

## **A Study on Occupational Stress in Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) Industry**

**Abdul Raheem Mazarik Ahamed**  
HSBC Securities Services, Colombo.

**Athambawa Haleem**  
Department of Accountancy and Finance  
Faculty of Management and Commerce  
South Eastern University of Sri Lanka.

Correspondence: mazarik@live.com, ahaleem@seu.ac.lk

### **Abstract**

Occupational stress is a commonly known phenomenon for organizations across the globe. The level of occupational stress experienced by employees varies from one organization to another based on their culture, structure and expectation from employees. BPO industry follows a different structure and requirement compared to a conventional organization. Hence, the issue is significant for ABC Bank operations operating under the BPO sector umbrella in Sri Lanka. Employees are the biggest assets of any organization and stress-related issues often lead to employee turnover and reduced performance. Furthermore, the organization spend a large amount of money on recruiting and training employees to meet the expected output desired by the end customer. Reduction in performance and morale of staff creates an additional cost to employers and forces them to lose the competitiveness in the markets. Sri Lankan BPO sector is in a continuous growing momentum and more growth is expected in future according to government plans. Hence organizations need to increase their competitive edge by addressing issues that can reduce their performance and employee wellbeing. Organizations are in a need to assess and understand the factors causing disruptions in achieving the expected level of performance. The occupational stress-related phenomenon is a serious issue which is noted to have a strong presence among BPO employees and evidenced by many types of research in the past. This research was intended to identify the existence of occupational stress and its impact on performance and health in ABC Bank Operation by collecting the primary data from the randomly selected sample population. Data was collected from 47 existing employees of ABC Bank and analyzed using SPSS to derive at the conclusion. The statistical analysis presents a strong response from the sample population experiencing occupational stress in the selected organization with performance issues. Furthermore, it was also evident from the research that a high level of stress-related disorders are experienced by the employees. Relationship between occupational stress and performance issues were significant however the relationship was not strong enough between occupational stress and health issues. Findings from the research are used to understand the current stress level and provide recommendations to the organization to manage the situation.

**Keywords:** Occupational Stress, BPO

## **1. Introduction**

The author of this research has denoted the name of the specific company as ABC Bank Operation to avoid declaring the real identity of the organization. ABC Bank is a multinational financial institution with over 150 years of history in providing successful financial services to 71 countries and territories. It is spread across Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, North America, Latin America, and Asia Pacific regions with over 250,000 employees servicing 46 million customers situated in 4,400 offices around the globe. ABC bank's vision is to become the world's leading financial institution and its mission statement is to become the first choice of its business partners for quality and consistency in service delivery around the world.

Activities are outsourced to countries such as India, Philippines, Malaysia, China and Sri Lanka due to the availability of skilled cheap workforce and reduced cost in operating the business. ABC Bank has been operating in Sri Lanka for over 130 years and the outsourced work has been in function for over 12 years under the BPO industry. The competitive pressure faced by many organizations has forced them to direct their focus from presence in global markets to cost reduction and investment in increasing productivity and profits (Blocher et al., 2002). The current financial crisis and economic downturn experienced by the world has impacted the revenue generated by the financial services industry and increased the need for outsourcing (Helpman, 2010). Outsourcing markets have matured over past two decades and they have created a platform for both businesses and clients to examine and enable innovative solutions to reduce cost and focus on growth (Weeks and Feeny, 2008). On a similar context, Ghodeswar and Vaidyanathan (2008) describe that organizations outsource their non-core activities to third parties and increase focus on the core activities to reduce cost and increase the quality of output to be more competitive in the market they operate.

BPO was originally associated with manufacturing firms and later with the complexity of organization challenges it has shifted to service industries. Robey and Boudreau (1999) describe BPO as the smartest and most cost-efficient methods of doing business. It is a subset of outsourcing which involves contracting a part of the existing business or a function to a third-party service provider (Naidu, 2011). Outsourcing process is generally classified into two significant areas such as Information Technology Enabled Services (ITES) and Knowledge Process Outsourcing (KPO). The differentiation is mainly influenced based on the different core dependency each type is having on IT and professional service delivery (Wickramasinghe and Kumara, 2009). KPO and BPO companies are further categorized into the front office and back office operations or function. Front office functions mainly deal with customer service delivery while the back-office functions are focused on services such as accounting and human resource management. Offshore outsourcing is the term used to define a process outsourced outside of the company's country and nearshore, offshoring defines activities outsourced to a nearby country (Ezhilarasi, 2015). Outsourcing has been traditionally considered as a valuable approach due to its ability to achieve visible cost reduction and increased profits with a higher competitive advantage, better shareholder returns and sustainable quality of service (Vashistha and Vashistha, 2005). This has given rise to the amount of non-core works being outsourced from western countries to less costly developing nations (Chanda, 2005). This has resulted in the formation of BPO firms such as ABC Bank Operations and outsource the back-office activities from ABC bank's core business locations. Non-core activities are handled by the onshore location due to regulatory and client-facing requirements. However, with the rapid improvement in technology, the customer requirements are changing to online transaction and customer serving. Hence, the process of outsourcing goes through continuous evaluation to seek opportunities and offshore more activities.

BPO services are a highly competitive sector in markets and economies around the world having globally interdependent nature. Sri Lanka is focused on moving forward in this global market by providing substantial and dynamic business environments to achieve competitive advantage globally (Flecker and Huws, 2003). Sri Lanka has become one of the preferred BPO locations in South Asian region due to the continuous effort of the government and attracts many businesses every year. Sri Lanka was ranked at 21<sup>st</sup> in the A.T. Kearney's Global Services Location Index (GSLI) 2011 as the best increasingly attractive

offshoring location at a global scale and in 2015, Sri Lanka was placed 14<sup>th</sup> among 55 countries considered for the ranking. Furthermore, Global Services Magazine ranked Colombo, Sri Lanka's business capital city as a top global centre of excellence for Finance and Accounting out of the top 20 locations in the world. Sri Lankan BPO industry employs over 60,000 employees and had attracted Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) of over USD1.5 billion from more than 300 different companies. The government focuses to increase the investment to USD5 billion by the year 2022 (SLASSCOM, 2016). Leading BPO companies like We Nurture Specialists (WNS), Industrial and Financial Systems (IFS), HSBC, RR Donnelley have been operating in Sri Lanka for more than a decade very successfully and they have contributed for large foreign income to the country. Sri Lanka produces over 30,000 graduates every year with international exposure and it has a large pool of qualified professionals with professional qualification such as CIMA, ACCA and CMA. Which has added additional value for the quality of service delivered from Sri Lanka and attracts more outsourcing of KPO related work. According to research conducted by LIRNEasia (2006), it revealed that 59 per cent of the employees of Sri Lankan BPO industry are between the age group 18-24. An advanced Level certificate was recorded as the highest educational qualification for 51 per cent of the employees and 15 per cent of the employees were graduates. Availability of flexible working options are rare in the industry as it has a sufficient workforce to work on a full-time basis. 43 Per cent of the firms participated in the survey expressed dissatisfaction with the skill levels of the workforce they initially recruit and 95 per cent of the firms invest in training employees to meet the shortfall in skill level to meet their requirement.

