

Changing Paradigm in Women Employability: An Analysis of Employers' Recruitment Trends in India

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In the recent times the concept of women employability has taken a new perspective. From an ornamental status in the workforce mix in various corporate, women employees are getting an equal preference by the employers and hence the ratio of women workers has been significantly increased. The history of women employability has pre-defined limits in terms of nature of the job, sectors, responsibilities and even the payouts. In contrast to the history in today's scenario women are holding the positions in board room of the companies and successfully reign over major corporate house of India. They are continuously demonstrating their competence of visionary leadership and better management and hence proving themselves a better choice as an employee. The employers are enthusiastically hiring the women as the new talent and promoting them to the higher positions knowing their hold on the unique behavioral competencies, they are blessed along with the technical expertise. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the changing recruitment trends of the employers in India in reference to women employability. The study also examines the factors responsible for increasing ratio of women employees and their success in Indian companies.

Keywords: Women Employability, Workforce Mix, Career progression, Behavioral competencies.

INTRODUCTION

In past few years women have broken down all limits of social bounding and left their marks in almost every sector. From government administrative services to managing big corporate, from politics to arts, from science to sports, women have declared their vision to move shoulder to shoulder with men in every sector and have refused to be with the secondary status.

In Indian society, where women are worshiped as 'Devis' but at the same time we have the practice of female foeticide, surprisingly among the so called elite and educated class, which is a matter of disgust. It clearly denominates the picture of male dominant society where women are considered undesirable. The upbringing of girls and boys

has a huge difference in terms of sensitivity, care, nutrition, education and freedom. Girls are taught to be tolerant and ready to compromise on each and every front throughout their life. Even there are fixed mind set ups of the society when it comes to women employability too.

Despite of all odds, women have clearly demonstrated that a successful professional life is their right and they are capable and ready to go beyond any limit to get it.

Today the corporate sector is witnessing the significant increase of women employee in their workforce mix. They are not only doing good at the entry level but also proving themselves competent and capable of managing India's big corporate houses with their incredible vision, participative leadership and focused management. Indira Nooyi (CEO-Pepsico), Arundhati Bhattacharya (Chairperson-State bank of India), Chanda Kochhar (MD and CEO-ICICI Bank Limited), Kiran Majumdar Shaw

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(Chairman and Managing Director- Biocon Limited), Shikha Sharma (MD and CEO- Axis Bank Limited) are few names among the huge list of globally successful Indian women.

The employers today are enthusiastically motivating women to join the business as they are better realizing the high multitasking skills they have. Though the career progression patterns of a man and a woman is quite different as women have to do the additional task of reproduction and child rearing along with the household responsibilities which is not in the case of men, especially in the societal context of India. Still, if given responsibilities, they are showing a miraculous balance between their work and family life. The study analyzes the factors promoting women employability and the recruitment patterns of employers.

Concept of Woman Employability

Woman employability means woman engaged in a commercial work which creates value and getting paid for it. It is a process which includes continuous learning and improving ones skills.

Review of Literature

Indirsan (2006) wrote that if the society is leaving its half workforce, that is women workforce; in leadership positions it is obvious that there would be huge loss of unique strengths and perceptions which women could bring to the organization with them. She argued that women are equally gifted, talented and competent in management, leadership and the policy making. She further given an important reason for the need of women in leadership positions which is that, unless the men at the decision making positions are gender sensitized, women's issues would be marginalized and trivialized i.e. they do not get the deserved attention. She also stated that certain personal, social and structural factors are responsible for holding back women from coming to leadership positions.

Gill (2010) while analyzing the effect of globalization on female employment, wrote that education and literacy enhance the economic independence of female. Female work participation acts as a catalyst for social upliftment and for the empowerment of women. She further added that per capita income and the sex ratio are important variables which affect female work participation.

Bhandare (2015) cited the McKinsey report in her article which shows that India is among the top countries which have largest gender gaps in work participation. If this gap is bridged India could add 60% to its GDP by 2025. In India only 23-24% of the total work force is woman generating only 17% of the share of GDP which is far below the world's GDP of 37%. The report further said, "Economic development enables countries to close gender gaps, but progress on four indicators in particular- education level, financial and digital inclusion, legal protection and the of unpaid care work- could help accelerate progress".

Bhattacharyya and Chaturvedi (2015) discussed that companies in India bridge the gender gap across levels by hiring more females and initiating leadership development programs for them. They are geared towards attracting more female professionals and retaining the best of them.

