Opportunities and Challenges Experienced by Fresh Graduate Students in a Home-Based BPO Industry

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative research study determined the challenges and opportunities faced by recent graduates engaged in home-based Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) trades. Employing a phenomenological research design coupled with thematic analysis, this investigation delved into the intricate experiences of these emerging professionals within the dynamic BPO landscape. The researcher employed a snowball sampling technique to collect data and conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews with a diverse group of participants. The findings of this study revealed that the participants enjoy several opportunities, including the company's multiple stipends and assistance, the convenient nature of work, and the stability of professional growth. It has been noted that the industry offers flexible time, rest and leisure days, hassle-free workshops, no age restrictions, a healthy work environment, and a convenient promotional setup. Furthermore, the researcher has also found that the application process stipulated in the BPO industry is rigorous; intensive training and tough qualifying stages are present. The study suggests that educational institutions should provide comprehensive career guidance that includes information about the rigorous application process and intensive training requirements for college students regardless of the student's area of specialization.

Keywords: *Business Process Outsourcing; Challenges; Opportunities; Fresh Graduate Students; Home-based*

INTRODUCTION

Many Filipinos in the 21st century have been chasing job opportunities regardless of the degree that they obtained during their collegiate years (Carrancho, 2020). In fact, some say that there is really a significant disparity between the skills possessed by job seekers and the skills required by employers nowadays, particularly during the pandemic. This phenomenon might be a result of rapid technological advancements and digital transformation, vastly reshaping the labor market. Also, education system offerings may not always align with the evolving needs of industries in the country. Further, open job positions in private and government sectors are sometimes limited (Pelletier, et.al., 2022). These circumstances result in job mismatch and, most of the time, unemployment.

The unemployment rate in the country has been constantly changing due to several factors. Worldwide economies faced unprecedented difficulties due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, and the Philippines was no exception (Rampal, et.al., 2020). The government enacted stringent lockdown measures to contain the epidemic as the virus started to spread worldwide in early 2020. These actions significantly and immediately impacted the economy. Layoffs, furloughs, and shorter workweeks resulted from the forced closure of numerous enterprises, notably those in non-essential industries. The pandemic had a significant impact on several industries, which led to an increase in unemployment. According to the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) Report, the country's unemployment rate doubled from 2019's 5.1% to 10.3% in 2020. During the pandemic, travel restrictions dramatically dropped demand and job losses in several sectors. Despite these, many agencies and companies have

still pushed through the usual workloads of their employees following a new modality – work from home setup. One of which is the Business Processing Outsourcing (BPO) Trade.

Numerous Filipinos have drastically changed their lives through the Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) industry, which has become an important sector of the country's economy (Kim, et.al., 2019). In this industry, the standard threshold educational qualification for employment is not too high. In fact, BPO companies hire people regardless of their educational background. Everyone with customer service skills, English proficiency, computer-technical literacy skills, and adaptability can be part of the fast-growing industry. For many, deciding to work in BPO is a decision that will change their lives (Vaid, 2009 as per cited by Gupta & Sekher, 2023). It provides a path to steady employment and the chance for career advancement. The sector emerges as a ray of light for individuals trying to break free from the cycle of poverty or unemployment, promising a better future and the opportunity to present their talents on a grand scale. Furthermore, many companies hire Filipinos for various positions because the Philippines is known to be the powerhouse of the best English speakers. Filipinos are in high demand in the BPO sector because of their impressive English language proficiency. Their proficiency in English enables seamless communication with clients worldwide, whether they are customer service representatives or technical support specialists. This linguistic advantage widens the range of employment options available to Filipinos and emphasizes their natural capacity for cultural sensitivity and adaptation.

Moreover, several studies have examined the challenges experienced by employees, but not, particularly in BPO. Significantly, this study determined the challenges and opportunities opened for fresh graduate students working in a home-based BPO trade regardless of their baccalaureate degree. This provides a clear overview of the real score between onsite work and its contrary. Additionally, this study sets the parameters for fresh graduates whose first job is in the home-based BPO setup.

METHODOLOGY

This study determined challenges and opportunities opened for fresh graduate students who are now working in a home-based BPO setup. This employed a phenomenological research design utilizing thematic analysis. As defined by Creswell (2009), phenomenology is a research strategy of inquiry in which the researcher identifies the essence of human experiences about a phenomenon described by participants.

