Abstract

In this study, difference in psychological empowerment perceptions among female employees working in IT industry is presented. Employee empowerment was measured using a 12 item scale developed by Spreitzer. The questionnaire covered four dimensions: meaning, competence, self-determination and impact. A study applied to 150 female employees working BPO in Coimbatore. The data were solved using percent, mean, standard deviation, t-test, and ANOVAs. As a result of this analysis; it has been found that there is a statistical difference in psychological empowerment perceptions among female employees according to their income level in IT sector. In addition this results, it has been seen that there is no statistically significant difference according the age, year of experience, marital status and family size.

1. Introduction

The IT industry has become one of the most popular industries due to the dynamic nature of the industry. Some researchers reported that IT industry role in India’s Economic Growth has been tremendous, especially in the last few years, where the demand for outsourcing of work to India has been significant among western companies. The driving forces that account for the increase in foreign investments through the BPOs in India are emphasis on quality services, skilled sets and workers, cost effectiveness, quality products, English speaking manpower. It depends heavily on the ability of client contact employees to properly deliver their services. The attitudes and behaviors of contact employees can significantly affect client’s perceptions of the service because service delivery occurs during the interaction between employees and client. As a matter of fact, the Indian IT industry is leading in the market and is improving in the area of training professionals in learning foreign languages and increasing the number of skilled workers to meet the complex
service demands of clients. To accomplish this, employee empowerment is receiving increased attention with end user in service sector and more specialties in IT industry.

2. Empowerment of female through IT industry

Over twenty years, Riger (1984) examined feminist organisations, such as battered women’s shelter, and stated that, “grassroots organizations that enable people to obtain access to resource and develop skills and self-esteem can be important vehicles for empowerment”. Empowerment of female in the workforce means allowing women to have more control over their lives. It means giving them the freedom to make their own schedules, learn new skills and gain self-reliance. Empowerment is created when the strengths that women already bring to the company are recognized and utilized. Generally empowerment is any process and activity by which women control their lives. Women represent almost one-third part of the IT sector and their contribution in this industry is major. Technology and certain regulatory changes have accentuated the demand of female employees in IT sector.

Major reasons behind female joining this IT industry are easy entry and exit, fair remuneration, not much qualification required and lifestyle. Although it began with low skilled activity such as answering routine telephone queries from customers on bank account balances, have now expanded to cover a wide range of high ended areas like tele-marketing, market research, billing and collection, cash and investment, legal case research, medical research testing and financial analyses are now emerging as important components of high-end out sourcing. Yet, they face serious issues like, night shifts, flexible working hours, transportation, socio-cultural factors and sexual harassment, which need to be psychologically empowered.

Change in the out-look- in India’s patriarchal society, the emergence of call centers is nothing less than a social reform movement as far as economic, social and cultural empowerment of women is concerned. Due to many positive factors in women BPO’s prefer them. Thus a booming call center industry has provided employment to thousands of young women in earning good salaries that are really good with Indian standards. Women, who otherwise might have remained unemployed and burden to their families are now seen to be assets to their families. The financial independence provided by these BPOs has empowered to be assertive and independent in their out-look, attitude and career choice. Thus these IT industries have played as catalysts in quickly changing the socioeconomic status of the women in her families.

A primary objective of employee empowerment is to create a workforce that is energized by an enhanced to produce products or services that meet or exceed internal and external customers’ expectations. When employees believe that they have the necessary skills and possibilities to handle more challenging tasks and the value of their work goals is congruent with individual’s own ideals, it is expected that they will get involved in extra-role behaviors towards an organization, such as offering ideas to improve the functioning of a firm or expressing loyalty towards the organization. Team leader must create a positive ambience at the workplace and train employees and empower them to handle most caller incidents on the spot and with good judgment promptly, professionally and courteously in the IT industry. This will improve quality service and satisfaction, create a better working environment for the employees and free up more time for team leader to focus on the tasks of being a team leader. Therefore, to obtain a competitive advantage and to differentiate a company from others, employees empowered by supportive managers are a key to success in a competitive world.
The majority of the researcher’s efforts have focused on the organizational practices and managerial role in creating empowering conditions. Although, there are so many researches about the employee empowerment in the different sectors, there is no enough research about the employee empowerment in the IT industry. Moreover, researchers reported that employees’ perspectives are crucial because empowerment is not a permanent, fixed reality that is shared by all, but rather is something that varies in how it is experienced from individual to individual. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to provide information’s about differences in psychological empowerment perceptions of female employees working in IT industry. This study can generate unique and timely insights into employee empowerment.

