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Short Paper

Career Advancement Opportunities, Challenges, and Barriers within BPO Companies: Towards an Improved Human Resource Development Program

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Abstract

This descriptive-correlational study assessed career advancement opportunities, challenges, and barriers within Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) companies as a basis for an improved Human Resource Development Program. Specifically, it examined employees' perceptions of promotion opportunities, training and development, mentorship programs, and challenges affecting career advancement. A survey questionnaire was administered to 418 BPO employees from selected BPO companies in Metro Manila, Philippines, using convenience sampling. Data were analyzed using frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, t-test, and analysis of variance (ANOVA). Results showed that respondents generally perceived career advancement opportunities positively. The highest-rated indicator was the provision of clear pathways for career advancement (M = 3.03). Respondents also agreed that challenges and barriers to career advancement exist (M = 2.83, SD = 0.718), with limited managerial and leadership positions due to flat organizational structures identified as the most significant challenge (M = 2.97). No significant differences

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were found in perceptions of promotion and training opportunities across demographic variables. However, a significant difference was observed in mentorship program assessment according to age (p = 0.041). Significant differences in perceived career advancement barriers were likewise found according to age (p = 0.002), position, years working in the BPO (p = 0.002), and years of company operation (p = 0.005). The study concludes that BPO companies provide structured opportunities for career growth through promotion, training, and mentorship initiatives. It recommends strengthening recognition systems, expanding professional development opportunities, and enhancing mentorship programs. A limitation of the study is the use of convenience sampling, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. The results provide insights for developing sustainable human resource policies that support employee growth and retention in the BPO sector.

Keywords – career advancement opportunities, career barriers, mentorship, training and development, BPO companies

Introduction

The business process outsourcing (BPO) sector has become a key player in the global economy in recent years, supporting a wide range of industries and businesses. BPO firms, which were characterized by the outsourcing of business processes to outside service providers, provide a broad range of services, from back-office operations and data management to customer support and technical assistance. The work environment that these organizations offer their employees is crucial to their success as it shapes organizational culture, employee satisfaction, and overall productivity. One of the most common ways that businesses worldwide conduct business is through business process outsourcing, or BPO. In addition to having a significant impact on your bottom line, using these strategies can lead to numerous other benefits that will ultimately improve the efficiency of your company (Du & Miao, 2022).

In the Philippines, the millennial generation, also referred to as Gen Y, Gen Next, Echo Boomers, and the Baby-on-Board Generation, makes up about 47.1% of the population, suggesting that they make up a sizeable share of the labor force. The main issue facing businesses nowadays is staffing. The business process outsourcing industry has emerged as a significant economic driver, particularly in countries like the Philippines, where it constitutes a substantial portion of the global BPO market (Malicay & Gano-an, 2023). This industry's rapid expansion is projected to further solidify the Philippines' role in global supply chains, contributing positively to the nation's balance of payments through substantial export revenues (Dumlao et al., 2024).

Despite the rapid growth of the Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) industry and its role as a major global employer, empirical studies examining structured opportunities for employee advancement remain limited and fragmented. The literature identifies BPO as a

dynamic but often transitory career option, with many employees perceiving few pathways for long-term growth. However, the mechanisms through which career advancement, training and development, and mentorship programs can foster genuine upward mobility are under-researched, hence this study.

Statement of the Problem

This study focused on the assessment of the career advancement opportunities, challenges, and barriers in selected business process outsourcing companies towards improved human resource development. Specifically, this answered the following research questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of:
   1.1. Age;
   1.2. Sex;
   1.3. Working Position;
   1.4. Years Working in BPO; and
   1.5. Years of operation of the company?
2. What is the assessment of the respondents on the career advancement opportunities within the BPO company in terms of:
   2.1 Promotion Opportunities;
   2.2 Training and Development; and
   2.3 Mentorship Program?
3. What is the assessment of the respondents of the challenges and barriers to career advancement within BPO companies?
4. Is there a significant difference in the respondents' assessment of the career advancement opportunities within the BPO company when grouped by profile?
5. Is there a significant difference in respondents' assessment of the challenges and barriers to career advancement within the BPO company when grouped by profile?
6. Based on the findings, what recommendations for improved human resource development program can be proposed?

