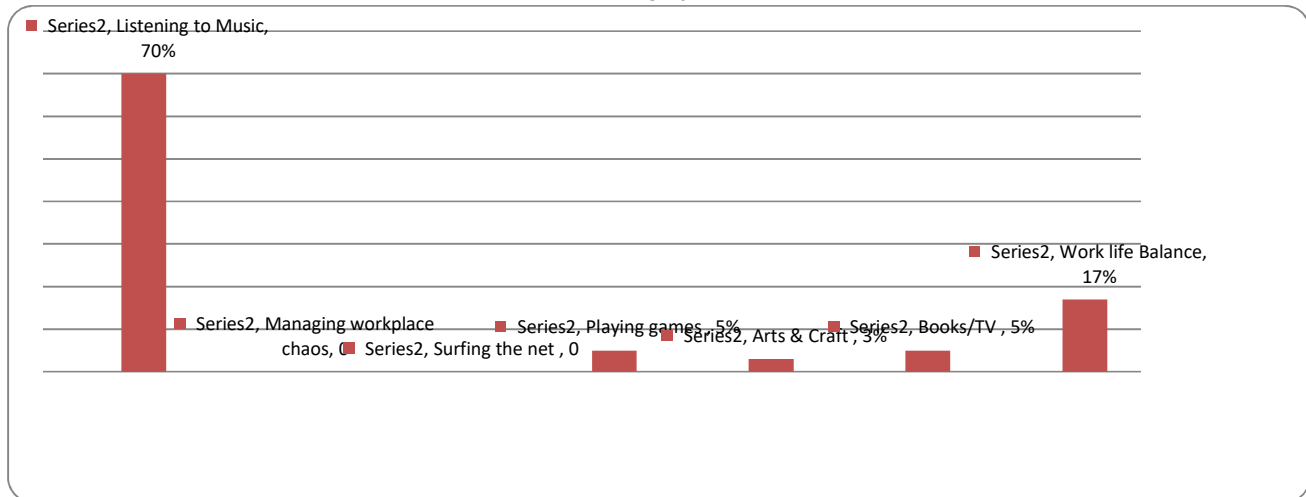
FIG. 14 & 15



70% of respondents agreed that constant monitoring by superiors was a stress factor.

MANAGEMENT OF STRESS BY THE EMPLOYEES

FIG. 16



Majority of them agreed that listening to music helped them to manage stress while 17% believed that work life balance helped to relieve stress.

CONCLUSION

In modern competition oriented corporate scenario organizations try to squeeze out more output with fewer resources by contributing less which is the main cause of employee stress. The productivity of the work force is the most crucial factor as far as the success of an organization is concerned. The productivity in turn is dependent on the psychosocial wellbeing of the employees.

Overtime, repetitive work and health issues are the major factors causing stress for BPO employees. Proper stress management techniques could be adopted. Listening to music was the major stress buster for the employees. Even stress could be handled with activities like get-togethers, team building fun activities, vibrant ambience of workplace, attractive designations, impressive salary structure etc, the main objective of all this is to bring right balance between work and fun to enable employees for coping with the pressures and emotional pains of job.

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WEBSITE

6. www.snjuanlouis.wordpress.com

ANNEXURE

QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Respondent:

Please fill in the questionnaire. This information is purely confidential and used for only research.

Name of the Respondent (optional) :
 Age : Below 30 / 31-40/ 41-50 / 51-58
 Gender : Male / Female
 Years of Service in B.P.O. : Less than 5 Years / 5-10 / 10-20 /20-30 / More than 30 Years
 Name of the Company (Optional) :
 Your Designation :

Please choose any one answer for each of the following statements. The five options given.

SL NO	Causes of Stress	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Neutral
1	Work Environment				
2	Late Night Shift				
3	Target				
4	Travel Time				
5	Insufficient Holidays				
6	Work Load				
7	Work Timing				
8	Repetitive Nature of Work				
9	Health Issues				
10	Long Working Hours				
11	Pressure to Perform on Metrics				
12	Overtime				
13	Insufficient Breaks				
14	Call Volume/ Number of Calls				
15	Physical Strain				
16	Your immediate superior				
17	Constant monitoring by superiors				

How do you manage stress?

SL NO	Causes OF Stress	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Neutral
1	Listening to Music				
2	Managing workplace chaos				
3	Surfing the net				
4	Playing games				
5	Arts & Craft				
6	Books/TV				
7	Work life Balance				

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Looking forward to an appropriate consideration.

With sincere regards

Thanking you profoundly

Academically yours

Sd/-

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