The researcher has observed the snowball sampling technique to collect the necessary data. According to Creswell (2012), snowball sampling is a term of purposeful sampling that often proceeds after a study begins and occurs when the researcher asks the participant to recommend another person to be sampled. Participant selection criteria have been established. These included the following:

1. The participants should be fresh graduate students regardless of any bachelor's degree.
2. The participants' first job after obtaining their baccalaureate degree should be in a home-based BPO industry.
3. The participants should adhere to the guidelines indicated in the Informed Consent Form (ICF).

The researcher conducted a semi-structured interview with diverse participants in the study. A semi-structured interview was used to gain rich data through open-ended questions. After the interview, the researcher transcribed and analyzed the transcripts thematically. Generated themes and codes were noted to discuss the findings of the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research question aimed to determine the opportunities and challenges that fresh graduate students have experienced in the home-based BPO industry. The researcher was able

to interview three (3) customer service representatives. The interviews were carried out both in person and virtually through Google Meet.

Challenges Experienced by Fresh Graduate Students who are now working in Home-based BPO Industry

1. 1 Intensive application process stipulated in Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) industry

The home-based work set up in the Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) industry can be a great option for fresh graduate students who are just starting their careers. However, it also presents unique challenges that they should be aware of.

As per the interview responses, fresh graduate students who have entered the home-based working setup in the BPO industry have reported experiencing various challenges. One of the challenges they have mentioned is the intensive application process typically required in the BPO industry. This intensive application process has three (3) stages; the **rigorous application process**, **intensive training**, and the **tough qualifying stage for applicants**.

> *"...actually the hiring process and the hiring application here is quite that hard." – 43P2*

The hiring process for the BPO industry is quite challenging, as indicated by the interviewee's response. Like working in a traditional office environment, the BPO industry is known for its intensive hiring process. This is because the BPO industry provides various services to clients across various sectors. Given the critical nature of BPO companies' functions, their recruitment and selection process can be quite rigorous.

Additionally, the hiring process for a customer service representative position involves multiple stages of assessment, including online evaluations and several rounds of interviews with management, as stated by the participant. This intensive process is designed to ensure that the best candidates are selected to provide high-quality service to customers.

> *"If they have, how many interviews. Most of the time they have four interviews. You have assessment an online assessment, so there will be actually first interview. That's initial interview. Aside from that you will have an online assessment. They will test your grammar skills and all the information that you have, and aside from that there is a managerial interview after that, that will be the final interview. If you've passed, then you're hired. -54P2*

After being hired, applicants will undergo intensive training. As per **Magaisa & Musundire (2022)**, training and development play an important role in the improvement of employees' skills and talents for current and future positions. The duration and content of the training period may vary depending on the BPO (Business Process Outsourcing) company and the specific job role the employee has been hired for. As mentioned by the interviewed participants, the training period typically lasts for a month and covers various aspects such as communication skills, product-specific training, and nesting. Additionally, there may be sections that test the employee's grammar proficiency and speaking skills.

> *"There will be a grammar. Grammar section. Speaking section, they will test how fluent you are with the grammar and how you can analyze the paragraphs something like that and after that there will be speaking." -64P2*

"…sa training, we have a month for language which is very important. … First month training, comm skills. Fifteen days for product specific training or PST and nesting for also fifteen days." -41P1

One of the participants mentioned that their training program involves providing the employees with a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) book that acts as a guide throughout the training process.

"We have one month of training and then after that po you will be a casual agent after that po. Yung training… we do have what we so called SOP or Standard operating *procedure wherein para lang siyang book na where nandun po lahat ng kailangan na e study and then most of the time ang nangyayari is para lang siyang self study…" – 103P3*

The training is rigorous, with a strong focus on language skills deemed essential for the job. It is important for new employees to pay close attention to the specific training program provided by their company, so they can perform their job well and meet the expectations of their employers.

