Importance and emergence of workforce diversity concept with special reference to gender diversity in today’s business scenario: an empirical study of various industrial sectors of South India

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Abstract

In today’s business scenario people around the world are coming closer due to technological advancement. Apart from this different organization to face the competition are investigating the best way to have a best human resource by hiring and keeping able and efficient workforce for a longer period. So strategically diversity in workforce is a value adding HR function which able to enhance the all-round performance of an organization. But due to societal inequities, religious and cultural differences, it seems to be difficult to managing diversity and makes it a complex and unique HR issue in India. One more fact is that out of total diverse workforce 30 to 32% workforce is female workforce. Even though they are getting considerable recognition at organizations, still their quantity at managerial positions is very far from male workforce, (Both in top and middle level) is growing, but in a slow rate. Still the female employee percentage in decision making position is increase lesser rate as compared to the past years. Most of the time they are feeling pressure and sometime forced to work in an environment which is highly controlled and dominated by male employees. Such kind of circumstances and practices is creating an environment that minimizing their scope to move their career path toward the higher level. This paper is an attempt brings clear attitude towards gender diversities, their obstacles and the strategies adopted to solve this problem by various industrial sectors India.

Keywords: Gender diversity, Diversity Management programs and practices, Male dominated society, Discrimination obstacles,

I. Introduction

In simple word diversity means a wide range of different things. Diversity concept in workplace means different types of people with different background, characteristic and experience to one place. Diversity in workforce can be expressed as inviting, hiring, and treating the people of having different social, demographic...

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and economic background. That means having a pool of employees who may differ from each other with respect to age, gender, cast, creed, social class, religion, physical strength, sexual need, etc. By supporting this view Grobler (2002) believes that every human being is separate from each other with respect to their environmental or biological characteristics. According to Cox, 1991; 2, Thomas, 1991:16, in business terms, workforce diversity can be explained as a group of people working in different levels of organization having different social, demographic, and professional traits. Diversity can be understood from two dimensions. As per Das and Wagar, 2007, physical abilities, sexual need, culture and subculture, religious practices, age, gender comes under one dimension. While secondary dimensions consider factors like economic status, social status, qualification standards, language pattern, etc. According to Kundu and Turan, 1999:9[XV].

Workforce diversity means having a workforce who are related to different social and cultural backgrounds and working at different levels within the organization. According to him, the term Diversity may include all kinds of social as well as demographic factors. So management of this diversity is becoming a most challenging task for every organization, especially to handle the problem of gender differences in top-level management of organizations. Only those organizations are enjoying the taste of success where these diverse talents are being effectively utilized, irrespective of gender[XVI].

In the current business scenario, the workforce environment is quite different from the environment which existed 50 years ago as far as participation of female in the workplace is concerned. Now in the present scenario, females are getting employment opportunities and showing their ability in various fields like manufacturing, defense, sports, legal, and judiciary sectors as well as in corporate where these were earlier considered sectors mostly preferred by male members. And it is equally observed not only gender diversity prevailing in present business environment but also due to this gender diversity is impacting the overall output and productivity of an organization in a positive manner. Simons, 1992; Thoits, 1992:15; Wethington and Kessler, 1989:17 Qureshi et al., 2014:13 strongly express in their research that involvement of women in the workplace helps to boost the women’s morale and confidence levels. Now women are feeling much better and getting more satisfaction by engaging at different roles in the workplace than those who restricted themselves to household work only due to various reasons. As per the report published by Zaman et al. 2011:19 though women are now a part of the overall workforce but still their career path towards promotion and top management position is facing many challenges in organizations. There are many examples which prove that now female employees are getting good response from all around and entered in organizations middle order positions but still they are struggling to acquire and prove themselves in executive as well as other top strategic decision-making levels. According to McKinsey, 2012:9 there is an attitudinal
difference between male and female as far as performance is concerned is also available in workplace. He states that 70% of the women employee are not considering their performance less effective in compare to their male colleagues, while in case of males employees 70% believe that they are performing in a better way than of their female colleagues. According to Grusky and Grusky, (2004:7). Discrimination is exists between man and women as far as job opportunity is concerned in the professional environment. As per him, most of the time women are hired for teaching, nursing and other hospitality job while on the other side men are the first choice for all kind position having leadership and decision making role. Now a day’s females are facing many difficulties in many issues like payment, getting higher designation through promotion and other career enhancement opportunity in their workplace. As an effect of this firms are unable to utilize their talent in an effective way, which further leads loss to the organization. In Britain fulltime female employee payment is just equal to 80% of the total payment of male fulltime employee and in case of part time female employee it is just 60% of their male colleague. Apart from this bitter fact some surveys have shown proves that gender discrimination in workplace should be abolished to get the organizational success.

