

Investigating The Association of Work Environment and Work Performance of Employees in The BPO Sector of Digos City, Philippines

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Abstract: The Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) industry provides a wide range of services globally but faces persistent challenges such as high attrition rates, poor work environments, and negative impacts on employee well-being and productivity. This study investigated the relationship between the work environment and employee performance in the BPO sector in Digos City. A total of 180 employees were selected using simple random sampling. Data were gathered through a structured survey and analyzed using mean, percentile, and Spearman Rho correlation. Results revealed a high level of work environment in terms of physical, psychological, social, and administrative dimension as well as a high level of work performance. Moreover, statistical analysis revealed a moderately positive correlation between the work environment and employee performance. These findings suggest that enhancing workplace conditions could contribute to improved employee outcomes. The study recommends that BPO firms in Digos City strengthen their human resource practices and training initiatives to cultivate a more supportive and productive work environment.

Keywords: Work Environment, Employee Performance, Business Process Outsourcing

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INTRODUCTION

The Business Process Outsourcing Industry (BPO) offers various worldwide services, including customer care, email help, web design, web development, content writing, proofreading, and accounting. However, it is widely recognized as one of the most demanding service sectors, with an employee attrition rate of 50% (De Jesus et al., 2023). Various aspects are considered when determining the attrition rate, and one of these factors is the work environment, which impacts work-life balance. The work environment is a crucial social setting where many actions and concepts play a central role daily. These activities substantially impact an organization and an individual's future in their profession (Satyvendra, 2019). Most employment environments in underdeveloped countries do not meet the required standards. Unfortunately, many companies view a safe and healthy work environment as an avoidable cost and do not allocate significant efforts toward maintaining a pleasant working environment (Aghaji et al., 2020).

In recent years, the business process outsourcing sector has experienced substantial growth, with many individuals worldwide participating in various BPO operations (Mann & Graham, 2019). The job satisfaction and performance of these individuals are crucial for the success of BPO organizations. Performance is the key factor that motivates an organization, and the contribution of employees leads to the company's production or service outcomes. A company's performance significantly affects its quality and defines its success rate (Farisi et al., 2020). Various scholars argue that the implementation of a clearly defined framework for evaluating employee performance is crucial for the effective operation of a corporation (Olson et al., 2018; Awan et al., 2020; Vuong et al., 2020). Businesses have primarily struggled with enhancing employee performance to ensure their credibility remains at the forefront (Ho et al., 2021).

The work environment and surroundings have the most significant influence on an employee's performance, and it substantially impacts an organization's ability to maintain high-performance levels, which in turn affects the overall performance of the business (Chotikamankong, 2019). Employees are driven to achieve optimal performance and productivity within a company due to many motivations, which can be either internal or external. (Song & Tao, 2022). An ideal work environment fosters a sense of ease and comfort among employees, enhancing their performance. Enhancing convenience will improve employee performance (Putri et al., 2019). However, the adverse consequences of an uncomfortable work environment on employees can have serious repercussions, as it can harm the employees' health, decreasing their performance (Dawal & Taha, 2019).

This study was anchored primarily on the Theory of Work Adjustment (TWA) developed by Dawes and Lofquist at the University of Minnesota in 1984. This theory provides a foundational framework for understanding how work environment factors influence employee performance. TWA suggests that outstanding performance is achieved when there is a strong alignment between the work environment and the employee's work. A positive alignment between the employee's work environment and job demands enhances performance (Dawes & Lofquist, 1984). The theory, also known as the Person-Environment Correspondence Theory, emphasizes the dynamic and reciprocal relationship between an individual and their work environment, highlighting the importance of perpetual adaptation for enduring workplace stability. The better the worker's abilities align with their role, job, or organization requirements, the higher the likelihood of effective performance. Employers perceive the job as pleasant when an employee performs well (Winter, 2009).