The concept of employee empowerment was introduced to the management literature over thirty years ago by Kanter (1977). Surveys have shown that empowerment has had a major impact on management practice, as more than 70% of organizations have implemented some form of empowerment for at least some part of their workforce (e.g., Lawler, Mohrman, & Benson, 2001). The concept of empowerment also continues to generate considerable research interest. Still, a number of important questions remain unanswered (Spreitzer, 2008). It is therefore important to develop a fuller understanding of the nature of empowerment, the factors that lead to employee feelings of empowerment, and the consequences associated with an empowered workforce.

Antecedents and Consequences of Psychological are the two major perspectives on the empowerment phenomenon have emerged (Liden & Arad, 1996; Spreitzer, 2008). Early, socio structural approaches regarded empowerment as a set of structures, policies, and practices designed to decentralize power and authority throughout the organization, enabling employees at lower levels in the organization to take appropriate action (Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Block, 1987; Kanter, 1977, 1983). Conger and Kanungo (1988) were the first to introduce a psychological perspective on empowerment. They argued that empowering organizational practices result in greater employee initiative and motivation only to the extent that these practices provide informational cues that enhance the employees’ effort–performance expectancies (Lawler, 1973) or feelings of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986). Thomas and Velthouse (1990) expanded upon this work by articulating a more complete theoretical framework for psychological empowerment. On the basis of their synthesis of a range of cognitive motivation theories, they identified meaning, choice, competence, and impact as the set of employee task assessments associated with intrinsic task motivation.

Spreitzer (1995b) was the first to develop a multidimensional instrument to assess psychological empowerment. On the basis of the work of Thomas and Velthouse (1990), defined psychological empowerment as intrinsic task motivation reflecting a sense of control in relation to one’s work and an active orientation to one’s work role that is manifest in four components: meaning, self-determination, competence, and impact. Meaning refers to the alignment between the demands of one’s work role and one’s own beliefs, values, and standards (Hackman & Oldham, 1980). Self determination is one’s sense of choice concerning the initiation or regulation of one’s actions (Deci, Connell, & Ryan, 1989). Competence refers to one’s belief in one’s capability to successfully perform work activities (Bandura, 1989; Lawler, 1973). Finally, impact is one’s belief that one can influence strategic, administrative, or operational activities and outcomes in one’s work unit (Abramson, Seligman, & Teasdale, 1978; Ashforth, 1989). Consistent with previous theorizing (e.g., Thomas & Velthouse, 1990), the highest levels of intrinsic task motivation were proposed to emerge only when all four cognitions are high Spreitzer’s (1995b) formulation has proved seminal to research on psychological empowerment.
The four dimensions are argued to combine additively to create an overall construct of psychological empowerment. In other words, the lack of any single dimension will deflate though not completely eliminate, the overall degree of felt empowerment. Thus, the four dimensions specify “a nearly complete or sufficient set of cognitions” for understanding psychological empowerment”. Empowerment contributes to the making of so-called learning organizations. Compared to their non-empowered counterparts, empowered employees are likely to be cognitively more active and are more likely to modify their own behaviors and attitudes toward customers in order to reach both personal and into their personal conduct and analyze the effects of the different behaviors they developing regard to their outcomes. All this cognitive activity triggered by empowerment is likely to improve the organization’s adaptability.

Researchers reported that empowerment places some responsibility on the individual for creating his or her own conditions for growth and setting goals and targets. These are the following key values and assumptions central to the concept of empowerment.

- Each person is unique and worthy of respect,
- Individuals are responsible for their own behaviour and action,
- New situations contain opportunities for learning and growth,
- Mistakes are learning experiences, not failures,
- Only oneself can activate the potential for creativity and growth,
- All persons can do more than they are currently doing,
- One's own fear is the major limiter for personal growth and
- Growth and development never end.
- Standing inter-agency working groups on gender equality and women’s empowerment;

These components can be viewed as the essential prerequisites for the motivation to engage in empowered behaviors in the work environment.

3. Why Psychological Empowerment?

- There have been different in male and female empowerment perceptions that have failed to yield the expected results, most probably because the psychological makeup of the female employees who are being empowered has not been put into consideration.
- Female are also psychological entities and must be considered as such in the formulation of policies that are directly or indirectly related to them. Failure to do this may yield a negative result.
- Without psychological empowerment, wrong attitudes and behaviours may be exhibited by the female employees who may eventually hamper good policies in IT Industry.
- Psychological perception will be enhanced, only if they consider female employees for organisational development.

Employees had a positive approach to empowerment although advantages and disadvantages. Some of the disadvantages for the employees are communication difficulties, unclear work practices, higher levels of pressure on staff and increased competition among employees. Advantages for the employees included higher levels of job satisfaction, better customer service, more rapid decision making and personal development. Efficiency empowerment provides to the process of service production, one which is both produced and delivered simultaneously, an ultimate increase in the effectiveness of its delivery.

