

OVERVIEW OF HUMAN RESOURCE ENVIRONMENT WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO IMPACT OF GENDER GAP ON ORGANIZATIONAL GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

The term “Gender” is quite often used to refer about a person being male or female. Whereas, the term gender-gap is majorly denoted to express the ratio of male to female. Both the terms gender and gender gap are widely used in various environments such as organizational, political, sociological, cultural, economic, legal and educational context. The term is very crucial in understanding certain challenges these environments facing and posing at an organizational level. However, the present research paper focused on Gender gap from the angle of Human Resource Environment. HR environment consisting of workforce or human capital is backbone for running any organization successfully. However, HR environment is clothed with certain external environmental barriers like legal, societal, economic, political, technological and cultural environments. Gender being comes under both internal and external environments. Organizations have to deal with this subject very carefully. At this juncture, from the context of organization, the subject of gender gap is to be verified from many folds. The current research paper is intended to address this phenomenon.

Another observation from the literature is that organizations are focusing towards their major objective of wealth maximization. In fact, the major objective of Organizational Development (OD) is wealth maximization itself. In order to achieve this objective, organizations usually resorts to various techniques or interventions of Organizational Development in the form of strategies. The term gender generally is crucial, while assessing an organization’s internal environment, especially human resource environment. The current research paper signifies the impact of Gender on Organizational Development. Though gender is a significant factor in deciding various facets of organizational development, organizations have to come up with strategies, especially on one of the important area like “workforce composition”. Organizations are adopting different practices and policies to deal with the situation and the current research paper focusses on the dimension of workforce composition in different contexts. Much of progressive researches focused on “Gender” under the umbrella of “Gender Equality” but not focused on the impact of “Gender gap” on organizational growth and development. The present research paper caters to this need by raising certain fundamental questions with respect to “Gender gap”.

Keywords: Work Force Composition, Equity, CSR and Organizational Development.

INTRODUCTION

Gender is defined as per “*Gender Theory in Sociology*” as psychological, social and cultural differences between males and females, it is mostly about masculinity and femininity and it is not specifically about biological sex (Giddens, 2009).

Gender is a significant term in human life. In the case of business, especially in wake of globalization and privatization the term becomes further significant. Though the term is significant, majority of the studies focused on as a whole on the term “*Gender gap*”. Gender gap is widely prevalent throughout the globe. One way to reduce this gap is bringing parity in male and female sex ratio. Whereas, as per certain researches business is meant for business only (Friedman, 1970), at this juncture, a plethora of questions are rising before the progress and prosperity of business. They are as follows:

1. Compliance of business to societal norms from the context of gender gap

Ever since civilization started, human behavior and development is much dependent on societal norms. Though norms vary from country to country, yet organizations also have their own norms intending towards their own growth and survival. A plethora of business, corporate, labour and other laws are in vogue throughout the globe. All these laws have intended for progressive society and betterment of that domain. A large number of laws are getting passing through with respect to the area of “*Gender gap*”. Much of the laws relating to “*Gender gap*” focused on equality in all terms with respect to the rights of women in comparison to male counterparts.

2. Growing concern of CSR

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is another area of concern for business organizations to follow or not follow is still debatable. However, CSR has not mandated specifically allocation of jobs equally to men and women. Yet, in case, if corporate bodies take the Gender gap from CSR angle and distributes the workforce composition equally and labeling it as CSR can be a concern of today’s CSR mantra.

3. Whether gender gap can be offset, through “*diversity*” in organizations?

There is one more version, which has intended for following by organizations is “*diversity*”. An organization, which has more diversified in terms of varied groups in the composition of workforce results in better growth as per some of the researches. However, diversity is expressed not completely by referring to gender alone, the researchers have taken into consideration various other aspects like culture, race, communities etc. Therefore, gender as a basis with respect to diversity is to be tested.