Despite the various growth opportunities in the BPO industry, employees are continuously challenged by the increasing demand for maintaining the expected performance levels with their capabilities. This often leads to increased stress levels resulting in physical, emotional and mental exhaustion (Dhanesha, 2014). Stress is the state or feeling which arises when a person is unable to meet the expectation and demand which exceeds social and personal resources the person can mobilize (Cohen and Lazarus, 1979). Stress is a common fact connected to everyday life. People are often dealing with various factors causing stress in their life. When they reach out for help, they are consumed with conditions, stressors and situations which make them emotionally and physically weighed down (Ezhilarasi, 2015). All job sectors irrespective of corporate, government, pharmaceutical, baking and education are becoming the main causes of stress to its employees. BPO employees work in a closely monitored environment with critical and tight deadlines resulting in burnout (Shilpa et al., 2013). Employees develop various symptoms of stress when it exceeds the limit they can handle and impacts performance, health and their ability to cope up with the environment.

## **1.2 Research Problem**

There are various researches conducted on stress in relation to its psychological hazards and large amounts of researches have been conducted on stressors in different work environments and occupations. Most of them have been conducted to research specific areas of stress management on a western organizational context. However, there are only very few researches being conducted for the South Asian region under the context of BPO industry. Existing literature present the results obtained for countries such as India, Philippines and Malaysia. Hence, the finding from these researches may not be applicable to Sri Lanka. Therefore, the impact of stress on BPO employees under Sri Lankan context is very rare and raises the need for this study considering the major differences between cultural, social and environmental differences (Chau et al., 2002).

Scientific literature suggests that there are many issues with researches about the management of work-related stress. Most of the researches conclude that the stress management programs have a positive impact on employee well-being and quality of work-life balance. However, there is no sufficient evaluation data available to confirm the success of these programs. This result is the same for most of the authoritative researches conducted in the field of stress management during the past decade (Cox et al., 2000). Proven results for managing stress are concluded only in a handful of well evaluated and designed researches. Murphy et al., (1992) concludes that organizational change and job redesign are the preferred

approaches to stress management. Landy (1992) concludes that the work environment redesigning is an effective approach. Van der Hek and Plomp (1997) concludes that organization-wide approaches have a positive impact.

In view of the various studies conducted for the theme of occupational stress, it is critical to assess the role of occupational stress in Sri Lankan BPO sector. Considering the rapid growth of the industry and its impact on the overall economy it is important to fulfil the research gap by investigating the existence of stress, its impact on performance and employee well-being.

Stress is a commonly widespread dilemma in all human being and no one is exempt to it. Various factors from individual, environment and organization impact the level of stress and it has an adverse impact on employee work performance and health (McGowan, 2001). When people are unable to identify, the stressors causing stress and manage them appropriately, they tend to look for a change by quitting the job. Employee turnover is a common issue for many BPO companies operating within Sri Lanka.

Occupational stress is the main predictor for turnover intention (Barsky et al., 2004) and it creates absenteeism, low level of commitment and turnover intention (Mikkelsen et al., (2000). Snell and Bohlander (2010) describe having a golden turnover ratio of 10 per cent is beneficial for the organization and it allows new talent and expertise to be introduced which helps to increase efficiency and innovation. ABC Bank Operations have been continuously announcing job vacancies for their non-managerial positions. This has noted to rise on a year on year basis the company used all available sources to advertise their jobs. A permanent billboard is set up in front of the office premises which has been on display for over three years and it has ongoing advertisements on newspapers and online job seeker websites. Additionally, ABC Bank also encourages existing employees to refer their friends and family to join the firm by providing referral bonuses which highlight the ongoing struggle to retain the existing staff and manage turnovers.

ABC Bank has recorded a continuous increase in employee turnover over the past three years from 19 per cent recorded during 2014 and 21 per cent recorded during 2015. According to recent data from HR, this has already exceeded 24 per cent as of December 2016. Employee engagement survey conducted during the year 2014 ranked ABC bank as the “best place to work” organization in Sri Lanka and the firm has lost this title for the past two years. HR data on medical claims have revealed a major rise in employee medical claims sending out concern on employee health. These ongoing issues have created the need to assess occupational stress in ABC bank and its influence on employee well-being and organizational performance. Facts provided and discussed a stronger platform for the need of carrying out this research for the context of a Sri Lankan BPO sector. In line with the need, the research intends to meet the following objectives. To understand the existence of occupational stress in the BPO industry, to understand the impacts of occupational stress on performance and to understand the impacts of occupational stress on employee health

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Occupational Stress in BPO Sector**

Stress has become an integral part of our everyday life and vocabulary, but the current use of the term has only been in existence for over 50 years from the time Hans Selye used the term it to describe a scientific concept which has suffered from too well know and too little understood (Selye, 1956). Employee and the organization faces stress as a major issue and it can lead to attrition, illness, burnout and absenteeism (Morse et al., 2012). Linden (2004) explains stress as an output of a process where stressors demand and trigger resolution or adaptation from an individual and failure of the individual to satisfy the demand. Stress can create very deleterious health effects when it becomes chronic and it can lead to psychological, cognitive and behavioral responses from individuals. Various studies conducted for stress reveals that employees suffering from stress show reduced productivity, low morale, higher interpersonal conflicts

and absenteeism (Cranwell and Abbey, 2005). Due to the complex nature of some jobs, they demand challenging outputs from employees. The BPO industry is such example where the complexity extends from usual job objectives to night shift working requirements, long working hours, extended targets and lack of recognition. A survey conducted by Annamalai and Kamalanabhan (2016) for BPOs in India reveals the result of sleeping disorders, depression and digestive system related disorders.

Occupational stress is caused due to the work demands and inability of employees to cope with the demand, it can lead to psychological distress and illness (Edwards, 2003). Jain and Cooper (2012) explain that occupational stress is created by the excessive pressure and demand placed on employees by the organization. According to Bartram et al., (2004) it also acts as a major barrier for organizations to recruit and retain employees. Occupational stress arises due to factors from both the interaction of work and worker characteristics as well as personal stressors. Personal stressors are commitment towards family responsibilities, lack of sleep and capability (Zeller & Levin, 2013).

## **2.2 Relationship between Occupational Stress and Performance**

Occupational stress is experienced when employees do not have the capability to meet the demands of the organization. This has become a global issue for organizations as stress results in poorly motivated, unhealthy and less productive employees by creating a challenging environment for the organizations to succeed in business and maintain a competitive edge in the market (Palmer et al., 2004). A research conducted by Samartha et al., (2010) for a sample of 100 employees to study the connection between occupational stress and employee performance proves that occupational stress plays an important role in impacting employee performance. It further presents various factors identified to influence different levels of stress at work and among them, the main ones are, lack of support from management, work-life balance and job satisfaction. There exists a high gap for identifying the correct potential employees who suit the requirements of BPO sector which has completely different expectations and skillset to perform the job. Failure to recruit the correct skilled employees creates occupational stress when they can't meet the expectations and ultimately results in poor performance (Raghu Raman et al., 2007). Interesting research conducted by Smith et al., (2012) in relation to the habit of chewing gum and its impact on occupational stress reductions. The research was conducted by collecting answers for survey questions and testing individuals using Electroencephalography (EEG). Their research proved that chewing gum balanced the brain waves similar to a relaxed person and helped to reduce stress. Furthermore, the research also provides evidence on this effect on the improvement of employee performance at work.

