

## OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH HAZARDS IN BPO PROFESSIONALS - CASE STUDY

K. KARTHIKEYAN\*, N. KAMALRAJ<sup>1</sup>, N. KUMARESH<sup>2</sup> AND M. POONKOTHAI<sup>3</sup>

\* Department of Information Technology, <sup>1</sup> Department of Computer Technology, Dr. SNS Rajalakshmi College of Arts & Science, Coimbatore 641 006, T.N., India

<sup>2</sup> Department of Computer Applications, Sri Ramakrishna Institute of Technology, Coimbatore 641 010, T.N., India

<sup>3</sup> Department of Zoology and Life Sciences, Avinashilingam University for Women, Coimbatore 641 043, T.N., India

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### ABSTRACT

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Occupational health problems are common among BPO professional. They are manifested mostly in psychological and health problems which directly reflect the quality of life for workers and decrease in productivity. The present study was carried out to assess the different types of occupational health problems among the BPO professionals with the help of a questionnaire and personal interview. The present study reveals that majority of them had musculo skeletal problems, change in their food habits and their life style was altered. The results are discussed with the intervention of good settings of office and computer laboratory ergonomics suggested by ECMA and HMSO for the improvements.

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### INTRODUCTION

Technology development and computerization has made people to sit for several hours at the computer. Now a days use of computer is viewable occupational tool for number of persons in all fields. But the usage was found to be high in IT and BPO personalities. Among these people many occupational problems such as headache, back pain, neck and shoulder pain, wrist and hand pain, eye strain, obesity, hearing loss, urinary infections and digestive problems were seen. This Computer Health Syndrome (CHS) is found to be a severe occupational threat observed in BPO and IT workers (Choudhary *et al.* 2000; Choudary *et al.* 2002).

Though the impact of above illness is not much

felt today, these problems are spreading like an epidemic and this occupational health phenomenon of BPO workers will create physical, psychological and social issues (Jayaprakash and Muthuraman, 2006). With all these, the present study was undertaken to assess the Computer Health Syndrome of BPO's working in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

A survey was conducted by taking a total of 50 subjects (31 males and 19 females) and the age group was between 18-30 years. They were working for more than 5 years and the working hour was between 8-9 hours per day.

These subjects were surveyed with the help of

Nordic questionnaire (Kuroinka *et al.* 1987). The centres where they were working were listed and each individual were interviewed personally to know about their health problems, food habits and also the regular activities were assessed.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The BPO's were very much interested in earning huge money with lot of strain in their work. The data presented in this study was an assessment and occupational health hazards of the subjects.

The data revealed that large number of them felt exhausted, fatigue and suffered from eye and musculo skeletal problems. The health hazards observed during their profession was presented in Table 2.

From Table 2 it has been observed that many had problems with eye and fifty percent of the workers

**Table 1** depicts the status of the experimental subjects taken for the study.

Experimental Subjects	
Occupation	BPO professional
Number (n)	50
Sex : Male	31
Female	19
Age (in years)	18-30
Stature (cm)	152-180
Working experience	2-6 yrs
Working Hours	8-9 hrs/day

**Table 2.** Health Hazards of BPO's

Eye vision	54 %
Hearing capacity	52 %
Throat pain	54 %
Headache	52 %
Back pain	60 %
Wrist and hand pain	56 %
Feel exhausted	38 %
IQ improvement	48 %
Urinary infections	40 %

**Table 3.** Changes observed in food habits

Skip in breakfast	65 %
Hunger in midnight	63 %
Alcohol consumption	10 %
Obese	54 %
Consumption of coffee or tea	51 % / 50 %
Digestion	68 %
Lack of exercise	81 %

suffered from short sight and many had eye irritation due to long exposure to the computers. Due to their fixed posture in the chair, no leg space of foot rest on the tables few suffered with back pain. Some were found to have urinary problems. The auditory effects of the workers were not much affected in greater extent but headache problems were observed regularly for 4 days in a week. Due to the ambient loss of aerobic conditions and work load the workers were found to be exhausted and their IQ improvement was reduced.

The employees were totally dependent on the canteen for their food and also due to the lack of time they skip or bound to forego the regular meals. The intake of hot drinks was about 10% which may lead to headache problems and water consumption was also very less (ie, 3 litres/day) which may cause stomach pain. Since the workers were found to be seated on same posture they lack exercise and their food habits were found to be irregular which leads to obesity.

Thus from the above study it has been found that the BPO professionals should take care of their food habits and health problems and the management which cater them should fulfill their needs according to their working environment suggested by ECMA and Sck.

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