H. L. Kaila (2005) wrote that the traditional picture of a woman is quite different from what today's educated woman have. Through educational and societal reforms, women have demonstrated their talent in academic and professional front. Woman now is seeking to fulfill her potential in public spheres now. But the work life of a woman is completely different from a man. For women the opportunity to work and to grow in career comes with a double burden of work within and outside the home. Regardless of holding an executive position at work, where the responsibility and accountability is high, she would still be expected to prepare meals, caring for children and managing the household chores.

While man's assertiveness to focus on his career only is socially acceptable and appreciated. Men are not subject to same social constraints and expectations their career development is different from that of women. He further added that by providing career training to females they would be able to better manage their career growth and create a balance between work and family. He included career planning, confidence building and assertiveness, understanding and managing organizational politics and stress management as important areas in which women have to be trained.

Objective

The objective of the study is to understand the changing patterns in women employability through the analysis of the recruitment trends of employers in context to women workforce in India. The research will also aim to find out the factors responsible for increasing ratio of women employees and their success in Indian companies.

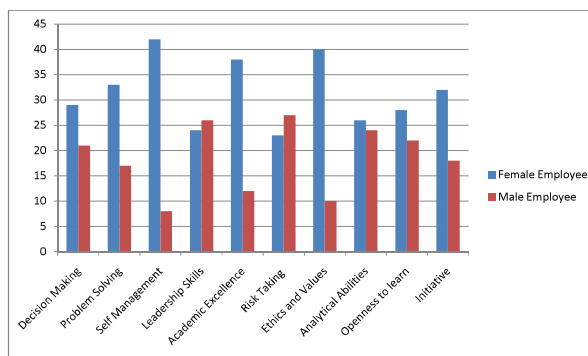
S. No.	Variables	Female Employee		Male Employee	
		No.	%	No.	%
1	Decision Making	29	58%	21	42%
2	Problem Solving	33	66%	17	34%
3	Self Management	42	84%	8	16%
4	Leadership Skills	24	48%	26	52%
5	Academic Excellence	38	76%	12	24%
6	Risk Taking	23	46%	27	54%
7	Ethics and Values	40	80%	10	20%
8	Analytical Abilities	26	52%	24	48%
9	Openness to learn	28	56%	22	44%
10	Initiative	32	64%	18	36%

Research Methodology

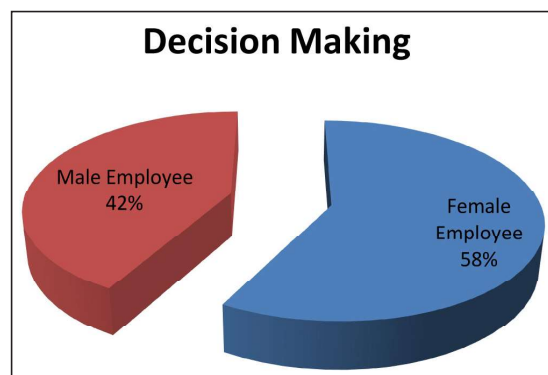
The research methodology employs both primary and secondary data. The primary data has been collected through interviews of 50 employers from Banking, Telecom, Retail, IT and BPO sectors. The techniques used for sample collection is Random sampling. The secondary data is collected through the secondary sources like magazines, books, journals, websites etc. The collected data is analyzed in the light of the objectives of the research.

Data Analysis

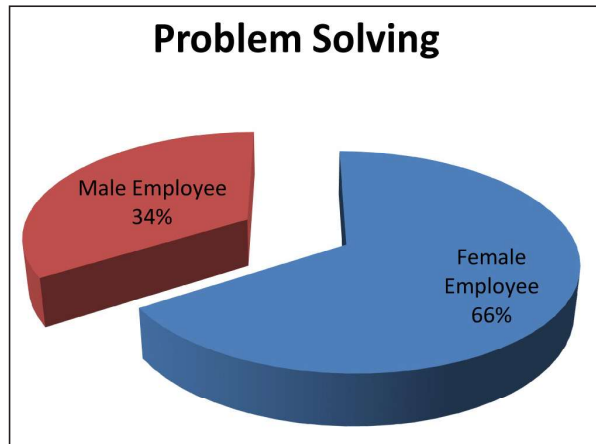
The following table shows the preference of 50 employers for a female or male employee on 10 variables required to be employable.