## **2.3 Relationship between Occupational Stress and Employee Health**

Work is one of many possible proven factors that can influence and give rise to stress and health issues (Goldberg & Novak, 1992). Surveys from Germany indicate a very high level of rising in illness related to occupational stress from the year 1990. Data analysis done by the American Institute of Stress (2016) presents findings that occupational stress constituted for more than 60 per cent of illnesses and an estimated cost of over USD300 billion is annually spent on health issues caused by occupational stress. Data analyzed for the United Kingdom reports that occupational stress-related disorders are constituting for the loss of over 30.4 million productive working days annually (Cox et al., 2000). Health and Safety Executive (2016) data reveal an enormous GBP14.1 billion cost estimated for the illness related to workplace and GBP1 billion was involved in the illness related to workplace stress in UK.

According to various literature discussed in this section, many researchers agree on the fact that occupational stress exists in the BPO industry and it is being referred to as a serious issue faced by employees and organization. Researches clearly classify and highlight how the unique factors of the BPO sector such as workload, work time, holidays, work type, travel time, overtime and performance measurement techniques influence occupational stress among employees. Furthermore, the previous researches also provide rich information on the subsequent impact of occupational stress on employee performance in the organization. Many types of research reveal and evidence that occupational stress challenges employee confidence and self-esteem level and makes them unable to deliver the desired

results. Occupational stress changes synergy of the human body and creates conflicting action which results in illness. Researches did in the medical discipline and organizational context provide evidence to this difficult situation and illustrates the reflective impacts on connected people of the employee. Coping strategies are suggested by the researcher as a solution to combat the issues faced by employees with additional support and understanding from the organizations.

### **3. Research Design**

The quantitative research methodology is commonly used by researchers to predict, describe and explain the complex phenomenon of ideas at work using the collection of quantitative data. Quantitative research is characterized by positivism, measurement and statistics. The author uses a survey method to collect the required primary data using the quantitative methodology to fulfil the requirement of the research hypothesis. Distributing questionnaire and conducting structured interview were the two options assessed by the author to gather the primary data. Employees of ABC Bank work across different shift times and it is not practical to meet or gather them on a specific time. Hence, the author decided to select a questionnaire as the option for collecting data. Furthermore, structured interviews would require the interviewer and employees to be present on a common time, which can have practical issues in scheduling as well as the employees will not feel comfortable in disclosing their genuine view on the questions. This can impact the quality of the research.. Twenty carefully prepared closed-ended questions were distributed to the sample population using “Google Forms” which is a very effective, free and simple to use the tool available to conduct surveys online.

#### **3.1 Sample Technique**

According to the latest records from HR, ABC bank operations consists of 552 employees as of December 2016. The entire employee base is considered as the target population for the purpose of this research to collect the required primary data.

Considering the target population of 552 ABC Bank employees, random sampling is used in this research. Random sampling gives equal opportunity for a sample to be picked out of the target population and ensure the correct representation is collected for the study and to maintain high accuracy (Costello, 2009). The accurate sample size required to carry out the research was calculated using G\* Power analysis tool. Considering the variables involved in the research the F Test analysis in the tool suggested that, data is required to be collected from a minimum of forty-two samples to achieve an acceptable finding and conclusion through the research. The author obtained assistance from HR to identify the required target population using an existing randomizing tool used by HR to select employees for in-house surveys. Total of fifty employee details was requested from HR considering that all staff will not respond to the survey as it is not a mandatory work requirement. The survey questionnaire was created using “Google Forms” and the link to the questionnaire was distributed to all fifty employees identified as samples for the research.

This research focuses on the impacts of three variables being; occupational stress, performance and health. Performance and health are independent variables and they can independently change. These changes can positively or negatively impact the dependent variable occupational stress. The survey questionnaire was designed with the intention to identify the impact or power each independent variable has over the dependent variable. Employee attitude can have control over the behaviors of the independent variable. However, this behavior is considered to be the main reason which causes occupational stress among employees and the literature reviewed are a proof to it. The questionnaire was carefully designed with precision to capture how each independent variable is being affected by different factors and identify the correlation between them.

The questionnaire was created with four separate sections with specific purposes to cater to the requirement of the research. The first section was created to collect demographic data from the sample respondents. The second section comprises of questions intended to identify the existence of

occupational stress in ABC Bank operations in accordance with hypothesis one. Third and fourth sections are designed to collect data relating to hypothesis two and three with reference to performance and health-related impacts by occupational stress.

Questions from section two, three and four were designed based on a Likert scale with the responses are ranging from one to five. one being 'Strongly Disagree', two being 'Disagree', three being 'Neutral', four being 'Agree' and five being 'Strongly agree'. The likert scale allows the respondent to answer the questions by agreeing or disagreeing based on their feelings from cognitive elements (Hodge & Gillespie, 2010). Questions were primarily created based on previous research findings and some questions were reverse coded to accurately capture the data from respondents.

#### **4. Data Analysis**

The survey was distributed to 50 randomly selected ABC Bank Operations employee and 47 employees completed the survey. This gives 94% response rate and can be accepted as a positive return on the survey. The variables identified in the research are analyzed using Pearson's product-moment correlation to understand the power of relationship each independent variable against the dependent variable. Pearson's product-moment correlation score can range from -1 to +1. A positive or negative sign indicates the positive or negative relationship between the selected variables. Scores ranging from 0 to 1 indicates the strength of the relationship. The data gathered using the survey are computed using SPSS to identify the correlation between the variables.

##### **4.1 The Data Set and Response Rate**

The survey was distributed to 50 randomly selected employees of ABC Bank operations representing the BPO sector in Sri Lanka with the purpose of collecting the primary data for the research using google forms. Completed responses were received from 47 employees with 94% success rate and all responses were satisfactory as the questionnaire was designed by making each question as mandatory so that no question is left unanswered and impact the purpose of the survey. According to G\* Power analysis tool, the required minimum sample size was suggested as 42 and the data collected from 47 employees deemed satisfactory to proceed with the research analysis.

##### **4.2 Findings**

The following section focuses on the findings and conclusion derived from the data gathered using the survey. These findings are discussed along with the hypothesis of this research to prove its validity. Cronbach's alpha test is used to measure the internal consistency related to a set of items in a group. It is not a statistical test; however, the test helps to provide information on the coefficient of reliability or consistency. Cronbach's alpha test is expected to be higher than 0.5 for it to be accepted as a reliable result (Sijtsma, 2009). This research has considered three groups of questions relating to the dependent and independent variables and Cronbach's alpha test was carried out separately on each of the groups to check the reliability of the questions used in the group.

First hypothesis related question from group one (questions 6-10) were tested using Cronbach's alpha test and the score was returned from SPSS as 0.609 thus  $0.609 > 0.5$ . These questions were intended to identify the existence of occupational stress and the form they exist in ABC Bank operations. Therefore, the questions used in group one for hypothesis one are reliable and are clear to the ordinance.

**Table 1: Reliability test for questions**

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Occupational stress	.609	5
Performance	.796	5
Occupational stress on health	.505	5

Questions listed in group 2 (questions 11-15) in line with identifying the performance impact by occupational stress and hypothesis two were tested for Cronbach's alpha test and the score was returned as 0.796 thus  $0.796 > 0.5$ . Hence the question used to identify the relationship of stress on an employee can be accepted as valid. The final set of questions used under group 3 (questions 16-20) were intended to identify the relationship of occupational stress on health in relations to hypothesis three. Cronbach's alpha test value for these set of questions were returned as 0.505 thus  $0.505 > 0.5$  and the results obtained from these questions can be deemed valid. Overall all three sets of questions used on the questionnaire have returned a positive result using Cronbach's alpha test and the responses show the value greater than 0.5 consistently across all areas. Hence, the overall questionnaire can be accepted as valid and clear to the purpose of the research.

