



Original Article

Applied *Swasthavritta* with special reference to Health Problems of BPO employees

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Abstract:

Indian Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) industry accounts for 34% of the Global BPO market of 2010. It has offered an employment to over 4.5 million Indian people with 50% of employees below 25 years. A good work environment, decent emoluments and financial incentives offered in the BPO industry has a dark side that leads to physical, psychological, behavioral and interpersonal problems. The stressful working conditions affect the body, mind and soul of the BPO personnel. The present article deals with the Applied *Swasthavritta* with special reference to the health problems of Indian BPO employees.

Keywords: BPO, *Dinacharya*, Health hazards, *Pranayama*, *Ratricharya*, *Swasthavritta*

Introduction

Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) is the delegation of one or more information technology intensive business process to an external provider that in turn administers and manages the selected process.

The Indian Government, especially after 1990 had adopted the liberalization and the globalization policy. The growth of Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) sector worldwide and the availability of large number of English speaking people and low cost labor in India, led to a sharp rise in the field of BPO. Today, India provides assistance to Transnational Corporation and their clients in North America and Europe. BPO industry in India is growing at the rate of 35% [1].

BPOs in India-

These are both domestic and International, but the prominence arises in Transnational BPOs, where the clients or owners are from USA or UK. In the transnational BPOs, due to the difference in time-zones between India and the UK or USA (time gap of approximate 6 to 12 hours), working is mostly performed during night hours. The voice based sector (Call Centre) need to work at night whereas the non-voice service workers are able to do their work in day

time. Work environment schedule in the BPO sector is highly pressurized, closely monitored and monotonous. The employees are given Call Quotas for both inbound and outbound services, as much as 400 calls a night. The employees cannot disclose their true nationality and even their names. This leads to a dual identity conflict, i.e. westerners by evening and Indians by day. A strict time and motion regime with limited time (2-3 minutes) for making and answering call of customers, limited breaks and no interaction with colleagues while at work. Married employees have a dual burden of work and home. In nutshell, these BPO employees suffer from the Physical, psychological and Behavioral problems. They also suffer from the Interpersonal conflicts.

India is the most preferred location for BPO & it is having certain threads on the lives of the Indian educated youth. Increased level of stress & increased health problems made us think about the current review article. Also, Ayurveda & especially *Swasthavritta* could be the most proper solution to these problems.

As the word *Swasthavritta* suggests, it is composed of two words, *Swastha* (healthy) & *Vritta* (ideal way of living). This science deals with the

balanced diet & ideal way of living, through which one can attain a healthy life.

Swasthavritta is an integral part of Ayurveda which states the measures to maintain the health of a person. This health is attained through *Ahara* (Balanced Diet), *Vihara* (Proper environment), *Achara Rasayana* (Behavioral Ethics), *Yoga* and Naturopathy.

Although a variety of texts have discussed the remedial measures for the health problems of BPO employees, no texts have so far mentioned the applied *Swasthavritta* for overcoming these problems. This article therefore is an attempt to discuss the Applied *Swasthavritta* with special reference to Health Problems of BPO employees.

Aims & Objectives

This article will discuss the problems faced by the BPO employees on various fronts (especially regarding the physical & mental health). This article is aimed at studying the problems faced by the BPO employees in the following respect-

- Physical problems
- Psychological problems
- Behavioral problems
- Interpersonal conflicts
- To discuss the applied *Swasthavritta* for overcoming the aforesaid problems

The motto of Ayurveda is "*Swasthasya Swasthya rakshanam* (maintenance of health in healthy individuals), *Aturasya Vikara prashamanam* (to get relief from the various ailments of the diseased persons). Here will discuss the concepts of *Swasthavritta* that will provide us a solution for these problems to a greater extent.

Materials & Methods

The aforesaid problems were studied with reference to the various systems. For this study the literary sources like books, journals and websites and study reports were referred as a secondary source of data. However no clinical trials, surveys or focused group discussion was carried out.