Hypotheses

Ho1 – There is no significant difference in the respondents' assessment of the career advancement opportunities within a BPO company when grouped by profile.

Ho2 – There is no significant difference in respondents' assessment of the challenges and barriers to career advancement within the BPO company when grouped by profile.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Career Growth in BPO

In order to achieve rapid professional progress, young graduates can choose from a variety of employment alternatives. BPO firms are now conscious of the need to prevent attrition by offering possibilities for long-term career advancement and by continuing to offer higher-value activities like KPO. In a few years, working for a BPO company allows individuals to progress from experts to leads to executives, all thanks to excellent performance and ongoing development of both technical and soft skills.

For young accounting professionals who enjoy the challenge of working on a worldwide scale, pursuing a career in business process outsourcing (BPO) or knowledge process outsourcing (KPO) may be the best option. However, it is reasonable to anticipate lengthy hours, more rigid work schedules, and a great deal of pressure. On the other side, there are numerous training alternatives and unwavering support for obtaining higher education in order to both gain and enhance abilities. In a BPO setting, learning new skills is a corporate culture that involves internal job rotation, certification, and training. Actively volunteering for training, certification courses, and new positions that will advance career development is therefore essential.

According to Labin (2025), employees nowadays are looking for a career that would give them an opportunity to grow and improve their skill set in the desired position. These employees want to have career advancement. If leaders or managers do not address or recognize these demands, employees are likely to move to another organization. Effective career management means that there are capable employees at all organizational levels who can step up into more responsible roles as needed. It also means that as many employees as possible are highly driven and content with their employment and careers. Therefore, a firm should provide employees with the chance for promotion and training.

Career Advancement

Career advancement is the process of progressing an individual’s career; it is the series of activities or the ongoing/lifelong process of developing one's career. It usually refers to managing one's career in an intra-organizational or inter-organizational scenario. It involves training on new skills, moving to higher job responsibilities, making a career change within the same organization, or moving to a different organization. Similarly, others argue that a career advancement plan for employees plays a critical role in establishing commitment, which results in the retention of employees. Career advancement is measured in terms of job accomplishments through the efforts of the employee in pursuit of personal career goals (Tetletsadik, 2022).

Promotion

Forbes' Victor Lipman claims that unambiguous prospects for promotion are an "especially powerful" motivator for staff members. Employee retention and promotion chances are positively correlated, according to numerous studies conducted in Western nations. Thus, we may conclude that promotions encourage employees to perform better and contribute more to the objectives of the company, which reduces their level of intention to leave.

As cited in the study of Lestari et al (2023), promotion is a crucial component of career development since it gives workers the chance to advance, take on more responsibility, and get recognition within the company. Employee morale, job satisfaction, and performance can all benefit from promotions (Supriadi, 2021). According to a study on staff members at Indonesian private colleges, career advancement and work expertise have a big impact on job promotion.

According to Mubarok (2022), there is a relationship between promotions and employee career development. Promotion has been shown to have a positive effect on career development. In addition, employees' perceptions of the organization's promotion policy can influence their career commitment.

Training and Development

Employee training and development is a comprehensive process that businesses implement to improve employees' skills, knowledge, attitudes, and general performance. It comprises equipping employees with the specific skills needed for their jobs, fostering a deep understanding of concepts that go beyond appearances, changing perspectives on teamwork and adaptability, and promoting lifelong learning to stay abreast of industry developments. Ongoing T&D can influence the success employees have in their current position. T&D also allows employees to prepare for any promotional opportunities available to them. T&D success will be evident when an employee can implement what was learned in training in a day-to-day routine, leading to accomplishing personal and organizational goals (Patidar, 2024).

