

Knowledge of Business Process Outsourcing Agents on Sexually Transmitted Diseases and HIV, Manila Philippines

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ABSTRACT

Background & Objective: Knowledge on sexually transmitted diseases and HIV and its association to demographic and socioeconomic profiles of Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) agents was explored in this cross sectional study. **Method:** A total of 50 BPO agents participated. An adapted questionnaire was utilized to inquire the knowledge. Validity and reliability were done. Data was processed using SPSS version 21. **Results:** Results revealed that the majority of the respondents are male, single, between 21-26 years of age and graduated from public school. Net monthly income varies from 12,000 PHp to 16,000. The majority of the respondents is catholic and is a college graduate. The majority of the level of knowledge of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV were inadequate. **Conclusion:** There is an inadequacy of knowledge among BPO agents on the disease and that the associated demographic and socioeconomic factors were age, gender, marital status, religious affiliation, type of school and educational attainment.

Key-words: HIV/AIDS, BPO agents, level of knowledge, STDs.

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INTRODUCTION

Knowledge is an important indicator in measuring the awareness of people on certain issues. In health care this is often used as an evidence based inquiry in conceptualizing health promotion and education strategies. While there are several data published about HIV and sexually transmitted diseases on vulnerable groups in the Philippines, it was found out by the author that there is a scantiness of data focusing on business process outsourcing (BPO) agents which perceived at the time this paper was written will become the next most vulnerable groups to acquire the disease in the Philippines. This paper attempt to establish a baseline data, focusing on this group and it is hoped it will contribute and help other researchers to consider in

looking the potentiality of studying this group also. Furthermore, this paper seeks to answer the following objectives: Describe the demographic and socioeconomic profiles of the respondents; determine the extent of knowledge of respondents on HIV/AIDS/ and sexually transmitted diseases; determine the association of demographic and socioeconomic profiles to the knowledge of the respondents on HIV/AIDS/ and sexually transmitted. This study is limited to exploring the demographic profile, socioeconomic, level of knowledge and its association to these profiles.

FRAMEWORK

The Philippines is reported to have an increasing trend in the incidence of

sexually transmitted diseases and HIV cases. The magnitude cut across all ages, high cases are among young adults with age ranging from 15-45 years old according to Department of Health (DOH) data. The National Epidemiology Centre¹ of DOH reported that most cases are males (96%) and median age is 27 years old. The 20-29 years old (61%) had the most number of cases and 58% come from the National Capital Region.

Cacam² narrated that the populations most vulnerable in the Philippines contracted by HIV/AIDS are women, young adults, men having sex with men, sex workers and overseas Filipino workers, this information was similar to the study of Farr and Wilson³ (2010) included in the list injectable drug users. Baguio⁴ (2010) reported that the most alarming group who are in “risky behavior” was BPO agents. University of the Philippines (UP) Population Institute in their unpublished report revealed that for the past 10 months there was an increase in the number of young urban professionals affected by HIV/AIDS the study was done among 675 respondents forming 22 call centers in Metro Cebu and Metro Manila, they contracted the disease through casual sex. This survey was validated with several BPO agents, that sex become a gaining ground especially among night shift workers.

The Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) industries in the Philippines are one of the leading contributors to the economic growth and stability in the Philippines. Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) agents on the other hand, are the prime mover of the BPO industries, it is important therefore to protect their health. Presently there is no research studies focused on this group. The reasons could be one due to the sensitivity of the topic another is it is not a priority group of the health department and third most studies

are focused on the co-morbidities of the disease such as HIV and tuberculosis.

