

Influence of Gender Differences in Selection Process of Higher Managerial Post– case study

faiz.marikar@fulbrightmail.org Marikar

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The status of males and females is an important concept for cross-cultural research. Lack of proper understanding on the part of researchers about understanding of gender inequity and equality increase the potentials for malpractice. In this article we highlight the importance of gender equality in the recruitment process in an organizational contexts. Using an administrative staff in Sri Lanka that studies social roles, we examined, use of impression in how males and females are playing a major role in an organizational setting for gender differences in the selection process for a higher administrative post. We expected that men and women would generally be considered equally, but with gender role expectations this might not be advantageous to women in the corporate world. In the last 20 years, important initiatives have sought to empower women and address gender inequities in Sri Lanka. But many women's rights advocates have learned that improving the health and well-being of women generally requires engaging men, and they still do dominate. Our findings from this study supported our expectations are beyond gender equity, females prefer females as top managers and males prefer the males to dominate. We conclude with discussing the implications of these findings for an enriched understanding of organizational behavior. The study further emphasizes that there are substantial gender differences in the employment of higher management areas in organizational contexts due to existing social roles theory however it is changing rapidly in Sri Lanka with favor towards females.

Keywords

Higher Management post, Gender equity, Sri Lanka

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Background

Women comprise approximately 50% of today's workforce (Segal 1992). However, despite nearly equal representation in the workplace, there is a substantial gender difference in their career progression, as men progress faster and advance higher than their female counterparts. Several surveys on this issue illustrate this. Although nearly one half the workforce is comprised of women, they occupy only one-third of all management positions (Colwill 1993), and women are more likely to be junior or middle managers rather than senior executives. Only 3% of women in the workforce occupy senior management roles (Segal 1992).

In 2012, the United Nations agreed on the landmark United Nations System-Wide Action Plan (UN-SWAP) on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, to implement the gender equality policy of its highest executive body, the UN Chief Executives Board, chaired by the Secretary General. Spearheaded by UN Women, the UN-SWAP for the first time assigned common performance standards for the gender-related work of all UN entities, ensuring greater coherence and accountability.

Gender equality capacity assessment is a means of assessing the understanding, knowledge and skills that a given organization and individuals have on gender equality and the empowerment of women, and on the organization's gender architecture and gender policy. Capacity assessment refers to the process through which the information is gathered and analyzed and also to the results of this analysis.

When assessing the capacity of individuals, attention is paid to the knowledge, skills and attitudes that each person has regarding gender equality and the empowerment of women and the integration of these to their daily work. The information that will be gathered entails how much they know and understand about particular concepts (for example, gender equality, women's empowerment, etc.), policies (such as organizational gender strategy, gender mainstreaming strategy) and procedures (how gender equality should be reflected in procurement or recruitment processes, among others), as well as how capable they are of implementing all these and other processes. Capacity assessment at an organizational level evaluates what policies, strategies and procedures are in place to ensure that gender equality and the empowerment of women can adequately be included in the agency's mandate.

The Participatory Gender Audit, a methodology developed by the International Labour Law in Switzerland is a systematic, participatory and gender-sensitive methodology for analyzing how gender is mainstreamed within an organization or a part of it. Throughout their working lives, women continue to face significant obstacles in gaining access to decent work. Only marginal improvements have been achieved since the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, leaving large gaps to be covered in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by the United Nations in 2015. Inequality between women and men persists in global labour markets, in respect of opportunities, treatment and outcomes. Over the last two decades, women's significant progress in educational achievements has not translated into a comparable improvement in their position at work. In many regions in the world, in comparison to men, women are more likely to become and remain unemployed, have fewer chances to participate in the labour force and when they do often have to accept lower quality jobs. Progress in surmounting these obstacles has been slow and is limited to a few regions across the world. Even in many of those countries where gaps in labour force participation and employment have narrowed and where women are shifting away from contributing family work and moving to the services sector, the quality of women's jobs remains a matter of concern. The unequal distribution of unpaid care and household work between women and men and between families and the society is an important determinant of gender inequalities at work.

