

GENDER DISCRIMINATION IN WORKFORCE AND DISCRETIONARY WORK EFFORT- A PROSPECTIVE APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

The disparity between men and women in the workplace has become the area of scholarly investigation in the present public as well as corporate set-up. This disparity can be explained at the level of segregation on the labor market by the employer's perceptions about male and female workforce. Although women have always played an important role in the economy, their contributions have not been fully recognized in research and labour market statistics that traditionally focus on paid work. Since much of women's work, especially in low-income countries, is still performed in the informal economy and in the domestic sphere, it entails no direct payment and as a result it is often excluded from money transactions. Research reveals that elimination of gender discrimination is crucial for the satisfaction and motivation, commitment and enthusiasm and less stress of the employees. In this backdrop, the present research paper explores the issue of gender discrimination in workforce in accordance with discretionary work effort put by male and female workers and thereby providing valuable suggestions.

Keywords: Gender Discrimination, Discretionary Work Effort, Motivation, Satisfaction.

INTRODUCTION

Discrimination is any distinction, exclusion, restriction, preference or different treatment that disadvantages a person or group, as compared with others in similar situations. The reasons underlying the discrimination may be diverse, such as race, nationality, ethnicity, religion, sex, sexual orientation, language, age, disability etc. Discrimination is a general feature of social life, based on the existence of certain prejudices. The prejudice phenomenon involves the rejection of the other person, regarded as a member of a group against who there are shown negative feelings. The social identity theory (Tajfel, 1971) introduces the distinction between the in-group and the out-group, and between the group membership and the group represented by "the others". This means that individuals tend to favor their own group against others. The research conducted so far has identified the existence of several types of discrimination. Banton (1998) made a distinction between the direct and indirect discrimination. The direct discrimination occurs when two people with the same level of training and similar jobs are paid differently. The indirect discrimination is based on a previous decision that two people with the same level of training receive different wages because they were employed on different positions or at different time. Kirshna Mallick

(1995) suggests two other types of discrimination at a group and individual level. Group discrimination is different from individual discrimination, which is independent of the group members.

In India, discriminatory attitudes towards women have existed for generations and affects women over their lives. Although the constitution of India has granted women equal rights but gender disparities remains. There are limited opportunities for women to access resources such as education, health care services and job training. Women are disadvantaged at work, and are often underestimated for their capabilities. This has prevented Indian women from achieving a higher standard of living. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics cites women working 41 to 44 hours per week earn 84.6% of what men working similar hours earn. It gets worse as women work longer hours - women working more than 60 hours per week earn only 78.3% of what men in the same time category earn. In Census, work is defined as participation in any economically productive activity with or without compensation, wages or profit. A large number of farm and non-farm activities in our country are family based. Female workers irrespective of their age work in the peak season of ploughing, sowing, harvesting and collection of farm produce. It is worthwhile to mention that the women performing such economic activities are still treated as non-workers because of non-reporting of their work which leads towards gender bias. The table 1 given below shows gender discrimination as per Census 2001. There are number of districts where females have not been enumerated as they deserve and if so enumerated, their economic activity has not been taken into account. This is the reason why there are various districts shown in the table where female work participation is less than 20 percent. This figure indicates a bias because India being an agricultural economy, a greater percentage of work is carried out by women particularly in villages which unfortunately go unnoticed. On the basis of this statistics, these districts were given the name gender critical districts in Jammu & Kashmir State.

Table 1. Gender Critical Districts

Gender Critical Districts/Cities identified for special efforts at the 2011 Census					
S No.	State	District	Sex ratio (Less Than 900)	No. of villages with no Female worker	Female work participation rate (less than 20 %)
1	Jammu & Kashmir	Kupwara	-	7	18.7
2.		Baramula	-	34	15.1
3.		Srinagar	851	6	10.7
4.		Pulwama	-	25	17.4
5.		Kargil	837	0	-
6.		Udhampur	860	11	-
7.		Rajouri	878	5	-
8.		Jammu	868	62	13.3

Source: Census 2001

Gender Difference and Discretionary Work Effort: A Phenomenal Evidence

In the present state of affairs, a scholarly investigation has focused on gender differences in attitudes and orientations toward work, on one hand, and in behaviors, on the other. The

question that whether men and women differ in the extent to which they perform the work above and beyond what is minimally required has fascinated the attention of researchers in the current corporate scenario. As women increasingly enter a wide range of occupations and workplace settings, and as employers intensify their search for new ways to harness workers' motivation and energy, considerable research attention has focused on examining gender differences in orientations to work. Although a great deal about gender disparities in several work-related attitudes and behaviors are understood, a little is known about the relationship between genders which is arguably an outcome of central concern to employers - the extent to which employees engage in discretionary work effort. Because of globalization and technological advances, employer's demand for work effort have tremendously increased. It is important to know whether women are more likely than men to provide the increased discretionary effort that employers seek, because the consequences of such effort for workers are likely to be mixed. Sustaining high levels of voluntary effort can be fulfilling, but it can also lead to exhaustion and burnout (Kunda, 1992; Meyerson, 1994).

