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WORKPLACE GENDER NEUTRALITY – IMPLICATIONS ON PERCEIVED ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT OF EMPLOYEES IN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY INDUSTRY

Manu Melwin Joy

Assistant Professor,
Ilahia School of Management Studies,
Mulvaoor, Muvattupuzha,
Kerala, India

ABSTRACT

The software exporting industry in India has been characterized by many unique features such as its high level of integration into the global economy, comparative freedom from state controls and reliance on a consistent supply of highly educated knowledge workers. From the labor relations perspective, industry has created a positive image in the minds of the workforce mainly because of its employee friendly HR policies. They pay due attention to these practices for retaining their small pool of well qualified and knowledgeable employees. Apart from these general facts, software industry is known for its women friendly strategies making it one of the most preferred sector by female graduates in the country. Since women consider computer programming as a more attractive option compared to traditional jobs, more and more female engineers are entering this field. Even though many major players in the sector claim to have implemented gender inclusive practices at workplace, studies shows that the industry is still male dominated and this masculine culture tends to marginalize women form the mainstream. With the help of this study, the researcher tries to find out whether gender has any influence on the perceived organizational support of employees working in software industry. A sample of 300 employees working in 10 software firms were selected for collection of data and responses were gathered with the help of structured questionnaires. One way ANOVA was employed for data analysis with the assistance of SPSS software. Results showed that gender has a influence on perceived organizational support of employees. Further research showed that female employees perceived higher levels of job and well being dimension of perceived organizational support.

KEY WORDS: *Gender inclusivity, perceived organizational support, information technology industry.*

INTRODUCTION

The advent of globalization has led to the emergence of information technology sector which was facilitated by fast data communication links and the industry has captured 51 percentage of the world market (Kumar, 2001). The growth of information technology sector has accelerated because of the natural advantages that India enjoy such as 12 hour time gap with most of the overseas countries, cheap English speaking labor force and governmental initiatives of giving tax holidays to profit making IT firms. These changes has helped in bridging the gap between countries and broadened the scope of opportunities for individuals seeking paid work. Apart from contributing significantly to Indian economy, IT industry has created employment for a large pool of educated unemployed youth and has provided an attractive career option for women candidates.

A study done by Sequeira A H (2005) to assess the status of women in technical education and employment in Karnataka found that self employment among degree and diploma holders is as low as 1% of the total number of pass outs. NASSCOM – Mencher report (2009) revealed that even though there is a substantial rise in the women workforce at the entry level as well as the middle level management, there is still a considerable lack of adequate women at the top management level. Apart from that women employees have to face issues of prolonged working hours, frequent travelling and managing different time zones of international clients as result of which industry is losing women employees at middle and senior management level. This is evident from the fact that top management of Infosys consists of only 2% women employees. The study tries to find out whether gender has any influence on the perceived organizational support experienced by employees working in IT industry.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Perceived Organizational Support (POS):-

A lot of research done in the field of organizational behavior and human resource management has focused on the exchange relationships between employees and their organizations (Aselage & Eisenberger, 2003: Wayne et al., 2002). These results show that when employees perceive that they are treated well by the organization, the firm tends to get more satisfactory efforts. For example, employees who are treated well are more inclined to be committed to their organizations (Rhoades, Eisenberger & Armeli, 2001) and more likely to stay with their organization (Allen, Shore & Griffeth, 2003). Moreover, a bulk of

research findings regarding employee-employer relationships have focused on perceived organizational support (Eisenberg et al., 1986). Eisenberg et al., (1986) referred to perceived organizational support as employee's formation of beliefs regarding how much the organization is concerned about his well being and considers his contribution valuable. Muse and Stamper (2007) divided perceived organizational support into two namely POS – J (care about employee outcomes and performance) and POS-W (care about employee wellbeing).

The concept of POS is well support by traditional theories such as social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) and theory of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960). These theories explain why individuals feel obligated to respond actions directed towards them by the firm. Moreover, POS is associated with this exchange in that individual will respond by committed effort when they believe that the organization will reward them. A great majority of studies concerning POS based on organizational support theory have proved the unidimensionality of support construct. For instance, Eisenberger et al., (1986) argued that individuals demonstrated a consistent pattern of agreement with statements related to the kind of treatment received under specific situations such as future illness or mistakes. Even though POS is a response to the entire organization, it is also seriously affected by attitudes, procedures and choices of the organization (Shore & Tetrick, 1991).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

350 employees working in 25 software firms operating in two techparks in Kerala served as participants for the present study. Professionals with less than two years of experience were excluded from the study since they didn't get ample time to experience perceived organizational support from the organization. A structured questionnaire was sent to all the respondents asking them to participate in an online study on the influence of gender on perceived organizational support. A tool developed by Eisenberger et al., (1986) was used to capture perceived organizational support. Of the 350 software professionals at the time of study, 300 completed the online questionnaire correctly. With the help of one way ANOVA carried out in SPSS software, data analysis was completed. Data was collected in them time period spanning from August 2015 and November 2015.