Regrettably, not everyone is suited for the BPO industry as the training for customer service representatives is highly competitive, and not all applicants may successfully complete it. According to the participant's interview statements,

"… on the training there will be some of the employees that will be eliminated. It depends on their performance." – 93P2

"… if you have not met the criteria you will be eliminated." – 98P2

"… nag-train kami around we're thirty but we've finished 25." -67P1

Applicants are evaluated based on their performance, and those who fail to meet the criteria or perform poorly may be removed from the program. This indicates that the company has established particular benchmarks and anticipations that the employees must achieve to continue.

"… you need to learn on how to speak English even not that fluent but it can understand and converse well, kasi basic requirement siya. So, you need to converse *well and communicate well para makapasa ka sa training." – 70P1*

"Basic computer knowledge especially you must be very proficient or mabilis kang mag type, ganun. Basic troubleshooting na din for computers, …Sa mga tools din sa *pc. So, you need to, dapat computer literate ka." – 77P1*

The statements suggest that the training process for customer service representatives requires specific skills and knowledge to pass. The ability to speak English well is a basic requirement for the job. Computer literacy is also necessary to effectively carry on with the work and deliver quality service to their clients. These assertions are backed by **Bhuiyan & Islam (2021)**. The study focused on the challenges faced by BPO companies in retaining their employees and identified intensive hiring processes as one such challenge. The study also emphasized the significance of training and development programs in enhancing employee

retention. BPO companies can enhance employee satisfaction and loyalty by providing appropriate training and development opportunities, leading to increased retention rates.

1.2 Personal constraints encountered by the employees

The BPO industry has seen a significant shift towards remote work arrangements due to the pandemic, resulting in many employees working from home. While this offers several benefits, it also has several personal constraints that can impact employees' well-being and productivity.

Based on the interview responses, the majority of participants reported experiencing personal constraints while working from home in the BPO industry. These constraints include (1) **unscheduled power interruptions and internet connectivity issues**, (2) **compromised work-life balance**, and (3) **maintaining professionalism while dealing with rude customers**.

The participants mentioned facing challenges related to unscheduled power outages and internet connectivity problems, which disrupt their work schedule and affect productivity.

> *"The internet connection here is not that good. We have a lot of Internet connection issues and in my company right now if you have it here then you'll be logged out."* – *135P2*

> *"Sa bahay, may brownout. We have internet outages and power interruptions."* – *132P1*

> *"...wala kang internet at wala kang kuryente is really hard kasi you are a customer service, if you are down so is the company is also down so magkakaroon po siya ng domino effect, it can affect the company you are working with."* -*219P3*

BPO employees rely heavily on the internet and computer systems to perform their job functions, and any interruption in the connectivity can severely impact their work. Other participants also highlighted the accompanying problem that follows the unscheduled power interruptions and internet connectivity issues. One has to report onsite at their own expense, and the other having a slow and unreliable internet connection in their area, suggesting having a backup plan that involves having two separate internet connections to ensure uninterrupted work. However, this means that the employee has to pay for both internet connections, which can be an additional expense.

> *"Kapag 2-hrs ang scheduled power outage, we have to report onsite. So, that is one of the challenges rin. We have to travel at our own expense kasi walang shuttles kapag gabi."* – *147P1*

> *"...sa internet you need to have a back up plan na dapat meron kang dalawang internet kasi alam naman po natin na yung internet ditto satin sobrang bagal so yung set up ng internet niyo dapat dalawa dalawa, so you need to pay po yung both na internet."* – *205P3*

Therefore, it is essential for BPO companies to provide their employees with a reliable and stable internet connection, backup power sources, and contingency plans to minimize the impact of power outages and connectivity issues. By addressing this challenge effectively, BPO companies can ensure their employees can work efficiently from home, delivering high-quality services to their clients.

Compromised work-life balance is another personal constraint in a work-from-home setup. Participants have stated that working from home can blur the boundaries between personal and professional life, leading to mental exhaustion, overwork, burnout, and stress. Struggling to maintain a healthy work-life balance affects both their well-being and job performance.

