Research Paper

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GENDER DISCRIMINATION AMONG WORKERS IN SERVICE SECTOR: A STUDY OF ITES EMPLOYEES IN COIMBATORE CITY

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ABSTRACT

Women play a crucial role in the socio-economic development of a country. Despite the unprecedented growth and development, women's position has worsened considerably in every sphere with the exception of some gains for middle class women in terms of education and employment. Gender disparities in women's economic participation have remained deep and. persistent in India. The current study was based on primary data. 500 samples have been selected using stratified proportional sampling technique. Equal representations of 250 male and female respondents were selected. The study focuses on gender discrimination in ITES (Information Technology Enabled Services) sector. Results supported a model in which perceived gender discrimination exerted a significant negative effect on job satisfaction which in turn negatively impacts career or professional growth. Thus there was certain amount of discrimination in ITES organization in terms of payment provided for both male and female employees.

KEY WORDS: Gender discrimination, ITES organisation, Employment, Workplace

INTRODUCTION

India achieved unprecedented economic growth and made noteworthy advances in the fields of science, agriculture, medicine and information technology (CSNSI 2008; Pathak and Singh 2011). The development of a nation cannot only be measured through the technological and materialistic advances, but through the quality of life the people live. The growth of a nation lies in its capacity to elevate the status of the weakest section of its society especially women. Women play a crucial role in the socio-economic development of a country. Despite the unprecedented growth and development, women's position has worsened considerably in every sphere with the exception of some gains for middle class women in terms of education and employment. Gender disparities in women's economic participation have remained deep and persistent in India. There is an alarming rise in the rates of gender discrimination at workplaces nowadays. Discrimination at work can come from either the employee or from the colleague side. Discrimination by colleagues can happen to new employees. However, if it persists for a long time, it can affect not only the employee but also the employer. The effect on the employee can be huge or meager but the impact on organization remains for a longer time.

In ITES sector, the employees are literate and skilled; they have similar education, age, eligibility etc.

Still discrimination occurs in this sector. In the first phase of IT revolution, women mostly find jobs in the lower end work such as data entry and word processing, and assembly of electronic components. However, as manufacturing advances and manual jobs become obsolete, women found new opportunities in services such as information processing, software development, and call center support. It is undeniable that Indian women have made significant inroad into the higher value added segments of the IT industry. But NSSO estimates as Chandrashekhar and Ghosh (2008) explains, the newer activities that are much cited such as IT and finance continue to absorb only a tiny proportion of urban women workers. Women workers in all IT-related activities that is, computer hardware and software as well as IT-enabled services account for only 0.3 per cent of the urban women workers in large sample, amounting to an estimated total of 74,000 workers at most. Software and ITES segment are employing more women and brand themselves as women friendly industries. In Indian software sector, in spite of continuously increasing number of female employees at entry level as per NASSCOM-PWC Report (2010), number of women at middle management and top management level is stagnant at 11 percent and 1.5 percent. At entry level female labor force is increasing steadily and their proportion has reached now 45 percent. But this higher number at entry level doesn't ensure equal representation at higher level which is evidenced as 'leaky pipe line'. Moreover, it is believed that female employees in ITES at times face discrimination in compensation, recruitment, promotion, participation in decision making, leadership roles etc.

OBJECTIVES

The specific objectives of the study are

1. To examine the socio-economic profile of the selected respondents.
2. To identify the gender differences in employment factors.
3. To assess the interrelation between perceived gender discrimination at workplace and professional growth for female employees.
4. To recommend policies to reduce gender discrimination.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Anders Frederiksen and Timothy Halliday (2015) presented a study on Why are there so few women in executive positions? The study establish that there are few women in executive management because they have lower levels of human capital, are underrepresented in lower-level jobs, and are less likely to be perceived as high-productivity employees. The results showed that observable gender differences in the employment composition at lower ranks and education levels explain part of the gender gap in executive employment. This implies that the gender gap was caused by factors that are unrelated to education and sector choice, which makes it particularly difficult to influence through policy.