Training influences employee performance, with competence having a significant positive impact, while commitment's effect is positive but not statistically significant. Employee performance is crucial for success, influenced by job satisfaction. Key measures include productivity, absenteeism, and satisfaction. The most common barriers to employee training and learning are inadequate promotion opportunities, poor management commitment to training, and a lack of openness and equity in the selection of trainees. Training and development showed a significant positive impact on employee productivity and performance (Pramono & Prahiawan, 2021).

Mentorship Program

Mentorship programs play a vital role in career advancement and satisfaction by providing mentees with valuable guidance, support, skill development opportunities, and access to networks. Through mentorship, individuals are able to navigate their career paths more effectively, gain confidence and self-efficacy, develop leadership skills, and find fulfillment in their work. Organizations that invest in robust mentorship programs not only benefit from increased employee retention and engagement but also cultivate a pipeline of skilled and motivated talent ready for higher-level roles.
Findings in the study of Balinda (2024) highlight that formal mentorship programs positively impact career advancement, job satisfaction, leadership development, skill enhancement, and networking opportunities for employees.

Research by Kram et al (2020) highlighted the positive impact of mentorship programs on career advancement. Employees who participated in formal mentorship programs were more likely to receive promotions and career advancement opportunities compared to those who did not have mentors. This suggests that mentorship provides mentees with visibility within their organizations, access to new opportunities, and increased confidence in pursuing challenging roles.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

In this study, the researcher employed a descriptive-correlational research design.

Population, Sample, and Sampling Techniques

The target population consisted of approximately 4,100 BPO employees handling travel and online booking accounts in selected BPO companies in Metro Manila. The required sample size was determined using Slovin's Formula (equation 1):

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$ *Equation 1*

Where:

- n = sample size
- N = population size
- e = margin of error

Substituting the values into the formula:

$$n = \frac{4100}{1 + 4100(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{4100}{1 + 4100(0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{4100}{1 + 10.25}$$

$$n = \frac{4100}{11.25}$$

$$n = 364.44$$

Thus, the computed sample size was 364.44, which was rounded down to 364 respondents. Therefore, a minimum of 364 BPO employees was required to participate in the study to ensure that the sample adequately represented the target population with a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error. To increase reliability and account for possible incomplete responses, the researcher collected data from 418 respondents. Participants were selected using convenience sampling based on their availability and willingness to participate in the study.

Research Locale

The study was conducted in selected Business Process Outsourcing Companies in Metro Manila, Philippines. The researcher considered four (4) BPOs operating in Metro Manila.

Research Instrument

A survey questionnaire based on the variables of career advancement opportunities and challenges and barriers to career advancement culled from related literature and studies was the main instrument in the gathering of data necessary for the study. In the validation of the questionnaire's content, expert judgment was undertaken. The instrument was tested through statistical validation using the alpha-coefficient (frequently called the Cronbach Alpha, after the man who developed it).

The research instrument consists of three (3) parts. First part pertains to the profile of the respondents, while the second part is the assessment of the career advancement opportunities in terms of promotion, training and development and mentorship program; and part three is the assessment of challenges and barriers to career advancement within BPO companies.

Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher secured an ethics clearance for the school before data gathering. Using the WeChat and Google Form applications, a questionnaire was distributed to the respondents. The respondents were given time to answer the survey followed by the

retrieval of the responses. After the data collection, the results were treated with statistical tools, analyzed, and interpreted, assisted by the data analyst. The analysis and discussion were supported by the gathered related literature and studies.

As a Chinese student, the research ensured that the conduct of research was properly guided to avoid problems. Data gathering was done following the process as prescribed by Trinity University of Asia.