> *"We're not allowed to go out and there's a certain place that you just need to go so it's kind of stressful. You don't you don't have, I mean coming to your friends. You will be burnout."* – 198P2

> *"...kapag nasa work from home setup, parang hindi mo nafi-feel na day off mo pala. Like me, katabi lang ng kama ko yung PC ko, paggising ko, parang lagi kong naiisip na I have to work kahit day off naman."* – 131P1

> *"Your home po it supposed to be your safe, ano tawag dito, yung comfortable place muna yung parang pahinga mo, pero you are working sa home mo po so parang minsan ang boring na. kasi parang yung routine mo po is parang in one place lang."* – 202P3

Working from home can indeed have an impact on the work-life balance of BPO employees. While working from home offers certain benefits such as flexibility and convenience, it also blurs the lines between personal and professional life. The inability to disconnect from work can lead to employees feeling like they are always on the job, even outside of working hours. Without a clear separation between work and home, it can be challenging to maintain a healthy work-life balance. This can lead to reduced productivity, low morale, and decreased job satisfaction. Employers must provide their employees with the necessary resources and support to maintain a healthy work-life balance, such as clear communication about work expectations, flexible working hours, and regular breaks to prevent burnout.

Lastly, maintaining professionalism while dealing with rude and difficult customers is a personal constraint in the interviewee's response. This is a significant challenge for BPO employees, particularly in a home-based work setup.

> *"There a lot of foreigners na ma e encounter mo talaga na they are nagger and they are racist especially… if they notice that you're not an American they will look for an American representatives. they are very … racist pero sanayan lang talaga, sanayan lang, kase di mo naman nakikita eh, di mo naman sila nakikita."* – 206P1

> *"...bawal kaming mag hang ng calls it's an agent misconduct its terminable, its terminable so even though talagang pikon na pikon ka na you still have to empathize kaya nga sabi ko kanina fake it until you make it nalang, ganon, hindi ka pwede makipag away kahit pikon na pikon ka na talaga it's a big no, no, pag sa BPO ka."* – 217P1

While it is essential to maintain a professional demeanor when dealing with difficult customers, it can be emotionally draining to do so. BPO employees must remain calm and composed while dealing with customer complaints, even when faced with insults or verbal abuse. This can be difficult to achieve, especially when dealing with a high volume of calls or challenging situations.

Furthermore, the inability to interact physically with customers can make it even more challenging to maintain a professional demeanor. Employees who feel that customers are not respecting them may experience frustration, anger, or helplessness. This can lead to decreased job satisfaction, increased absenteeism, and reduced motivation to perform at their best.

To conclude, these statements imply that personal constraints are significant for both employees and organizations. These constraints can lead to reduced job satisfaction, increased stress levels, and decreased productivity for employees. These, in turn, can lead to a decline in their overall well-being and quality of life. For organizations, these constraints can lead to decreased productivity and performance and a negative impact on customer satisfaction.

The study's analysis is supported by **Ipsen et al., (2021)**. Similarly, their study also tackles the advantages and disadvantages of working from home in a Europe setting during COVID-19. While working from home has great benefits, it also entails disadvantages. They have found 3 main disadvantages: home office constraints, work uncertainties, and inadequate tools. Overall, it is important for organizations to address these challenges to ensure that employees can work effectively and maintain their well-being while working remotely.

Opportunities opened to Fresh Graduate Students working in Home-based BPO Industry

2.1 Multiple Stipends & Assistance Provided by the Company

BPO Agents can get generous benefits from their companies. They are receiving multiple incentives for their work. They have a competitive salary, and they also receive an allowance while they are on their training. According to the participants, there are multiple incentives like internet connection privileges, health/medicare benefits, and compensation beyond regular work shifts given to them.

> *"We have rice allowance. There is also clothes. There's also a clothes allowance for the laundry. That's the allowance that I'm receiving. Rice allowance, clothes allowance, transportation allowance, if you're on site, but if not you will receive internet allowance"-165P2*

> *"We actually provided Internet connection too. So does Internet reimbursement"-125P2*

> *"We only have vouchers for movies, for food"-57P1*

> *"We have incentives pag you met a certain metrics, meron kaming incentives per month, meron OT incentives, meron din"-86P1*

> *"We have benefits like Intellicare. It is provided by the company; we still have PhilHealth na hinuhulugan, SSS, PagIbig but yung Intellicare isa siyang program ng company na healthcare din siya like PhilHealth"-87P1*

