

SUMMARY

This study looks into the dynamics in the relationship between globalisation and women workers with a focus on Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) industry in India. The study aims at analysing the nature of women employment in BPOs in India in general and in Pune – one of the largest centres of BPOs in India - in particular. The study focuses on the nature of women participation in connection with BPO sector as, irrespective of various challenges, the participation of women has been increasing in recent years. As per the studies of Women Safety 2013, Nasscom and Nasscom Diversity and Inclusion Summit 2017, the share of women in BPO workforce has recorded an increase of 14% during 2004–2017 period. Currently women constitute 34% of total BPO workforce in the country, and, it is estimated that, one out of three employees joining the \$143-billion Indian IT-BPO industry is a woman.

This study also addresses certain fundamental questions related to globalisation, women workers and BPOs in India like; what is the impact of globalisation on BPO sector? What is the nature of women participation in BPO Industry in India? What are the challenges and opportunities before female employees in the sector? And does the participation of Indian women in BPOs impact a positive way? These questions are important as globalisation and the growth of BPO sector in India, over the past few years, has resulted in considerable changes in the lives of the youth and women workforce in India. Today, women participation and contribution has become critical in this sector. This study examines the growth of BPO industry in India and its impact on women workers in the sector.

Though the study takes India as a whole for the examination of the key research questions, a special emphasis is given to BPO industry in Pune as Pune has a representative character of Indian BPO industry in terms of companies as well as workforce. Pune is emerging as the favoured outsourcing hub with a number of Business Process Outsourcing centres catering to the US and European markets. In Pune, BPO is very prominent with 50+ top international companies have their presence. Importantly, most of the leading BPOs in Pune has its branches in other parts of the country and thus interconnected both at national and international level. The policies through which the workers are governed by, the nature of opportunities they get, scope for growth, challenges, facilities and BPO work culture in other cities are similar to Pune and therefore BPOs located in Pune broadly reveals the general nature of Indian BPO industry. So, it

is understood that, a study on women BPO workers in India with special focus on women employees in Pune based BPOs will be helpful to understand the work practice, work culture and work atmosphere of Indian professional women in BPOs.

The study approaches the subject against the backdrop of globalisation which facilitates the expansion of BPOs all over the world, especially to the developing countries like India. The growth of Business Process Outsourcing services can be considered as one of the major outcomes of globalisation. BPO industry has adopted an international business environment with a global standard and thus has reduced the national and geographical differences. The process of globalisation has been an indispensable part of the present-day economic growth achieved by developing countries. For example, in developing countries like India, globalisation has played a crucial role in export-led growth, directing to the expansion of the employment sources in the country. In the last few years, the country has witnessed tremendous increase in the employment of skilled professionals by both local and foreign Multinational Companies and they provide services to customers from US, UK and other European countries. The availability of educated and English-speaking human resources in a lower cost and the advanced and developed global communication technologies such as voice-over IP (VOIP), email and internet, have enabled global firms to lower their cost base by setting up outsourced knowledge-worker operations in India.

It is observed that expansion of BPO sector by globalisation has changed the role of Indian women in the global workforce. BPO employment has made women in the country more career-oriented and self-confident. They are experiencing more financial independence, greater freedom and also high standard of living. They have also acquired respectable status in the family and society. There are numerous writings about Indian BPO sector and women employees. However, there are negligible literature that are dealing with the impact of BPO employment on Indian women, on their economic status, social status, family responsibilities, overall empowerment etc. This has also made limitations in developing a proper understanding on the nature of women participation in this crucial sector.

Attempt has been made in this study to bridge such significant knowledge gaps. The study develops through both quantitative and qualitative methods and techniques. A structured questionnaire has been used to collect relevant data and data analysis and interpretation was done

through utilizing statistical methods/tools like percentage, tables and figures. The qualitative method in the study consisted of open ended questionnaire containing case study and its analysis, personal interviews, field observation and its interpretations.