### 4.3 Demographic Profile of the Data

The questionnaire was structured with a separate section to capture the demographic data from the respondents. The questions in this section were focused on gathering data about the age, gender, marital status, position held in the organization and their highest educational qualification. Demographic data were collected with the intention of having a better understanding about the target population identified for the research.

Age of the target population was analyzed using the data collected. According to the 47 responses received from the survey, five employees belonged to the age group 18-22 which comprises of 10.6% of the total target population and can also be generalized to the total employee population of ABC Bank operations. This implicated the opportunity given by the BPO sector for recruiting school leavers as a startup for their career. These employees are at the earlier stages of their career and will be having a firsthand experience of a corporate working environment with less or nil experience. 37 out of the 47 respondents belonged to age group 23-28 which consists of 78.7% of the total target population. These employees can be considered as the ones at their mid-career level or more senior staff members. A larger population of the organization comes from this section and the remaining questions used in the survey can be largely influenced by this population. Next age group was from 29-35 which consists of 8.5% of the target population employees. These population can be the more senior employees who can possibly be the senior staff or the first-level managers in the organization. The last category was the age group from 36 and above, only one respondent belongs to this group taking a 2.1 percentage of the target population. This data implicates the distribution of employee ages in ABC bank and in general, it can also be related to the BPO sector where the main focus on employing staff starts from school leavers and the majority of the population consists mid aged employees.

**Table 2: Age analysis of the respondents**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	18 to 22	5	10.6	10.6
	23 to 28	37	78.7	89.4
Valid	29 to 35	4	8.5	97.9
	36 and above	1	2.1	100.0
	Total	47	100.0	100.0

Survey response was collected from 27 males and 20 female employees from ABC Bank operations. This translated to 57.45% of males and 42.55% females working for ABC Bank. It significantly illustrates the ongoing focus of the organization in having to ensure gender diversity by maintaining a perfect balance between the male and female population. ABC Bank markets itself as an equal opportunity employer and provides an opportunity for job seeker from various cultures and backgrounds to bring in different talents the innovation to the organization. The data reveals a perfect output of the current gender distribution



within the organization and it can be considered the questionnaire has been distributed equally among employees of different genders.

**Table 3: Gender analysis of the respondents**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Male	27	57.45	57.45	57.45
Valid Female	20	42.55	42.55	100.0
Total	47	100.0	100.0	

Out of the 47 respondents, 40 employees are married consisting of 85.1% the sample population and seven employees are not married with 14.9%. This can be related to the age analysis where most of the employees are in their early stages of career and the age group 18-22 and 23-28 consists of 89.4% of the total sample considered for the research. This age groups related to employees who are also focused on their studies and beginning to establish a firm foundation in their career. Further, it also reflects the norm of the country in relation to the average marital age.

**Table 4: Marital status analysis of the respondents**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Single	40	85.1	85.1	85.1
Valid married	7	14.9	14.9	100.0
Total	47	100.0	100.0	

Data collected in relation to the position held by the sample population within the organization reveals that 32 employees belong to the Administrator category consisting of 68.1% of the total population. 11 employees consisting of 23.4% belongs to the Supervisor or Subject Matter Expert (SME). Three employees belong to the Manager category taking up 6.4% of the total population and one employee belongs to senior manager category with 2.1% representing the total population. Senior Manager and Managers can be considered as Managers for discussion in this research which translates to 8.5% of the total sample population. ABC Bank organizational structure is managed by an eight by eight globally accepted model. Which enables eight vertical and horizontal hierarchical reporting levels within the organization, enabling faster communication and better visibility of people management across the group. This model ensures a maximum of eight direct reports is assigned to a manager. The data collected through the survey represents a ratio of managers to employees as 1:10 which deviates from the model followed by the organization. However, this presents a very close representation of the structure and on an actual scenario the structure is impacted by employee turnover and pending backfills which are high in BPO sectors and specifically, ABC Bank also has recorded a very high percentage on the recent turnover rate. Hence, the data collected can be taken as valid and representing the actual structure of the organization.

**Table 5: Analysis of position held by employees in ABC Bank**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Administrator	32	68.1	68.1	68.1
Valid Supervisor /Subject Matter Expert	11	23.4	23.4	91.5
Valid Manager	3	6.4	6.4	97.9
Valid Senior Manager	1	2.1	2.1	100.0
Total	47	100.0	100.0	

The educational qualification-related questionnaire used on the survey provided that 14 of the respondents representing 29.8% of the sample population have GCE Ordinary Level or Advanced Level as their highest educational qualification. As discussed previously, ABC Bank gives an opportunity for school leavers to start their career with them looking at retaining the employee for the long term. Also, the tech-savvy generation is capable of learning the BPO work fast and have been producing satisfactory results in the past. 16 of the respondents gave degree as their highest qualification contributing for 34% of the population and 13 employees have a professional qualification such as CIMA, CMA, ACCA, etc. contributing for 27.7% of the population. 3 employees with 6.4% of the population have a Master degree as the highest educational qualification and one employee has a qualification different from the one listed in the questionnaire contributing to 2.1% of the population. Educational data is an important factor describing on the capability and knowledge level of employees in coping with the challenging nature of BPO works as discussed in the literature review. ABC Bank operations have a good distribution of highly qualified employees consisting of 70.2% of the sample population.

**Table 6: Educational qualification analysis of the respondents**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
GCE Ordinary Level / GCE Advanced Level	14	29.8	29.8	29.8
Graduate	16	34.0	34.0	63.8
Valid Professional Qualification (CIMA, CMA, ACCA, etc.)	13	27.7	27.7	91.5
Master Degree	3	6.4	6.4	97.9
Other	1	2.1	2.1	100.0
Total	47	100.0	100.0	

The demographic data gathered from the survey and analyzed using SPSS reveals the current distribution of employees in ABC Bank and it related to the actual situation of the organization. Furthermore, the data also provides rich and authentic representation of the policies and culture followed within the organization and its focus levels on future aspects. Hence, the overall data collected from the survey can be deemed acceptable and considered as derived from valid random employees and the findings can be accurately generalized to the wider employee population.

#### 4.4 Findings About the Conceptual Model

The conceptual model of this research focuses on two independent variables employee performance and health in relation to the dependent variable occupational stress in ABC Bank operations under Sri Lanka BPO sector. The first hypothesis focuses on understanding the presence of occupational stress in ABC Bank Operations. As discussed previously the Cronbach's alpha test present 0.609 reliability for the question used to identify this factor. Hence the value is greater than 0.5 it can be accepted that there exists occupational stress in ABC Bank Operations. In addition to this, the KMO and Bartlett's test carried out the questions to understand the sampling adequacy returned a score of 0.641 thus  $0.641 > 0.5$  and provides a positive indication of the existence of occupational stress.

**Table 7: KMO and Bartlett's Test for Hypothesis one**

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.641
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	38.605
	df	10
	Sig.	.000

The second hypothesis was tested using Pearson’s correlation test to understand the relationship of occupational stress against employee performance in ABC Bank Operations. The data collected using survey highlights a Pearson’s correlation positive weak score of 0.292 at a significance level lesser than 0.05. Hence, it can be concluded that a significant relationship exists between occupational stress and employee performance.