Statistical Treatment of Data

The assessment of the employee-respondents was computed and quantified using the mean. The computed means were interpreted using the following scales: 4- 3.26-4.00-Strongly Agree/Very Good; 3- 3.25-2.51- Agree/Good; 2- 1.76-2.50 –Disagree/Poor; 1-1.0-1.75. Further, test the t-test was employed to determine the significant difference when a profile in terms of sex and position was taken as test factor (Problem # 4 and 5), and ANOVA was used for a profile in terms of age, number of years working in BPO and number of years the company has been operating.

RESULTS

Demographic Profile of the Respondents

A total of 418 respondents participated in the study. Most respondents were aged 26–30 years (53.3%), followed by those aged 31–35 years (22.2%). The sample was almost evenly divided by sex, with 51.2% female and 48.8% male. The majority were staff (91.1%), while 8.9% held managerial positions. In terms of work experience, 38.5% had been in the BPO industry for 6–10 years, 30.6% for less than 5 years, 23.4% for 10–15 years, and 7.4% for more than 15 years. Regarding company operation, 38.0% of respondents worked in companies operating for 6–10 years, 27.5% in those with less than 5 years, 25.6% in 10–15 years, and 8.9% in companies with more than 15 years of operation.

Assessment of the Career Advancement Opportunities Within the BPO Companies

The respondents assessed the promotion opportunities as *good* based on the overall mean score of 2.9, SD=0.786, interpreted as *agree*. Among the indicators, the highest rating was for the statement that *"the company provides clear pathways for career advancement and promotion"* (M = 3.03), while the lowest was shared by statements on recognition and company support for career growth (M = 2.85). This indicates that while employees generally view promotion opportunities positively, there is still room for improvement in recognizing employee contributions and supporting continuous career development.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Age	Frequency	Percentage
18-25	45	10.8 %
26-30	223	53.3 %
31-35	93	22.2 %
36-59	57	13.6 %
Sex		
Female	214	51.2 %
Male	204	48.8 %
Position		
Manager	37	8.9 %
Staff	381	91.1 %
Years working in the BPO		
10-15 Years	98	23.4 %
6-10 Years	161	38.5 %
Above 15 Years	31	7.4 %
Less than 5 Years	128	30.6 %
Years of Operation of the Company		
10-15 Years	107	25.6 %
6-10 Years	159	38.0 %
Above 15 Years	37	8.9 %
Less than 5 Years	115	27.5 %
Total	**418**	**100%**

Table 2. Assessment of the Career Advancement Opportunities within BPO Companies in terms of Promotion

Indicators	Mean	Standard Deviation	Verbal Interpretation
1. The company provides clear pathways for career advancement and promotion.	3.03	0.976	Agree
2. Promotion decisions were based on merit and performance rather than favoritism or bias.	2.9	1.058	Agree
3. The company invests in promoting internal talent and grooming future leaders.	2.89	1.042	Agree
4. I feel that my performance and contributions were recognized and rewarded with promotion opportunities.	2.85	1.086	Agree
5. The company actively supports employees' career growth and advancement through promotion opportunities	2.85	1.063	Agree
Overall Mean	**2.9**	**0.786**	**Agree**

Scale:
3.26 – 4.00 – Strongly Agree (SA)/Very Good (VG)
2.51 – 3.25 – Agree(A) / Good (G)
1.76 – 2.50 – Disagree / Poor
1.00 – 1.75 – Strongly Disagree (SD)/Very Poor (VP)

The respondents assessed the training and development within BPO companies as *good* based on the overall mean score of 2.83, SD=0.754, interpreted as *agree*. The highest-rated indicator was that *"the company offers a variety of training programs to enhance employees' skills and competencies"* (M = 2.95), while the lowest was *"the company provides resources and support for employees to participate in external training programs"* (M = 2.77). These findings suggest that while internal training opportunities are available and beneficial, organizations could further strengthen support for external training and continuous learning initiatives.