I) Physical problems [2]:

Ears: Hearing problems, earache and tinnitus

Eyes: Strain, discharge, redness, blurred vision, dry eyes, double vision.

Voice- Dry, itchy throat, hoarseness of voice.

Diet: Irregular eating patterns, unhealthy/ junk/ ready to eat food consumption, Disturbed digestion.

Sleep- Disruption of natural sleep-wakefulness cycle,

insomnia, lack of proper sleep during daytime.

Body: aches - Pain in neck, shoulder, back, wrist; leg cramps, spondylitis, High blood-pressure, Menstrual irregularities, Hormonal imbalance, Cough, cold, and Increased incidence of breast and colon cancer- observed in night and rotating shift workers.

Burnout stress syndrome - Chronic fatigue, insomnia and complete alteration of the 24 hour biological rhythm which affects the sleep and proper functioning of the heart.

II) Psychological problems [3]:

High attrition rate gives them a sense of insecurity, Nervousness, anxiety, restlessness, irritability, depression.

III) Behavioral Problems:

Due to high disposable income, employees tend to resort to smoking, drinking and a western lifestyle, risky sexual behavior, excessive drug and alcohol use. BPO employees are at rest during daytime, when the others are at work, resulting in being cut-off from their social life.

Smoking: 8% of women (Age- 20-25 years). Smoking leads to reproduction hazards like low-birth weight, lower gestation periods and higher rate of stillborn apart from cardiovascular risks.

Drug abuse: Inability to socialize with family and relations and addicted for drugs.

IV) Interpersonal Conflicts:

- Dual identity (non- disclosure of true name and nationality).
- Tendency to become irritable.
- Degradation of moral and social values.

Applied *Swasthavritta* with reference to Health problems of BPO employees:

Swasthavritta, basically acts at two levels- Personal & Social. The rules laid down to maintain proper well being of the physique are twofold-

1. Consumption of proper diet
2. Observance of personal, moral, seasonal and spiritual conduct.

The code of conducts are further classified into five types viz. good mental conduct, good social conduct, good religious conduct, good personal conduct and good moral conduct.

Properly observed *Dinacharya* (Daily Regimen), *Ratricharya* (Night Regimen), and *Rutucharya* (Seasonal Regimen), help to achieve a sound state of body and mind. The *Rasayana*

Chikitsa (Rejuvenation therapy) is further suggested by the ancient Ayurvedic Texts. The health tips offered by the *Swasthavritta* can be summarized as below-

Note- The procedures suggested here should be performed strictly under medical supervision.

1. Physical exercises:-

Asanas (Stretching exercises) – The Relaxative *Asanas* viz. *Shavasana* and *Makarasana* are suggested for the BPO employees.

The stretching body- exercises includes the *Asanas* of the standing, sitting, inverted, twisting and balancing types. Hence, the BPO employees are suggested to do *Suryanamaskara*, *Paschimottanasana*, *sarvangasana*, *Chakrasana* and *Bhujangasana*, etc.

Also the neck rotation, eyeball rotation and wrist-joint rotation exercises should be done at frequent intervals. For computer vision syndrome, *Trataka* should be performed.

Yoga-nidra can also be practiced to achieve optimum relaxation within a short span at workplace.

2. Breathing exercises [4]:

- *Pranayama: Sheetalī*, *Nadishodhana*, *Bhramari*, *sahit kumbhaka*, *Anuloma-Viloma*, *Ujjayi Pranayama*.
- Meditative *Asanas: Padmasana*, *Siddhasana*, *Swastikasana*
- *Dharana*, *Dhyana*, *Samadhi*.