The third hypothesis was intended to understand the relationship between occupational stress and employee health. Pearson’s correlation score was returned for this hypothesis is positive weak 0.043 with significance more than 0.05. Hence, it can be concluded that occupational stress does not have a significant relationship between employee health. Hence the primary data collected for the research provides a positive notion in relations to the first and second hypothesizes considered for the research by indicating occupational stress existing in ABC Bank and it is negatively impacting employee performance. However, due to the failed significance value and the lower correlation, it can be concluded that Occupational stress is not influencing health issues in ABC Bank context.

#### 4.5 Discussion

Primary data collected for the study was tested and examined in detail in the previous sections by analyzing the relationships between the identified dependent and independent variables. The author intends to further discuss the primary and secondary data collected for the research with the objective of accepting or rejecting the hypothesis considered in the study. The following section will discuss each hypothesis in detail.

##### 4.5.1 Existence of Occupational Stress

Five questions were included in the survey questionnaire targeting to obtains how the respondents from ABC bank operation experience occupational stress in the organization. Each question shared in the questionnaire is focused on the finding from secondary data discussed. Cronbach’s Alpha test KMO and Bartlett’s test carried out on the collected sample unveils a positive response on the existence of occupational stress in the organization.

The first question was intended to understand if occupational stress is caused by staff requiring to work long hours. 70.2% of the respondents agree that they are pressured to work long hours and 25.5 of the employees strongly agree on this fact. Only 4.3% of the employee disagree that they are pressured to work long hours. BPO employees in general work without direct line of sight on their end customers and clients. Which puts them in an uncertain situation of not being able to foresee the trends about the demand from the consumers. Furthermore, outsourced firms are provided with limited resources to manage the average volume expected for a given period due to cost-cutting initiatives continuously driven in the BPO sector to manage the profitability of the organization. This forces the employees to stretch and work long hours to complete their workload. As concluded in the researches by Annamalai and Kamalanabhan (2016), Dembe et al., (2005) and Bhargava (2014) this proves the existence of occupational stress in the organization. However, 4.3% of the respondents have disagreed to the fact of not experiencing stress due to working long hours. This explains the distribution of different work types in the firm.

**Table 8: Analysis of occupational stress from working long hours**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	2	4.3	4.3
	Agree	33	70.2	74.5
	Strongly Agree	12	25.5	100.0
	Total	47	100.0	100.0

The second question was intended to test the existence of the stressor deadline pressure in ABC Bank. Three respondents with a percentage of 6.4% disagreed for the existence of deadline pressures in the company. Two respondents answered neutral contributing for 4.3% while 31 respondents agreed and 11 respondents strongly agreed for the existence of the stressor ‘deadline pressure’ contributing for 66% and 23.4% respectively across the overall response received for the question. This finding compares well with the findings of Shilpa et al., (2013), Monis and Sreedhara (2010) and Chatterje et al., (2011) who have identified the same stressor causing occupational stress from their studies.

**Table 9: Analysis of occupational stress from deadline pressure**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Disagree	3	6.4	6.4	6.4
Neutral	2	4.3	4.3	10.6
Valid Agree	31	66.0	66.0	76.6
Strongly Agree	11	23.4	23.4	100.0
Total	47	100.0	100.0	

The third question was focused on identifying the existence of leave and holiday management related to a stressor in ABC Bank. One employee had responded as ‘strongly disagree’ for the question and four respondents have answered as ‘agree’ contributing for 2.1% and 8.5% of the responses. One respondent answered as ‘neutral’ contributing for 2.1% and finally, 35 respondents agreed for the question while six respondents strongly agreed to contribute for 74.5% and 12.8% of the population. This gives a strong statement with a consolidated 87.3% of the respondents agreeing that they are unable to take leave according to their requirements and the stressor is strongly present on the organization. This confirms the presence of occupational stress in BPO influenced by the restriction on leaves and holiday management followed by them. This statement aligns with the nature of work carried out in outsourcing firms and management restricting employees on their leaves to meet the deliverables, unforeseen requirements and aligning themselves to onshore holidays. Furthermore, this stressor can be also related to the first question where employees are required to work for long hours as confirmed by 89.4% of the respondents. Finally, the finding also confronts the results of the researches carried out by Latha & Panchanatham (2011) Shaik & Firoz (2016) that occupational stress is influenced by improper leave and holiday management.

**Table 10: Analysis of occupational stress from improper leave management**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	1	2.1	2.1	2.1
Disagree	4	8.5	8.5	10.6
Valid Neutral	1	2.1	2.1	12.8
Agree	35	74.5	74.5	87.2
Strongly Agree	6	12.8	12.8	100.0
Total	47	100.0	100.0	

The fourth question intends to understand the existence of workload stressor asking the respondent if they are given unfair workload in the organization. One respondent strongly disagreed with 2.1% and four respondents disagreed to the question with 8.5% contribution. 31 respondents agreed with 66% and 11 respondents strongly agreed with 23.4% contribution that are given unfair workload at work, thus creating stress in the workplace. This finding agrees with the results obtained from the researches conducted by Bhatti et al., (2010), Chatterje e al., (2011), Budhwar et al. (2006) confirming that unfair workload leads to occupational stress.

**Table 11: Analysis of occupational stress from workload issues**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	1	2.1	2.1	2.1
Disagree	4	8.5	8.5	10.6
Valid Agree	31	66.0	66.0	76.6
Strongly Agree	11	23.4	23.4	100.0
Total	47	100.0	100.0	

Fifth and final hypothesis related question intends to understand the stressor employee relationship with colleagues and management creating occupational stress in ABC Bank. One respondent strongly disagrees with 2.1% contribution and 3 respondents with 6.4% contribution disagreed for the question. 26 respondents agreed while 17 respondents strongly agreed to contribute for respectively 55.3% and 36.2% of the responses. Finding implicates a poor relationship existing between management and employees creating a negative environment for effective communication. This confirms the presence of stressor and the existence of occupational stress. This finding also confirms the secondary data and research results obtained by Flanagan (2006) and Ahmady et al. (2007) that occupational stress is present in the BPO sector.

**Table 12: Analysis of occupational stress from colleagues and management**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	1	2.1	2.1	2.1
Disagree	3	6.4	6.4	8.5
Valid Agree	26	55.3	55.3	63.8
Strongly Agree	17	36.2	36.2	100.0
Total	47	100.0	100.0	

#### 4.5.2 Treatment of Hypothesis One

Based on the findings discussed above and primary data analyzed using SPSS confirming strong positive reliability of the responses, it is strongly evident that occupational stress exists in ABC Bank operations. Therefore, the null hypothesis can be rejected and accept that hypothesis one is valid. Stressors such as workload, deadlines, leaves, long working hours and employee relationship with colleagues and management are influencing occupational stress strongly in the organization. Subjecting the various demographic into the hypothesis can reveal further product information on the stressors and their impact on the specific sample population. However, the sample tested for this study conveys that the employees are experiencing occupational stress in the organization.

#### 4.5.3 Relationship Between Occupational Stress and Performance

The previous section discussed and confirmed the existence of occupational stress among ABC Bank Operations employees. This section intends to understand the impact of occupational stress on performance by analyzing the primary data collected using the questionnaire and the secondary data considered for the study. Five mandatory questions were presented to the sample population with each question specifically focusing on areas impacted by stress in the work environment. Questions were designed in a positive approach to capture the actual feel and experience of the employees. The first question received one response where 2.1% strongly disagree and 38 respondents with 80.9% disagree with the question. Six responses with 12.8% were received neutral while two respondents with 4.3% contribution agree that they make mistakes when stressed at work. A higher percentage of disagreement for the question reveals that more employees make a mistake when they are stressed at work.