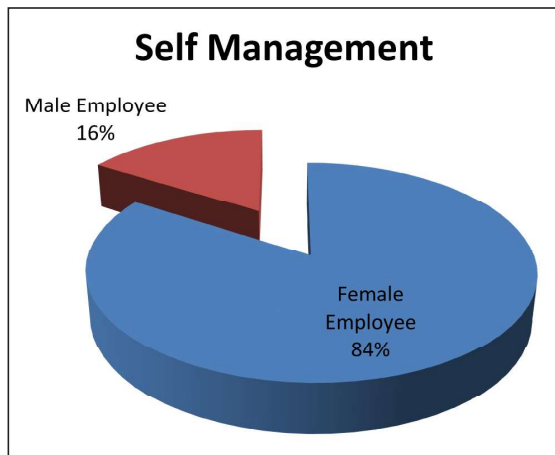
The above chart shows that in most of the criteria, the employers have given preference to the females over males.



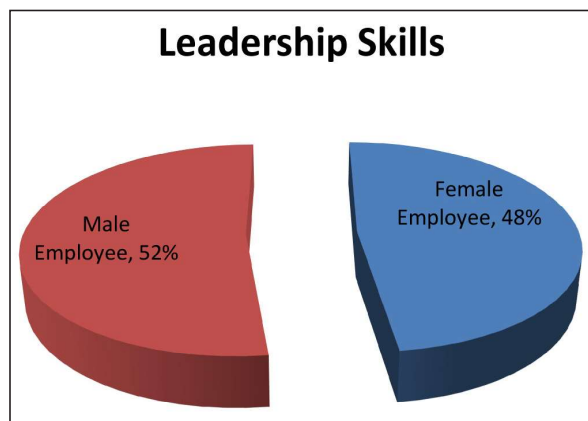
For Decision making 58% of employers have given preference to female employees over male employees, saying they are thoughtful and practical while taking decisions.



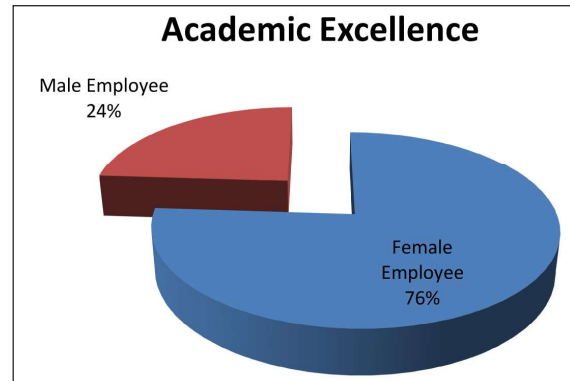
66% of employers of top companies said that women are better problem solvers than men, while only 34% voted for male employees.



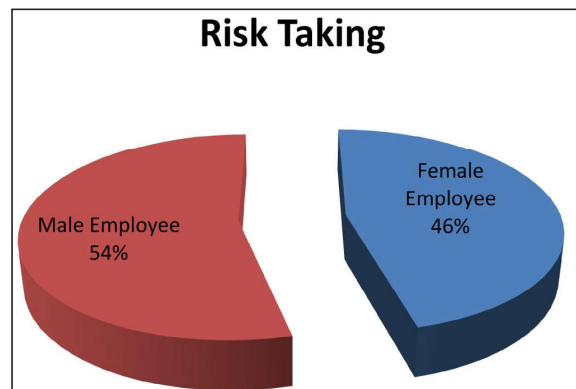
For self management 84% employers and managers were in favor of female team mates rather than male which were chosen by only 16% of employers.



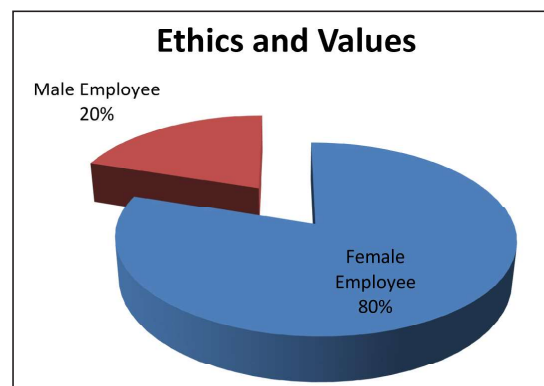
Leadership skills was the area where women are somewhat behind men and 48% of employers says women are better leaders while 52% employers gave their vote for men employee.