Ashish Singh (2015) analyses the differences between the wages of female and male who had similar academic ability at the school level. The analysis uses data from a nationally representative household survey and both non-parametric as well as parametric approach for estimation. The findings reveal that, for the same level of academic ability, men earn substantially and significantly higher wages than their women counterparts. The results clearly indicate that despite controlling for socio-economic, cohort and labour market related factors, the wages of females are significantly lower than that of the males.

Surendra Kumar Sia et.al (2015) examined the contribution of perceived gender discrimination to work engagement, the contribution of future time perspective (FTP) to work engagement and more importantly, the moderating role of FTP on the relationship between perceived gender discrimination and work engagement. Based on a social cognitive frame work, it was hypothesized that FTP was positively related to work engagement. Further, it was also expected that FTP would work as a compensatory motivational resource and weaken the negative relationship between gender discrimination and work engagement. Results indicate that FTP had a positive relationship with physical, cognitive as well as emotional engagement of the respondents.

METHODOLOGY

The study was based on primary data. The primary data was collected with the help of a questionnaire which was collected from the sample respondents by administering a pretested questionnaire during the period August 2012 - January 2013. By adopting stratified proportional sampling technique the sample of 500 were distributed across the zones which include 121 from North, 51 from South, 98 from East, 113 from West and 117 from Central zone. Equal representations of 250 male and female respondents were selected. The collected data were tabulated and analysed using statistical tools like Likert scaling and Path analysis.

FINDINGS
I. Socio-Demographic Profile

In order to develop a proper perspective analysis, all major components of social environment must be considered.

Religion

Gender-wise classification reveals the domination of Hindus (76.8 percent), among male employees followed by Christians (19.6 percent) and Muslims (3.6 percent). Majority (78 percent) of female employees belonging to Hindu religion preferred working in ITES organization.

Community

A peculiar type of social grouping which is found in India is the caste grouping. Community-wise analysis revealed that a majority of the employees belong to backward caste, (69 percent) followed by general category (14 percent), most backward caste (13 percent) and scheduled caste (4.6 percent). Gender-wise also backward caste was predominant in both the groups.

TABLE - 1
DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BASED ON SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS

(in numbers)

Particulars Gender	Male	Female	All
Religion			
Hindu	192 (77)	196 (79)	388(78)
Christian	49(20)	46 (18)	95(19)
Muslim	9 (3)	8 (3)	17(3)
Total	**250**	**250**	**500**
Community			
General	36 (14)	33(13)	69 (14)
Backward Class	152 (61)	191 (77)	343 (69)
Most Backward Class	42 (17)	23 (9)	65 (13)
Scheduled Class	20 (8)	3 (1)	23(4)
Total	**250**	**250**	**500**
Age of the respondents			
20 – 25	168 (67)	175 (70)	343(69)
26 – 30	56 (22)	57(23)	113(23)
31 – 35	24(10)	18(7)	42(8)
35 & Above	2(1)	0(0)	2(0)
Total	**250**	**250**	**500**
Marital status			
Single	203(81)	201(80)	404(81)
Married	47(19)	49(20)	96(19)
Total	**250**	**250**	**500**
Income (₹)			
Less than or equal to 8000	64(26)	80(32)	144(29)
8001 to 12000	46(18)	56(22)	102(20)
12001 to 16000	39(16)	41(17)	80(16)
Greater than 16000	101(40)	73(29)	174(35)
Total	**250**	**250**	**500**

Source: Based on field survey, 2012-13.

Figures within parentheses indicate column percentage.

Age of the respondents

Gender-wise analysis reveals that 67 percent of male respondents and 70 percent of female respondents also belong to the age category 20-25 years. Thus a large proportion of the ITES employees in both groups were in their early twenties.