The impact of work environment on employees' performance is critical yet often overlooked aspect of organizational effectiveness. With rising concerns over employee well-being, high turnover rates, and performance fluctuations in the BPO industry, understanding how different dimensions of the work environment influence performance is essential. Hence, by identifying key factors such as physical, psychological, social interactions, and administrative conditions, this research provides empirical evidence that can guide BPO companies in enhancing their organizational practices. Furthermore, the study addresses a notable gap in the literature, particularly in the Philippine context, where limited data exists on how the work environment affects employee performance in BPO settings. The findings are expected to benefit HR practitioners, managers, and policymakers through strategy development that would lead to a more productive and more sustainable work environments.

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Objectives

This study aimed to determine the impact of the work environment on the work performance of employees in the BPO sector of Digos City. Particularly, it sought to address the following objectives:

1. To examine the work environment of the BPO sector in Digos City in terms of:
 - 1.1 physical work environment;
 - 1.2 psychological work environment;
 - 1.3 social work environment; and
 - 1.4 administrative work environment.
2. To assess the work performance of employees in the BPO Sector of Digos City.
3. To determine the significance of the relationship between the work environment and the work performance of employees in the BPO Sector of Digos City.

Respondents

This study involved a total of 180 respondents, which falls within the recommended range of 160 to 300 participants for conducting multivariate statistical analysis, as suggested by Memon et al. (2020). The sampling technique employed was simple random sampling, wherein each member of the target population had an equal and independent chance of being selected. This method was chosen to minimize sampling bias and ensure that every eligible individual in the population had an opportunity to participate in the study. According to Bhardwaj (2019), simple random sampling enhances the representativeness of the sample, as the selection of one individual does not influence the selection of others. This approach contributed to a well-balanced and comprehensive dataset, enabling the researcher to effectively assess the impact of the work environment on employee performance in the BPO sector of Digos City. This study focused on full-time call center employees within the Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) industry in Digos City who were 18 years old and above, regardless of gender or educational background. Excluded from this study were those who were working outside the research locale and BPO employees who have work-at-home set-up. Furthermore, the respondents were free to withdraw from answering at any stage of the data-gathering process to ensure voluntary participation.

Instrument

This study employed adopted survey questionnaires, which consist of three sections. The first section was designed to elicit information on the respondents' profiles and to direct the respondents to how they should rate the items. The second section sought questions on the work environment made up of four indicators: physical work environment, psychological work environment, social work environment, and administrative work environment. The instrument used to measure the work environment variable was adopted from a research study entitled "The Effects of Work Environment on Employees Productivity in Government Organizations. A Case Study of Obuasi Municipal Assembly" (Manu, 2015). A five-point Likert-type scale was utilized to allow the respondents to express how strongly they agree or disagree with each item.

Range of Means	Descriptive Levels	Interpretation
4.20-5.00	Very High	This means that the level of work environment is always favorable.
3.40-4.19	High	This means that the level of work environment is often favorable.
2.60-3.39	Moderate	This means that the level of work environment is sometimes favorable.
1.80-2.59	Low	This means that the level of work environment is rarely favorable.
1.00-1.79	Very Low	This means that the level of work environment is almost never favorable.

On the other hand, the work performance instrument was adopted from the study entitled "Employee Work Performance During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Effects of Transformational Leadership and Employee Work Environment" (Tran & Idodo, 2022) to gather information needed for the work performance of the employees in BPO Sector in Digos City. To interpret the data collected from the responses, a 5-Point Likert Scaling was also used for respondents to articulate different levels of frequency about the specific item. The table below demonstrates the work performance scale including range of means, descriptive levels, and interpretations.

Range of Means	Descriptive Levels	Interpretation
4.20-5.00	Very High	This means that the level of work performance is always observed.
3.40-4.19	High	This means that the level of work performance is often observed.
2.60-3.39	Moderate	This means that the level of work performance is sometimes observed.
1.80-2.59	Low	This means that the level of work performance is seldom observed.
1.00-1.79	Very Low	This means that the level of work performance is never observed.

Design and Procedure

The researchers employed a descriptive correlational research design to help uncover the association between the work environment and the work performance of employees in the BPO Industry in Digos City. Descriptive research describes phenomenon, population, or situation and focuses more on description than on establishing a cause-and-effect relationship (Siedlecki, 2020). On the other hand, a correlation study is a form of nonexperimental research where the researcher analyzes two variables and evaluates the statistical relationship, or correlation, between them without actively controlling for extraneous variables (Quaranta, 2017). In this study, the correlations between work environment and work performance were investigated.

