



Workforce Mobility And Turnover Tendency Among Employees In Bengaluru's BPO Sector: Evidence From Select Firms

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Abstract

Employee attrition has become a persistent human resource challenge in the Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) sector, particularly in large urban employment hubs where skilled employees have access to multiple alternative job opportunities. Bengaluru, being one of India's major IT-BPM and BPO centres, provides a suitable context for examining employee mobility and turnover tendency. The present article examines the extent and pattern of employee attrition among employees working in selected BPO firms in Bengaluru. The article is based on primary data collected from 390 employees working in six selected BPO firms: Infosys BPM Ltd., TCS BPO, Wipro BPO, Accenture Operations, Cognizant BPO and Genpact. The analysis focuses on previous job changes, reasons for joining the current organization, thoughts of leaving, job search behaviour, interview attendance, likelihood of leaving, perceived level of attrition and common exit periods. The findings show that job mobility is a strong feature of Bengaluru's BPO workforce. A considerable proportion of employees had changed jobs at least once in the BPO/ITES sector, and nearly half had thought of leaving their present organization during the previous twelve months. Low salary, better outside opportunities, work pressure, poor work-life balance and lack of promotion emerged as major reasons for possible exit. The study concludes that attrition in the BPO sector is not merely an individual decision but a structured outcome of early-career mobility, competitive labour markets, work pressure and limited long-term attachment to organizations.

Keywords: Employee attrition, turnover tendency, job mobility, BPO, ITES, Bengaluru, employee retention.

1. Introduction

Employee attrition is one of the most serious human resource challenges faced by the Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) sector. BPO organizations depend heavily on trained employees who possess process knowledge, customer-handling ability, communication skills and client-specific operational experience. When employees leave frequently, organizations face repeated recruitment, onboarding and training costs. High attrition also affects service quality, team stability, employee morale and client confidence.

The problem of attrition is particularly visible in cities such as Bengaluru, where a large number of BPO and IT-enabled service firms operate within the same labour market. The clustering of firms creates employment opportunities for workers, but it also increases employee mobility. Employees can easily compare salary, incentives, work conditions, shift patterns and career prospects across organizations. As a result, job switching becomes a common feature of the sector.

The BPO workforce is generally young and career-sensitive. Many employees join the sector at an early stage of their working life and view it as a platform for income generation, skill development and future opportunities. However, demanding work schedules, night shifts, repetitive tasks, performance monitoring and limited promotion opportunities may weaken their long-term organizational attachment. In such a context, understanding the pattern of attrition is as important as understanding the causes of retention.

The present article focuses on employee attrition and turnover tendency in selected BPO firms in Bengaluru. Unlike studies that examine only retention determinants, this article concentrates on the structure of mobility: how many employees have changed jobs, how many think of leaving, how many actively apply outside the organization, which employees are perceived to be more likely to leave and when exits commonly occur. This approach helps to understand attrition as a workforce pattern rather than only as an individual decision.

2. Review of literature

Employee attrition and turnover have been widely discussed in organizational behaviour and human resource management literature. Attrition refers to the reduction of workforce due to employee exits, while turnover refers to the movement of employees into and out of an organization. In many organizational studies, voluntary turnover receives major attention because it reflects employees' decision to leave due to dissatisfaction, better opportunities or personal reasons (Price, 1977).

Mobley (1977) explained turnover as a gradual psychological process. According to his model, job dissatisfaction may lead to thoughts of quitting, evaluation of alternatives, intention to leave and finally actual turnover. This model is useful for understanding BPO employees because many workers may not resign immediately, but they may first think of leaving, apply for jobs, attend interviews and then exit when a better opportunity becomes available.

Turnover has serious organizational consequences. Griffeth, Hom and Gaertner (2000) showed that turnover is associated with job dissatisfaction, lack of commitment, alternative employment opportunities and work-related pressures. High turnover increases recruitment and training costs and disrupts organizational continuity. In service organizations, turnover is particularly costly because service quality depends on employee experience, customer familiarity and process knowledge (Heskett et al., 1997).

The BPO sector is structurally prone to high attrition. BPO work often involves standardized processes, strict performance monitoring, night shifts, customer interaction and repetitive tasks. Taylor and Bain (2005) observed that call centre work is shaped by intense monitoring, targets and global service schedules. D'Cruz and Noronha (2012) noted that Indian call centre employees face pressure from high-commitment work systems, emotional labour and managerial control.

In India, the BPO sector has created large-scale employment opportunities for young graduates. However, it has also produced a labour market marked by frequent job switching. Employees may leave for higher salary, better work schedules, promotion opportunities, reduced stress or movement into other sectors. Sengupta and Gupta (2012) argued that attrition in Indian BPOs is closely linked to organizational practices, employee expectations and sectoral labour market dynamics.