Transparency, Accountability, Gender Equality and Power

Although the terms ‘transparency’ and ‘accountability’ can seem ubiquitous these days, they are rarely defined with much rigor. The vagueness that surrounds these terms stems partly from the fact that they are used in relation to so many different issues (Florini 1999). However, the roots of most definitions of transparency and accountability are found in the literature of political sciences and governmental institutions (Neyland 2007; Siklos 2003; West *et al.* 1998). These studies stress that governmental organizations should be transparent, meaning that organizations are called upon to make internal aspects of the organization’s activity externally visible. The idea is that openness will reduce the scope for corruption or unethical practices. In this study, we define decisions or practices as ‘transparent’ when information about how they are carried out is accessible to insiders and outsiders in an accurate and comprehensible form. The purpose of transparency is closely connected to enabling outsiders to hold organizations accountable for their policies and performance (Florini 1999; Levay & Waks 2009). Institutions can be said to be transparent when they release information that is relevant to holding them accountable (Giddens 1984).

Gender equality programs frequently emphasize the importance of transparent appointment processes. Transparency is seen as a way of increasing the likelihood of a fairer process and reducing bias. Studies on gender mechanisms in organizations emphasize that transparency enhances women’s chances of promotion and decreases the chance of gender related bias (Allen 1998; Finland 1998; Ledwith & Simonetta. 2000; Rees 2004). All these studies argue that bias is more likely to occur if assessments are based on obscure criteria and the evaluation process is kept confidential.

Gender Equality Theories

Gender equality is a contested concept. Different conceptualizations underlie gender equality programs and those conceptualizations can be traced back to analytically distinct perspectives within feminist theory (Booth & Bennett 2002; Verloo 2005). The first perspective has been named the ‘equal opportunities’ or ‘equal treatment perspective’ and is based on liberal feminism: the idea that women and men are equal and therefore have equal rights, as well as equal access to and equal representation in public life. From this perspective, the aim of gender equality is to enable women and men to compete as equals in the workplace and the labor market and to create equal opportunities by eliminating structural and procedural barriers to women’s success (Meyerson & Kolb 2000).

Gender Laws in Sri Lanka

Today, we live in an environment recognized as an international standard and is perceived as a strategy for imposing alien and Western values on our government and our people. Politicians

and other public officials seem to have forgotten that as a member of the international community, the government of Sri Lanka has signed and agreed to be bound by international treaties like the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and International Labour Organization (ILO) instruments as well as international policy documents like the beginning platform for action and the millennium development goals. There is also increasing amnesia in regard to the manner in which our governments have, with civil society participation, introduced legislation incorporating international standards. Legislation such as the Penal Code Amendments in 1995 and (2006), the Maintenance Act in 1999, the Domestic Violence Act which was implemented in 2005, and the amendments on maternity leave and child labour have brought some commitments under international instruments to females to equalize the gender base equality. Therefore gender laws in Sri Lanka are super imposed by known other non-governmental organizations.

This article discusses the sample selection for a study designed to control gender equality in selection for a higher managerial post. The participants were men and women that applied for full-time, higher managerial posts in multinational companies. Here we report the problems we faced in participant recruitment and the strategies we used to produce a heterogeneous sample. Our study suggests that researchers who are committed to incorporating selection criteria is gender biased in this qualitative research designs.

Methodology

Objectives

This study was a part of a gender based equity and equality in Sri Lanka. The aim of this component of the study was to ascertain the level of understanding of 'research' with a particular emphasis on gender equity and equality research and the concept of voluntary informed consent by exploring the views of the top managerial post.

Protocol development process

Along with other components of the project, the initial protocol was subjected to revision based on comments from the seniors. Following a two day workshop on Leadership training, focus group meeting on the protocol were held to develop consensus. Three rounds of meeting were conducted where strategies for recruiting participant for the study were discussed in depth. Focus group participants felt that it was important to include people who had participated in research as well as people with no research participation experience.