Prior to the administration of questionnaires, the researchers submitted letters of permission to conduct the study, signed by their adviser and endorsed by the Research Publication Center of the university to the operation managers of various BPO companies in Digos City. The distribution of the questionnaire to the respondents was carried out through face-to-face surveys. The respondents' consent for their answers to the questions was retained. The collected data were systematically arranged and presented in a spreadsheet, and appropriate statistical treatments were applied. At this juncture, the assistance of statistician was required. The subsequent statistical tools were employed to assess the work environment's impact on employees' work performance in the BPO sector of Digos City. Mean was utilized to evaluate the work environment and work performance of employees in the BPO sector of Digos City. Additionally, Spearman rho was employed to ascertain the relationship between the work environment and work performance of employees in the BPO sector of Digos City as it is particularly effective for evaluating ordinal data and does not necessitate the assumption of normality. This non-parametric method offers a reliable correlation metric, facilitating the assessment of ranked variables concerning employee performance.

Ethical Considerations

This study was undertaken with a serious commitment to upholding ethical norms. In compliance with the regulations and directives established by the Research and Publication Center of UM Digos College, the researchers diligently sought and obtained the requisite authorization from necessary school authorities to conduct this study. The researchers obtained appropriate permissions before the study to protect their rights in line with the relevant authorities and respondents selected. Steps were also followed to ensure that the data was handled in a manner that respects and safeguards the privacy and confidentiality of the respondents.

Voluntary Participation. All respondents were given information about the study to understand its scope and objectives. Participation was purely voluntary and respondents were given the right to withdraw anytime without penalty.

Privacy and confidentiality. The personal and professional information of the respondents needed for the study were kept private and held with utmost confidentiality. The researchers ensured that the given information was protected from disclosure outside the research setting or to unauthorized individuals.

Informed Consent Process. The study was characterized by clarity and comprehensibility, as the researchers took measures to ensure that the respondents thoroughly understood the potential benefits from the participating. The survey was conducted with the approval of the relevant establishment authorities and the consent of the respondents themselves.

Risks. The present study did not encompass circumstances of elevated risk for the respondents. The study ensured the protection and security of the individuals' rights.

Benefits. The study aims to contribute to the overall understanding of the impact of the work environment, potentially leading to better organizational practices within the BPO sector in Digos City.

Plagiarism. The researchers diligently adhered to proper and precise citation practices when incorporating ideas from other authors and researchers. The manuscript underwent rigorous checks for grammar and potential plagiarism using Grammarly and Turnitin software to uphold originality and maintain credibility of the study.

Fabrication. The researchers ensured that all data included in the study were accurate and free from misleading claims. Only peer-reviewed journals and scholarly ebooks were used to maintain quality and credibility of the study.

Falsification. All sources in this study were cited using the Harvard Style of referencing to ensure transparency and traceability in acknowledging the original author’s works. All information presented in the study were acquired with the highest degree of accuracy.

Conflict of Interest. The study was carefully conducted to manage any potential conflicts of interest. The researchers took measures to disclose any associations or activities that could have affected the research or the interpretation of the results.

Deceit. Throughout the study, the researchers upheld transparency and honesty in all aspects of the research process. No form of deception was employed during data collection, analysis, or reporting. All findings presented in the study reflect the actual results obtained to ensure the integrity and trustworthiness of the research.

Permission from Organization/Location. Formal permission was obtained from the selected BPO companies in Digos City to carry out the study and interact with their employees as respondents. The researchers ensured that all procedures were conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of responsible research practice.

Authorship. The researchers followed the recognized protocols for crediting authorship, making sure that people who played a substantial role in the research were acknowledged as authors. They utilized specific criteria to decide who qualified as an author, which was reflected in each person's significant intellectual contributions to the study.