**Table 13: Analysis of employees making mistakes**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	1	2.1	2.1	2.1
	Disagree	38	80.9	80.9	83.0
	Neutral	6	12.8	12.8	95.7
	Agree	2	4.3	4.3	100.0
	Total	47	100.0	100.0	

Question two intends to test the decision-making skills of employees under a stressful situation. One respondent strongly disagrees with 2.1% and 34 respondents disagree with 72.3% contribution that they are unable to make correct decisions when they are stressed. Four respondents with 8.5% agree that their decision-making skill is not impacted by stress while eight respondents with 17% contribution responded neutrally.

**Table 14: Analysis of the influence on decision making skills**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	1	2.1	2.1	2.1
	Disagree	34	72.3	72.3	74.5
	Neutral	8	17.0	17.0	91.5
	Agree	4	8.5	8.5	100.0
	Total	47	100.0	100.0	

Source: Results analyzed using primary data in SPSS

The third question focused on the impact of stress on coaching skills and helping colleagues improve performance under stress situation. One respondent strongly disagrees with 2.1% and 33 respondents disagree with 72.3% contribution that they are unable to help their colleagues when they are stressed. 10 Respondents with 21.3% contribution gave a neutral response while three respondents agreed they help their colleagues even during a stressful situation to improve performance. Finding from the study conducted by Shilpa et al., (2013) relates to these findings.

**Table 15: Analysis of the impact on teamwork**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	1	2.1	2.1	2.1
	Disagree	33	70.2	70.2	72.3
	Neutral	10	21.3	21.3	93.6
	Agree	3	6.4	6.4	100.0
	Total	47	100.0	100.0	

The fourth question was intended to identify if employees are taking up additional responsibilities which can help them develop skills and improve performance. One respondent strongly disagreed with 2.1% and 20 respondents disagreed with 42.6% contribution that's they do not take up any additional responsibilities when they are under stressful situations. 21 respondents gave a neutral answer with 44.7% while 3 respondents agreed with 6.4% and 2 respondents with 4.3% contribution agreed and strongly agreed respectively with the question.

**Table 16: Analysis of the impact on taking additional responsibilities**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly Disagree	1	2.1	2.1	2.1
Disagree	20	42.6	42.6	44.7
Neutral	21	44.7	44.7	89.4
Agree	3	6.4	6.4	95.7
Strongly Agree	2	4.3	4.3	100.0
Total	47	100.0	100.0	

Fifths question was intended to understand if employees are able to achieve the targets at an acceptable level under stress situation. One respondent strongly disagreed with 2.1% and 37 respondents disagreed with 78.7% contribution that they are unable to meet the required performance targets during a stressful situation. Six respondents gave a neutral answer with 12.8% while three respondents with 6.4% contribution agreed that they can achieve good performance targets even during stressful situations. This finding falls in line with the research results of Abu Al Rab (2004) which indicates an improvement in performance due to stress. Findings concluded by the research of Raghu Raman et al., (2007) indicating the stress created by the failure to meet expectation leading to reduced performance can be explained using these findings.

**Table 17: Analysis of meeting performance metrics targets**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly Disagree	1	2.1	2.1	2.1
Disagree	37	78.7	78.7	80.9
Neutral	6	12.8	12.8	93.6
Agree	3	6.4	6.4	100.0
Total	47	100.0	100.0	

Overall results collected from the survey to capture the performance related impacts of occupational stress illustrates that occupational stress is negatively impacting the expected performance level of the employees of ABC Bank. Employees consisting of 72% of the sample population confirm from their responses that they are unable to make the right decision at workplace, tend to make mistakes, do not support colleagues to improve performance, lack in taking additional responsibilities and finally they are unable to achieve the expected performance targets. These parameters form the overall objective of employee and they are evaluated based on these elements in ABC Bank. Hence the interpretation of primary data analysis explains that occupational stress is impacting employee performance.

Expression of employees between occupational stress and performance was mainly analyzed based on the questions shared for data collection. All five questions were presented with a positive approach and the relationship was analyzed using correlation in SPSS. Overall 72% of the response received was implicating negative impact of occupational stress on performance among ABC Bank employees. Notable 22% of the responses were neutral and 7% of the responses returned as occupational stress is helping employees to improve performance.

Correlation test carried out for occupational stress and employee performance returned a score of 0.292 which indicates a positive weak behavior. This proves that occupational stress is related to employee performance.

**Table 18: Correlation between stress and performance**

		Stress	Performance
Stress	Pearson Correlation	1	.292*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.047
	N	47	47
Performance	Pearson Correlation	.292*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.047	
	N	47	47

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

#### 4.5.4 Treatment of Hypothesis Two

Cronbach's alpha test carried out on the questions identified for assessing the relationship between occupational stress and performance returned a reliability score of 0.796. Hence  $0.796 > 0.5$ , the data used for analysis can be considered valid. Correlations test returned a value of 0.292 with a significance of 0.047. Thus  $0.047 < 0.05$  this hypothesis can be considered valid and eliminates the nil hypothesis. Therefore, the second hypothesis can be concluded that occupational stress is related to employee performance.

#### 4.5.5 Relationship between Occupational Stress and Health

The last set of five questions presented in the survey questionnaire were intended to identify the relationship between occupational stress and employee health issues. As discussed for the first two hypotheses the questions were designed with reference to the secondary data assessed in the study with a positive approach to obtain open feedback from the respondents.

The first question in this section was intended to identify if employees experience anxiety due to occupational stress. 16 respondents with 34% strongly disagreed and 30 respondents disagreed with 63.8% contribution that they are unable to focus their mind on the things they do. Only one respondent with 2.1% contribution agreed to be able to focus on the activities carried out. Anxiety was discussed as a common health issue faced by occupational stress by researchers such as Hwang et al., (2014), Shields (2002), Dhanesha (2014). The responses analyzed gives strong evidence to the existence of the health problem in ABC Bank.

**Table 19: Analysis to find the existence of anxiety**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly Disagree	16	34.0	34.0	34.0
Valid Disagree	30	63.8	63.8	97.9
Valid Agree	1	2.1	2.1	100.0
Total	47	100.0	100.0	

The second question was intended to identify the existence of an eating disorder problem which is primarily caused due to stress. 12 respondents contributing for 25.5% of the sample population strongly disagree for having a good eating habit and another 35 respondents with 74.5% agree for the same issue. Hence all respondents have agreed for the fact of having eating disorders caused due to occupational stress. This finding confirms the results obtained from the research of Mosadeghrad (2014).



**Table 20: Analysis to find the existence of an eating disorder**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	12	25.5	25.5	25.5
Valid Disagree	35	74.5	74.5	100.0
Total	47	100.0	100.0	

This question was intended to if employees are feeling depressed due to occupational stress. The responses reveal 14 respondents with 29.8% contribution strongly disagree for the question that they do not feel depressed and another 33 respondents with 70.2% contribution disagree for net feeling depressed. All responses received for this question indicated that employees are frequently feeling depressed. This finding concludes with the finding from various researched conducted by (Annamalai & Kamalanabhan, 2016; Hwang et al., 2014; Smith, 2009).

