WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN IT AND ITES SECTORS

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ABSTRACT

Empowerment is a concept that is equal importance to both men and women. This idea of sharing power is not a concept which is unique to men or women alone. As identified by each individual who is titled as an employee, the employer is expected to extend his work spheres to make employees feel contended. The IT and ITES sector which is booming in the present era and especially ITES that create good opportunities for young minds to work, is expected to play the additional role of an extended supporter. The article discusses the role of empowered women and then explores the gestures of the corporate world towards them.

Key words: - *Empowerment, Support systems, Work life balance.*

EMPOWERMENT

The term **empowerment** refers to measures designed to increase the degree of autonomy and self-determination in people and in communities in order to enable them to represent their interests in a responsiblde and self-determined way, acting on their own authority. Empowerment as action refers both to the process of self-empowerment and to professional support of people, which enables them to overcome their sense of powerlessness and lack of influence, and to recognize and use their resources.

The term empowerment originates from American community psychology and is associated with the social scientist Julian Rappaport (1981).

In social work, empowerment forms a practical approach of resource-oriented intervention. In the field of citizenship education and democratic education, empowerment is seen as a tool to increase the responsibility of the citizen. Empowerment is a key concept in the discourse on promoting civic engagement. Empowerment as a concept, which is characterized by a move away from a deficit-oriented towards a more strength-oriented perception, can increasingly be found in management concepts, as well as in the areas of continuing education and self-help.

Trust

The empowerment relationship is bound by many things, especially trust. A high level of trust is needed, by all parties involved, in order to share power. Trust is crucial to the empowerment process, for both, the leader as well as the employees.

Enablement

Well-known for their insights on empowerment, Conger and Kanungo, share that the idea of empowerment in the workforce, is directly linked to the following: managerial and organizational effectiveness, power and control within the organization, and increased team-building in organizational life. Building on the work of these researchers, who show that

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power is more than sharing power, the idea of enabling others, arises. The ability to enable others is not new, and yet for leaders, this can be complicated. Enabling others involves sharing power, but here is the main distinction –it also involves the leader taking the time to prepare the person for that power usage.

Definitions

A management practice of sharing information, rewards, and power with employees so that they can take initiative and make decisions to solve problems and improve service and performance.

Empowerment is based on the idea that giving employees skills, resources, authority, opportunity, motivation, as well holding them responsible and accountable for outcomes of their actions, will contribute to their competence and satisfaction. Empowerment is related to the word power. In English, the concept leans on its original meaning of investment with legal power—permission to act for some specific goal or purpose (Rappaport, 1987).The new meaning of the concept includes mainly references to power that develops and is acquired. People are managing to gain more control over their lives, either by themselves or with the help of others. The form to be empowered relates to what is both a process and an outcome—to the effort to obtain a relative degree of ability to influence the world (Staples, 1990).

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Introduction: The topic on "Women Empowerment" is a burning issue all over the world. "Women empowerment" and "women equality with men" is a universal issue.

What is the meaning of Women Empowerment?

Women Empowerment refers to the creation of an environment for women where they can make decisions of their own for their personal benefits as well as for the society.

Women Empowerment refers to increasing and improving the social, economic, political and legal strength of the women, to ensure equal-right to women, and to make them confident enough to claim their rights, such as:

- freely live their life with a sense of self-worth, respect and dignity,
- have complete control of their life, both within and outside of their home and workplace,
- to make their own choices and decisions,
- have equal rights to participate in social, religious and public activities,
- have equal social status in the society,
- have equal rights for social and economic justice,
- determine financial and economic choices,
- get equal opportunity for education,
- get equal employment opportunity without any gender bias,

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- get safe and comfortable working environment,

Why Women Empowerment is Important?

1. Under-employed and unemployed: Women population constitutes around 50% of the world population. A large number of women around the world are unemployed. The world economy suffers a lot because of the unequal opportunity for women at workplaces. (Also read: Paragraph on Women Employment)

2. Equally competent and intelligent: Women are equally competent. Nowadays, women are even ahead of men in many socio-economic activities.

3. Talented: Women are as talented as men. Previously, women were not allowed higher education like men and hence their talents were wasted. But nowadays, they are also allowed to go for higher studies and it encourages women to show their talents which will not only benefit her individually but to the whole world at large.

4. Overall development of society: The main advantage of Women Empowerment is that there will be an overall development of the society. The money that women earn does not only help them and or their family, but it also help develop the society.