In terms of knowledge, there were few published studies focused on these parameters and none in the Philippines have studied these BPO agents. The studies commonly published were always associated with attitude and practices such as the study by Sekireme⁵ (2001) where knowledge, attitude and practice about sexually transmitted diseases among students in Kampala. The level of knowledge about the disease was inadequate. Males had greater sexual partners than female, but the lower age at first intercourse. School education, peer groups and mass media remain the main ways to which students learn about STD. This was similar to the findings of Rahman et al⁶ (2009) where respondents are not aware of sexually transmitted diseases and AIDS and more than half of them ever heard of AIDS and that age, years of schooling and knowledge appeared to be predictors of the awareness about AIDS. Aslamangan⁷ (2014) where he studied dental students have deficiencies with respect to their knowledge and amount of information received on HIV and AIDS related topics. In contrast to the findings on the study of Hesketh et al⁸ (2005) and Chinte et al⁹ (2014) the former focused on female sex workers (FSW) where awareness on HIV and STIs and use of condom was generally good, but the very poor level of compliance as to condom use while the latter studied adolescent girls where the study revealed that they are knowledgeable about HIV and STDs.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design, Description of Study Participants and Instrumentations

This study utilized a descriptive cross sectional study design. A random sampling was done for a total of 100 regular employees of the 3 BPO

companies. Total enumeration was employed, however, only 50 respondents signified their willingness to participate in the study. Demographic, socioeconomic profiles and level of knowledge were described, determine and the association was analyzed. Adapted questionnaires from Survey Instrument Scales¹⁰ that has been designed and tested by CAPS Scientists available free of charge for use by HIV researchers, evaluators, prevention program planners were used. Validation was done, and a Cronbach's alpha of 0.8 was obtained. An informed consent has been attached to the questionnaire. The research has undergone evaluation from the ethics review committee. Self-administered guided questionnaire was employed. Data was processed using SPSS version 21. Frequency and Percentage were used. Level of knowledge was measured using the median point. Those above the median points are considered to have adequate knowledge while below the median point have inadequate knowledge. Spearman's correlation was used to determine the association of demographic and socioeconomic profiles to the level of knowledge about sexually transmitted diseases and HIV.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Profile of the respondents

Table 1 shows the demographic and socioeconomic profile of the respondents in terms of age, gender, civil status, type of school graduated, net monthly income, religious affiliation and educational attainment. The majority of the respondents were male (58%). Culturally in the Philippines males assume the provisions of addressing the basic needs of the households that is contributing to the household source of income, this may be the reason why majority of the respondents are male another reason is the strong preference of

male applicants over female by these BPO companies due to security reason; work schedules given to most employees are on a graveyard shift.

The majority were single (82%) and were between 21-26 years. In the Philippines these age groups are classified as working age group considered also as "risky groups in terms of acquiring the disease. The majority of the respondents' graduated from public school (86%). The Philippine government has a very good educational policy whose main priority is accessibility to education by all citizenry. Free education in public schools is one of the provisions. The respondents' net monthly income varies from 12,000 PHP to 16,000 PHP, which is the regular monthly take home pay of BPO agents at the time the study was conducted. Based on the data of the national economic development authority (NEDA), the net monthly income of BPO agents range from as low as 12,000Php to as high as 60,000Php. The majority (42%) of the respondents were catholic, the dominating religion in the Philippines and were college graduate (90%). The high percentage (90%) can be accounted to the fact that BPO companies required college graduate for an applicant to be hired.

Table 1. Frequency and Percentage of the demographic and socio-economic profiles of the BPO respondents.

| Profile of the respondents | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| A. Demographic Profile | | |
| A.) Gender | | |
| Male | 29 | 58% |
| Female | 21 | 42% |
| Total | 50 | 100% |
| B.) Civil Status | | |
| Single | 41 | 82% |
| Married | 9 | 18% |
| Total | 50 | 100% |
| c.) Age | | |
| 21-26 | 35 | 70% |
| 27-32 | 9 | 18% |
| 33-38 | 2 | 4% |
| 39-44 | 3 | 6% |
| 45-50 | 1 | 2% |
| Total | 50 | 100% |
| d.) Type of School Graduated | | |
| Public | 43 | 86% |
| Private | 7 | 14% |
| Total | 50 | 100% |
| B. Socio-Economic Profile | | |
| e.) Net Monthly Income | | |
| 12,000-16,000 | 47 | 94% |
| 17,000-21,000 | 2 | 4% |
| Above 21,000 | 1 | 2% |
| Total | 50 | 100% |
| f.) Religious Affiliation | | |
| Catholic | 42 | 84% |
| Non-Catholic | 8 | 16% |
| Total | 50 | 100% |
| g.) Educational Attainment | | |
| College Graduate | 45 | 90% |
| Undergraduate | 4 | 8% |
| Vocational | 1 | 2% |
| Total | 50 | 100% |