3. Miscellaneous:-

- Sleep [5]- it must be completed during day time as the employees have to remain awake and alert during nighttime.
- Defecation [6]- To get relief from constipation and for proper defecation, 2-3 glasses of water stored in properly cleaned copper vessel should be drunk.
- Chanting [7]- *Strotopathana*, *Dhyana*, *Atma-Chintana* etc. imparts calmness to the mind and body.
- *Indriya Swasthya* (Health of Sensory organs)- Now a days, it is not practically possible to perform all the *Swasthavritta* Procedures daily. But one must perform them at least weekly.
- Eyes [8]- *Anjana karma* (Application of Kajala) is must for all BPO employees as they have to work in front of computers all the time. Application of *Sauviranjana* daily,

are must. *Netratarpana* (Oleation of eyes) can be done once in a month. Employees should be made aware about the *Heena*, *Mithya* and *Ati-Yog of Indriyas* (Less, improper or excessive use of organs).

- Ears: Oil application in ears - once in a week. At least once in a month *Karnapurana* (Oleation of ears-) is to be done.
- Nose [9]: *Nasya* (Nasal medication) is an important karma. Simply application of 2 drops of *Go-Ghruta* (Cow- Ghee) or *Tila taila* (Sesame oil), in each nostril, before going out of the house and after coming in the house will help to a greater extent.
- Mouth- Gargling with lukewarm salty water or *Tilataila* (Sesame oil) will protect from the diseases of teeth, hoarseness of voice, nausea etc.
- *Abhyanga* (Oleation of Body)- It is of utmost importance. Especially *Shirobhyanga* (Oleation of Head) and *Padabhyanga* (Oleation of feet) will help a lot. *Vata-shamana* will ultimately lead to prevention of ageing process.
- *Bhojana Vidhi* [10] (Rules for consumption of food): Consumption of food just before sleeping should be avoided. Food should be taken at least 2 hours before going to bed. Concept of *Satvika* food should be implemented. Junk food or ready-to-eat food should be avoided.
- The urges for urine & stool impulses should not be held unnecessarily for a longer time.

4. **Social Health** –The concept of *Achara Rasayana* (Good Social Conduct) be followed. This will promote abstinence from smoking alcohol, drug abuse and risky sexual behavior.

The Yoga offers multidimensional benefits to the body, mind and soul. The Yoga helps in achieving integrated and coordinated development of all potentialities of man. The neuromuscular systems are reconditioned. Yoga enables withstand greater stress and cultivation of correct attitude.

Observations

After having the literary research, it was observed that the Indian BPO employees mostly suffer from the physical, psychological & behavioral problems. They also suffer from the interpersonal

conflicts. *Swasthavritta*, the Ayurvedic Science related to physical, social and spiritual health; provides a cost effective and suitable solution to these Indian BPO employees, in the form of physical exercises (*Yogasanas*), breathing exercises (*Pranayama*), chanting (*Mantra, Strotopathana*). The observance of daily and social regimen will treat the health problems faced by the Indian BPO employees.

Discussion

WHO has described Health as a state of complete physical, mental, social & spiritual well-being and but not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. The health is linked with various factors like physical/social environments, employment/working conditions, social support networks, lifestyles etc. the maintenance and promotion of health is achieved through Health Triangle (combination of Physical, Mental and Social well-being).

Swasthavritta has a definite solution to the health problems of BPO employees. The Health Triangle described in the Ayurvedic texts has offered Panacea to the ailments of the sufferers. The implementation of these health tips will help the society esp. the BPO employees to relieve them from their health problems. It is further to be noted that the BPO employees need not give up their job for adopting these *Swasthavritta* measures as a part of their lifestyle.

Conclusion

The average working life time of an Indian worker is about 35 years (Age 25-60 years). The Indian job scenario is of a competitive market, over population and scarcity of good jobs. No profession is said to be stress-free as 'Survival of the Fittest Rule' is applied in every working sector. The occupational stress affects physical, psychological, behavioral balances of both employer and the employee. The Information technology and the Business Process Outsourcing fields are more competitive and stressful. The measures to overcome these stresses are offered

by *Swasthavritta*. The cost effective, easy to implement remedies suggested by *Yogas* and *Asanas* create an internal environment that promotes the dynamic balance of health. Hence, the BPO employees can definitely be benefitted by adopting *Swasthavritta* measures to overcome their physical, psychological, behavioral problems and interpersonal conflicts.

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