> *"That is one of the major factors why I chose to work in this setup. The company will give a certain amount to pay the internet connection bills. So, bawas na rin sa gastos. Yung company talaga ang nagbibigay"-153P1*

> *"Sa company namin, double pay siya lagi. We follow holiday dito sa atin"-169P1*

"Bale, may isang dependent talaga kami. Nilagay ko si Mama. Pero if you want to add other dependents, you have to apply which somehow costs ilan lang naman. Insurance kumbaga."-174P1

"SSS and Philhealth po after maging casual na maging agent kana po"-259P3

"They have incentive per month that is so called Mr. Perfect award and also, nakalimutan ko yung isang incentive basta yung past po the whole team will get incentive too and also for the people nan aka quota po they do have the internet incentive were in the company po is going po pay yung expenses mo sa internet"-261P3

One of the participants also stated that they are receiving competitive salaries because BPO companies do not only offer minimum wage for their employees.

"We all know that in BPO, it does not only offer minimum wage for employees"-24P2

"Even though you are still on the training, you'll get to receive the salary package that they discussed during interview. So if they offer you 24k for your package, so that consists your basic salary plus the incentives they will all give that twenty four playback range even though you're still in the training."-75P2

"We actually have an Intellicare account wherein we declare dependents"-159P2

"We have three incentives in a month especially sa account namin. We have OT incentive, which is 100 pesos per hour. Rest day OT which is 1500 per day. And meron kaming performance based incentive, that is around 2500 kapag na reach mo ang goal nay un. I remember last year nagri-range ako ng 30 to 31 thousands kasama na yung mga incentives dun."-162P1

"Mas malaki po yung salary nung naka home base kesa sa onsite"-290P3

"It depends po sa campaign dun po sa isa siguro nag rerage po sya as eleven thousand po if you are a newbie"-385P3

The participants also stated that even when they are just starting to train they are receiving training allowances per day of their training.

"Yes we received the salary package that was discussed during the interview because basically you are actually working even though you are on the training and the training that translates the product training, the nesting. So it is not the training just like for other jobs. It is actually training and you are doing a call and you are in production already."- 82P2

"Meron ng incentives in terms of allowances per day siya. Meron siyang per day. Sometimes it depends on your account." -55P1

„Yes po, may tinatawag sila pong training allowance."-145P3

Most fresh graduates tend to apply to BPO companies because of their numerous benefits compared to any local companies. Like what the participants said that even though

they passed the LET, they chose to be a BPO agent because it gives a higher salary than others. It implies that because of the multiple incentives, allowances, and high salaries, fresh graduates are attracted to enter BPO companies. As a fresh graduate, you will grab this opportunity to be employed with a high salary compared to the minimum wage. This is supported by the study of Alexander (2020), that having a high salary and multiple rewards motivates people and agents to work hard. They are using this technique to increase an organization's productivity.

2.2 Convenient nature of work in the Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) industry

2.2.1 Flexible Schedule
Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) company's conduct of flexible schedules or flexitime is a popular reason why employees choose to work in this industry. With the sudden outbreak of COVID-19, these companies are forced to implement a work-from-home setup which became more in favor of the employee's lifestyle and personal obligations. Typically, these workers are individuals who are either a parent, a student, or someone with more than one job.

Based on the interviewee, flexible time allows them to manage and adjust their work hours according to their situations. As discussed in section 1.2, home-based working can have unforeseen situations, but flextime allows employees to cover any gaps in their work or make up for their lost work hours.

> *"...we have 2-3hrs outages, I just have to extend my working time and hours. Let's say I logged in at 11PM and nagkaroon ng brownout at 12 midnight to 2AM so that's 2-hrs, instead of logging out by 8AM, I have to logout by 10AM."- 138P1*

Additionally, it allows employees to have overtime (OT) whenever they want. Since the employees are in a work-from-home setup, they are more-free to have OT because they don't have to think of going home, it is convenient, and they are less exhausted compared to when they are working onsite.