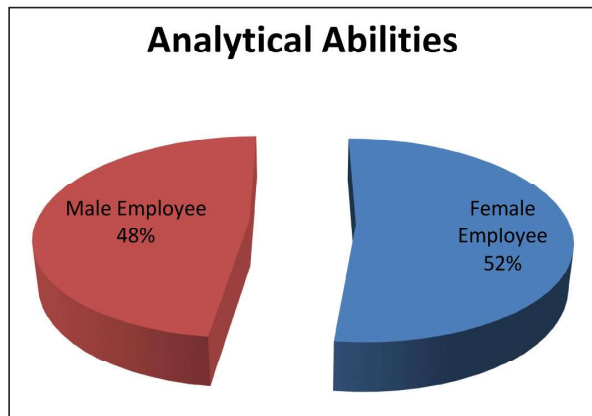
In academic excellence women are much ahead of males and most of the employers given preference with 76% and men are at 24%.



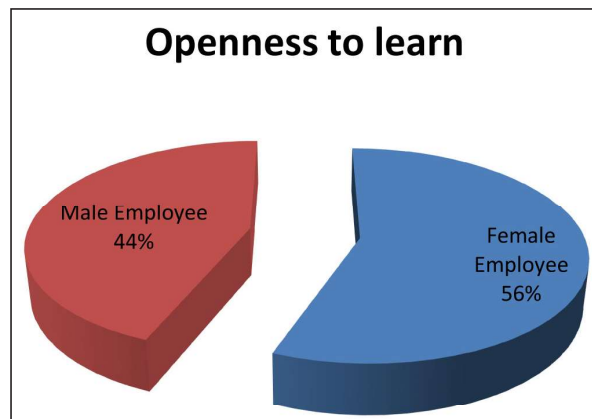
Risk taking is the area where women were the choice of 46% of employers and rest 54% given preference to male worker with a caption that women take calculated risk.



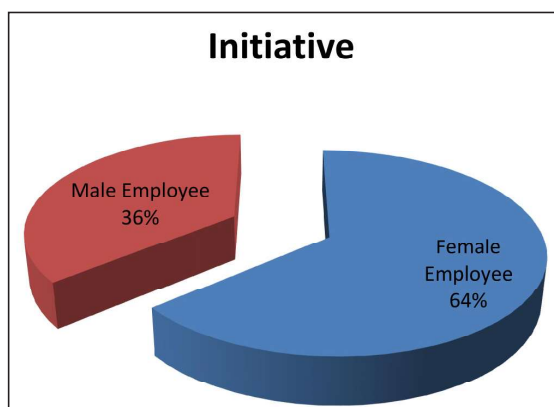
80% of employers have given preference to a female worker in Ethics and values and only 20% were in favor of males.



52% of employers chose women for their analytical abilities while 48% employers said men are better on it.



56% employers have given their vote to females for openness to learn saying they are better learners and ready to change and adapt.



64% of employers said that females are much ahead of males in taking new initiatives and only 36% employers said men are initiative takers.

Leadership Programs introduced by India Top companies

Many companies are working towards gender diversity in their workforce. The employers are keen to hire female workers in more technical and leadership roles. Companies like Capegemini, Google, Tech Mahindra are hiring women in technical profiles to bridge the gender gap.

Many renowned companies have launched Back to work programs keeping in mind the maternity roles females have to perform. They have introduced flexible work hours to work from home options for their female talent brigade.

Some of the great "Back to work programs" is discussed as follows:

1. **TATA Second Chance Internship Program-** This program was launched in 2008. It is a career transition program which allows the women who have taken a break for any reason and wish to re-enter the professional space by providing flexi work hours in any of the companies of TATA group.
2. **Intel Home to Office Initiative** – Intel introduced this program for the women who want to resume their work after the necessitated break due to life events like motherhood, family wellbeing etc.
3. **GE "The Restart" Program** – Introduced at GE's John F. Welch Technology Center at Bangalore, this program focuses on hiring women scientists and engineers who are away from work and wish to 'Restart' again.
4. **Hindustan Unilever Career by Choice Program** - To ease up the transition from a career break HUL designed a comprehensive program that balances a woman's personal

and professional needs. This program allows a woman to structure her work around her life and vice versa!

5. **IBM “Bring Her Back” Program-** IBM started this program in 2011. The purpose is to attract the women who have taken a mid-career sabbatical due to personal reasons.
6. **SAP “Stay in Touch” Program-** The Company ensures that the women employee should be back to work after the maternity break and adopts flexible work hours policy to help her cope up with the personal life responsibilities.
7. **Axis Bank India “Reconnect” Program-** Axis Bank offered jobs to the former female employees who have left their jobs from the bank in the last 10 years.
8. **Phillips “Back in the Game” Program-** This unique initiative taken by Phillips India motivates the female talent to resume their corporate career at Phillips after a break. In this program Phillips provide required mentorship and a flexible work environment as return to work.