RESULTS

1. Level of Work Environment in the BPO Sector of Digos City

Table 3 shows the level of work environment in the BPO Sector in Digos City using its four indicators: physical work environment, psychological work environment, social work environment, and administrative work environment. The overall mean of 3.86 (SD=0.41) indicates a high work environment in the BPO sector in Digos City. This suggests that the level of work environment of the employees in terms of physical work environment, psychological work environment, social work environment, and administrative work environment is often favorable. As shown in the table, the administrative work environment has the highest mean of 4.22 (SD=0.62), followed by the social work environment (\bar{x} =4.17, SD=0.61), psychological work environment (\bar{x} =3.95, SD=0.60) and physical work environment (\bar{x} =3.11, SD=0.45). These results demonstrate the organizations’ dedication and commitment in creating a favorable and conducive work environment for its employees, which can result in higher levels of job satisfaction and productivity.

Table 3. Level of Work Environment in the BPO sector of Digos City, n=180

	\bar{x}	SD
Physical Work Environment	3.11	.45
Psychological Work Environment	3.95	.60
Social Work Environment	4.17	.61
Administrative Work Environment	4.22	.62
Overall	3.86	.41

Administrative work environment ($\bar{x}=4.22$, $SD=.62$), was the highest-rated dimension among the four work environment indicators and was assessed as very high. This means employees have a positive perception of the workplace, taking into account the leadership, communication, and decision-making processes. These findings are slightly similar to the study done by Khan et al. (2019), which emphasizes that a favorable administrative work environment is crucial to determine an organization's productivity and performance quality. When employees have clear understanding of their job scope and possess a positive view towards effective performance, they tend to work towards the goals and objectives set by the organization. Studies show that providing good facilities and administrative support in the organization enables good job performance among employees and allows greater cooperation (Lee et al., 2020). Undeniably, the administrative work environment contributes highly to employees' satisfaction level and productivity which consequently enhance the organization's overall performance (Sundram et al., 2020).

The above results also revealed that the *social work environment* achieved a high mean score of 4.17 ($SD=.61$), which suggests that the organization's work environment is good and supportive. According to Olomi (2020), the social work environment is a crucial determinant of employee job performance. Enhancing its quality directly correlates with improved job performance, as a conducive social work environment promotes employees' well-being, leading to increased motivation and excellent work output. It is generally believed that employees who experience positive social interactions tend to demonstrate a higher level of engagement and productivity. Thus, the role of social work environment cannot be gainsaid as it impacts employees' psychological well-being, affecting their performance due to work-related stress (Banyi et al., 2021). While the social work environment has an indirect but significant impact on job performance, it is closely tied to the company's overall productivity (Tsou & Yang, 2019).

On the other hand, the *psychological work environment* received a mean score of 3.95 ($SD=.60$), which was categorized as high. This indicates that employees feel supported, valued, and respected. This finding aligns with Banyu et al. (2021), demonstrating that an improved psychological work environment can enhance motivation and job effectiveness. However, various mental health issues can impact employee performance, often stemming from work-related stress in the psychological work environment. Work expectations, organizational variables, and job content significantly influence the psychological work environment (Ginting & Febriansyah, 2020). According to Clausen et al. (2019), the psychosocial work environment is a crucial factor in predicting the well-being of workers. This includes factors such as the daily well-being of persons at work and the long-term sustainability of their working lives. An optimal psychological work environment is essential for promoting job satisfaction and overall well-being. This optimal state is achieved when there is a harmonious balance between the expectations placed on employees and their capabilities and competencies to meet those expectations. Kumar et al. (2023) recognized the power of psychological work environment and its direct relation to employee job performance. When organizations place importance in improving the psychological work environment, employee productivity rose to match it. Establishing a supportive and balanced psychological work environment contributes to the overall well-being of employees which in turn leads to overall increase in organizational productivity.