Empowering employees contributes to the organizational effectiveness and guest satisfaction by creating more job satisfaction and self-esteem for employees and engaging in discretionary
behavior aiming at meeting or exceeding guests’ expectations in service encounters. Empowered employees are likely to be more satisfied with and committed to their job and they support-based relationships in the organization might foster feelings of empowerment.

4. Methodology For This Research
Data for this research were collected from IT employees in Coimbatore. The present study has chosen 150 female respondents in IT industry. The study used a random sampling based on the number of IT and their total number of employees. In the first part of the questionnaire is about female employees’ characteristics such as age, marital status, monthly income, education and year of experience. And the second part of the questionnaire included empowerment questions. Employee empowerment was measured using a 12 item scale developed by Spreitzer (1995b). The questionnaire covered four dimensions: meaning, competence, self-determination and impact. Five point Likert scale was used with the end-points labeled with “Highly satisfied” [5] and “Highly dissatisfied”. Four composite values of dimensions rather than 16 items were used for analysis. As detailed in the following sections, data analysis procedures include descriptive analysis, t-tests and ANOVA. The study utilized SPSS for data analysis.

5. Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Impact</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>3.6556</td>
<td>.67270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std Deviation</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>3.8600</td>
<td>.67585</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competence</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.1289</td>
<td>.63550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaning</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.0533</td>
<td>.73486</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid N (List Wise)</td>
<td>150</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5.1: Descriptive Statistics

Based on the above descriptive statistics it was found that the Standard deviation is highly significant to meaning dimension in terms of female perception towards empowerment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Competence</td>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>2.780</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.695</td>
<td>1.755</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>57.395</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>.396</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>60.175</td>
<td>149</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaning</td>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>9.247</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.312</td>
<td>4.707</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>71.215</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>.491</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>80.462</td>
<td>149</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std deviation</td>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>4.261</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.065</td>
<td>2.421</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>63.799</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>.440</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>68.060</td>
<td>149</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact</td>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>4.330</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.082</td>
<td>2.487</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>63.096</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>.435</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5.2: ANOVA Income
According to study results: there is a statistically significant difference between income and four empowerment dimensions (p<0.10). As a result of this research, it has been found that the difference between income and competence dimension is more significant.

The results above show that there was no significant difference among female employees of varied age in their perception toward empowerment where f-value is 1.792 and p-value is 0.033. In terms of educational level, this variable is shown not to have had a significant influence on employees’ perception with an f-value of 3.071 and p-value 0.050. For perception based on working experience, the mean is 3.185 (working less than 1 year), 3.351 (2-5 year) and 3.44 (6-10 year). The ANOVA’s result showed there is no significant difference among employees of varied working experience level in their perception towards empowerment, where the f-value is 2.184 and the p-value is 0.007. To summarize, the other demographic factors such as age, marital status and education do not significantly influence female employee’s perception towards empowerment.

This finding corresponds with studies done by Itzhaky and York (2001) and Peterson and Hughey (2004) who stated that because the empowerment processes are complicated and multifaceted, the effect of participation on empowerment tends to differ between women and men.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Competence</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>4.1289</td>
<td>.63550</td>
<td>.05189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaning</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>4.0533</td>
<td>.73486</td>
<td>.06000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>3.6556</td>
<td>.67270</td>
<td>.05493</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. deviation</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>3.8600</td>
<td>.67585</td>
<td>.05518</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5.3: T Test One-Sample Statistics

T –test was conducted to determine if there is a statistical difference in psychological empowerment perceptions of female employees considering respondents some characteristics (ages, marital status, income level, education level).

6. Conclusions

In the improving and changing world, empowerment is the important issue to success some organizational goals in the IT industry it involves fundamental changes to the traditional hierarchal organizational structure. With empowerment, employees will be able to accommodate customer requests and achieve the highest service quality standards. Empowerment is a prerequisite for successful quality initiatives and should be incorporated into the service delivery process so that customer needs are addressed more quickly and resolved more efficiently. Empowerment applications in a management are not a technique which can be accomplished in short order. Since it brings continual education and development, managements should be dedicated about the subject and focused not on daily but long term incomes. Also, there should be an open communication atmosphere in the management and there should not be any lack of knowledge sharing and a climate of trust has to be established. The use of the solely female IT employees may be considered a limitation of this study. Future research can be conducted for all employees who work in the IT sector, in Coimbatore. Moreover, both psychological and behavioural dimensions of the empowerment can be using more efficient outcomes rather than psychological empowerment dimension. This study finding may be useful for IT team leader to improve their female employees’ psychological empowerment levels.
References