Marital Status

Gender-wise, 81 percent of male respondents and 80 percent of female respondents were unmarried. Thus the predominance of unmarried persons was more among the employees in ITES organizations.

Income of the respondents

Out of 500 respondents, a maximum of 35 percent of the respondents are earning an income greater than ₹ 16000 in the ITES organization. Gender-wise analysis reveals that a while 40 percent of male employees earn an income greater than 16000, this proportion was only 29 percent for the female employees. While 32 percent of female employees earned an income of less than or equal to 8000 from ITES organization, this percentage was 26 percent for males. The nature of

income distribution was positively skewed for male employees with more concentration at higher income scale, while it was more heavily concentrated in the bottom income scale for females. Thus female employees earned less when compared to males.

II. Employment factors
A.Job Title

The distribution of respondents based on Job title has been depicted in the table –2 .

TABLE - 2
DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BASED ON JOB TITLE
(in numbers)

Gender / Job Title	Male	Female	All
Programmer analyst	41(16)	11(5)	52(11)
Software tester	14(6)	5(2)	19(4)
Android trainer	18(7)	3(1)	21(4)
Team leader	11(4)	26(10)	37(7)
System analyst	39(16)	21(8)	60(12)
Programmer	41(16)	84(34)	125(25)
Data analyst	19(8)	5(2)	24(5)
Graphic designer	15(6)	10(4)	25(5)
Customer support service	35(14)	65(26)	100(20)
Process associate	17(7)	20(8)	37(7)
Total	**250**	**250**	**500**

Source: Based on field survey, 2012-13.

Figures within parentheses indicate column percentage.

Gender-wise, maximum of 34 percent female employees work as programmer followed by 26 percent in customer support service, and only a few female employees work as system analyst, android trainer and data analyst. A majority of 16 percent male employees work as system analyst and programmer. Thus job title showed significant gender differences with greater

concentration of female employees as programmer or customer support staff while males were working in higher end jobs such as system analyst, trainer etc.

B.Employment Details

The distribution of respondents based on employment details is presented in table- 3.

TABLE - 3
DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BASED ON EMPLOYMENT DETAILS

(in numbers)

Gender / Particulars	Male	Female	All
Age of entry of respondents in the job			
21	17(7)	8(3)	25(5)
22	70(28)	106(42)	176(35)
23	67(27)	50(20)	117(23)
24	45(18)	38(15)	83(17)
25	27(11)	18(8)	45(9)
25 & ABOVE	24(9)	30(12)	54(11)
Total	**250**	**250**	**500**
Respondents experience			
< 2	191 (76)	212(85)	403(81)
2 - 5	37(15)	34(14)	71(14)
> 5	22(9)	4(1)	26(5)
Total	**250**	**250**	**500**

Source: Based on field survey, 2012-13.

Figures within parentheses indicate column percentage.

Age of entry of respondents in the job

Gender-wise, a maximum of 42 percent female employees and 28 percent of male employees entered the job at the age of 22. And only nine percent of male employees entered the job after 25 years.

Respondent's experience

The analysis of total experience of the respondents in ITES organization shows that a maximum of 81 percent of the respondents had an experience of less than two years, which includes 76 percent of male and 85 percent of female employees. And a minimum of five percent of employees had an experience of more than five years, of which nine percent were males and one percent were females. Thus female employees were not continuing the job on sustainable basis in ITES organization.

III. Emoluments

The distribution of respondents based on equal payment has been depicted in table - 4.

Equal Pay

About 68 percent of the respondents opined that there was no wage differentials based on gender while 32 percent have stated there was wage differentials. Gender-wise, 69 percent of male and 66 percent of female

employees have opined that they were receiving equal payment and about one third of them opined that there was wage differential. Thus there was certain amount of discrimination in ITES organization in terms of payment provided for both male and female employees. Steyn, Renier,Jackson and Leon (2014) focused on the point that discrimination at remuneration level seems to favour men, allowing them to receive higher salaries than women at the same organisational level.