As for the *physical work environment*, data revealed a mean score of 3.11 (SD=.45), which implies that there is room for improvement in terms of workplace safety, employee comfort, and ergonomics in the work environment. These results align with Karina et al. (2020), who revealed that the physical work environment contributes significantly to employee performance. The physical work environment must be conducive to productivity, meaning that employees' workstations should be sterile, have sufficient workspace for job activities, have office equipment in good working condition, have correct lighting levels, and have an ambient work temperature. According to Tayfun and Oneren (2021), the physical work environment correlates with the workers' performance because it significantly affects their job satisfaction. Physical work environments refer to specific areas in the workplace that are structurally designed to help accomplish the company's goals. As supported by Pusparani et al. (2021), physical work environment also influences an individual's suitability for working conditions. Thus, enhancing the physical work environment can improve job satisfaction, performance, and overall productivity.

2. Level of Work Performance of Employees in the BPO Sector of Digos City

Table 4 presents the work performance level of the employees in the BPO sector in Digos City. The overall mean of 3.82 (SD = 0.48) means that the employees' work performance in the BPO sector is high, which means that, on average, the employees in this sector are not only meeting but most of the time exceeding the expectations of their employer. The high mean is likely due to a workforce that shows a consistently high level of effort, strong work ethic, and the ability to perform the core tasks effectively within their roles. The standard deviation of 0.48 means that there is a relatively low variation in the work performance of the employees in sectors across the sample. This suggest that the majority of the employees in the sectors display a similar high level of performance. The high consistency may be due to standardized performance expectations, effective management, and excellent work culture experienced within BPO sectors.

Table 4. *Level of Work Performance of Employees in the BPO Sector of Digos City, n=180*

	\bar{x}	SD
Work Performance	3.82	.48

These findings align with the observations made by Alsafadi and Althatat (2021), who emphasized the importance of employees as valuable assets in any organization. A high-performing workforce is essential for driving organizational success, and in the case of the BPO sector, it plays a critical role in maintaining service quality, meeting client expectations, and enhancing overall business performance. The high level of work performance reported in this study is indicative of the industry's ability to adapt to the dynamic nature of the industry and the evolving demands of clients.

Furthermore, the results suggest that the work environment in the BPO sector of Digos City may be conducive to high performance. Factors such as training, management support, and clear performance metrics could be contributing to this outcome. Previous studies, such as those by Çakır & Gözoğlu (2019), emphasize that structured environments with well-defined roles and performance expectations tend to foster higher employee productivity. The BPO industry, known for its strict

adherence to KPIs and performance monitoring, likely plays a role in maintaining this high level of employee output. Additionally, Shammout (2021) noted the association of high employee performance on the overall success of an organization. When employees consistently perform well, the organization is better positioned to meet its goals, innovate, and remain competitive in a fast-changing market. Conversely, poor employee performance can hinder organizational growth and lead to a decline in service quality, as stated by Gachui et al. (2020). In the context of this study, the high performance in the BPO industry in Digos City shows a better hope for sustainability and growth of companies.

3. Relationship Between Work Environment and Work Performance of Employees in the BPO Sector of Digos City

Table 5 presents Spearman's rank-order correlation between the work environment and work performance in the BPO sector in Digos City. A moderate positive correlation ($r_s(178) = .502, p = .000$) was identified between the work environment and work performance. This indicates that as the work environment improves, employee work performance increases as well. This corresponds with the research conducted by Razak et al. (2019), which found that factors related to the work environment significantly impact and influence employee performance and certainly play a crucial role in the organization's overall success. Li et al. (2019) also revealed that employee performance is significantly related to their satisfaction with the work environment (Li et al., 2019).

Table 5. Correlation Matrix of Work Environment and Work Performance

	Work Performance
Physical Work Environment	.141**
Psychological Work Environment	.357 **
Social Work Environment	.466 **
Administrative Work Environment	.460 **
Overall	.502 **

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

The correlation between each component of the work environment and work performance differs upon analysis. The *physical work environment* exhibits a weak positive correlation with work performance, indicating that elements such as workspace design, noise levels, and illumination have limited impact on employee performance compared to other dimensions in the BPO sector. This finding aligns with Ocampo (2021), which indicates that although lighting and ergonomic arrangements might enhance well-being, their direct impact on productivity is frequently subordinate to other elements, including social, psychological, and administrative work settings. Veljovic et al. (2019) posit that noise and office configurations may influence employee comfort. However, individuals in dynamic industries such as BPO may acclimate to these environments without adversely affecting performance. Moreover, Abirami (2023) emphasizes that distractions in open-plan workplaces or inadequate illumination can be alleviated through flexible, task-oriented designs, endorsing a nuanced perspective on the environmental impacts on employee performance.