Table 3. Assessment of the Career Advancement Opportunities with BPO Companies in terms of Training and Development

Indicators	Mean	Standard Deviation	Verbal Interpretation
1. The company offers a variety of training programs to enhance employees' skills and competencies	2.95	0.961	Agree
2. I have access to training opportunities that align with my career goals and aspirations	2.83	1.043	Agree
3. Training programs were well- designed and effectively contributed to my professional development	2.8	1.062	Agree
The company encourages employees to pursue continuous learning and growth through training.	2.8	1.041	Agree
5. The company provides resources and support for employees to participate in external training programs.	2.77	1.076	Agree
Overall Mean	**2.83**	**0.754**	**Agree**

Scale:
3.26 – 4.00 – Strongly Agree (SA)/Very Good (VG)
2.51 – 3.25 – Agree (A) / Good (G)
1.76 – 2.50 – Disagree / Poor
1.00 – 1.75 – Strongly Disagree (SD)/Very Poor (VP)

The respondents assessed the mentorship program within BPO companies as *good* based on the overall mean rating of 2.87, SD=0.783, interpreted as *agree*. The highest-rated indicator was that *"the company provides formal mentorship programs to support employee development"* (M = 2.99), suggesting that structured mentorship opportunities are present. However, slightly lower ratings on mentorship structure and facilitation imply that improvements could be made to strengthen mentor–mentee relationships and enhance program effectiveness.

Table 4. Assessment of the Career Advancement Opportunities within BPO Companies in terms of Mentorship Program

Indicators	Mean	Standard Deviation	Verbal Interpretation
1. The company provides formal mentorship programs to support employee development.	2.99	1.001	Agree
2. I have access to mentors who provide guidance and support in my career development.	2.86	1.043	Agree
3. Mentorship opportunities were well- structured and beneficial to my professional growth.	2.85	1.092	Agree
4. The company encourages and facilitates mentorship relationships between experienced and junior employees.	2.81	1.045	Agree
5. I feel that mentorship has positively impacted my career development and advancement	2.83	1.053	Agree
Overall Mean	**2.87**	**0.783**	**Agree**

Scale:
3.26 – 4.00 – Strongly Agree (SA)/Very Good (VG)
2.51 – 3.25 – Agree (A) / Good (G)
1.76 – 2.50 – Disagree / Poor
1.00 – 1.75 – Strongly Disagree (SD)/Very Poor (VP)

Challenges and Barriers to Career Advancement within BPO Companies

The overall mean of 2.83, verbally interpreted as "Agree," indicates that employees generally perceive the identified challenges as real and significant factors that affect their professional growth. The highest-rated statement is *"BPO companies often have a flat organizational structure, resulting in limited managerial or leadership positions"* (Mean = 2.97, SD = 0.961). The second highest-rated challenge is *"Chronic fatigue, stress, and health issues hinder* employees *from pursuing higher roles or further education"* (Mean = 2.87, SD = 1.073). This emphasizes the negative impact of the demanding nature of BPO work—particularly night shifts and workload pressures—on employees' physical and mental well-being.

Respondents also agreed that *"Employees trained primarily for customer service roles may lack the analytical, technical, or managerial skills needed for supervisory or specialized roles"* (Mean = 2.85), highlighting a perceived skills gap that hampers advancement. Similarly, the statements *"Emotional exhaustion reduces engagement"* and *"Limited opportunities to demonstrate leadership potential"* (both Mean = 2.83) reflect issues of burnout and restricted exposure to leadership experiences.

On the other hand, the lowest-rated statement, though still agreed upon, is *"Frequent turnover in the industry means that positions are often filled externally rather than by internal promotion"* (Mean = 2.77). While turnover remains a known characteristic of the BPO sector, respondents may have experienced some level of internal promotion or job mobility that slightly mitigates this perception.