TABLE -4
DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BASED ON EQUAL PAYMENT
(in numbers)

Gender Particulars	Male	Female	All
Equal pay			
Yes	173(69)	165(66)	338(68)
No	77(31)	85(34)	162(32)
Total	250	250	500
Who has received more payment			
Male	58(75)	78(92)	136(84)
Female	19(25)	07(8)	26(16)
Total	77	85	162

Source: Based on field survey, 2012-13.

Figures within parenthesis indicate column percentage.

Receiving more payment

From the above table it is evident that 32 percent (162 respondents) are of the view that they were not provided with equal payment. There has been discrimination in providing payment to ITES employees. It is found that 75 percent of male respondents and 92 percent of female respondents stressed that male employees were receiving more payment compared to female employees. About 25 percent of male respondents and eight percent of female respondents stressed that female were receiving more payment. An analysis of the results revealed that the main concern that women have their perception that their male counterpart are paid more than them for similar type of job. A study by Katam Reddy (2008) also come to the similar conclusion that 70 percent of women feel that they have faced some form of discrimination either in the nature of job they handle or the level of salary they get.

IV. Gender discrimination at workplace

With increasing number of women finding their way into the corporate arena, the issue of gender equality has become important. This is more so because work discrimination and sexual harassment are found to exist even though there are a greater percentage of women in the workforce (Fitzgerald et al., 1997; Gruber & Bjorn, 1982). The barriers faced by women in their work environments can take several forms like limited options in terms of the work that they perform; differential pay; poor career progression; gender segregation etc. It is quite surprising that despite the rapid progress made by women, and the able support received by government regulators, there is still so much gap between the status of men and women workers across the world.

Equality and fairness in the workplace needs to be assessed by the perceptions of the affected people within the organization. Gender discrimination turns the employees emotionally brittle, simple peace loving employees transform into paranoid and suspicious, fearful and angry individuals. In the workplace, tension among employees can reduce productivity and result in additional cost in terms of employee absenteeism, low turnover, legal suits, unrest etc. Elimination of gender

discrimination is therefore crucial for the satisfaction and motivation, commitment and enthusiasm and less stress of the employees. While the issue of equal opportunity has been slowly gaining ground in Indian companies, especially in the wake of increased globalisation, it was felt that a reality check at this stage would be helpful in evaluating the position of Indian firms in adopting these policies and making the minority social group especially women feel comfortable with the policies that are adopted in ensuring equal treatment. An attempt was made to see whether the employees

differ with respect to various dimensions of gender discrimination. Five point rating scale was used to collect the opinion of employees on various dimensions of gender discrimination and total score was obtained. The null hypothesis tested was

Ho: There were no gender differences across various dimensions of gender discrimination.

Ha: There were significant gender differences across various dimensions of gender discrimination. The estimated results are shown in table -5 below.

TABLE -5
TESTING FOR DIFFERENCES ACROSS GENDER ON PERCEIVED GENDER DISCRIMINATION SCORES

| Variable	Gender	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	F Values	Significance
Gender	Male	250	27.86	4.66		
Discrimination	Female	250	28.83	4.78	5.258	.022
Scores	All	500	28.34	4.74		

Source: Estimation based on field survey,2012-13.

From the table it is evident that there was a significant difference among male and female employees on the perceived gender dimension scores at 5 percent level. The average gender discrimination score (28.83) was marginally higher for female employees when compared to male employees (27.86). Thus women perceived a differential treatment at workplace.

Gender Discrimination Model

Given that women had higher discrimination score, Partial Least Square Method (PLS) was used to evaluate the views of female employees on how perceived gender discrimination has affected their

professional career. In the study the variables considered were perceived gender discrimination(DIS), work place harassment(WPH), career growth hindrances(CGH), job satisfaction(JS) and professional growth(PG). The model proposed for analysing the interrelationship among the variables was that greater perceptions of pervasive prejudice against one's own group will exert a direct effect on work place harassment and career growth and a negative impact on job satisfaction and indirectly affect professional growth. To test these hypothesised predictions, the following model was specified in (figure -1).