On the other hand, the *psychological work environment* has a moderate correlation with work performance. A conducive mental environment, marked by little stress and strong mental health support is moderately associated with better employee performance. Skinner et al. (2021) claimed that organizations that prioritize employees' mental health by providing a healthy work environment and adequate support systems tend to achieve better employee performance. Establishing sufficient social support networks is crucial for maintaining employee well-being, as individuals require trustworthy confidants to discuss their difficulties. Employees who are made aware of accessible support networks during stressful periods are more likely to contribute to a psychologically healthy work environment through meaningful collaboration and transparent communication (Vanhaecht et al., 2021). Yan et al. (2020) also asserted that businesses that establish realistic and attainable goals to enhance the psychological well-being of corporate workers tend to enhance employee performance.

The *social work environment* demonstrates a strong positive correlation with work performance. This highlights the importance of positive connections between coworkers and supervisors, which have been demonstrated to cultivate a collaborative and productive work environment. These findings correspond with the research conducted by Armbrecht and Andersson (2020), which indicates that the social work environment influences employee performance. Employees exhibit exceptional performance in a positive work environment and possess significant social connections at their workplace. Likewise, employees content with their social work environment exhibit enhanced work performance (Lin et al., 2021). A prior study indicated that improvements in the social work environment lead to enhanced employee performance, while poor social environment negatively affect performance. This shows the favorable role of social work environment in supporting and sustaining employee performance in the BPO context (Christensen- Salem et al., 2021).

Lastly, the *administrative work environment*, encompassing leadership style, management methods, and organizational policies, exhibits a strong positive association with work performance. Efficient administrative frameworks enhance communication clarity, optimize resource distribution, and promote organizational equity, substantially impacting employee productivity. This corroborates Shatnawi et al.'s (2024) findings that the administrative work environment is seen as the primary engine upon which employees rely to accomplish their goals. There has been significant interest in the significance of administrative skills and their influence on enhancing employee performance, augmenting their work capabilities, and prioritizing human resources as the primary and most crucial asset in any organization (Al- Zoubi & Shatnawi, 2022). Employees who perceive consistent administrative support are more likely to feel valued, which fosters increased motivation and a stronger commitment to achieving positive job performance outcomes (Özdemir, 2022). In line with this, Shatnawi (2022) emphasized that the administrative work environment plays a critical role in shaping employee performance, as effective administrative structures and support systems contribute to overall organizational efficiency and employee satisfaction.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the association of work environment and employees' work performance in the BPO industry in Digos City. The findings indicated an overall high level of work environment, assessed in the physical, psychological, social, and administrative aspects. The study also revealed a high level of work performance among employees in the BPO industry in Digos City. Based on the data analysis, work environment was found to have a moderate positive correlation with work performance among employees in the BPO industry. These findings support the Theory of Work Adjustment (TWA), which posits that a positive correspondence between the work environment and employee characteristics enhances job performance. The observed alignment between supportive work conditions and strong employee performance affirms the theory's emphasis on the importance of person-environment fit in promoting organizational effectiveness.

Recommendation of this study is offering significant insights for various individuals and organizations involved in the BPO industry in Digos City. HR managers may adopt these findings to improve their procedures and training initiatives, creating a more positive work atmosphere that boosts employee productivity. Operation managers may also benefit by fostering a positive psychological work environment through stress management measures, mental health assistance, and recognition programs. Team leaders and supervisors may prioritize the social components of the work environment, such as fostering teamwork, transparent communication, and a supportive company culture to enhance team cohesion and efficiency. In addition, it is recommended that the administrative department improve work performance by clearly defining job responsibilities, adopting fair policies, and offering possibilities for professional development, thereby increasing employee motivation. Moreover, future researchers may expand upon this study to investigate supplementary factors that impact productivity and work environment, yielding more profound understandings that will assist BPO organizations in making informed choices to establish an ideal work environment for their employees.

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