

Hiring Women Workforce: Considerations of Employers

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The paper is focused upon determining different factors that employers take into consideration while making a recruitment decision. It specifically determines the causes of hiring or not hiring a woman for any job in the organization, personally interviewing the human resource personnel in thirty six organizations of Islamabad. The study revealed that any of the proposed hurdle i.e. culture, personality traits and organizational settings, didn't actually prevent women to enter any organization.

Field Of Study: Human Resource Management

1. Introduction

In today's world of business diversity is the major element necessary for competitive edge of any organization. Human resource is perhaps the most valuable and useful resource. All other opportunities, resources etc available to the organizations seem to be of no value if there is no way of handling them properly. Also an intellectual, competitive pool of employees is a non-duplicable asset that is of the most value for any organization. As women are more than fifty percent of the population of Pakistan, it is very important to utilize this part of population so that the talent of whole population is optimally utilized. Also the trends are showing a positive even better advancement of women in the field of education as well as in the practical field, as compared to men.

Therefore the rationale of the study is to analyze the improvement and acknowledgement of these facts on the part of employers. How they are responding to this need of time and what are their experiences utilizing the women workforce.

2. Literature Review

As the businesses are growing and the world is moving toward a concept of global village, the competition among the organizations and industries is rapidly increasing.

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Also, due to the global economy, the distance among people, different nations, races sexes etc are diminishing. In this scenario of high interaction, the existence of any business/economy is dominantly dependent upon not only the optimal utilization of current available resources, but also on innovation and diversity. Entrepreneurs are recognizing the fact that out of the resources, HR is the most important one due to its in-duplicability, and hence the best option to adopt in order to gain a competitive edge. Organizations that are open for women increase the pool of talented applicants, leading them to acquire and retain competitive workforce (Schuler et al). Because any innovation, technological change etc. can be easily acquired at some price, but it is very hard to copy a competitive employee pool (Denise.M 2003).

It is primarily the issue of increasing efficiency that draws the attention of employers to diversity, lessening the cultural, racial, color, sexual differences in the work environment. Women workforce has long been neglected as a productive and innovative input to the organizational success. There are certain elements that have been hindering the development of women as a part of formal work life. But now, at a gradually slow rate-changing trend, things are moving toward recognizing this resource as useful and effective as its counter part (male force) in leading the organization through a comparative market. Gender is being taken into an account due to two major factors. One of them is the equality issue by the human rights commissions & NGOs, forcing the employers to provide equal opportunities in order to fulfill the legal, ethical requirements. The other factor is regarding the efficiency and value addition involving women in the organizational practices & hence taking the advantage of a diverse workforce. Woman can prove to be a valuable resource & an asset for the organization with the abilities like handling multiple tasks simultaneously, which might not be that easy for male employee (Standing.H). The other side of the picture shows the constraints and the reasons for woman being disadvantaged of the opportunities for getting hired and playing an effective role in the progress of the organization & overall economy. Women are advancing in the academic field they are equipped with necessary technical knowledge, & are capable to perform the task as efficiently as the men are. Studies negate the perception that the women lack the personality traits, skills, qualification & motivation necessary to work even in the leading role. They are able to attend what they are committed to (Liff.S & Ward.K 2001). Employers also have reservations about dealing with stress and interpersonal skills of woman .it is evidence from studies that woman can handle stress and can work in an environment of extreme pressure but not as effectively as the man are, and they are more prone to stress related illness (which is due to dual stress that is both at work and at home) (Davidson & Cooper 1992).

The behavioral aspect also has vital importance. Women are considered to have the "other-oriented" (Elron & Kark 2002) personality dimension that helps them in socializing and effectively interacting with people. Also their communication style is empathetic that improves the work relationship by enhancing the others' self

worth. Though women are good at developing relationship, this can be taken as a negative factor where people start to take an advantage of the empathy & don't respect & regard women as the fellow worker/boss, but as women (Standing.H 2000).