The major source materials of the study are various reports published by agencies such as The Department of Electronics and Information Technology (DeitY), ILO, World Bank, IMF, and Nasscom; Research Institutions like V.V. Giri National Labour Institute, IGIDR, CSD, Women Commission and the concerned Departments (Labour, Family Welfare, Industry etc.) of Government of India. Research papers and articles published in various Journals, Newspapers, News Magazines, Websites and Books about BPO industry has also been used as secondary sources for the study.

A general study on women employees in BPOs in India and a detail study on Pune based BPOs has been carried out in this research. A list of 20 international BPOs operating in the Pune city was compiled. It was decided to take 12 of them for the collection of samples. They are further divided into 3 strata - Voice Process, Non-Voice and Semi-Voice in order to represent the 3 major work profiles of the industry and 4 BPOs from each work profile were selected using random sampling technique. Since it was not possible to build one-to-one rapport with all the employees, a sample size of 250 women employees was chosen for the study. Simple random sampling technique was used to gather data from the Entry Level, Team Manager and Manager level employees.

A questionnaire having both close ended and an open ended questions was intricately designed to tap the demographic variables including Name, Age, Current Designation, Home Town, Cast/Community, Education, Parents/Husband's Occupation, Marital Status and Tenure of the women respondents. It also gathered information about career option, level of women representation, growth, scope, family and social support, attitude of organisation/employer towards women employees, smooth work-life balance, safety and security and the challenges facing by women employees. Suggestions for improving women participation in the industry has also been collected from the respondents through the questionnaire.

Besides gathering data through questionnaire, interviews were also conducted among 40 BPO employees (32 women employees and 8 male employees) in order to substantiate the data

gathered. The population for interview was also divided into 4 strata - Entry level, Manager Level, Director Level, Top Level - in order to represent the various hierarchical positions of an organisation and their views on the subject under study.

The thesis has been divided into 6 chapters. The **first chapter** Introduction contains the basic blueprint of the thesis. It explains the core concepts and the correlation between issues and variables used in the study. There are sections on globalisation, employment, women employees and BPO sector in this introductory chapter. It also includes a section on literature review, rationale, research questions, objectives, methodology and organisation of the study. Basically it tries to build a structure for the research to be taken forward in a greater detail.

The **Chapter 2** titled “Globalisation, Employment and Women Employees” explains the conceptual and theoretical framework in which the study has been organized. It focuses on interconnection between globalisation and employment with special emphasis on women workers. The first part of the chapter consisted of a brief overview of the concept globalisation - origin, history, dimensions and driving forces behind it. The second part of this chapter tries to analyze the impacts of globalisation on employment in general. Globalisation has been associated with profound changes in the labour market such as changes in the level and structure of labour demand, in skill shortages and relative wages, and in employment elasticity, among others. All of these have far reaching implications on worker's and therefore on the success of the process of adjustment to globalisation itself.

It is a fact that sweeping changes have taken place in the global economy in recent decades and these changes have reshaped the structure of employment on a global scale. National economies are now more integrated into the global system than at any other point in the recent past. Globalisation is clearly contributing to increased integration of labour markets and closing the wage gap between workers in advanced and developing economies, especially through the spread of technology. It also plays a part in increasing domestic income inequality. Mobility and lowering barriers, as a consequence of globalisation process, have opened up scope for people looking for jobs. Globalisation, through the abolition of economic barriers and the opening up of borders, has facilitated people to move from one's country of origin to other countries in search of work. Regional agreements which govern travel and conditions of employment have brought into prospect at both national and global levels.

The final part of this chapter comprises of an analytical discussion on the effects of globalisation on women employees. At the international level, it has been noticed that women participation in the paid workforce has been increasing and their employment has expanded to all the productive sectors – services, agriculture and manufacturing; with a particularly strong rise in the service sector. Women have also proceeded towards occupations that have been typically ruled by men. It simply means that, beyond household-based production, the section of female workers has moved to various sectors of the economy. This direction of women employment is influenced by the process of globalisation and it is not only limited to high-income countries. Women's representation has been escalating as a share of total employment and to varying degrees, their employment has been developing faster than men's. Studies reveal that the gap between percentage of women employment and percentage of men employment has been narrowing.