FIGURE -1
PROPOSED PATH MODEL
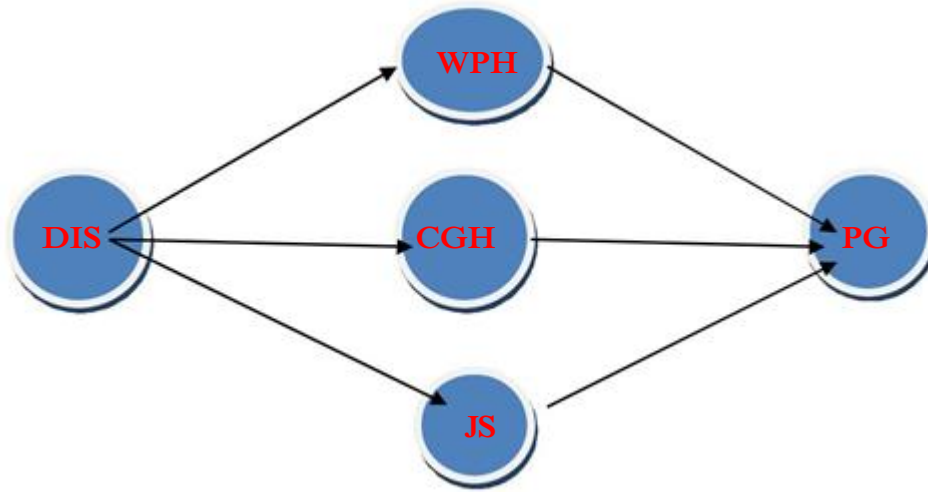
Five point Likert scale was used to ask the respondents how strongly they agree or disagree with a statement. Rating or Scale questions were used to collect opinion data from the respondents regarding the gender discrimination, work place harassment, career growth hindrance, job satisfaction and professional growth.

Scale Reliability

Reliability of Gender Discrimination scale, having six questions was 0.759 which was more than the required norm of 0.70. Hence this scale was reliable. Reliability of work place harassment, career growth hindrances, job satisfaction and professional growth were 0.792, 0.733, 0.854 and 0.765 respectively establishing the reliability of the scales used for measuring the variables.

Composite Reliability and Convergent Validity

The reliability of the constructs refers to the accuracy with which the constructs repeatedly measure the same phenomenon within permissible variation. The composite reliability for internal consistency of the constructs should be above 0.7. The convergent validity of each construct was checked by examining the Average Variance Extracted' (AVE) values. Constructs which have AVE values greater than 0.5 are said to have convergent validity or unidimensionality. In some cases, values up to 0.4 are also considered if they are central to the model (Chin, 1998; Chin & Newsted, 1999; Chin et al, 2003). The composite reliability and the AVE values of the five constructs used in the study were carried out using VPLS software which is presented in table -6 below.

TABLE - 6
RELIABILITY AND AVE VALUES

Constructs	Composite Reliability	AVE
Gender Discrimination	0.82795	0.644671
Work Place Harassment	0.85576	0.54938
Career Growth Hindrances	0.82338	0.58276
Job Satisfaction	0.873534	0.54932
Professional Growth	0.83972	0.51992

Source: Estimation based on field survey,2012-13.

The reliability of the constructs refers to the accuracy with which the constructs repeatedly measure the same phenomenon within permissible variation. The composite reliability for internal consistency of the constructs was tested and was above 0.7. The convergent validity of each construct was checked by examining the Average Variance Extracted' (AVE) values.

The AVE scores for all the constructs are greater than 0.5 indicating sufficient convergent validity.

The study aims at examining the impact of gender discrimination on work place harassment, career growth hindrance and job satisfaction and in turn on professional growth. The hypothesis formulated was:

H1: Gender discrimination increases work place harassment.