A second dimension to the gender issue that needs to be taken into account, while taking a hiring decision, is its cultural implications & constraints. In the developing countries especially there is the main problem of perceiving women as not capable & not meant for the formal work. Also there are specific occupations that are traditionally associated to women & the impact of socialization reduces women enter into occupation that are not traditionally female oriented (Myerson & Fletcher 2000). Along with this general perception there are practical obstacles in a women life named as family responsibilities & life cycle stages where she is bound to have career breaks. The family values and division of responsibilities is such that women are doing most of the unpaid work (2/3rd incase of Canada), which is definitely related to their family responsibilities. And the burden of household job still prevails. But "The problem with no name" is not due to intent. And it does not mean that all the men benefit from this labor division (Myerson & Fletcher 2002). So there is an inequality that starts at home, & that has to be treated from there. Women have all the burden of bringing up their kids, maintaining the home and nursing the older parents. Due to marriages, childbirth etc they are prone to take more breaks during their career and hence have a longer career path. There are very few organizations that allow women to take break, maintain their records in their absence, welcome them back & asses their training needs after the break. That is why they lag behind their male counter parts on their way to career growth (Bourgon.J 1996). In 1970s women had to leave the government job in case of marriage in Canada (Denise.M 2003) and in the UK health industry, women with career breaks took 23years, & with no career break took 15years to reach the nursing officer position which was 8 years in case of men. Same situations prevail in almost all sectors.

The difference shows that this is not only the dual responsibility factor but there is evident work place gender discrimination and stereo typing regarding woman as poor managers, less motivated & less career oriented. The last but not the least dimension to the gender debate is organizational culture that needs to be kept in view while recruiting a diverse workforce especially women. There are certain organizations that promote diverse & flexible culture. The norms & values support positive relations between men & women. Conditions and work settings (work schedules, job titles, physical environment) including both men & women. (Denise.M 2003). The organizational culture depends on the strength of the female employees. 30% is supposed to be a strong "critical mass" of women in a work place that is helpful to them to work without pressure & in a more favorable environment. Still there is another angle to it if women are lesser in an organization they have tendency to perceive themselves as "other" or "outsider" (Elron & Kark 2002) and not a part of majority work force. This tendency on one hand may leave them with stress and feeling aloof while on the other hand it

develops adaptability and sensibility which helps as a very effective adjustment tool. So, the employer has the consideration of hiring women, related to their qualifications & skills, cultural obstacles & the organizational environment in order to determine what type of women he/she need to recruit, for what jobs, how to tackle with the career breaks, & how to retain them.

3. Methodology

3.1 Objectives of the study

The study has the following objectives.

- 1 To filter out the reasons, (if any) for women not being given the equal employment opportunities
- 2 To find out areas of improvement in the internal environment and work settings to encourage women participation
- 3 to point out deficiencies and areas of improvement for women employees

3.2 Hypotheses

Based on the literature review, the following hypotheses are developed for the study.

1. Cultural considerations affect the recruitment decision of women workforce.
2. Women are not equipped with necessary Qualifications and skills required, that act as a hurdle for them being hired.
3. Organizations with positive environment allowing flexibility are more attractive for women.

3.3 Defining Variables

The paper considers three main variables, with further division of each. The diagrammatic elaboration of variables is as follows.

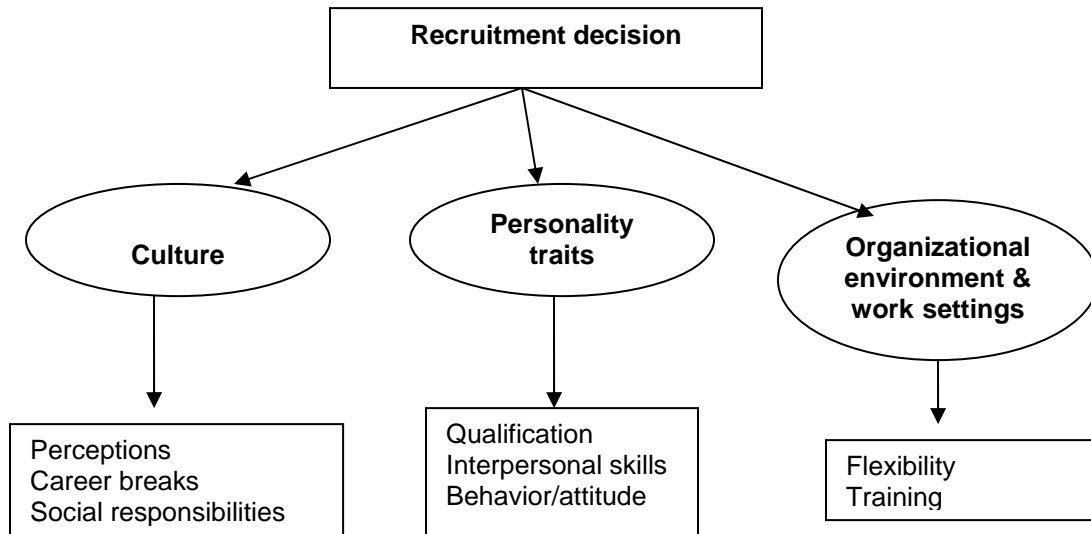


Fig. 1
(Defining variables)

3.4 Measurement Instrument

Data was collected from the HR personnel of the organizations using interview questionnaires.