> *"Pag nasa bahay ka, pwede kang mag OT ng up to 5 hours. Pwede kang mag rest day OT. When we say rest day OT, yung off mo, tapos papasok ka. For me kung naka onsite ako, hindi ako mag o-OT kasi gusto kong magpahinga na lang after work. Pero kapag nasa bahay, convenient. Hindi ka masyadong nape-pressure sa mga ka workmates mo, hindi mo makikita yung mga TMs mo na roaming around, checking your scores, and everything." -117P1*

Similarly, it provides opportunities for a student or individuals with multiple jobs since they can pursue their personal interests while still earning extra money. The interviewee emphasized that BPO companies allow employees to work full-time or have a flexible schedule.

> *"... BPO offers flexible schedule if they know that you are a student, they'll give flexible time." -26P2*

This implies that allowing employees to control their work schedule can improve productivity, job satisfaction, and work-life balance. This also leads to better management of their personal and professional responsibilities, resulting in a more balanced and fulfilling lifestyle. According to **Хлыповка, Е. А. (2020)**, telecommuting offers several advantages, particularly regarding employee productivity. Working from home and having flexible

schedules are beneficial because they eliminate distractions from coworkers, avoid the struggles of commuting, reduce health issues, and have other advantages. These benefits create a more convenient and productive work environment for employees.

2.2.2 Provides Rest Days and Leisure Time for Employees

Rest days and leisure time are essential components of a healthy work-life balance for employees. Employees need time off work to rest, recharge, and engage in activities that promote their physical and mental well-being.

According to the participants' interview responses, BPO company provides its employees with rest days and leisure time. This is to ensure that the employees can recover from the demands of their job and prevent burnout. Also, employees have the opportunity to pursue their hobbies, interests, and social activities. Engaging in leisure activities is essential for stress relief and promotes a positive work-life balance.

> *"Yes, we have two days-off." -200P2*

> *"...you can still go out. Have fun and you know, enjoy your life even though you're still working" -180P2*

This suggests that a BPO company prioritizes employees' rest days and leisure time. This can reap many benefits, including increased productivity, reduced stress, and improved employee satisfaction. The company can create a positive and productive work environment that benefits everyone involved by implementing policies and programs that support employee well-being and mental health. Therefore, rest days and leisure time protect the physical and mental health of the employees. Having a dedicated rest day is crucial in preventing burnout and promoting employee wellness. Similarly, having leisure time will help them disconnect from work-related stress and feel more energized and refreshed when they return to work.

This is supported by the article of **Hendricks (2014)**, wherein he found that employees who are working at home have a low chance of getting sick days. He stated that roughly 78% of absences from work occur because of stress or personal problems. That is why, employees who work from home experience fewer sick days because they can manage personal issues and stress more efficiently, possibly due to the flexibility of rest days and leisure time.

2.2.3 Hassle-free Work Setup

A hassle-free work setup is one of the most significant benefits of home-based working. It refers to the ability of individuals to set up their work environment to maximize productivity and minimize distractions and interruptions.

Based on the interview, home-based jobs are considered more convenient than onsite work. The majority of their feedback centered on factors such as convenience, cost-effectiveness, and proximity to family.

> *"I prefer working home setup because it's easier. It is less expensive, you don't need to go on to have a transportation allowance"- 129P2*

> *"Very convenient if you are working at home. First, you don't need to travel papuntang office. Like my schedule from 11PM to 8AM, so, I need to be prepared around 9PM, wait for the shuttle. Then, arrived 10:30PM, setup tools and PC. Pero kapag nasa bahay ka, you can just wake up around 9 if your schedule is 11, setup at 10:50. That's fine. Wala ka ng gagawin. You don't need to take a bath. It lessens the difficulty in*

terms of time management kasi kahit gumising ng late, all I have to do is to open my computer and then run the work." -106P1

"sobrang ganda po ng work from home set up, because syempre yung expenses sobrang bawas na po and very convenient when it comes to, like kung nasa office base ka you have to travel so yung time, marami ka pong masisave na time and also you are with your family" -187P3

This infers that home-based working has hassle-free work set up, as it enables the employees to save money on transportation costs and the time required for preparing to go to work. Working from home lessens spending money on transportation costs. Also, working from home disregards the need to commute to and from work and the time spent preparing before going to work. Thus, working from home prevents employees from excessive stress and burnout since they have a support system ready to assist them. Therefore, working from home allows employees to have a hassle-free work setup that suits their lifestyle while conveniently earning money. As a result, employees can work productively, efficiently, and successfully from home.

