

LEVEL OF PERCEIVED WORK RELATED STRESS AND ITS EFFECT ON BEHAVIOUR CHANGE IN CALL CENTRE EMPLOYEES

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Abstract: Background & objectives: Generally the call centre industry works in two shifts and companies catering to clients of the western part of world have to work more during the night hours. The expectations from the employees are high and sometimes because of this the employees may feel stressed out. **Material & Method:** A sample 200 call centre workers of both sexes and from day and night shifts were interviewed. The self perceived level of stress was found with the help of a questionnaire. **Results:** The perceived level of stress was seen in all respondents. About 127 males out of 147 were addicted to tobacco products. Only 17 respondents were using yoga to relieve work related stress.

Keywords: Call centre, stress level, behaviour change, Day shift, Night shift

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Introduction:

In the last few years, the growth of the Information Technology industry is phenomenal. With the growth of the industry, our country has also seen establishment of many Business Process Outsourcing (BPOs) companies. In BPOs, there are two type of categories; the non-voice segment, also called the “back office” and the voice based segment, also called the “front office”. The voice based segment is popularly known as the “Call Centre”. The Call Centre employees handle two types of calls - outbound and inbound calls. The inbound calls are originating from the company’s client and customers, who by phone or email voice their queries, complaints or other related customer concerns. The outbound Calls on the other hand are those originating from the Call Centre, which has been contracted by the company to sell or promote certain products and services¹. In India, we have both domestic and international call centres catering services to both the Indian companies as well as to international companies.

The globalization and changing lifestyles along with an increased demand for luxury and the competition for jobs are now changing the traditional India. With establishment of call

Centres by large number of companies, many young graduates and undergraduates are seen

opting for a job at such centre mainly due to lucrative remuneration packages and requirement of minimum education qualification².

Call centre employees are expected to work long hours with customers, constantly talking on the phone and keeping pace with the call-time pressure, doing pre-scripted conversations with customers, sometimes dealing with hostile customers with target pressure from the superiors³.

The present study was done on 200 call centre employees from both day and night shift with following objectives.

Objectives: **1.** to find out the perceived stress level, if any, in call centre employees. **2.** To find out difference in stress level in call centre employees in day and night shift. **3.** To know the effect of stress, if any on change in behaviour. **4.** To know use of stress management methods.

Material and Methods:

The study was carried out at a BPO call centre located at Ahmedabad. 100 call centre employees who gave consent for the study were selected randomly from each of the day

and night shift. Total study population was 200. Informed consent was taken from all study subjects. Those who gave oral consent for the study were included in the study and those who did not give consent were excluded from the study. Information about age, sex, education, work experience was collected.

Height of the sample population has been measured without shoes with the subject standing in an erect posture, shoulders in relaxed position and arms hanging freely. The weight was measured without shoes in light clothing with the subject standing motionless on the digital weighing scale in such a way that the body weight should be distributed equally on each leg.

Blood pressure was measured using a sphygmomanometer with the auscultatory method. The systolic blood pressure was defined as appearance of the first sound and diastolic blood pressure was defined as disappearance of the sound. The subjects were made to be seated comfortably in a chair for at least 5 minutes with arm supported at heart level.

Body Mass Index (BMI): The BMI was calculated as weight (kg.) / height (meter²). To classify BMI, WHO standard of BMI for Asians was taken into consideration.

A questionnaire containing questions related to stress due to workplace as per "The workplace stress scale" by Marlin Company and the American Institute of Stress was given to all employees and the perceived level of stress was measured.

Data entry and statistical analysis:

Data was entered on Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and analyzed using EpiInfo7. Chi-Square test was applied to explore associations between level of stress in day and night shift.

Results:

Out of total 200 subjects, 147 were males while 53 were females. Out of 100 study subjects in each shift, 11 subjects were female in night shift

as compared to 42 females in day shift. The mean age, height, weight, systolic blood pressure, diastolic blood pressure and BMI are given in Table 1. All the parameters are expressed as mean \pm standard deviation. It was seen that the mean BMI was in the range of Overweight as per the WHO classification of BMI for Asians. Similarly, the mean systolic blood pressure was also in the pre-hypertensive range as per the JNC-VII classification. Table 2 shows perceived work related stress among the respondents. The behaviour change in terms of addiction is shown in figure 1. It was found that none of the female respondents had any addiction. Out of 147 males, only 20 males did not have any addiction. Majority of the respondents who had addiction, said that the stress at the workplace was responsible for either starting of the addiction or increase in consumption of the tobacco product. Figure 2 shows use of any stress relieving method by the respondents. As it is seen by the figure majority of the call centre employees did not use any stress relieving method.