Table 2 shows the level of knowledge of BPO agents on sexually transmitted diseases and HIV, data revealed that the majority (80%) of the BPO agents has inadequate knowledge about sexually transmitted diseases and HIV means their scores is below the median scores. The majority of the respondents were inadequately knowledgeable about HIV and STDs (Sekireme, 2001).⁵ A large portion of respondents are not aware of sexually transmitted diseases and AIDS (Rhaman, 2009)⁶ and more than half of them ever heard of AIDS (Aslamangan⁷ 2014, Chinte,⁹ 2014).

Table 2. Knowledge of BPO agents on sexually transmitted diseases and HIV

| Level of Knowledge | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------------|-----------|------------|
| Adequate | 10 | 20% |
| Inadequate | 40 | 80% |
| Total | 50 | 100% |

The association of the demographic and socioeconomic profiles to the level of knowledge of respondents on sexually transmitted diseases and HIV was presented in Table 3. The findings of the study revealed that being a young adult or at the middle age, it is a factor on the adequacy or inadequacy of knowledge on sexually transmitted diseases and HIV. Age is a factor to the awareness of the respondents on sexually transmitted disease and HIV (Rhaman et al, 2009).⁶ Corollary to the finding among the socioeconomic profiles inquired in the study, net monthly income is not significant to the level of knowledge of the respondents, meaning whether the respondent income was low or high the level of knowledge about sexually transmitted diseases and HIV of the respondents were not a factor to the adequacy and inadequacy of the level of

knowledge. Gender, marital status, religious affiliation, type of school and educational attainment are significantly associated with the level of knowledge of the BPO agents on sexually transmitted disease and HIV. Socio-demographic profiles have an association with the level of knowledge on HIV and STDs among his respondents, among these are age, type of school and household income (Huda et al¹¹ 2013). Those enrolled in urban school and have high income shown greater tendency to have high knowledge (Wang et al,¹² 2015).

Demographic and Socioeconomic profiles have a positive correlation to the knowledge on sexually transmitted diseases.

Association of the demographic and socioeconomic profiles to the knowledge of respondents on sexually transmitted diseases and HIV

Table 3. Association of the demographic and socioeconomic profiles to the knowledge of respondents on sexually transmitted diseases and HIV

| Knowledge on sexually transmitted diseases and HIV | Spearman's Correlation | Significant Level | Interpretation |
|--|------------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| A.Demographic Profile | | | |
| Gender | 0.800 | p<0.05 | Significant |
| Marital Status | 14.00 | p<0.05 | Significant |
| Age | 17.24 | P<0.05 | Significant |
| B.Socio Economic Profile | | | |
| Net Monthly income | 23.90 | p>0.05 | Not Significant |
| Religious Affiliation | 0.750 | p<0.05 | Significant |
| Type of School Graduated | 30.23 | p<.05 | Significant |
| Educational Attainment | 23.00 | p<.05 | Significant |

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

HIV and STDs among BPO agents in the Philippines are not reported because of the sensitivity of an issue what is commonly reported were those in the vulnerable group such as MSMs (men having sex with men) , women, etc. The study primary intention was to contribute and help by establishing a baseline data on this potential vulnerable group so that other researchers with similar interest can use it to further investigate the topic.

The paper delved on the association of the demographic and socioeconomic factors were age, gender, marital status, religious affiliation, type of school and educational attainment have been found to be associated with the level of knowledge. The paper was not able to look at the association of attitude and risky behavior to HIV and STDs of the respondents of the study and it is suggested that these variables be considered in future studies.

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