Table 5. Assessment of the Challenges and Barriers to Career Advancement within BPO Companies

Statements	Mean	Standard Deviation	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. BPO companies often have a flat organizational structure, resulting in limited managerial or leadership positions.	2.97	0.961	Agree	1
2. Frequent turnover in the industry means that positions are often filled externally rather than by internal promotion.	2.77	1.088	Agree	10
3. Employees trained primarily for customer service roles may lack the analytical, technical, or managerial skills needed for supervisory or specialized roles.	2.85	1.046	Agree	3
4. Training programs focus mainly on process efficiency rather than professional development or leadership skills.	2.79	1.059	Agree	8-9
5. The demanding schedules and night shifts make it difficult for employees to pursue further education or certifications	2.81	1.035	Agree	7
6. Night shifts and rotational schedules affect employees' health and motivation	2.82	1.072	Agree	6
7. Emotional exhaustion reduces engagement and discourages employees from seeking advancement opportunities	2.83	1.074	Agree	4-5
8. Many agents have limited opportunities to demonstrate leadership potential due to rigid team structures	2.83	1.048	Agree	4-5
9. Many positions are project-based, which discourages long-term career planning.	2.79	1.028	Agree	8-9
10. Chronic fatigue, stress, and health issues hinder employees from pursuing higher roles or further education.	2.87	1.073	Agree	2
Overall Mean	**2.83**	**0.718**	**Agree**	

Scale:
3.26 – 4.00 – Strongly Agree (SA)/Very Good (VG)
2.51 – 3.25 – Agree (A) / Good (G)
1.76 – 2.50 – Disagree / Poor
1.00 – 1.75 – Strongly Disagree (SD)/Very Poor (VP)

Significant Difference in the Respondents' Assessment of the Career Advancement

Opportunities Within the BPO Companies when Grouped by Profile

Table 6 presents the test of significant difference in respondents' assessment of career advancement opportunities within the BPO companies when grouped according to their demographic profile variables. The variables examined include promotion, training and development, and mentorship programs.

Table 6. Significant Difference in The Respondents' Assessment of the Career Advancement Opportunities Within the BPO Companies when Grouped by Profile

Demographic Profile	**Promotion (p)**	**Interpretation**	**Training and Development (p)**	**Interpretation**	**Mentorship Program (p)**	**Interpretation**
Age	.283	Not significant	.223	Not significant	.041	Significant
Sex	.303	Not significant	.676	Not significant	.759	Not significant
Position in the Company	.096	Not significant	.554	Not significant	.561	Not significant
Length of Stay in the Company	.633	Not significant	.437	Not significant	.238	Not significant
Years of Operation of the Company	.974	Not significant	.782	Not significant	.317	Not significant

Note: *Significant at p<.05*

Results show that there are no significant differences in the respondents' assessment of promotion and training and development opportunities when grouped by age, sex, position, length of stay, or years of company operation, as all p-values are greater than 0.05 (Table 6). However, a significant difference (p = 0.041) was found in the respondents' assessment of the mentorship program when grouped according to age. All other demographic variables—including sex, position, length of stay, and years of company operation—showed no significant differences in any of the three career advancement factors.

Significant Difference in the Respondents' Assessment of the Challenges and Barriers to Career Advancement within the BPO Companies when Grouped by Profile

The data in Table 7 reveal that there are significant differences in the respondents' assessment of the challenges and barriers to career advancement when grouped

according to age, years working in the BPO, and years of company operations, as indicated by the p-values less than 0.05.

On the other hand, sex and position in the company show no significant difference (p = 0.478), implying that male and female employees generally share similar views regarding the challenges to career advancement within the company. Regarding the position in the company, no significant difference was noted, as indicated by p=.984.

Table 7. Significant Difference in the Respondents' Assessment of the Challenges of Barriers to Career Advancement within BPO Companies when Grouped by Profile

Variable	Statistical Test	t/F	P	Interpretation
Age	ANOVA	4.15	.002	Significant
Sex	t-test	0.71	.478	Not Significant
Position in the Company	ANOVA	0.02	.984	Not Significant
Years working in the BPO	ANOVA	4.23	.002	Significant
Years of Operation of the Company	ANOVA	3.67	.005	Significant

Note: *Significant at p<.05*

DISCUSSION

The study determines the assessment of the respondents on the career advancement opportunities and the challenges and barriers to career advancement within the BPO companies. The assessment of career advancement opportunities within BPO companies revealed that respondents generally hold positive perceptions toward promotion opportunities, training and development, and mentorship programs, as all three indicators were rated *good* with mean scores ranging from 2.83 to 2.90. This suggests that BPO organizations provide employees with structured mechanisms for career growth, skill improvement, and professional guidance, which are essential components of employee development and retention.