FACTORS PROMOTING WOMEN EMPLOYABILITY IN INDIA

1. Literacy Rate

The most important factor in woman employability is the literacy rate. There has been a lot of change in the scenario of women literacy since independence. The time when the British left India, the women literacy rate was only around 8%. Now it has gone up to 65.46% (as per 2011 census). To our surprise, the census in 2001-2011 decadal periods reveals that the growth rate of female literacy was 11.8% in comparison to the male literacy rate which was 6.9%. It gives a positive sign of narrowing the gender gap in education.

2. Societal Reconditioning

With the rise in literacy rate in India, the overall mindset of Indian society is going through a reconditioning. Today, parents are providing best possible education to their girl child and leaving no stone unturned to make them self reliant. This practice is more prevalent in the middle class educated fraternity. Today the girls are outshining boys in all the competitive examinations especially in those held for Indian Administrative Services, they are on the topmost positions in the country's merit of board in secondary and higher secondary exams, around 40% of total doctoral students at various IITs are females and among the top offers bagged by students at IITs and IIMs at campus recruitments, female students are equally taken up by giant companies throughout the world. All discussed above shows that the society has admitted the fact which once was quoted by the First Prime Minister of India, Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru, “When a women moves forward, a family moves, the village moves and the nation moves”.

But this change is going on at a very slow rate and it is limited to the urban boundaries only. The rural belief is still considering a girl child as burden and an increase in female foeticide is the live example of it. The dream of India to become a developed nation cannot be fulfilled until the societal mindset change and female would be given the equal status.

3. Government Initiatives

Various programs run by Government of India to give women a state of equality not only as per the constitution but also in economic, social and legal terms. The vacancies announced by the government have reserved quota for females to ensure a gender balance in government organizations. Some of the programs of government for female welfare are Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Yojna, Women Entrepreneurship

Scheme, Support to Training and Employment Program for Women (STEP), one stop centre Scheme, Rajiv Gandhi National Creche System for working women and working women hostel. These all programs are directly or indirectly catalyzing the process of women employability.

Recently, the Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 has been proposed and passed in Rajya Sabha in which a woman is entitled for a full paid absence from work for 26 weeks to take care of the child. This includes private sector organizations too. These steps are definitely taking the graph of female employability on a rise.

4. Women Empowerment in global perspective

The picture of women in global perspective is also playing important role in promoting women employability in India. When a woman is heading towards becoming 'The President of world's most powerful country', it is obvious that the world has confidence in women power and skills. Women are now choosing different challenging sectors and are becoming successful round the globe. They are becoming more growth oriented and have a hunger of professional success. The western philosophy to provide equal status and opportunities to men and women adequately affected the Indian culture. It would definitely bring the highly needed change in Indian societal and organizational cultures.

5. Technological Advancements

Technological advancements such as internet has also played an important role in making women grow and learn professionally without much compromising on their child rearing and household roles. Indian companies, as mentioned above, have launched many programs like work from home, flexi-hours options etc. to make women contribute their efforts, knowledge and skills in organizational objectives while keeping a work-life balance. The policies in Indian corporate are getting more women friendly and motivating the employers and employees too.

CONCLUSION

The research findings show that preferences of employers are changing with times and now they have realized the importance of a gender diverse work force mix. Females are known for their multi tasking and behavioral skills. Employers want to use these skills present in women to realize the vision of the organizations. Perseverance is the greatest attribute women have but because of the reproductive and life events it is difficult for them to balance between their personal and professional life. They need support at family, social and professional front to prove their competence. This can be understood by the looking the other side of the coin too i.e. if the economy and society wants to gain with the unbeatable competence women have, they have to motivate and support them. Today, many MNCs are headed by Indian CEOs or Chairpersons, and proving their leadership capabilities, the need of the hour is to create more leadership opportunities to them. A study by McKinsey suggests that India could add 60% to its 2025 GDP if we would be able to bridge the gender gap at work and provide equal growth opportunities and support to females. The above discussed leadership programs are positive step to attain the gender diversity at work.

In the era of globalization and modernization, when India is dreaming to become a developed nation soon, we have to improve or change the image we have globally in context to gender equality. The people make a nation and a country where half of the population is fighting for the survival of its existence, talks of development are sounding like a myth. It is high time we should direct the skills, energies and competencies of women in a right direction, giving them well deserving equal status and make the dream of India becoming a developed nation come true. This article truly appreciates the positive change coming in Indian corporate towards women employability, however more efforts at the ground level is the need of the hour.

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