Survey report says that Fortune 500 companies who are having women in their top position have been proved as more successful companies. Report by McKinsey showed that “companies who are having a higher ratio of women at top management level typically reflect organization value at a higher degree by bringing profit margin more than average. Another report concluded that leadership under a women have been has been proved more task oriented, proper mentoring, and giving priorities to the individual and organizational need.

According to NASA, report involvement of female in crew results in ‘calmer missions’ as well as 75% of male crew members have been noted a reduction of rudeness in their behaviour and improved their concern toward s cleanliness.

Women managers are able to create a better working environment consisting good team building working culture

So, with proper gender diversity management policy and its regular practice will definitely increase the organizational performance in effectively.

II. Literature Review

This section of the research has helped the author to have a wide knowledge about the gender diversity concept. While reviewing the literature some fact came to the lime light which reflects the gender discrimination practice as well as value of gender diversity management in Indian corporate world. In 1980 Nieva and Gutek (11) in their research indicated that gender evaluation biasness are prevailing in business sector. Men are getting more preference as compared to women particularly...
in case of job application for semiskilled, scientific and managerial position. While some literature has brought the fact of today’s changed business environment as far as workforce gender diversity is concerned.

In today’s corporate sector, many workplaces are found to be filled with employee of wide range of background. Workplaces are the pool of People coming from different gender, culture, religion and from various societies of a country as well as world. The concept of diversity is a wide concept consisting of all kind of individual, social, demographic and cultural element. Dataquest, 2006, emphasis mostly on demographic features of people as the diversity element and suggest that companies should correct their policies to remove the gender discrimination in their workplace. Now a days many business sector are coming forward for practicing and getting a profitable experience from this diversity concept. As per Oleary and Weathington (2006:12) various educational and business communities are showing their interest towards the adaptation of diversity and its effective management in their organization. According to Dobbs, 1998; Kochan, T et al., 2003, A lot of organization those who have a diversified workforce are now experiencing benefit in term of higher performance, highly satisfied employees as well as customers. The increasing diversity among the employees in corporate sector is due to changes happening in and around the country. Educational standards and opportunities are increasing and people’s skill level is also growing day by day which is bringing changes in beliefs, attitude and thinking of various society and regional groups. After 1990’s It has been observed that in India the ratio of women employee in total workforce is gradually increasing due to better academic and career opportunities. Now many organization are trying to create a system where both male and female will getting equal opportunity in recruitment, placement and comfort platform to perform. This initiation is not for any gender issue rather it is a effort to enhance the organizational environment and productivity by exploring global talent in their workplace.

Dataquest, (2009:3), highlights that, in Indian IT sectors, gender diversity is well recognized and emphasized form of diversity out of all diversity issues and effort have been made by the organization to make a comfortable environment for both the gender without any discrimination. Joana Marinova and Chantal(2010:8) highlights in their research that the gender diversity which was considered as a mare social issue in previous days, now became a major value driven concept in most of the corporate policies and strategies.

Deaux and Farris (1977:4) found that the success for both men and women are attributed towards their hard work and their cognitive abilities rather a matter of luck.