As cited by Tetletsadik (2022), career advancement is the process of progressing an individual's career; it is the series of activities or the ongoing/lifelong process of developing one's career. It usually refers to managing one's career in an intra-organizational or inter-organizational scenario. It involves training on new skills, moving to higher job responsibilities, making a career change within the same organization, or moving to a different organization. Similarly, others argue that a career advancement plan for employees plays a critical role in establishing commitment, which results in the retention of employees.

In terms of promotion opportunities, the findings indicate that employees perceive the company's career advancement system positively, particularly regarding clear pathways for promotion (*M = 3.03*). This reflects that the organizations have established

defined procedures for career mobility, which is consistent with *career development and motivation theories* that highlight the importance of transparency and goal clarity in fostering employee commitment. However, the relatively lower mean score on recognition and company support (*M = 2.85*) points to an area needing improvement. Recognition of employee efforts and continuous support for career growth serve as intrinsic motivators that can strengthen engagement and reduce turnover—issues that are often prevalent in the BPO industry. As cited in the study of Lestari et al (2023), promotion is a crucial component of career development since it gives workers the chance to advance, take on more responsibility, and get recognition within the company. Employee morale, job satisfaction, and performance can all benefit from promotions (Supriadi, 2021).

According to Mubarok (2022), there is a relationship between promotions and employee career development. Promotion has been shown to have a positive effect on career development. In addition, employees' perceptions of the organization's promotion policy can influence their career commitment.

The results on training and development further reinforce the companies' commitment to enhancing employee competencies, as evidenced by the overall mean of 2.83. Respondents acknowledged the availability of various internal training programs (*M = 2.95*), which reflects the organization's investment in capacity building and human capital development. This aligns with human capital theory, which posits that organizations benefit from improving employee skills through targeted training initiatives. Nonetheless, the lower score on external training support (*M = 2.77*) suggests limited encouragement for employees to participate in external seminars or certifications. Employee training and development is a comprehensive process that businesses implement to improve employees' skills, knowledge, attitudes, and general performance. It comprises equipping employees with the specific skills needed for their jobs, fostering a deep understanding of concepts that go beyond appearances, changing perspectives on teamwork and adaptability, and promoting lifelong learning to stay abreast of industry developments. Ongoing T&D can influence the success employees have in their current position. T&D also allows employees to prepare for any promotional opportunities available to them. T&D success will be evident when an employee can implement what was learned in training in a day-to-day routine, leading to accomplishing personal and organizational goals (Patidar, 2024).

Regarding mentorship programs, the overall mean of 2.87 signifies a generally positive evaluation, particularly with respect to formal mentorship structures (*M = 2.99*). This finding implies that mentorship is recognized as a valuable tool for employee development, facilitating knowledge sharing and professional guidance. However, the slightly lower scores on mentorship facilitation indicate that while programs exist, their implementation and consistency may vary. Findings in the study of Balinda (2024) highlight that formal mentorship programs positively impact career advancement, job

satisfaction, leadership development, skill enhancement, and networking opportunities for employees.

Research by Kram et al (2020) highlighted the positive impact of mentorship programs on career advancement. Employees who participated in formal mentorship programs were more likely to receive promotions and career advancement opportunities compared to those who did not have mentors. This suggests that mentorship provides mentees with visibility within their organizations, access to new opportunities, and increased confidence in pursuing challenging roles.