H2: Gender discrimination causes career growth hindrances.

H3: Gender discrimination negatively influences job satisfaction.

H4: Work place harassment negatively impacts professional growth.

H5: Career growth hindrances negatively impacts professional growth.

H6: Decrease in job satisfaction causes a decline in professional growth

The estimated path model for female employees is shown in figure -2

Figure - 2
PATH MODEL
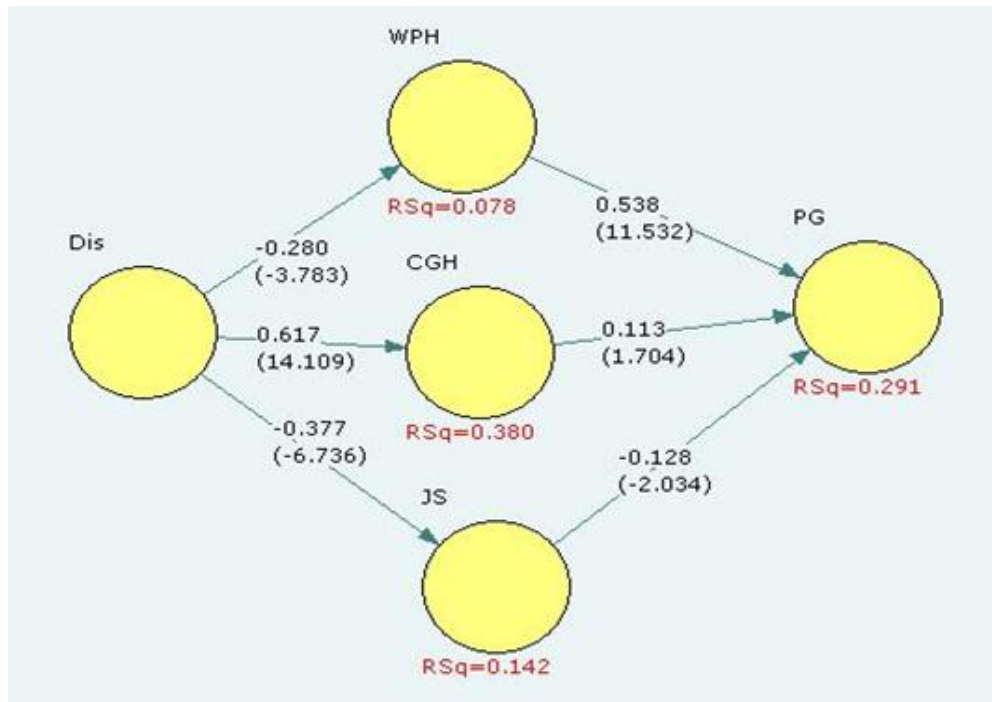
A path to be significant, its t value needs to be greater than 1.96. The analysis of the above diagram reveals that the path between perceived gender discrimination and work place harassment was found to be significant, though the path coefficient was negative. The path coefficient was -0.280 and t value was -3.783 which was greater than 1.96 (ignoring the sign). This is contrary to the hypothesis framed that perceived gender discrimination tend to increase the perceived work place harassment This may be because women are less worried about harassment at work place and more passionate to achieve equal opportunities.

The path between perceived discrimination and career growth hindrances was positive and significant. The path coefficient was 0.617 and the t value = 14.109. An increase in the perception of gender discrimination makes women to feel that they are not being fairly treated or given equal opportunities in all matters related to their jobs. The barriers faced by women in their work environments can take several forms likelimited options in terms of the work that they perform;

differential pay; poor career progression; gender segregation which presumes that women are suitable only for certain types of work and are not suitable for others. This phenomenon is being increasingly observed in India with the rapid rise in the service sector jobs especially the BPO sector (Katamreddy, 2008).