III. Research Methodology

According to Denizin and Yvonna, (2013:5), the main objective of qualitative research is to find out the ways through which people can get the sensible meaning by
analyzing many real fact which they have experienced and is quite descriptive, interpretive and exploratory in nature. As per Yin in (2003:16), one of the most suitable method of research is by studying and analyzing a case through which we can study the important factors and phenomena and its impact on a particular concept like role of gender in bringing effectiveness to organization. The main objective of this research is to find out the perception of the people towards acceptance of gender diversity in workplace as well as to explore the management practices and initiatives towards gender diversity management. To do this research 30 leading corporate sector of southern part of India has been studied. Total 300 structured questionnaires has distributed to collect the data out of which 200 responds were considered. Apart from these a depth interview has designed and conducted with 50 managers working in top level and 100 managers who are working in middle level of different industries. The main intention was to have wide coverage rather than to restrict in a particular sector. The interviews were well planned and highly structure where various aspect of the study had been discussed with the interviewees. Apart from all this effort 50 employees who are working lower and middle level had gone through focus group interview. As per (Alvesson, 2003:1) Interview is one of the most effective method, which helps us to know the interviewees detail perception towards the concept of gender diversity and its impact on organizational effectiveness to make the research more qualitative, the collected data has been analyzed through thematic approach.

IV Analysis findings and discussion
Employee views regarding Gender diversity management programme and practice

| S.No | Items                                                                 | No. Of employee | Frequency In % |
|------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| 1    | Feeling comfortable to work in group having both male and female      | 30              | 15             |
| 2    | Ready to give value to others irrespective of their gender            | 24              | 12             |
| 3    | Gender difference is not affecting effective communication            | 22              | 11             |
| 4    | Possibilities to learn new skill and values by working with other genders are more | 26              | 13             |
| 5    | Recruitment and retention quota policy is highly necessary for different gender | 18              | 9              |
| 6    | Giving value and respect to the fundamental differences of different gender is necessary and ready to work under higher authority of any gender | 29              | 14.5           |
Gender diversity is very essential to the organization

| S.No | Items                                                                 | No. of employee | Frequency in % |
|------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| 1    | Stereotype thinking and practice                                      | 30              | 15             |
| 2    | Sexual harassment and abuses                                          | 16              | 8              |
| 3    | Problems in maintaining work life balance                             | 34              | 17             |
| 4    | Absence of flexible work schedule in workplace                        | 28              | 14             |
| 5.   | Availability of mail dominated work culture                           | 26              | 13             |
| 6    | Lack of awareness about the availability of diversity policy and practice | 16              | 8              |
| 7    | Inefficient leadership effort towards diversity                       | 21              | 10.5           |
| 8    | Less opportunity for the female employee to achieve high position     | 19              | 9.5            |
| 9    | Availability of discrimination towards giving promotion and other Developmental opportunities to female employee in workplace | 10              | 5              |

Total sample 200 including top level, middle level and Lower level employee

Table 1. Employees perception regarding acceptance of gender diversity in workplace

|  |
|---|---|---|
| 7 | Gender diversity is very essential to the organization | 12 | 6 |
| 8 | Gender difference will not affect the work performance | 19 | 9.5 |
|   | Total sample 200 including top level, middle level and Lower level employee | 200 | 100 |

Table 2. Perception of the employee towards the obstacle to gender diversity
| S.No | Items                                                                 | No.of employee | Frequency in % |
|------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| 1    | Conducting diversity training sessions in order to enhance about the gender equality and to reduce gender discrimination | 10             | 5              |
| 2    | Conducting effective mentoring and counseling session to train the female employees to give effort for career development as well as taking new responsibility. | 21             | 10.5           |
| 3    | Introduction of Flexible work schedule, work from home, part time work, flexible timing options. | 20             | 10             |
| 4    | Creating and giving support to female network forum and affinity group | 28             | 14             |
| 5    | Conducting workshops and seminars for the awareness of diversity management | 12             | 6              |
| 6    | Implementing policies regarding parental leave during the time of child birth and child care | 25             | 12.5           |
| 7    | Introducing policies of gender quota for recruiting, promoting, retaining and development of employee | 14             | 7              |
| 8    | Strict disciplinary rule and protection against gender discrimination | 16             | 8              |
| 9    | Top leaders’ effective effort towards funding, involvement and Commitment for the gender diversity programme | 22             | 11             |
| 10   | Strict disciplinary action against mobbing and sexual harassment | 32             | 16             |
|      | Total sample 200 including top level, middle level and Lower level employee | 200            | 100            |