5. Economic Benefits: Women Empowerment also leads to more economic benefits not to the individuals but to the society as well. Unlike earlier days when they stayed at home only and do only kitchen stuffs, nowadays, they roam outside and also earns money like the male members of the society. Women empowerment helps women to stand on their own legs, become independent and also to earn for their family which grows country's economy.

The Empowered women

India being a developing economy has seen a major change over the last few decades in the social and economical status of women. The role played by women has shifted from docile, fettered, dependent female to that of being independent, explorative towards their potentials and voicing their concerns openly.

As a result of this, women have ventured beyond the traditional role of wife and mother, and have sought employment and careers outside the home, and have actively participated in the economic and social development of the nation. Indian women have taken up challenging careers in IT and ITES sectors.

One can notice that more and more women in India are getting into IT-related jobs at all levels. According to the recent Nasscom study, the men-women ratio in Indian software industry stands at 76.24. Already, emerging markets such as the ITES-BPO segment are hiring more women than traditional IT services industry. The trend is likely to continue and, in fact, gain momentum. The current crop of successful women is sure to catalyze the women in IT movement, drawing even more talent in to the fray.

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Four of the main processes that could lead to women's empowerment

Changes in women's mobility and social interaction;

- changes in women's labour patterns;
- changes in women's access to and control over resources; and
- Changes in women's control over decision-making.

The Intrinsic Advantage

- The IT sector is touted as be India's greatest strength with a captive English speaking and computer literate labour force. The strength of communication makes women intrinsically suited to work in the ITES sector. IT and ITES sector helps women attain an at par status with their male counterparts. Women have proved to excel in their multitasking abilities and collaborative team working skills.
- Companies believe that women bring in special qualities such as dedication, innovation and patience to the workforce. They are also recognized to be more stable and less prone to job-hopping. Considering the rate at which companies are growing, they are more concerned about meeting numbers and are looking out for people who are self-confident, talented and professional. This in all terms suits today's women, which has made companies to draw equals between genders.

The Support Systems:

IT can been seen that the change in attitude, norms and systems is not only in case of women but also in case of men, elders and all family members. When it comes to both men and women, child care was always one of the major concerns of most employees and at times it called for women to take a back seat in their profession. The gradual change seen in the norms of the society is a great contributor to the change in the attitude of women by and large. The society now calls on both the males and females to be equally responsible for all family that makes the women of the house to look into the outer world and contribute to the social and economic development of the society and country.

Embracing Best Practices in HR to serve the needs of women employees

The IT-BPO industry has taken a lead in adopting Best Practices in the areas of HR to attract women employees and emerge as a preferred career destination for these professionals. Companies, especially the large players, have undertaken the following to encourage gender diversity within their realms including the following:

- Fostered a "culture of inclusion" as a business imperative and recognized gender inclusivity as a key factor in organizational agility, innovation and success.
- Remained open to accepting the different capabilities that women bring into the workplace and created a nurturing environment for them to take leadership roles.

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- Set up special cells, and introduced policies and processes that spur women participation, especially at the higher levels of decision-making.

The Extended Supporter

- IBM as its work/life balance initiatives is sponsoring "fun and learn" activities for its employees and their children. During April and May 2002 it also sponsored the "young Explorers Summer Camp" at the Genie Kid Center. IBM also opened a first-of-a kind child care center during the launch of $50 mn global work/life fund. It is a partnership between IBM and "Your kids R our kids"—a pre-school and daycare center recognized by the Indian Ministry of Elementary Education.
- Accenture had adopted several initiatives and policies to support its women employees. One unique program is the Kids-at-Work day. Here employees are encouraged to bring their kids and families and enjoy events organized by the company.
- Employers are organizing meetings between employees of the BPO sector and employees of other sectors that demand night targets. A discussion on issues that affect their work and the similarities of their counterparts in other sectors helps them to a great extent is the view of the organizing employers.
- The BPO industry also has been proactive in addressing issues of work-life balance by giving flexible working hours as an option to the employees, especially the women. Women can opt to get paid less and work on general shift. This is an option thrown open to mitigate the stress of night shift among women employees.

CONCLUSION:

It is also observed that the IT and ITES sector has shown a tremendous concern for the people issues, especially the women working in the organizations. The future seems to be with lot more initiations of support to the women employees and employment opportunities in the IT and ITES sector. All deserve the opportunity to be as engaged as they desire to be, as well as have the ability to provide opportunities for empowerment, giving and receiving, as some women will be in the position to share the power and some will be the beneficiaries. The bottom line is this: When women are empowered everyone wins.

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