Table 1: Health related profile of Call Centre Employees

Variables	Day shift		Night shift	
	M	F	M	F
Mean Age in years	23.45 \pm 1.43	22.57 \pm 1.53	23.02 \pm 1.79	23 \pm 0.81
Mean Height	163.48 \pm 4.02	152.42 \pm 6.04	163.82 \pm 4.77	152 \pm 4.16
Mean Weight	71.77 \pm 9.01	56.78 \pm 8.5	68.21 \pm 7.73	59.5 \pm 4.79
Mean Systolic blood pressure	129.8 \pm 9.11	125.2 \pm 6.96	135.56 \pm 8.28	127.5 \pm 5.74
Mean Diastolic blood pressure	83.9 \pm 3.63	81.36 \pm 3.2	85.21 \pm 5.29	83 \pm 2.58
BMI	26.9 \pm 3.68	24.37 \pm 3.25	25.28 \pm 2.32	25.83 \pm 3.04

Table 2: Work related stress as per "The

workplace stress scale”

Level of Stress*	Day shift		Night shift		Total
	M	F	M	F	
No stress**	0	0	0	0	0
Low stress	18	9	13	1	41
Moderate stress	37	29	69	7	142
Severe stress	3	4	7	3	17
Potentially dangerous stress**	0	0	0	0	0

*By chi-square test, with Yate’s correction, p value > 0.05, not significant

** value “0” not considered for chi-square test

Figure 1

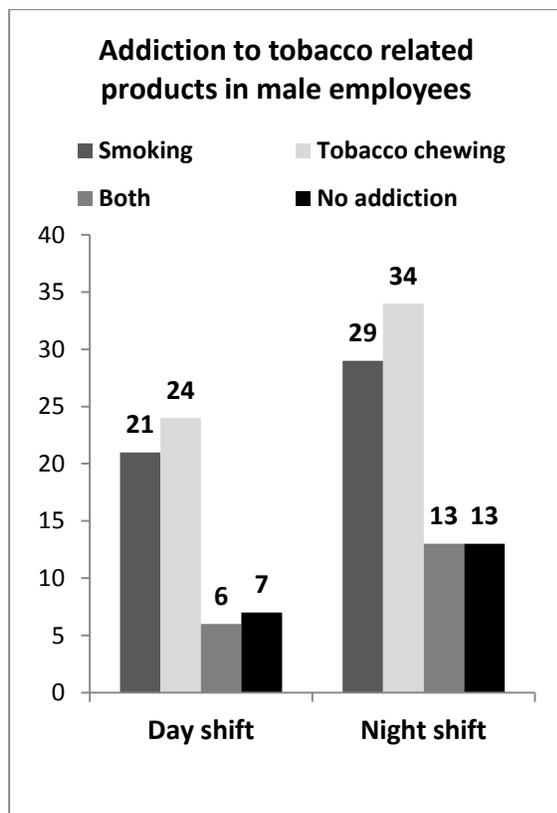
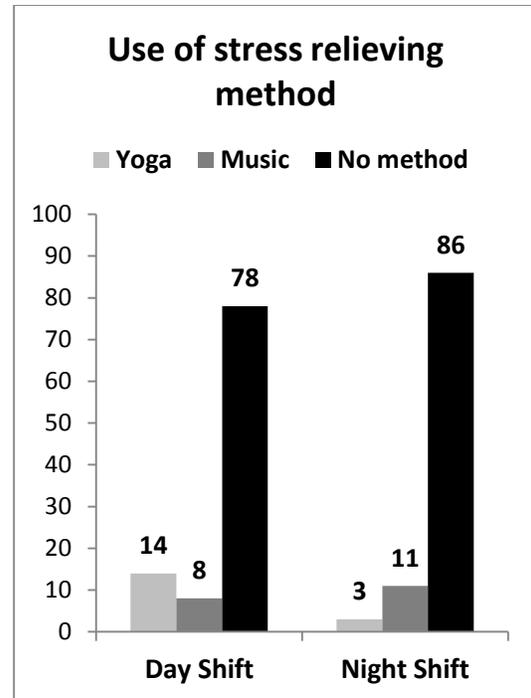


Figure 2



Discussion:

Workplace related stress was reported by all the respondents. Out of 200 subjects, 142 had moderate stress, 41 had low level of stress while 17 reported severe work related stress. Self reported mental stress was found in 33% of the respondents by Bhuyar et al⁴. Various factors leading to mental stress were work timing, workload, repetitive nature of work, insufficient break during work and insufficient holidays.

Surprisingly, 78 and 86 respondents from day and night shift respectively, did not use any stress relieving method. 8 and 11 respondents from each day and night shift respectively said that they listen to music to relieve stress.

Latha and Panchanatham found that BPO employees were more stressed (58.3% vs. 19.3%); more depressed (62.9% vs. 4.6%); and more anxious (33.9% vs. 1.4%) as compared with non-BPO workers.³ Higher levels of stress of more than 65% have also been reported by Sudhashree et al⁵, Suri et al⁶ and Jena⁷ from call centres in various cities of India. Superna et al⁸ found stress in 40.2% males and 22.9% females. Lin YH et al⁹ found stress in 33.5% outbound and 27.1% inbound operators of the call centre.

Charbotel et al¹⁰ found psychological stress in 39.4% workers in France.

Conclusion:

It is observed that the employees of call centre feel work related stress which range from low level to severe level. Besides, due to long working hours majority of them are not using any stress relieving method like yoga or pranayam. Majority of the males in both shift are addicted to tobacco chewing and / or cigarette smoking.

Limitations:

The study was carried out with only a small sample size and the findings cannot be generalized to all call centre employees.

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