**Table 3.** Employee perception towards the management initiation of gender diversity management programme and practice

**IV.i. Factor Analysis**

Factor analysis is used to find the linear combination of variables to form a factor on the basis of variable interdependence considered to study the different aspects of employee perception in given scenarios.

a. Acceptance of gender diversity in workplace
Table 4. Total Variance Explained

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Table 4 suggests that three factors can explain the phenomenon by 50.147 percentages. Since it is a social-science phenomenon where the preferences of people change very frequently a decent percentage approximately 50% phenomenon of accepting gender diversity at workplace can be explained using three factors only. These free factors are called as mutual respect, staffing and leaning ambience at the work place.

b. Obstacle in gender diversity

| Component | Initial Eigenvalues | Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings | Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings |
|-----------|---------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
|           | Total               | % of Variance                       | Cumulative %                     | Total               | % of Variance                       | Cumulative %                     | Total               | % of Variance                       | Cumulative %                     |
| 1         | 1.489               | 18.612                              | 18.612                            | 1.489               | 18.612                              | 18.612                            | 1.444               | 18.047                              | 18.047                            |
| 2         | 1.290               | 16.131                              | 34.742                            | 1.290               | 16.131                              | 34.742                            | 1.327               | 16.585                              | 34.632                            |
| 3         | 1.232               | 15.404                              | 50.147                            | 1.232               | 15.404                              | 50.147                            | 1.241               | 15.515                              | 50.147                            |
| 4         | .956                | 11.945                              | 62.091                            | .956                | 11.945                              | 62.091                            | .939                | 11.738                              | 73.830                            |
| 5         | .787                | 9.839                               | 83.669                            | .787                | 9.839                               | 83.669                            | .721                | 9.016                               | 92.685                            |
| 6         | .721                | 9.016                               | 92.685                            | .721                | 9.016                               | 92.685                            | .585                | 7.315                               | 100.000                           |
| 7         | .585                | 7.315                               | 100.000                           | .585                | 7.315                               | 100.000                           |                    |                       |                                    |
| 8         | .585                | 7.315                               | 100.000                           | .585                | 7.315                               | 100.000                           |                    |                       |                                    |

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Table 5. Total Variance Explained. Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Table 5 suggests that four factors can explain the phenomenon by 58.441 percentage. Since it is a social-science phenomenon where the preferences of people change very frequently a decent percentage approximately 60% phenomenon of obstacles in gender diversity at workplace can be explained using four factors only. Three four factors are called as harassment, rigid structure, stereotype thinking and discrimination at workplace.

Management initiation of gender diversity management programme and practice

Table 6. Total Variance Explained. Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Table 6 suggests that four factors can explain the phenomenon by 56.393 percentage. Since it is a social-science phenomenon where the preferences of people change very frequently a decent percentage approximately 60% phenomenon of management initiation of gender diversity management programme and practice at workplace can be explained using four factors only. These four factors are training sessions, flexible structure, preventive measure and harmony at the workplace.
V. Conclusion

The entire study has given a crystal-clear picture that the diversity management is nothing but hiring employees in wide range irrespective of region, cast, creed, and races and retaining them by giving equal treatment, respect and value, utilize their potential in best possible way to improve the organizational performance. The study has given a fine conclusion that many of the organizations are nodding their head to accept the concept of diversity management but not up to the mark in execution. The diversity management policies are existed in HR manuals but there is much lack of effort in converting those policies in to practice. In some cases the policies were implemented but due to lack of proper monitoring give poor result which automatically affects the organizational effectiveness in reverse way. Not only these employees are not getting motivation to Utilize their ability and potential in a productive and ultimately ready to quit the organization. So, it’s the high time for all the organizations to think seriously towards this issue do modification in their policy and procedure through which both gender work comfortably and ultimately become the source of effective performance.

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