Employee attrition also varies according to tenure. New recruits and early-career employees are often more likely to leave because they are still exploring job alternatives and may not yet have strong organizational commitment. Mitchell et al. (2001) introduced the concept of job embeddedness, which explains why people stay in organizations. Employees who are less embedded in terms of social ties, organizational fit and perceived sacrifice are more likely to leave.

The literature suggests that attrition in the BPO sector should be analysed as a pattern involving job changes, intention to leave, job search behaviour, perceived exit risk and tenure-wise exit tendencies. The present article builds on this view by examining the extent and pattern of employee attrition among selected BPO employees in Bengaluru.

3. Objective of the study

The present study is based on the objective of “To examine the extent and pattern of employee attrition in selected BPO firms in Bengaluru”.

For the purpose of this study, the selected retention determinants are:

1. Career growth and training opportunities.
2. Supervisory support and work environment.

4. Research questions

The article addresses the following research questions:

- i. What is the extent of job mobility among employees working in selected BPO firms in Bengaluru?
- ii. How many employees have thought of leaving their present organization during the last twelve months?
- iii. What are the major reasons for possible employee exit from BPO firms?
- iv. Which employee groups are perceived to be more likely to leave?
- v. During which period of employment do employees most commonly leave BPO organizations?

5. Research methodology

The study adopted a descriptive and analytical research design. Primary data were collected from employees working in selected BPO firms in Bengaluru. The total sample consisted of 390 respondents selected from six major BPO firms: Infosys BPM Ltd., TCS BPO, Wipro BPO, Accenture Operations, Cognizant BPO and Genpact. Equal representation was ensured by selecting 65 respondents from each firm.

A structured questionnaire was used for data collection. The questionnaire included questions relating to socio-economic profile, work-related profile, previous BPO employment, number of job changes, reason for joining the current organization, thought of leaving, job search behaviour, interview attendance, likelihood of leaving, perceived attrition level, employee groups likely to leave and common exit periods.

The data were analysed using frequency and percentage analysis. The article focuses on descriptive patterns of attrition and turnover tendency rather than regression-based determinant analysis. This is appropriate because the objective is to understand the extent and structure of attrition among BPO employees.

6. Analysis and results

6.1 Firm-wise distribution of respondents

The respondents were equally drawn from six selected BPO firms in Bengaluru. This ensured that the analysis was not dominated by any single organization.

Table 1: Firm-wise distribution of respondents

Sl. No.	Name of the BPO firm	Sample size	Percentage
1	Infosys BPM Ltd.	65	16.67
2	TCS BPO	65	16.67
3	Wipro BPO	65	16.67
4	Accenture Operations	65	16.67
5	Cognizant BPO	65	16.67
6	Genpact	65	16.65
Total		390	100.00

Source: Field survey

The table indicates balanced representation across all selected firms. This makes the attrition analysis more representative of the selected BPO firms rather than being firm-specific.

6.2 Previous organizations worked before current company

The number of organizations worked before joining the current company helps to understand prior mobility among employees.

Table 2: Organizations worked before joining current company

Number of previous organizations	Frequency	Percentage
One organization	127	36.71
Two organizations	122	35.26
Three organizations	66	19.08
More than three organizations	31	8.96
Total	346	100.00

Note: Forty-four respondents had no prior BPO employment

Source: Field survey

The findings show that among employees with prior BPO experience, more than one-third had worked in one organization before joining the present firm, while another 35.26 percent had worked in two organizations. This indicates that job mobility is already established among a large section of employees before joining their present company.

6.3 Number of job changes in the BPO/ITES sector

The number of job changes provides a direct indication of employee mobility within the sector.

Table 3: Number of job changes in BPO/ITES sector

Number of job changes	Frequency	Percentage
Never changed job	44	11.28
Once	136	34.87
Twice	122	31.28
Three times	59	15.13
More than three times	29	7.44
Total	390	100.00

Source: Field survey

The data show that only 11.28 percent of employees had never changed jobs in the BPO/ITES sector. The remaining 88.72 percent had changed jobs at least once. This clearly indicates that employee mobility is a major feature of the BPO workforce in Bengaluru. The largest proportion had changed jobs once, followed by those who had changed jobs twice.

6.4 Main reason for joining current organization

Employees' reasons for joining the current organization help to understand what attracts them to a particular BPO firm.

Table 4: Main reason for joining current organization

Reason for joining	Frequency	Percentage
Better salary	119	30.51
Career opportunity	110	28.21
Better working conditions	59	15.13
Brand reputation	47	12.05
Location convenience	34	8.72
Referral/social network	15	3.85
Other reasons	6	1.54
Total	390	100.00

Source: Field survey

The findings show that better salary was the most important reason for joining the current organization, followed by career opportunity. This suggests that employees' movement into organizations is mainly driven by financial and career-related expectations. Better working conditions and brand reputation also influenced job choice.