The concept of discretionary work effort appears to have been first mentioned by Yankelovich and Immerwahr (1983), who described it as the voluntary effort employees provide above and beyond what is required. Lloyd (2003) defined discretionary work effort as 'the voluntary effort employees spend that lies above the minimum level of effort required in order to keep the job and is directed towards organizational goals'. Needham (2005) translates this as "how we get people to produce more, to do more than their jobs, to give us their all, i.e. bust their butts for the organisation". Needham formally defines discretionary effort as "additional effort over and above requirements of a job description...the difference between how well people actually perform and how well they are capable of performing". The researcher estimates that this could represent a range of performance as broad as 20% to 40% above actual performance. This represents an "unmanaged and unrealised resource" for organisations. Fielder (2006) defines discretionary effort as "something we hold back unless we feel really motivated or inspired to give more". Fielder also notes that this may not be deliberate; the capacity for extra effort may be unrealised until the motivation and inspiration occurs. Fielder dismisses high performance practices as increasing stress and staff turnover, advocating a range of positive approaches, but not specifically mentioning work-life balance except for focusing on "fun". The researchers developed a scale of discretionary work effort that includes voluntary actions, such as persisting in activities over time, and putting in extra hours to achieve the results faster, items that indicate intensity and perseverance of discretionary work effort over time.

The Common Patterns of Gender Bias

- **Maternal Wall:** The strongest and most explicit bias in today's workplace is against mothers. Generally, maternal wall bias is triggered when motherhood becomes "salient" or obvious to managers and colleagues. This typically occurs when a woman announces that she is pregnant, returns from maternity leave, or adopts a part-time or flexible schedule. Maternal wall bias stems from assumptions that mothers are not as competent as others, are not as committed to their jobs, and belongs at home because they can't be both good mothers and good workers. Fathers may run up against a comparable set of assumptions when they take an active role in caring for their families.

- **Matter of Competency:** The truth of the common saying "women must try twice as hard to achieve half as much" is documented by more than a quarter century of social science. Women need to provide more evidence of job-related skills than their male counterparts

before they are viewed as competent. Additionally, women are allowed fewer mistakes than men before they are judged incompetent.

- **Matter of Witch:** Behavior that is acceptable in men often is considered unacceptable in women. A woman in a traditionally masculine job may be called a “witch,” “hard to work with” or “too ambitious” – for the same behavior that helps a man establish himself as “assertive” and “having leadership potential.” The unspoken view in such situations is that women should be helpful, warm, understanding, and kind. In some workplaces, women are seen either as “likable, dependent...traditional women” who are nice but incompetent or as “dominant, non-traditional women” who are competent, but are disliked for violating unspoken norms that woman should be inclusive and nurturing.

- **The Gender Wars:** Workplaces create conflict among women when they evince approval of women who adhere to traditional feminine stereotypes (passive, nurturing, and allowing male supervisors to take the spotlight), but disapproval for women who buck such stereotypes. The most common workplace conflict among women is the generational conflict between older women who made it to the highest levels in their companies by closely following a traditional masculine career path and younger women who seek more flexible options, including part-time work.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To explore the gender discrimination of workforce and discretionary work effort.
2. To provide valuable suggestions so as to minimize the gender discrimination of female workers.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There is often a difference between how well people perform and how well they are capable of performing. Understanding what motivates employees to put their discretionary work effort has been one of the key challenges for managers in the present scenario (Stevenson, 2010). In the modern business world, employees who are willing to contribute discretionary work effort contribute greatly to the success of their organization. Discretionary work effort is the voluntary effort employees spend that lies above the minimum level of effort required in order to keep the job and is directed towards organizational goals (Lloyd, 2003). Kowalski (2003) conducted a study among young workers and found that the workers rather work for themselves than for an organization. These trends clearly indicate that organizations are losing discretionary work effort of workers and intellectual capital that was once willingly offered by employees. Another research study of 990 respondents showed that seventy per cent of employees had planned to stay with their current organization for the near future, while only twenty one per cent of those indicated that they offered their full discretionary effort to their current job (Blessing White, 2005).

Even though a great deal about gender disparities in several work-related attitudes and behaviors is understood, a little is known about the relationship between gender, which is arguably an outcome of central concern to employers. It is the extent to which employees engage in discretionary work effort (Julie Kmec and Elizabeth Gorman, 2010). Family and household duties can deplete energy, leading workers to exert less effort at work (Becker, 1985: 1991). However, marital and parental affiliations may have more marked effects on female employee's energy and effort at work, because they typically devote more time than men do to housework and child care (Bianchi, 2000; Bianchi, Milkie, Sayer, & Robinson,

2000; Brannen, 2000). A study conducted in two different colleges, one in which faculty appeared collaborative and creative, and another wherein faculty appeared to provide only their contractual requirement, investigated discretionary work effort by faculty. It was found that the area of student relationships and student success, either through the use of new technologies or through their personal investments of time and effort was significantly positive in relation with their discretionary work effort (Dietze, Beverly & Ann, 2005).