With these questions in vogue, organizations are focusing towards their major objective of wealth maximization. In fact, the major objective of Organizational Development (OD) is wealth maximization itself. In order to achieve this objective, organizations usually resorts to various techniques or interventions of Organizational Development in the form of strategies. The term gender generally is crucial, while assessing an organization’s internal environment, especially human resource environment. HR environment consisting of workforce or human

capital is backbone for running any organization successfully. However, HR environment is clothed by certain external environmental barriers, like legal, societal, economic, political, technological and cultural environments. Gender being comes under both internal and external environments. Organizations have to deal with this subject very carefully. At this juncture, from the context of organization, the subject of gender gap is to be verified from many folds.

Keeping in mind, the above introduction and discussion, the current research has generated certain propositions, which needs to be answered either by theories on gender gap or future research.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The current research is primarily an inter-disciplinary research and is based on the existing literature available on the theme “*Gender gap*”; especially the research is intended to test the existing theory of gender as per sociology.

In sociology, Symbolic interaction theory proposes or rather claims concepts such as - race, ethnicity or gender-are not naturally and objectively existed in the society, but they occurred through society. Society named “*females*” or “*males*” are endowed with distinct character features defined as feminine or masculine. Gender does not exist by itself, but with the interaction among people in society (Lindsey, 2015).

Though this theory does not say anything about goodness or badness of gender. Instead, they see gender as a factor, which provides us to form a relationship in daily life. On the other hand, gender put the men into the control center of society, and makes males people who shape the behaviors in society. Females have behavior that is more coherent in a typical way, on the other hand males have tendency to make interactions (Macionis, 2010). Likewise, symbolic theory there is another theory called “*Feminist theory*” which is known as still alive theory in society about gender. Feminism is supporter for social equality of men and women and against to sexism and patriarchy (Macionis, 2010).

The present research also focused the crucial theory of wealth maximization, which is the essence of Organizational Development. The early theories focused on the theme that “*shareholder wealth maximization is a norm*” of corporate governance (Macey, 2010). The topic of wealth maximization in today’s scenario is subjected to a host of factors to say ethics and law.

Though these theories may be correct from the context of sociological front but from the view point of business the same has to test on certain propositions and the current research has given certain propositions, which are built as per logical reasoning and observation by proposing four Research Questions (RQs) from the point of view of business. RQs are formulated through review of literature.

Proposition 1 (Research Question 1)

RQ 1: Does the gender-gap and workforce composition are connected together? Whether has it any impact on organizational development?

A study was conducted by Gardiner & Tiggemann (1999) on the impact of gender composition of the organization on gender differences in leader behavior, when they studied an equal number of male and female managers in several male-dominated and female-dominated industries. It was observed that in female-dominated industries (e.g., nursing, early childhood

education) women were more people-oriented. They were more tasks oriented in male-dominated industries (e.g., accounting, timber industry, and academia). Further, it was observed that female is more task oriented than male in certain industries.

In a research study made by Eagly et al. (1995) showed support for gender composition as a contextual variable that moderates leader behavior. In their study, male and female leaders were found to be equally effective but men were found to be more effective than women in situations in which both leader and follower roles were numerically dominated by men, as well as in roles that were defined in stereotypical masculine terms. In a research analysis it was shown that female managers are somewhat more transformational than male managers (Eagly et al., 2003).

Eagly et al. (1992) found that the devaluation of female leaders was greater when leaders occupied male-dominated roles than for roles occupied equally by both sexes, and it was greater when the evaluators were men. There are no concrete evidences that if the workforce composition consists without gender gap results in organizational development, yet the studies are showing that the gap can be wider suiting industry specific or organizational requirements.

Proposition 2 (Research Question 2)

RQ 2: Whether gender-gap is significant factor for the growth of Organization?

