Abstract

As women join the workforce in greater numbers, they continue to face challenges in climbing the organizational hierarchy and maintaining a work-life balance. Organization in the developed economies have adopted equal employment opportunity or affirmative action policies to deliver social justice for women in the workplaces, however, their efficacy in achieving the same is under question/attack. The Indian context, on the other hand, is highly patriarchal and is devoid of stringent regulations to curb discrimination against women. The Indian context provides a unique opportunity to study the rationales of gender diversity management policies and practices, which have been lately in vogue in Indian workplaces.

The Indian IT/ITeS industry boasts of being one of the biggest employers of women in India and is considered gender-neutral in nature. Research provides evidence that service organizations accrue more benefit because of gender diversity when compared to manufacturing organizations. However, questions keep arising whether diversity management is an act of window-dressing. An examination of the differences between adoption and implementation of gender diversity management can demonstrate whether gender diversity management is a façade and therefore limited in its impetus to improve the status of women in the organization. The Indian IT/ITeS industry was hence chosen to answer the following research questions:

a. What are the rationales for adoption of gender diversity management policies and practices?

b. Does gender diversity management improve the gender distribution in the organization?

c. Does adoption of gender diversity management lead to higher levels of implementation ?

d. Does implementation of gender diversity management improve the gender distribution in the organization ?

e. Does implementation of gender diversity management mediate the relationship between adoption of gender diversity management and gender distribution in the organization.

Surveys and semi-structured interviews were conducted with top management representatives, Human Resources or Diversity Heads, and line managers from 109 different organizations across India. Multi-variate regression analysis showed that size of the organization, the influence of external organizations, and enhanced organizational flexibility owing to gender diversity, explain the adoption of gender diversity management in the Indian IT/ITeS industry. Adoption of gender diversity management had a weak influence on the overall percentage of women in the organization and didn't explain the gender distribution in the management positions. Adoption of gender diversity management had a significant influence on implementation of gender diversity management. Extent of implementation was found to mediate the relationship between adoption of gender diversity management and percentage of women in the organization.

This study provides evidence that organizations exercise individual agency and adopt gender diversity management because it is economically rational. It is important to note that a weak regulatory environment provides the leeway for organizations to adopt these gender diversity management policies that seem to benefit them. Gender diversity management attempts to create an inclusive environment for both genders and enables them to perform to their fullest potential to achieve organizational goals. However, organizational goals may not include improvement of gender distribution as one of its objectives and this may not lead to improvement of status of women in the organization. Interestingly, there are differences in the way gender diversity management is implemented from the way it was originally

intended. For example, the utilization of work-life balance practices reduces the percentage of women in the organization as managers tend to use gendered definitions of merit in assessing the woman employee's potential for growth and development. On the other hand, training initiatives focussed on sensitizing and involving line managers in their gender diversity management responsibilities improve the percentage of women employees in the organization. This study demonstrates that the career progression of a woman is always not completely explained by the organizational policies or practices but also by the choices which she makes as a response to her environment.