Focus groups

Focus groups are a form of a group interview, which is a useful way to collect data from several people simultaneously. The group process can help people explore and clarify their views in ways that would not be conceivable in a one-to-one interview. During group sessions, rather than the

researcher asking each person to respond, participants are encouraged to talk to one another. This is useful for exploring people's knowledge and experiences and can be used to examine not only what people think but also how they think and why (Kitzinger 1995). Focus groups are useful in generating ideas, for example, finding out why people are not using a particular gender based service. Focus groups done away from home, among anonymous participants in a supportive setting, have been found to be useful for investigating topics of a sensitive nature such as abortion and sexual behavior (Khan 1991). They are also sensitive to cultural variables and therefore preferred in cross-cultural research. The group discussion led to a final decision to use convenience sampling (Bryman 2004).

Sample recruitment

Recruitment was carried out with an emphasis on balanced age and gender representation, diverse educational, socio-cultural and professional backgrounds and on those with previous research experience, either as researchers or participants. Participants were initially given a verbal description of the study aims and what would be required of them and then invited to participate. An information leaflet and consent form was also provided.

I have developed a case scenario to research the gender equality thinking patterns of well qualified state administrative sector employees in Sri Lanka. All of them are graduates working in the administrative sector as directors or in a similar capacity. The question which I asked in the focus group was "Equally qualified 47 year old man and 52 year old woman applied for a higher managerial post. Who are you going to recruit and what is the main reason for it, please give us the explanation?"

Data Collection

The research study used qualitative and quantitative data collection methods and included an analysis of 39 interviews with 3 focus group discussions; one group with males, one with females and a third one with males and females combined. For the purposes of this paper, we compare the recruitment and selection protocols with interview material from actual recruitment practices to understand the multiple ways in which these protocols were used, and how they enhanced, counteracted or stimulated gender equality.

The respondents were working in one of four major academic subfields; humanities, social sciences, natural sciences and medical sciences in state administrative services. The analytical focus of the interviews was recruitment and selection practices that is to say, what people say and do in their social interaction within organizations. The interviewees were asked to describe the recruitment process and highlight the arguments used by committee members to explain their choice of the nominated candidate. We encouraged the respondents to talk about concrete cases and incidents on the basis of anonymity, rather than in generalities. In an attempt to capture as much detail about the appointment process as possible, we asked the respondents to focus on the question and think about who would be the best person as the Chief Executive Officer. Selection

protocols were examined by analysing the content of documents from three participating focus group discussions.

Results

a.) Male Variables

Males with a greater ability to reflect about their views, to connect past and present, and to identify the eligible candidate for the higher managerial post seem more likely to be more gender equitable. Males were more likely to come up with a concrete answer with they would like to hire the male candidate due to the person is mature enough to lead the company.

b.) Female Variables

Families that offered access to an involved and nurturing male role model, or alternative gender role models, male or female, emerged as an important factor that may be related to achieving a more gender equitable identity. Females reported a female candidate as the Higher Managerial post and apparently leading to be the most suitable person due to she can work longer periods.

c.) Male and Female variables

The more gender equitable young men and female group come from the same social setting as the less gender equitable. The finally different opinion was observed from the mixed group and they were claiming none of them are suitable until they check the personality and mental fitness.

Conclusion

Since qualitative research frequently involves face to face contact between researcher and participant, open ended rather than closed ended questions, unstructured rather than structured interview schedules, samples are typically small. To generate theory, it is much more useful if the small samples are relatively homogeneous, since extreme diversity makes the task of identifying common patterns almost impossible. As labour market flow increases in a rapid developing post-conflict Sri Lanka, the impact on those gender equity and equality leave many unanswered questions. The delicate balance between gender in selection for any post promoting for economic prosperity and social protection is a formidable policy challenge and one that has largely been ignored.

From economic perspective, the females do not simply extend to families but extend to entire communities. Despite the Government push towards skilled females to be take part in administrative duties with the introduction of gender equity. In most cases the choice of selection gender biased for the any post in Sri Lanka, it was not considered recent past. The gender equity and equality policy sets the tone for policy and practice reforms agenda to create and enabling environment to make females and males to work equal in a safe, healthy and dignified process for around 2 million people live in Sri Lanka.

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