Chapter 2 also discusses briefly the recent trends of women employment. Globalisation has the capability to contribute to greater gender equality. Globalisation has indeed worked as a catalyst in women's efforts to get fair rights, impartiality and opportunities and certainly has nurtured the ideas and norms of equality for women that provided a platform of awareness. Economic dimension of globalisation gives new scope and benefits to women in the labour market. Growth in cross-national exchanges and upgraded communication encourage improvements in women's status and equality.

The chapter argues that, in the past two decades, globalisation has had a huge impact on the lives of women and is paving a way for them to involve in different spheres of life like economic, political, sports, social and cultural. Globalisation is helping most of the countries to eliminate the discrimination and all forms of violence against women and the girl child. Policies framed by different countries in helping women created larger awareness among women on their rights and also enhancing their skills at the competitive edge. Globalisation has coincided with a global increase in female labour force participation rates which has narrowed the gender gap. A number of factors associated with globalisation process have contributed to this increase, including the growth of production for export in the developing world. In the end, the chapter touches concisely the role of peer pressure, Convention, Treaties, media and NGOs towards

gender equality in employment around the world. The point of discussion in this chapter is the relation between globalisation, employment and women employees.

The chapter argues that, globalisation, particularly in terms of the mobility of capital and the spread of advanced communication technologies, has had a radical impact on employment relations in countries that are finely incorporated into the world economy. In India, its effects were mainly seen in the service sector. This rapid increase in the service sector during the last decade resulted in the phenomenal growth of the Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) industry. Indian BPOs are known for delivering effective business solutions along with quality and cost advantage by using developed technology. The speedy growth of the outsourcing industry has resulted in greater employment opportunities to a new group of employees: mainly young college graduates especially women.

Chapter 3 “Business Process Outsourcing Industry in India” discusses exhaustively on BPO industry in the Indian context. BPO industry in India started with the call center business, with people taking on American names, speaking in American accents and trying to sell credit cards or insurance policies to Westerners. But now the sector is not only confined to call centre business; the industry has come a long way from being an employer of English-speaking undergrads to an end-to-end managed services provider. The industry has demonstrated an add value and created large impact in economic growth and employability.

The chapter begins with the concept of global Business Process Outsourcing, which also includes-components and BPO business models. Eventually, the chapter moves to the evolution/history of global BPO sector and BPO industry in India. This section broadly presents the emergence and evolution of the sector in the country, it discusses about the major BPO-ITES cities and major players of the sector. It also takes a look at the major services offered by Indian BPO companies. The final part discusses comprehensively the impact of BPO sector in Indian economy, growth of the sector in recent years and the future outlook of BPOs in India.

The chapter focused on analyzing the impact of IT-BPO industry on Indian economy. The three-decade-old Indian IT-BPO industry has had great impact on the Indian economy and society, more than any other related sector, and within a much shorter time frame. Not only has

the industry helped India to emerge as a global force, it has also given a major fillip to the country's growth, helping it to narrow down the several 'divides' that separate its society.

Due to the growth in the domain of information technology and business process outsourcing, life in India has changed. It has transformed an entire generation. Some useful reviews on the growth of the IT-BPO sector in recent years are also analysed in the chapter 3. In the last few decades, BPO has changed the way the world does business. BPO is the fastest growing segment of the Information Technology Enabled Services industry of India. The BPO industry has achieved more than the IT industry achieved in over 20 years, in a short span of time. India has been recognized for almost two decades as a source of expertise and capability in information technology outsourcing. India has won its spurs as the world's outsourcing destination of choice. Currently the country has a commanding share (approximately 56%) of the global outsourcing market. India acquired a share of around 38 percent in the overall BPO market. It is now the world's favoured market for BPO companies. The sector has moved from being only voice-based call centres to data processing and management units, to the current phase; where it is mostly about knowledge gaining and transfer.