6.5 Thought of leaving present organization

Thinking about leaving is an early indicator of turnover tendency.

Table 5: Thought of leaving present organization during last 12 months

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	183	46.92
No	207	53.08
Total	390	100.00

Source: Field survey

Nearly 46.92 percent of respondents had thought of leaving their present organization during the last twelve months. This is a serious indication of turnover tendency. Even though all employees who think of leaving may not actually resign, such thoughts reflect dissatisfaction or attraction towards external opportunities.

6.6 Frequency of thinking about leaving

The frequency of thinking about leaving provides a deeper indication of turnover risk.

Table 6: Frequency of thinking about leaving

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Rarely	53	13.59
Sometimes	72	18.46
Often	45	11.54
Very often	13	3.33
Not applicable	207	53.08
Total	390	100.00

Source: Field survey

The data show that 18.46 percent of employees sometimes thought of leaving, while 11.54 percent thought of leaving often and 3.33 percent very often. These categories represent employees with stronger turnover risk. Regular thoughts of leaving may eventually lead to active job search and resignation.

6.7 Job search behaviour

Applying for jobs outside the current organization shows active turnover behaviour.

Table 7: Applied for jobs outside current organization

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	173	44.36
No	217	55.64
Total	390	100.00

Source: Field survey

The findings indicate that 44.36 percent of employees had applied for jobs outside their current organization. This shows that turnover tendency is not merely psychological; it has moved into actual job search behaviour for a large share of employees.

6.8 Interview attendance during last 12 months

Interview attendance indicates a more advanced stage of turnover intention.

Table 8: Attended interviews during last 12 months

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	136	34.87
No	254	65.13
Total	390	100.00

Source: Field survey

The data show that 34.87 percent of employees had attended interviews during the last twelve months. This indicates that more than one-third of the workforce had actively explored alternative employment opportunities. Such behaviour reflects a serious retention challenge for BPO firms.

6.9 Likelihood of leaving within next 12 months

The likelihood of leaving measures employees' future turnover intention.

Table 9: Likelihood of leaving within next 12 months

Likelihood	Frequency	Percentage
Very unlikely	76	19.49
Unlikely	79	20.26
Not sure	91	23.33
Likely	90	23.08
Very likely	54	13.85
Total	390	100.00

Source: Field survey

The findings show that 36.93 percent of employees were either likely or very likely to leave within the next twelve months. Another 23.33 percent were not sure. This indicates that a large segment of employees is either at high risk or uncertain about continuing with the organization.

6.10 Most important reason for leaving

The reasons for possible exit help organizations identify the main causes of attrition.

Table 10: Most important reason for leaving

Reason	Frequency	Percentage
Low salary	75	19.23
Better outside opportunities	70	17.95
Work pressure/stress	65	16.67
Poor work–life balance	49	12.56
Lack of promotion	47	12.05
Unsupportive supervisor	39	10.00
Health issues due to shifts	25	6.41
Family/personal reasons	11	2.82
Higher education	8	2.05

Other reasons	1	0.26
Total	390	100.00

Source: Field survey

Low salary emerged as the most important reason for leaving, followed by better outside opportunities and work pressure or stress. Poor work–life balance, lack of promotion and unsupportive supervision also contributed to possible exit. This shows that attrition is caused by a combination of financial, organizational and work-related factors.

6.11 Perceived level of attrition in the organization

Employees' perception of attrition provides insight into the organizational climate.

Table 11: Perceived level of attrition in organization

Perceived level	Frequency	Percentage
Very low	23	5.90
Low	60	15.38
Moderate	139	35.64
High	116	29.74
Very high	52	13.33
Total	390	100.00

Source: Field survey

The data indicate that 78.71 percent of employees perceived attrition as moderate, high or very high in their organization. Such perception may itself influence employees' attitudes, as frequent exits by colleagues can normalize job switching and weaken organizational attachment.

6.12 Employee groups more likely to leave

The identification of vulnerable employee groups is important for targeted retention strategies.

Table 12: Group more likely to leave organization

Employee group	Frequency	Percentage
New recruits	98	25.13
Employees with 1–3 years of experience	80	20.51
Night-shift employees	68	17.44
Female employees	43	11.03
Contract staff	38	9.74
High performers	25	6.41
Not sure	23	5.90
Male employees	15	3.85
Total	390	100.00

Source: Field survey

New recruits were perceived as the group most likely to leave, followed by employees with 1–3 years of experience and night-shift employees. This indicates that early-tenure employees and shift-affected employees require special retention attention.

6.13 Common period when employees leave

Tenure-wise exit patterns help organizations identify the critical retention window.