DATA ANALYSIS
Influence of gender on perceived organizational support (POS):-

One way ANOVA was used for testing hypothesis H1 which were about the significant difference in perceived organizational support across gender. H1 was stated as:

H1 - There is a significant difference in the perceived organizational support across gender.

ANOVA-test results for gender and perceived organizational support

		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig
POS	Between groups	1.196	1	1.196	2.916	.003*
	Within groups	142.111	298	.452		
	Total	149.032	299			

(* indicates items significant at 5% significance level)

The one way ANOVA results done on perceived organizational support with gender showed that the values are significant at 5% level. Hence, there is a difference in the perceived organizational support with regards to gender of the employees. H1 is therefore accepted. . The mean value of male employees was found to be 3.11 and that of female employees was found to be 3.52. So it can be inferred that female employees perceived higher levels of perceived organizational support compared to that of male employees.

Influence of gender on job dimension of perceived organizational support (POS-J):-

One way ANOVA was used for testing hypothesis H2 which were about the significant difference in job dimension of perceived organizational support across gender. H2 was stated as:

H2 - There is a significant difference in the job dimension of perceived organizational support across gender.

ANOVA-test results for gender and job dimension of perceived organizational support

		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig
POS-J	Between groups	1.232	1	1.232	2.336	.006*
	Within groups	147.861	298	.397		
	Total	142.029	299			

(* indicates items significant at 5% significance level)

The one way ANOVA results done on job dimensions of perceived organizational support with gender showed that the values are significant at 5% level. Hence, there is a difference in the job dimensions of perceived organizational support with regards to gender of the employees. H2 is therefore accepted. The mean value of male employees was found to be 3.45 and that of female employees was found to be 3.74. So it can be inferred that female employees perceived higher levels of job dimension of perceived organizational support compared to that of male employees.

Influence of gender on wellbeing dimension of perceived organizational support (POS-W):-

One way ANOVA was used for testing hypothesis H3 which were about the significant difference in well being dimension of perceived organizational support across gender. H3 was stated as:

H3 - There is a significant difference in the well being dimension of perceived organizational support across gender.

ANOVA-test results for gender and well being dimension of perceived organizational support

		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig
POS-W	Between groups	1.212	1	1.212	2.142	.002*
	Within groups	136.925	298	.399		
	Total	139.085	299			

(* indicates items significant at 5% significance level)

The one way ANOVA results done on well being dimension of perceived organizational support with gender showed that the values are significant at 5% level. Hence, there is a difference in the well being dimension of perceived organizational support with regards to gender of the employees. H3 is therefore accepted. . The mean value of male employees was found to be 3.29 and that of female employees was found to be 3.31. So it can be inferred that female employees perceived higher levels of well

being dimension of perceived organizational support compared to that of male employees.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

From the results, it is evident that perceived organizational support is influenced by gender. It was also found that there is a significant difference in the job and well being dimension of perceived organizational support among gender. Further analysis showed that female employees perceived higher levels of perceived organizational support

compared to that of male employees working in IT industry. Apart from that, it was found that female employees perceived higher levels of job and well being dimension of perceived organizational support compared to that of male employees working in IT industry. These results show that the gender inclusive practices adopted by major IT players have been effective. According to Dreze et al., (1995), female education and female employment are the two important steps towards gender inclusive work place and majority of the IT firms have implemented them.

It was observed that companies attempting gender inclusivity have experienced better brand identity, higher levels of firm productivity and lower levels of employee attrition. Studies show that female employees form good brand ambassadors for the organization and inclusion of them in the top management can lead to organizational success. Focusing on this strategy, Microsoft has included female employees in their engineering design team to ensure that quality products appealing to women can be developed. Similarly, Infosys organizes women oriented workshops to build female portals as a part of the inclusivity movement. Senior management has confirmed that these initiatives should be brought down to the grass root level employees. In IBM, a women leader's council was begun to attract women employees so that gender diverse work force can be developed. Apart from these programs, mentorship and networking are employed by multinationals for ensuring women empowerment. These initiatives have resulted in female employees experiencing higher levels of job and well being dimension of perceived organizational support compared to that of male employees working in IT industry (NASSCOM & Mercer Report, 2009).

CONCLUSION

The crucial role played by information technology in empowering women has been widely acknowledged by leaders from all cross section of the society. Sector is undergoing a sea change to ensure that women employees are attracted and retained. There is a series talent deficit in the top management of IT companies due to lack of proper work life

balance initiatives in place. From the NASSSCOM statistics, it is evident that the gender inclusive initiatives adopted by software firms have been effective. It is estimated that the male: female ration in IT industry has improved from 70:24 in 2005 to 70:30 at present.

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