According to **Church (2015***)*, working from home is cost- and time-saving. He claims that the employees save time from traffic, money, and preparation for work. This is advantageous because those mentioned are often why employees feel burned out at work. Home-based work eliminates this time-consuming and often stressful aspect of an employee's day.

2.2.4 No Age Limit

Working in a home-based BPO (Business Process Outsourcing) company can provide numerous benefits, and one of them is that there is no age limit. This means that individuals of all ages can pursue a career in the BPO industry from the comfort of their own homes.

According to the interviewee, there are no constraints of age when working in a home-based BPO company. As long as employees can fulfill their job responsibilities, they can be hired in this industry.

"...a lot of employees applying in BPO because there is no age bracket here. You can apply as long as you can. Like there is an employee and there's an applicant for 50 years old." -110P2

This suggests that employees can work at a time that suits their lifestyle. This flexibility can be especially beneficial for older individuals who may have other commitments or those who cannot work in other industries because of their age. Therefore, home-based BPO companies offer equal opportunities for individuals of all ages. This equality is a significant benefit for older individuals who may have faced age discrimination in the job market.

A study by **Carlsson & Eriksson (2019)**, found that older applicants or workers tend to get discriminated against in companies. Simply because employers tend to discriminate against older applicants or workers due to the perception that they have limited capacity to learn new tasks and are less adaptable to changes in the workplace. Additionally, older workers are sometimes viewed as less ambitious and less committed to working hard. In contrast, BPO companies tend to hire based on abilities rather than age without discriminating against older workers. This practice ensures that the company can hire the most capable individuals for the job, regardless of their age. BPO companies often require diverse skills and expertise, and hiring solely based on age could limit the talent pool available.

2.2.5 Healthy Work Environment

Home-based BPO companies provide a convenient and flexible way for employees to work remotely. One of the key advantages of working in a home-based BPO company is the potential for a healthy work environment.

Based on the interview, home-based working allows employees to have a healthy working environment. This can provide a more comfortable work environment that is tailored to employees' needs. Also, working at home is deemed to be enjoyable because it provides individuals with greater autonomy and flexibility in their work.

> *"So I think that's the thing na nae-enjoy ko po, tsaka yung environment po talaga dito sa BPO company…sometimes may day na parang hindi ka po nag work." -166P3*

This implies that home-based working has a healthy working environment, as employees have greater freedom to work according to their own preferences. This can reduce stress from factors such as commuting, colleagues, and workload, allowing employees to be more productive and work efficiently.

This claim is supported by **Church (2015)***,* wherein he enumerated the benefits of a healthy work environment. It was highlighted that there is a recorded increase in the productivity of employees who work at home. Some of the reasons behind this are that it eliminates the need to deal with traffic, coworker distractions, and potential intimidation from superiors. Thus, employees tend to get more relaxed in working, resulting in high-quality output.

2.2.6 Convenient Promotional Setup

Promotion is the process by which an employee advances within an organization to a higher-level position with more responsibility, authority, and often a higher salary. Promotions are typically based on an employee's performance, experience, and leadership skills.

According to the interviewee, promotion in a BPO company takes up to 6 months or more. Unlike other employees, BPO employees are easily promoted to a higher positions, meaning it is convenient to work in a BPO company if an individual aims for a high position.

> *"saakin po, siguro madali lang yung saakin almost six months po and after six months I got promoted as a management trainee then after I being a management trainee for almost three months so that time po I got promoted as a team leader so mabilis lang po yung sakin in terms po sa qualities yung boss lang po naming yung tumitingin non. As long as nakikita nung boss na you are fit for the job role so yun nap o sila lang po ang nag dedecide non"- 364P3*

> *"… just like the other job, you need to start from down and then on go up. It usually every after six months." – 207P2*

However, to be considered for a higher-level position within the BPO company, an employee must have demonstrated competence and proficiency in their current role. In other words, success in their current job is a prerequisite for advancement to a more senior position.