Henry Fayol (1916) in his book “*General and Industrial Management*” in the year 1929 mentioned that organizations in order to succeed have to follow certain principles and accordingly he has given 14 principles of management out of which one important principle is “*Division of Work*”. Division of work principle talks about the overall action of management should be divided into a compact job and employees should be allocated certain jobs by viewing their interest and skills. This principle helps in specialization and helps to make the workers more effective and efficient. Division of work is important in technical level as well as at managerial level in an organization for smooth operation. In a research study through a meta-analysis it was found that female leaders, on the average, are more democratic and participative than their male counterparts (Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Van Engen & Willemsen, 2004).

In a study made by Eagly (1987), Wood & Eagly (2012) it was observed that individuals develop descriptive and prescriptive gender role expectations of others’ behavior based on an evolutionary sex-based division of labor. This division of labor has traditionally associated men with breadwinner positions and women with homemaker positions. Accordingly, gender gap can be best utilized keeping in mind the interest and skill of gender. Therefore, can jobs and skill sets have to be defined first, and have to be filled up as per the requirements and not as per the gender? This question has to be addressed from the point of view of gender.

Proposition 3 (Research Question 3)

RQ 3: What percentage of gender-gap is required to be maintained for growth and organizational development?

In a study made by Enarson (1984) it was argued that the process of recruitment and selection is a process of finding the worker most suited for a particular position. In the views of the employer, gender and race of existing jobholders at least partially define who is suitable, although prospective coworkers may also do such defining. Further as per Rosser (2003)

perceptions plays predominant role, while hiring, generally female may be preferred for certain jobs. Salzinger (2003) mentioned that the ideal worker for many jobs is a woman, particularly a woman who, employers believe, is compliant, who will accept order and low wages. Much of the literature talks about equality of gender, but have not directed towards ideal percentile or rate, which can contribute towards organizational growth and development.

Proposition 4 (Research Question 4)

RQ 4: Is there any industry benchmarks/acceptable rate to be maintained for maintaining diversity in Organizations?

Diversity is classified in a number of ways. Majority of the classifications are based on perceptions and are dichotomous. Majority of the classifications can be in the form of readily detectable/less observable, surface-level/deep-level, highly job-related/less job related, task-related/relations-oriented and role-related/ inherent dimensions (Christian et al., 2006). As per Esty et al. (1995) diversity can be defined as acknowledging, understanding, accepting, and valuing differences among people with respect to age, class, race, ethnicity, gender, disabilities, etc. Companies need to embrace diversity and look for ways to become inclusive organizations because diversity has the potential to yield greater work productivity and competitive advantages (SHRM, 1995). Stephen Butler, co-chair of the Business-Higher Education Forum, believes diversity is an invaluable competitive asset (Robinson, 2002). As per role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders proposes that perceived incongruity between the female gender role and leadership roles leads to two forms of prejudice: (a) perceiving women less favourably than men as potential occupants of leadership roles and (b) evaluating behaviour that fulfils the prescriptions of a leader role less favorably when it is enacted by a woman. (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Managing diversity is a key component of effective people management in the workplace (Black Enterprise, 2001). Cox & Blake (1991) proposed that cultural diversity would impact six direct aspects of organizational effectiveness, including the capability to attract human resources, cost, the issues of innovation, creativity, and problem solving, the marketing advantages of a diverse workforce, and organizational flexibility. Though organizations trying to become diversified yet the research has not shown any scientific rates, which are to be maintained to manage diversity.

CONCLUSION

As per survey conducted globally, the deficit in the employment rates between men and women stands at 16 points, for men the employment rate is 34% in comparison to 18% for women across 140 countries all over the world. Is it really an alarming sign? The problem of “*Gender gap*” has happened due to a wide variety of factors. Now it is the time to formulate a strategically approved bases for organizational development and growth by focusing its eye on “*Women empowerment rather than on Gender Equalities*”. The HR departments have to follow a comprehensive long-term human resource plan with a well thought of course of action to deal with the issue of “*Gender gap*” as per the mandate of International Labour Organization, even though the current research paper argues with the usage of word “*Gender Equality*”.

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