Experiments show that men and women differ in how they invoke equity considerations in allocating effort and rewards. On average, women pay themselves less than men performing the same task, and they tend to undervalue their efforts relative to men (Lenney 1977; Callahan-Levy and Messe 1979; Major, McFarlin, and Gagnon 1984). It appears that, on average, women have lower internal standards of "personal entitlement" and, in the absence of salient, external comparison standards, make fairness judgments based on application of same-sex norms about appropriate rewards (Berger et al. 1972; Crosby 1982). In a laboratory experiment designed specifically to examine sex differences in effort and standards of personal entitlement, Major et al. (1984) asked men and women to do as much work as they thought was fair for a fixed amount of money. They collected objective measures of the accuracy and efficiency of performance on the task as well as information on each subject's perceptions of his or her level of performance. The researcher found that on average, women worked longer, did more work, completed more correct work, and were more efficient than men. Compared with men, women exhibit a level of organizational commitment that is either similar (Aryee & Lau, 1990; Aven, Parker, & McEvoy, 1993; Chelte & Tausky, 1986; Mottaz, 1988) or somewhat higher (Hult & Svallfors, 2002; Kalleberg & Mastekaasa, 1994; Lee & Peccei, 2007; Lincoln & Kalleberg, 1985, 1996; Loscocco, 1990; Marsden et al., 1993; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). In addition, women report greater commitment to work and employment in general than men do (Hult, 2008; Hult & Svallfors, 2002; Svallfors et al., 2001). Research on organizational citizenship behavior suggests that employers often recognize and reward extra effort (Turnipseed & Rassuli, 2005; Van Scotter, Motowidlo, & Cross, 2000), but it may actually lower performance evaluations if it comes at the expense of other basic tasks (Bergeron, 2007). Moreover, women's extra effort is less likely to be rewarded than men's, because employers often view such effort as natural for women. Unrewarded effort can produce feelings of futility or self-doubt in workers (Valian, 1998).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is conceptual in nature. The scope of study extends to the state of Jammu & Kashmir where a phenomenal example of gender-critical districts have been highlighted. The data was collected from the secondary sources including journals, magazines, books, published and unpublished research papers etc. The data thus reviewed has been critically analyzed through secondary review.

FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Over the past century there has been much to rejoice about the positive development of women in India: increased visibility of women in the public sphere, closing of gender gaps in primary and secondary school enrolment, the presence of women in the labour force across international borders, lower fertility rates etc. In addition, women's organizations have been able to raise issues such as sexual and reproductive health and rights, violence against women, and inequality of power in gender relations, and make these the pivotal issues of debate in national and global arenas. Yet these achievements have not eliminated, nor

decreased, gender discrimination or patriarchy. Research reveals that gender discrimination at workplace is still very much alive and kicking. Men and women in jobs that are generally associated with the other sex are judged more harshly when they make mistakes and are constantly in danger of falling off a "glass cliff" in the workplace. Gender discrimination impedes growth; with lower female-to-male workers ratios significantly reducing total output in both agricultural and non-agricultural sector. The work participation rate for Indian men at 51.9 per cent is nearly double that of the female participation rate of 25.7 per cent. It is also estimated that growth in India would increase by 1.08% if its female labor-participation rate were put on par with the US. Having a workplace that is free from gender bias is becoming a business imperative as companies compete for employees and customers. Companies that work to eliminate bias will reap ample rewards – as well as have the satisfaction of knowing they are doing the right thing. There is a need for new kinds of institutions, incorporating new norms and rules that support equal and just relations between women and men. Today women are organizing themselves to meet the challenges that are hampering their development.

The key to rooting out hidden bias is to raise managers' awareness of their unconscious gender biases; create a culture of inclusiveness; and audit relevant employment policies and procedures to ensure that they do not on their face or in application allow gender bias to creep into personnel decisions. Training is a valuable tool for raising awareness. It should:

1. Focus on the informal "hallway interactions" that take place every day as well as the major employment decisions. The bias can creep into the workplace through these brief informal interactions and eventually these interactions will impact managers' decision making.
2. Detail the business benefits (cost savings, increased productivity and efficiency, and morale) of retaining productive employees rather than terminating them or limiting their advancement based on assumptions about how they should behave.
3. Set forth the common patterns of gender biases and everyday examples of bias in the work place.
4. Emphasize that all personnel actions must be based on legitimate job related criteria and business needs and individual performance rather than stereotypes.
5. Make sure women's accomplishments are recognized; squelch snide remarks about the commitment of employees working reduced schedules, and support women who do not display traditionally feminine traits.
6. Human Resources should review both the language and application of personnel policies that may allow biases to creep into employment decisions. Relevant policies include: attendance, leave, availability and form of alternative work schedules, compensation, lack of written objectives regarding hiring and promotion criteria etc.

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