Table 13: Most common period when employees leave

Exit period	Frequency	Percentage
Within 6 months	77	19.74
6 months–1 year	121	31.03
1–2 years	113	28.97
2–3 years	54	13.85
After 3 years	25	6.41
Total	390	100.00

Source: Field survey

The findings show that the most common exit period is between 6 months and 1 year, followed by 1–2 years. This means that the first two years of employment are the most critical period for employee retention in BPO firms.

7. Discussion

The findings reveal that employee attrition in Bengaluru's BPO sector is a structured and recurring phenomenon. The fact that 88.72 percent of respondents had changed jobs at least once in the BPO/ITES sector shows that mobility is deeply embedded in the sector. This supports the view that BPO employees often operate in a fluid labour market where job switching is considered normal rather than exceptional.

The results also show that turnover tendency exists at different stages. First, employees think of leaving. Second, some employees apply for jobs outside the organization. Third, some attend interviews. Finally, a section of employees indicate that they are likely to leave within the next twelve months. This pattern closely resembles Mobley's (1977) turnover process model, where dissatisfaction gradually moves from thought of quitting to job search and actual turnover.

Low salary, better outside opportunities and work pressure emerged as the top reasons for possible exit. These findings suggest that attrition is both push-driven and pull-driven. Low salary, stress, poor work–life balance and lack of promotion push employees away from the organization. Better outside opportunities pull them towards competing firms. This dual pressure is especially strong in Bengaluru because of the concentration of BPO and IT-enabled service firms.

The findings further indicate that early-tenure employees are at greater risk of leaving. New recruits and employees with 1–3 years of experience were perceived as more likely to leave. The most common exit period was between 6 months and 1 year, followed by 1–2 years. This suggests that the early employment phase is a critical retention window. If employees are not engaged, supported and given growth clarity during this period, they may begin to search for alternatives.

Night-shift employees were also identified as a vulnerable group. This is understandable because night shifts may affect sleep, health, family life and social participation. Taylor and Bain (2005) and D'Cruz and Noronha (2012) noted that call centre and BPO work often involves demanding schedules and emotional pressure. Therefore, shift-related attrition needs separate managerial attention.

Overall, the study shows that attrition in BPO firms is not only caused by dissatisfaction within one organization. It is also shaped by the structure of Bengaluru's labour market, availability of alternative jobs, early-career aspirations and work conditions. Retention strategies must therefore be targeted, time-sensitive and employee-segment specific.

8. Managerial Implications

The findings have important implications for BPO firms and human resource managers. First, organizations should focus strongly on the first two years of employment. Since exits are most common during this period, retention strategies should begin from the onboarding stage itself. Structured induction, mentoring, career counselling and early feedback sessions can help employees develop attachment to the organization.

Second, BPO firms should conduct stay interviews with employees who have completed six months of service. This will help identify dissatisfaction before employees begin active job search. Stay interviews can capture concerns related to salary, shift timing, supervisor behaviour, workload and career expectations.

Third, new recruits should be supported through mentoring programmes. Assigning experienced employees or team leaders as mentors can reduce early adjustment problems and improve organizational belongingness.

Fourth, organizations should monitor job search signals. Employees who frequently express dissatisfaction, request documents, avoid engagement activities or show declining performance may be at risk of leaving. HR departments should use such signals ethically and constructively to provide support.

Fifth, night-shift employees require special retention support. Transport facilities, health check-ups, shift rotation fairness, rest periods and night-shift allowances can reduce dissatisfaction among this group.

Sixth, salary-related attrition should be addressed through periodic compensation review. Since low salary emerged as the most important reason for leaving, organizations should benchmark compensation with competing firms in Bengaluru.

Seventh, BPO firms should develop internal mobility options for employees with 1–3 years of experience. These employees may leave when they do not see growth opportunities. Cross-process movement, skill upgrading and promotion pathways can help retain them.

9. Conclusion

The present article examined the extent and pattern of employee attrition in selected BPO firms in Bengaluru. The findings show that employee mobility is a major feature of the sector. A large majority of respondents had changed jobs at least once in the BPO/ITES sector, and nearly half had thought of leaving their present organization during the previous twelve months. Many employees had also applied for jobs outside the organization or attended interviews, indicating that turnover tendency is not merely attitudinal but also behavioural.

The major reasons for possible employee exit include low salary, better outside opportunities, work pressure, poor work–life balance, lack of promotion and unsupportive supervision. The study also finds that new recruits, employees with 1–3 years of experience and night-shift employees are more likely to leave. The most common exit period is between 6 months and 1 year, followed by 1–2 years.

The study concludes that attrition in Bengaluru's BPO sector is structured around early-career mobility, labour market competition and work-related pressures. Retention strategies should therefore be targeted towards vulnerable employee groups and critical exit periods. BPO firms should focus on early-tenure retention, salary competitiveness, stress reduction, shift support, mentoring, internal mobility and supervisor-level engagement. Such measures can help reduce attrition and improve workforce stability in the sector.

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