> *"… you need to have a lot of knowledge with the account you are actually working. So if you have a lot of knowledge on the account you will be on SME position, you can apply to that SME position"- 205P2*

This implies that promotion is a motivating factor for employees, as it provides a sense of accomplishment and recognition for their hard work. In connection with that, it benefits both the employee and the company. These benefits include increased salary, career development, job security, and job satisfaction. Aside from that, it is also implied that promotion in a BPO company is not solely based on tenure or seniority but rather on an employee's ability to perform well in their current role. Therefore, it is essential for BPO employees to work hard and demonstrate their skills and abilities to be considered for a promotion to a higher-level position.

Ibrahim, A. L. A. N. (2022), wrote about the significance of promotion in jobs. He argued that promotion inspires employees to boost their productivity and morale. This, in turn, motivates them to work harder, knowing that it increases their chances of getting promoted. The promotion policy also contributes to job satisfaction, as it offers the possibility of career advancement and greater responsibility, accompanied by material and moral recognition. This recognition resonates with employees, generating a sense of contentment.

2.3 Stability of Professional Growth

Using new learning experiences and skills that improve one's work efficiency is referred to as professional growth. This can be obtained after entering the workforce through career training and continuing education.

One of the participants mentioned that after passing the interview, consistent drills and training are given to assess the employees' performances. Constant experiences of the employees in their work allowed them to develop even more.

> " It is the same with the BPO industry we get to train, we have the chance for the product training and after that we will apply it on the front door." – 93P2

Additionally, employees in the BPO industry could exercise the skills acquired from their previous experiences—most commonly, what they have learned from school. A participant even highlighted that the relevance of their previous program during college had influenced them to pursue the industry.

> "...the thing that inspires me to switch into this industry is since I'm a graduate of computer on science, I have a knowledge in terms of computer. It is easy for me to navigate the computer. I can easily absorb the learnings that they teach us with the training" – 104P2

> "...so even if you are working on BPO industry still the skills that you acquire in a practices that yearly develop during your college are still on track kumbaga na eexercise naman sya" – 306P3

The BPO industry has also opened an opportunity for the employee's personal development, most especially their communication skills. Some of the participants have also mentioned that they were able to deal with other people during their working experience in the industry, including being calm and more understanding to the customers.

> " Professional goals, siguro ano dealing with other people…" – 189P1

> "so even though talagang pikon na pikon ka na you still have to empathize kaya nga sabi ko kanina fake it until you make it nalang, ganon, hindi ka pwede makipag away kahit pikon na pikon ka na talaga" – 214P1

"I think the best is the knowledge na naexperience po ang pinaka investment nakuha ko dito sa company and also yung personal development po…" – 299P3

These statements imply that aside from the challenges employees encounter in the BPO industry, there are also advantages that help them grow, which may benefit their career development and personal growth. A similar study by Beerepoot and Hendriks (2013) supports the claim that being BPO helped employees improve their English communication skills and personal capabilities. Those acquired personal experiences from the academe became one of the employees' investments in entering the industry, which was honed through consistent training in the company to obtain professional development that can be used to grow in the current workplace or their future career goal.

CONCLUSION

The current study determined the opportunities and challenges opened for fresh graduate students who are now working in a home-based Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) setup. The findings of this study revealed that the participants enjoy several opportunities in the above-mentioned arrangement. This primarily includes the company's multiple stipends and assistance, the convenient nature of work, and the stability of professional growth. It has been noted that the industry offers flexible time, rest and leisure days, hassle-free workshops, no age restrictions, a healthy work environment, and a convenient promotional setup. However, despite these opportunities, the researcher has also found out that the application process stipulated in the BPO industry is rigorous; intensive training and tough qualifying stages are present. The results presented in this study establish a picture-perfect overview of what's within the industry. These give clear and empirical inputs on the perceptions of many about the work-from-home job arrangement.

Furthermore, since this study is limited to three (3) Filipino fresh graduate students who are working in a home-based Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) trade, pursuing a larger scope of the study is necessary. The factors and motivation of BPO employees in working as another focus of study can be recommended. It is essential for future researchers to explore the challenges and opportunities that other workers are experiencing in other fields. In addition to the present undertaking, it can be highly recommended that future researchers consider doing comparative studies on the same variables between onsite employees and those still in a work-from-home setup. Lastly, considering foreign participants in related themes might be pursued for future studies.

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