Job satisfaction and commitment to an organization are critical components of employee attitudes that are likely to be affected by perceived discrimination. Job satisfaction can be defined as a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one' s job or job experiences (Locke, 1976). The path between gender discrimination and satisfaction was negative and significant. The path coefficient was -o.377 and t value = -6.736. A study by Channar, Abbassi and ujan (2011) has also confirmed the above prediction that gender discrimination decreases satisfaction and motivation. Perceived discrimination contributed to higher work tension and decreased job satisfaction.

Workplace harassment, as a form of discrimination or otherwise, undermine personal and professional growth and negatively impacts upon the opportunity for individuals to work in an environment of mutual trust and respect. The path between workplace harassment and professional growth was found to be significantly (t value = 11.532) affecting professional growth. Hostility in the workplace increases the stress level of the workers causing a decline in productivity and thus abating their professional growth. On an average about 13 percent of men and about 15 percent of women were subjected to adverse social behavior. The levels of subjection to adverse social behavior were highest in health care sector and transport, and lowest in agriculture and construction (Eurofound, 2012).

The path between career growth hindrances and professional growth was found to be positive, but insignificant. Professional growth based upon their perceptions of problems and issues women face in their professional lives. Supporting conditions such as needs and satisfaction, high self-esteem and better performance, empathy, caring, psychological freedom and safety, effective communication can facilitate the process of professional growth. In some societies however, women do not have equal access to these supporting conditions to enable them develop their professional careers. When women face restrictions or hindrances in her career this definitely affect her professional growth. In the present study sign of the coefficient was positive contrary to the assumption made, but insignificance of the coefficient indicates the variable was not a determinant of professional growth for the selected women employees.

Professional growth is directly linked with job satisfaction. As the employees becomes more satisfied with their organization, they may not want to leave their organization and also their organization would also like to retain their employees to achieve its objectives and long term corporate goals (Shujaat, et.al, 2013). The path between job satisfaction and professional growth was negative and significant. The path coefficient was -0.128 and t value = - 2.034. Perceived gender discrimination negatively impacts job satisfaction. As the perceived job satisfaction level decreases, it negatively impacts the professional development of the women employees. Findings are consistent with the results of the previous studies done on Korean workers where career growth was negatively related to job satisfaction (Baik, 2001; Lee, 2004; Lee & Park, 2001). Lumely,et.al (2011) observe that in order to create a working environment that encourages people to stay with their respective organisations, managers need to review existing pay practices so as to offer fair pay, provide challenging and meaningful work tasks, and foster positive co-worker relationships.

Results supported a model in which perceived gender discrimination exerted a significant negative effect on job satisfaction which in turn negatively impacts career or professional growth.

CONCLUSION

The findings also suggest that the mere participation in a modern sector occupation (such as ITES / IT) alone need not necessarily lead to empowerment or emancipation of women from the clutches of traditionally rooted social norms. On the contrary, even such occupations are built on the traditional structures of gendered divisions, reinforcing the marginalization of women in the labour market. A nation or society, without the participation of women cannot achieve development. If we eliminate gender discrimination, women will deliver all the potentials, skills, knowledge to develop the family, the nation and the whole world.

RECOMMENDATIONS

✓ Efforts must be made to integrate gender equality dimensions into national development planning and budgeting. Government must ensure effective steps are in place to strengthen and monitor progress to eliminate gender bias at workplaces.

✓ Gender discrimination often results from a lack of diversity within an organization. A company with an unequal representation of the sexes could intentionally or unintentionally discriminate against the minority group. To reduce or eliminate gender discrimination, companies should create a well-defined diversity and inclusion program. These programs should promote gender diversity through recruitment and retention efforts, employee awareness and gender-specific accountability measures.

✓ Employers can approach gender discrimination by implementing gender-related education and training programs. Education and training initiatives help employees explore attitudes and belief systems about gender topics. The programs helps to establish interpersonal relationships and discourage gender discrimination in the workplace.

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