THE STUDY OF PERCEIVED DIVERSITY CLIMATE
AND ITS IMPACT ON EXPERIENCED WORK ALIENATION
AND WORK FAMILY CONFLICT OF PUBLIC SECTOR EMPLOYEES

PhD Abstract

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ABSTRACT

Equilibrium is achieved through diversity as it foregoes the lopsidedness inherent in homogeneity. But if the comprising heterogeneous groups are not made compatible with each other so as to harness and overcome each others’ strengths and weaknesses respectively can create the greatest disequilibrium.

The present research work focuses on the diversity created in the public/govt. sector organisations as a result of Caste based Quota system (Affirmative action) implemented by the government of India. The aim was to analyse the perception of the employees, belonging to both the general (UR) and the reserved (R) category groups towards the diversity climate of their organisations. Alongside, the psychological consequences of this perception in terms of two variables, namely, Work Alienation and Work-family Conflict were also studied in depth. To accomplish this aim a sample of 300 participants were taken, incorporating 123 GCM (General category males), 90 GCF (General category Females), 66 RCM (Reserved category Males) and 21 RCF (Reserved category Females). They were all working in public/govt. sector organisations and were having first hand experience of quota system at their workplace. A mixed methodology was adopted, for which three questionnaires for the three variables were administered, namely, ‘Perceived diversity climate questionnaire’ developed by Dr. Surendra Kumar Sia in 2008, ‘Alienation from work questionnaire’ developed by Shepard (1972) and ‘Work interference with family and Family interference with work questionnaire’ developed by Gutek, Searle & Klepa (1991). Alongside the questionnaires, a semi structured open ended question, based on their view towards the overall quota system was also asked from all the participants. And an interview comprising of 7 semi-structured situational questions was also taken with the 30% of the sample. Analysis was carried out using inferential statistical measures of ANOVA, Correlation and step wise regression. For qualitative
analysis, content analysis, thematic analysis and Critical incident technique were utilized.

The findings of the research study reveal that the perception of both the reserved and the general category employees towards the diversity climate of the organisations is poor. Based on the comparison between the four groups under study, the worst perception towards the diversity climate is being held by GCF and the best perception is held by RCF. It has also been found that this perception is leading to the experience of Work Alienation and Work-family conflict for all the four groups but in different ways and to different extent. The findings have been webbed around ‘Alienation as a social process model’ given by James E. Twinning (1980).

The situation is critical as GCF are suffering from Fundamental Alienation leading them to withdraw from all kinds of social situations, even family. GCM are suffering from Partial Alienation leading them to look for control and meaning outside their work, in arenas like family and friends. RCM are also suffering from Partial Alienation as they are discontented with being stereotyped and feel discriminated against at the workplace. They are also under great pressures to settle their families in a metropolitan. RCF, on the other hand are not suffering from Work Alienation but are experiencing high Work Family conflict, may be due to difficulty in balancing between work and family roles.

Further the present study has also given means to improve the present situation by focussing on an Inclusionary approach to manage diversity rather than the Assimilation approach, the one being utilised presently. Following an inclusionary approach, differences are recognized, valued and engaged. Different voices are understood as being legitimate and as opening up new vistas; they are heard and integrated in decision making and problem solving processes; they have an active role in shaping culture and fostering creativity and innovation; and eventually in adding value to the company's performance.