**Table 21: Analysis to find the existence of depression**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	14	29.8	29.8	29.8
Valid Disagree	33	70.2	70.2	100.0
Total	47	100.0	100.0	

The fourth question was intended to understand if employees are experiencing sleeping disorders due to occupational stress. 11 responses with 23.4% contribution strongly disagree for not having sleeping disorders and 34 respondents with 72.3% contribution disagree for the same. One respondent with 2.1% contribution had given a neutral response while another respondent agreed for not having any sleeping disorders. This finding concludes well with the results obtained by Kamalanabhan (2016) and Mosadeghrad (2014) from their research.

**Table 22: Analysis to find the existence of a sleeping disorder**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	11	23.4	23.4	23.4
Disagree	34	72.3	72.3	95.7
Valid Neutral	1	2.1	2.1	97.9
Agree	1	2.1	2.1	100.0
Total	47	100.0	100.0	

The fifth question was intended to identify if employees are experiencing mood swing which is caused by occupational stress. Five respondents with 10.6% contribution strongly disagree for not having mood swing and 38 respondents agreed with 80.9% contribution. Four respondents gave a neutral response contributing to 8.5% of the response received. Hence it can be concluded 91.5% of the employee confirm having mood swing caused by occupational stress. This finding concluded with the finding of (Mosadeghrad, 2014; Smith, 2009).

**Table 23: Analysis to find the existence of mood swing**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly Disagree	5	10.6	10.6	10.6
Disagree	38	80.9	80.9	91.5
Neutral	4	8.5	8.5	100.0
Total	47	100.0	100.0	

Overall data collected and analyzed for hypothesis three related question present 87% disagree, 10% were neutral and 3% agree on results for questions raised to confirm not having health issues related to occupational stress. Final results reveal that 87% of the employees of ABC bank are experiencing one or many types of stress-related health issues.

#### 4.5.6 Treatment of Hypothesis Three

Reliability test carried out using Cronbach's alpha on the five questions used to capture data related to health issues returned a score of 0.505 hence  $0.505 > 0.5$  is can be accepted as the questions are reliable. However, the correlation test carried on occupational stress and health issues returned a score of 0.043 with a significance value of 0.772. Thus  $0.772 > 0.05$  the nil hypothesis will be accepted for this relationship. Hence it can be concluded that health issues are not influenced by occupational stress. Analysis from the primary data shows the existence of health issues in ABC bank operation. However, the statistical analysis confronts that health issues are influenced by other factors than occupational stress.

**Table 24: Correlation between stress and health**

		Stress	Performance
Stress	Pearson Correlation	1	.043*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.772
	N	47	47
Health	Pearson Correlation	.043*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.772	
	N	47	47

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

## 5. Conclusion

Statistical findings and primary data analysis were discussed in detail to understand how the hypothesizes considered in the research needs to be treated. Based on the evidence gathered the author can accept the first and second hypothesizes while having to reject the third hypothesis. The evidence provides sufficient proof to conclude that occupational stress exists in ABC Bank Operation and in general it can be related to the BPO sector if Sri Lanka and it reduces the performance level of employees. However, the health issues identified from the research did not provide sufficient evidence to indicate the relationship between occupational stress. The following section will discuss the recommendation that can be offered to ABC Bank operations to tackle occupational stress-related concerns.

This research was carried out with the aim to understand the impact of occupational stress and its influence on employee performance and health issues in ABC Bank Operations which is a leading organization operating under BPO sector. The two main issues created by occupational stress were identified for the research and they were critically analyzed using secondary data which was previously published and fresh primary data collected for the purpose of this research.

Three hypotheses were developed to study occupational stress and its impacts on employees. The first hypothesis strongly proved the existence of occupational stress among ABC Bank employees and it was mainly influenced by workload, shift times, leave and holiday management, deadline pressure and relationship with colleagues and management. A higher level of stress was evidenced from the data collected from the sample population. Which translates the pressure imposed on BPO employees and the complex nature of work performed in these types of organizations.

The second hypothesis proved the relationship between occupational stress and employee performance using the collected data. The relationship between the two variables indicates a positive relationship implicating occupational stress having an influence on the performance of employees. This finding is similar to a few other types of research and proven fact which conclude that up to a certain level, stress can positively influence performance. However, the majority of the samples analyzed revealed a negative influence of occupational stress on performance.

Finally, the third hypothesis related analysis and statistical results returned as occupational stress is not influencing health issues in ABC Bank Operations. Primary data studied in the research revealed a significantly high level of health issues present among the ABC Bank employees. However, the statistical results reveal that health issues are not only influenced by occupational stress, but there can be other reason for health issues. Hence, the hypothesis was rejected, but the findings were very critical from an organizational perspective and raises an urgent attention from the management and employees to handle the situation by considering the recommendations discusses in the previous section.

## **5.1 Recommendations**

ABC Bank Operation is a well-reputed organization in Sri Lanka and employes largely young educated workforce. It faces challenges from various factors to maintain its competitive edge and increase profitability. ABC Bank Operations can create a better competitive position in the country by leveraging on skilled employees and providing them with a better and organized work environment to support their wellbeing.

Occupational stress is noted to be present among a large employee population within the firm. ABC Bank needs to introduce a more effective capacity management approach which should plan and provide the resource requirements for a given period. This will help to ensure the required amount of resources are available on a given day to manage the incoming work volumes, thus can reduce the need for employees to work long hours. This approach can also help to balance the increased workload currently experienced by employees. Additionally, the company also needs to re-assess if the required amount of employees are recruited for each work type and ensure the gap is filled in a timely manner.

Performance matrices need to be agreed with employees and proper understanding should be given to them during the performance year. Employees need to be given consistent feedback on a timely fashion to ensure they are aware of what is expected from them and what they are getting out of their additional outputs. This will help to balance the issue currently faced by employees in meeting their targets and failing in performance. Furthermore, the managers and supervisors need to actively support the staff in need and create a positive team working environment where everyone can collaborate positively to increase performance. Maintaining a supportive culture within the organization can motivate the employees and help to retain them for long term achievement and growth.

Stress management practices should be incorporated to the administration approaches the ABC Bank to assist the employees in improving their health and performance issues. A counselling service can be introduced into the administration model to provide an opportunity for staff to discuss the various stress-related issues and obtain advise on coping strategies to combat issues faced by them effectively on a timely manner. ABC Bank needs to focus on introducing more additional team activities and gathering for the employees to network and create a bond with colleagues and management to help them collaborate and support each other during stressful situations.

## **5.2 Future Studies**

This research was carried out for a Specific Organization, ABC Bank Operations. Future studies on occupational stress can be carried out considering the entire BPO sector organizations in Sri Lanka to find out the unique impacts caused by it on employee, organization and also the connected parties of the employees.

Due to the rare nature of occupational stress-related studies carried out under Sri Lankan BPO context and time constraints, this study is limited to identifying if occupational stress in present in Sri Lankan BPO and its impact on health and performance were assessed and evaluated. Future studies can focus on incorporating variables such as career progression, turnover intention and job satisfaction and understand the relationships which can reveal additional relationship and the finding can largely support the growing BPO industry to perfect their organization environment.

This research can be further expanded to study the impact of different demographic profiles and the varying impacts of occupational stress on employees. This can provide a better understanding of the issue in hand and provide a clear direction towards the problem areas and manage it appropriately.