The final part of this chapter discusses the Government initiatives towards Indian BPO sector. Acknowledging the growing demand of India as the preferred BPO destinations globally, the Government of India has commenced various initiatives and policy concessions to strengthen the flourishing of the IT enabled outsourcing market. Nasscom has over the years, successfully established the brand 'Made in India' in the global outsourcing market. The Indian BPO industry has undergone a paradigm shift to 'Serve in and for India'. In collaboration with Nasscom, BPO firms are making a concerted effort to get the central and state governments involved in providing improved citizen services, industry friendly policy frameworks, growth subsidies and grants.

India, which has been an unexcelled force in the global BPO domain, has been facing firm competition from several emerging BPO service providers like Philippines, Brazil, Russia, Fiji, South Africa, Mauritius, New Zealand, China, Malaysia, Ireland, Poland, Ghana etc in the recent years. Although, India still retains the number 1 position in the BPO sourcing landscape, Indian BPO industry has to address several challenges in order to retain this pole position in near

future. Hence, the end of the chapter is analyzing some important challenges the industry is facing today.

Thus, it is understood from this chapter that with the sustained growth and perceived stability of the IT-BPOs, one cannot deny the fact that Indian IT-BPO sector has now become an evolution and playing a major role in fueling country's recent economic growth. IT-BPO industries have transformed Indian economy and have served as catalysts for development. The emergence of India as a leading and favourite outsourcing destination has paved the way for tremendous job opportunities for the young populace. Today, its IT-BPO sector is a flourishing bed for young India and one of the highest employment streams in urban India. Significant impact on the lifestyle of the common Indian is seen with the growth of jobs in the outsourcing sector.

Chapter 4 titled “Women Employees in BPO Industry in India” attempts to examine BPO sector in India with special emphasis on women workers. One of the research questions addressed in the study is the impact of the sector on Indian women. In the contemporary world, women have no longer been lagging behind in terms of career development and career goal. It is observed that BPO is one of the sectors, which has witnessed high growth of women participation in recent years. Women give significant contributions to the sector in several ways. This chapter focuses on BPO sector with special emphasis on women workers. The chapter begins with a general discussion on women participation in the industry. Then, the chapter examines gender diversity with reference to the number of women participation in a few leading BPOs. The second part of the chapter tries to analyse the challenges before women employees from both professional and personnel point of view; which includes employee's health problems owing to BPO work culture. The last part consists of an analytical discussion on the initiatives by BPO organisations to address the challenges women face caused by BPO work nature, to accelerate the diversity and inclusion across the industry at large and for recognizing, implementing and supporting woman oriented work policies. The chapter also puts focus on how the industry is handling the important issues of women's safety and security.

Here, the chapter analyses the number of women participation in a few leading IT-BPOs and finds that women make up a considerable proportion of the workforce in the sector at the entry and junior levels. At the same time, though women participation is found quite satisfactory

at the entry level, there is still lack of female involvement across all jobs functions; which indicates fewer women engagement in senior levels than men within many organisations. To get more clarity on this and to examine how are the companies faring in terms of treatment towards female employees in senior position of authority; the number of members of Board of Directors and Executive Officers of few Indian leading IT-BPO companies are collected and analyzed in this chapter.

The chapter moves to the challenges that prevent a dedicated and competent employee to grow within the organisation to a responsible and challenging position. This part examines how dual accountability, child care, requirement of professional travelling, relocation and health issues lead to inadequate women representation at senior and top levels.

Chapter 4 also discusses one of the key challenges of the BPO sector; to improve the number of female members joining the sector, retain them and enable them to become leaders in the industry. In order to do that, it is of vital importance to observe and catch out the obstructions and address them through a structured policy. The efforts undertaken by organisations to get rid of the challenges of women at their workplace are highly impacting and make it possible and easier to build an inclusive workplace. Hence, the final part of the chapter examines the endeavour initiated by the BPOs in nurturing women leadership and women-friendly corporate culture. The several forums and platforms initiated by the sector for the growth and grooming of women employees to the next level of leadership demonstrated the women centric policy in various organisations.