Demographic factors generally do not influence how respondents perceive career advancement opportunities within BPO companies. The findings indicate that employees, regardless of their age, sex, position, length of stay, or the number of years their company has been operating, share relatively similar views on promotion and training and development programs. This suggests that such opportunities are perceived to be equitably implemented across the workforce and that company policies regarding promotions and training are likely standardized and accessible to all employees. The findings of the study of Ebigide and Adomi (2024) revealed a negative relationship between age and career advancement; gender and education show no significant effect on their perception of career advancement (Sahay & Lall, 2024).

The significant difference found in the assessment of the mentorship program when grouped according to age ($p = 0.041$) indicates that perceptions toward mentorship vary among different age groups. This could mean that younger employees tend to value mentorship more highly, as they may view it as a vital tool for career growth, guidance, and skills development. In contrast, older employees may perceive mentorship as less critical, relying instead on their accumulated experience and established professional networks.

The results indicate that employees generally agree that various organizational and work-related challenges hinder their career advancement within BPO companies (overall mean = 2.83). Among these, the most pressing issue identified is the flat organizational structure of BPO firms, which limits the availability of managerial or leadership positions and consequently restricts upward mobility. This structural limitation aligns with the nature of many BPO organizations that prioritize operational efficiency over hierarchical expansion.

Another significant challenge concerns the physical and mental health strain associated with BPO work, particularly due to night shifts, high workload, and stress, which can impede employees' motivation and capacity to pursue higher education or leadership roles. The findings also underscore a skills gap, as employees primarily trained for customer service roles may lack the technical, analytical, or managerial competencies required for promotion to specialized or supervisory positions.

Moreover, emotional exhaustion and limited opportunities to demonstrate leadership potential further contribute to reduced engagement and hinder professional growth. These findings are consistent with studies emphasizing burnout, role monotony, and lack of developmental pathways as key barriers to career advancement in high-pressure service industries such as BPOs.

Although employee turnover remains a challenge in the sector, the relatively lower mean score (2.77) suggests that some respondents recognize internal promotion and lateral movement opportunities, indicating gradual improvements in internal career mobility initiatives among BPO firms.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

BPO companies generally offer structured career advancement opportunities, including promotion pathways, training, and mentorship programs, which positively influence employee development and retention. However, challenges such as limited recognition, insufficient external training support, and organizational structures like flat hierarchies impede some employees' professional growth. The perceptions towards mentorship and training are generally favorable, with mentorship especially valued by younger employees, indicating its role in facilitating career progression.

To enhance the career advancement initiative of the BPO companies, recognition efforts and support systems to motivate employees should be implemented. Reconsider organizational structures to create more upward mobility pathways and strengthen mentorship programs to maximize their potential, especially among diverse age groups.

IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study have important implications for the BPO industry, educational institutions, and individual employees. For BPO companies, the results highlight the need to strengthen career advancement initiatives through enhanced recognition systems, expanded training opportunities, effective mentorship programs, and improved employee well-being strategies. For schools, universities, and training institutions, the study underscores the importance of developing industry-aligned programs that equip learners with leadership, technical, and managerial competencies required for career progression in the BPO sector. For individual employees, the findings emphasize the value of continuous learning, active participation in professional development activities, and proactive career planning to overcome barriers and maximize advancement opportunities. Overall, the study provides a basis for developing sustainable human resource development programs that promote employee growth, retention, and organizational success within the BPO industry.

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DECLARATIONS

Conflict of Interest

All authors declared that they have no conflict of interest.

Informed Consent

Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to their participation in the study. Respondents were informed of the purpose of the research, the voluntary nature of their participation, their right to withdraw at any time without penalty, and the measures taken to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. No personally identifiable information was collected, and all data were used solely for academic and research purposes.

Ethics Approval

This study involved human participants, specifically Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) employees, and was conducted in accordance with established ethical principles for research involving human participants. Participation was voluntary, and the privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity of all respondents were protected throughout the research process. The study complied with the ethical guidelines of the researchers' institution.

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