## **References**

- Annamalai, S. and Kamalanabhan, T.J., (2016). A study on occupational stress and job satisfaction. *International Journal of Business Innovation and Research*, 11(3), pp.417-430.
- Annamalai, S and Nandagopal, R., (2013). a study on occupational stress and coping strategies among its executives. *International journal of research in commerce, economics & management*, 3(9), p.18-24.
- Barsky, A., Thoresen, C. J., Warren, C. R., and Kaplan, S. A. (2004). Modelling negative affectivity and job stress: A contingency-based approach. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 25(8), 915–936.
- Bartram, T., Joiner, T. A., & Stanton, P. (2004). Factors affecting the job stress and job satisfaction of Australian nurses: Implications for recruitment and retention. *Contemporary Nurse*, 17, 293-304.
- Bhatti, N., Shar, A.H., Shaikh, F.M. and Nazar, M.S., (2010). Causes of stress in organization, a case study of Sukkur. *International Journal of Business and Management*, 5(11), p.3.
- Blocher, E., Chen, K. H. and Lin, W. T., (2002). *Cost management: A strategic emphasis*. Boston: McGraw-Hill.
- Budhwar, P.S., Luthar, H.K. and Bhatnagar, J., (2006). The dynamics of HRM systems in Indian BPO firms. *Journal of Labor Research*, 27(3), pp.339-360.
- Chanda, R., (2005). Trade in financial services: India's opportunities and constraints. Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations.
- Chatterjee, I., Aditya, C. & Sinha, D., 2011. Organizational role stress, coping styles and cognitive style towards the development of well-being among BPO professionals. *International journal of management research & review*, 1(3), pp. 105-113.
- Chau, P.Y., Cole, M., Massey, A.P., Montoya-Weiss, M. and O'Keefe, R.M., (2002). Cultural differences in the online behavior of consumers. *Communications of the ACM*, 45(10), pp.138-143.
- Cohen F., Lazarus R.S. (1979). *Coping with Stresses of Illness*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

- Cox, T., Griffiths, A. & Rial-Gonzalez, E., (2000). Research on work related stress. Belgium: European Agency for Safety and Health at Work.
- Cranwell, W., & Abbey, A. J. (2005). Organizational stress. New York: Macmillan Press.
- Dhanesha, D., (2014). A Study on the Stress of BPO Employees in Ahmadabad. International Journal of Enhanced Research in Educational Development, 2(5), pp. 1-9.
- Edwards, D. (2003). A systematic review of stress and stress management interventions for mental health nurses. Journal of Advanced Nursing, 42, 169-200
- Ezhilarasi, T., (2015). A study on coping strategies adopted by selected ITES company employees. International Journal of Research in Engineering, 5(3), pp. 107-119.
- Flecker, J. and Huws, U. (2003). Asian Emergence: The World's Back Office?. The Institute for Employment Studies, Brighton.
- Ghodeswar B. and Vaidyanathan, J., (2008). Business process outsourcing: an approach to gain access to world-class capabilities. Business Process Management Journal, 14(1), 23–38.
- Goldberg, R.J. and Novack, D.H. (1992) The psychosocial review of systems. Social Science & Medicine, Vol.35, No.3, pp.261-269.
- Helpman, E. (2010). Outsourcing in a Global Economy. Review of Economic Studies, 72(1), pp.135–159.
- Hodge, D.R. and Gillespie, D., (2003). Phrase completions: An alternative to Likert scales. Social Work Research, 27(1), p.45.
- Hwang, J., Lee, J.J., Park, S., Chang, H. and Kim, S.S., (2014). The impact of occupational stress on employee's turnover intention in the luxury hotel segment. International Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Administration, 15(1), pp.60-77.
- Jain, A. K. and Cooper, C. L., (2012). Stress and organizational citizenship behaviours in Indian business process outsourcing organizations. IIMB Management Review, Volume 24, pp. 1555-163.
- Latha, G. and Panchanatham, N., (2011). Call center employees: Is work life stress a challenge. Sabaragamuwa University Journal, 9(1), pp.1-9.
- Linden, W. (2004). Stress management: Basic science to better practice. Sage Publications.
- McGowan, B., (2001). Self-reported stress and its effects on nurses. Nursing Standard, 15(42), pp. 33-38.
- Mikkelsen, A., Ogaard, T., and Lovrich, N. (2000). Modeling the effects of organizational setting and individual coping style on employees' subjective health, job satisfaction, and commitment. Public Administration Quarterly, 24(3), 371–397.
- Monis, H. and Sreedhara, T.N., (2010). Correlates of Employee Satisfaction with Performance Appraisal System in Foreign MNC BPOs Operating in India. Annals of the University of Petrosani Economics, 10(4).
- Morse, G., Salyers, M.P., Rollins, A.L., Monroe-DeVita, M. and Pfahler, C., (2012). Burnout in mental health services: A review of the problem and its remediation. Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research, 39(5), pp.341-352.
- Mosadeghrad, A.M, (2014). Occupational stress and its consequences: Implications for health policy and management. Leadership in Health Services, 27(3), pp.224-239.

- Murphy, L., Hurrell, J. & Quick, J., 1992. *Work and well-being: where do we go from here?*. Washington DC: American Psychological Association.
- Naidu, M. (2011). Attrition in BPOs: A Study of BPOs in Hyderabad & Secunderabad. *Journal of Contemporary Research in Management*, 65–76.
- Palmer, S, Cooper, C and Thomas, K., (2004). A model of work stress. *Counselling at Work*. Winter. p.5.
- Raghu Raman, S., Budhwar, P. and Balasubramanian, G., (2007). People management issues in Indian KPOs. *Employee Relations*, 29(6), pp.696-710.
- Samartha, V., Lokesh, and Karkera, A. (2010). Impact of occupational stress on employee performance in banks - An empirical study. *Paradigm*, 14(1), 65-71.
- Selye, H. (1956). *The stress of life*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Shaik, S. and Firoz, S.C., (2016). A Study on Stress Management among the BPO Employees in Chennai City. *The International Journal of Business & Management*, 4(1), p.12.
- Shields, M., (2002). Shift work and health. *Health Reports*, 13 (4), p. 11.
- Shilpa, R., Ali, A. A. & Sathyanarayana, N., (2013). A Study on impact of Work Life Stress on Job with Special Reference to BPO Employees in Bangalore. *Asia Pacific Journal of Research*, 3(10), pp. 1-15.
- Sijtsma, K., 2009. On the use, the misuse, and the very limited usefulness of Cronbach's alpha. *Psychometrika*, 74(1), pp.107-120.
- Smith, A. P. (2009). Chewing gum, stress and health. *Stress and Health*, 25(5), pp.445–451.
- Smith, A.P., Chaplin, K. and Wadsworth, E., (2012). Chewing gum, occupational stress, work performance and wellbeing. An intervention study. *Appetite*, 58(3), pp.1083-1086.
- Van der Hek, H. and Plomp, H.N. (1997). Occupational stress management programmes: a practical overview of published effect studies. *Occupational Medicine*, 47 (3), 133-141.
- Vashistha, A. and Vashistha, A., (2005). *The offshore nation: the rise of services globalization*. New York: Tata McGraw-Hill Publishing Company Limited.
- Weeks, M.R. and Feeny, D., (2008). Outsourcing: From cost management to innovation and business value. *California Management Review*, 50(4), pp.127-146.
- Wickramasinghe, V., & Kumara, S. (2009). Differential effects of competency due to BPO and KPO industry differences in ITES sector in Sri Lanka. *Career Development International*, 14(2), 169-185.
- Zeller, J. M., and Levin, P. F. (2013). Mindfulness interventions to reduce stress among nursing personnel: An occupational health perspective. *Workplace Health & Safety*, 61, 85-89.