The chapter, at the end, discusses the special attention on the part of the organisations in providing secured transportation and security measures to women employees. The Indian IT-BPO sector is one of the largest employers where over 800,000 women employed across levels and many of them work in the early hours of a day or in the period after midnight. Therefore their security and safety, while commuting, have become critical areas of concern. The BPO sector has always been surrounded by controversies around not being able to offer adequate safety measures for women employees. However, during recent times, transportation is an area where most of the companies in the sector are focusing and has upgraded the same by putting effective efforts on the safety issues of employees.

On the basis of the above discussion and the initiatives taken by the industry for its women workforce in India, the chapter argues that the IT-BPO sector has clearly recognised the contribution of women in the workforce as an influential and empowering factor for the continued development of the industry and has remained fairly gender neutral from the onset, providing equal scope for both men and women. It has been noticed that, acknowledging the immense contribution, potential and increasing significance of this emerging workforce, IT-BPO sector has prepared itself to act as a catalyst in the enlargement of female workers. The industry has taken a lead in adopting best practices in all the possible areas to nurture the growth and strengthen employment of women.

The chapter argues that, apart from finding their employment as a source of income, the BPO women workers consider their job as an opportunity that creates right set of circumstances to make their life better. Along with the large scale of employment, the sector has given more confidence and freedom to Indian women. As the employment in a BPO does not require a higher level of formal education, women of all ages who may not have been working earlier but are educated and have good communication skills can look forward to working in this industry. BPO sector has given them income, exposure and a platform to prove their skill and talent without formal educational qualification and age limit.

The nature of women participation in BPO sector in India is another major issue in this research. The **Chapter 5** of the thesis titled “BPO Women Employees in Pune: A Case Study” extensively deal with this aspect. The nature of women employment in BPOs is examined with the help of a questionnaire and interviews. This part explored the BPO culture and its overall impact on female workers, taking Pune based BPO as model.

This chapter has made an attempt to identify how employment in BPO industry is impacting women and their families in Pune and also to understand and analysis the work environment, constructive and harmful aspects of BPO career, the challenges and opportunities that women experience, gender equality at workplace, the safety, security and family support they gain as a BPO employee. Suggestions are also taken from the participants on how to improve work environment and to increase women participation in this sector.

For reaching a conclusion on women employees in BPO industry in Pune, response to questions of interview and schedules is analyzed in two parts, part I analysis of schedule and part II analysis of interview. On the basis of the survey the chapter argues that, apart from finding their employment as a source of income, the BPO workers consider their job as an opportunity that creates right set of circumstances to make their life better. They are now confident, assured, independent, smart, career oriented and have improved their self-concept, the way they see themselves and believe they are seen by the others. They are not only sharing all household responsibilities and participating at family decision making process but also getting exposure to different types of work assigned and acquiring skills to deal with them competently. Along with the continuation of family and child care or additional personnel responsibilities, they are acquiring an opportunity to interact with international clients or getting exposure to another country. The findings of the survey are presented through graphical figures in this chapter.

The chapter argues that BPO is an industry where a potential and determined woman from any family background without higher formal educational qualification and solely on the basis of her ability, hard work and performance can accomplish the goal of a successful career, financial stability, responsibility, power, respect and self-satisfaction. It is also the right place for those who want to earn money without the desire of career development for some reason.

Chapter 6 is the conclusion of the thesis. This chapter precisely answering the research questions on the basis of the discussions/analyses made in the chapters, sums up the thesis and making some recommendations. The chapter discusses a few challenges (apart from challenges discussed in Chapter 4) faced particularly by women employees in BPOs, which are unique in nature. The chapter also examines the prospects of women workforce in BPOs. Chapter 6 concludes with a few recommendations for making BPO sector more women-friendly and a better workplace.

The list of source materials (both primary and secondary) used in the study is given in the references. Three relevant documents namely, Fact Sheet of IT & BPM Industry, interview questions and questionnaire used for field study/survey etc. are also given as Appendices.