3.5 Sample

The research was conducted in various types of industries regardless of their nature of work, specialization area sector etc, with Islamabad as population. As the study does not address any specific industry, management cadre or specialization area, so convenience sampling was done for data collection. From 36 organizations, interviews from the recruiting personnel (one from each organization) were conducted. The sample industries included, Telecom, NGO's and Banking sector of Rawalpindi, Islamabad.

4. Analysis

The data collected using the interview questionnaires was analyzed using Microsoft Excel. Using the excel spreadsheets, the averages and percentages were calculated and the tables, charts and graphs were designed. The analysis and the observations of the study are as follows.

PERSONALITY TRAITS

Qualification

On the basis of the research conducted, it was evident that the women workforce

is equally equipped with the education and the academic qualification required. This has also been proved by the literature (e.g by Davidson.M.J 1992) The following data and its graphical presentation show the facts and figures.

Table 4.1 Qualification levels of Women Employees

Level of education	Inter or below	Bachelors	Masters or above	Total
Minimum	3(8.3%)	30(83%)	3(8.3%)	36(100%)
Maximum	3(8.3%)	6(16.6%)	27(75%)	36(100%)
Average	6(16.6%)	6(16.6%)	24(66.6%)	36(100%)

Fig4.1

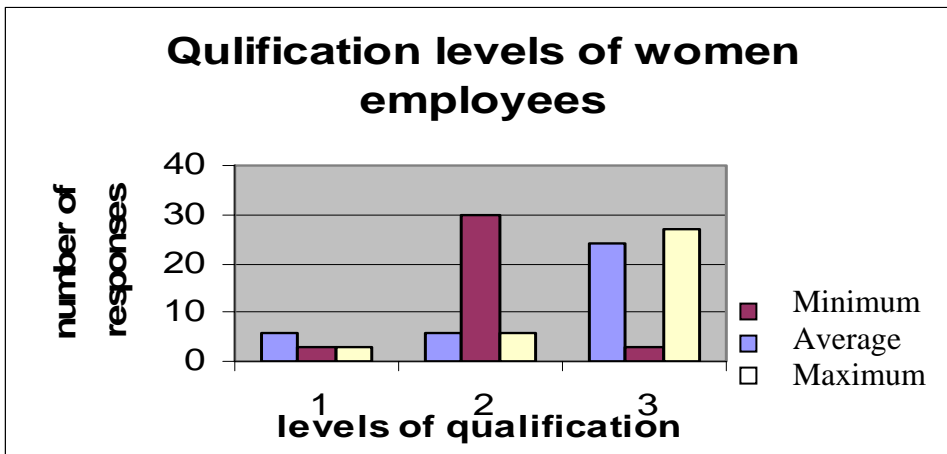


Fig 4.1 shows that masters (category3) are the average qualification level of female workforce. Most of organizations have bachelors (category2) as their minimum qualification level, while below that (category1) is very less in proportion.

Fig 4.2

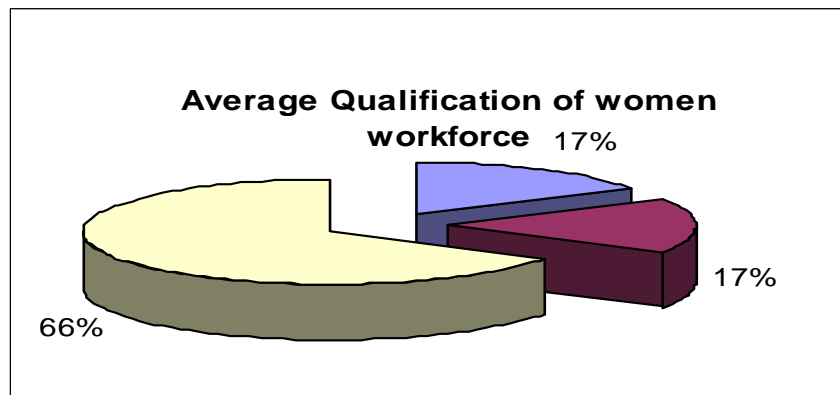


Fig 4.2 shows that 66.6% of women workforce has the qualification level above masters, while bachelor, inter or below is only 16.6% each.

It was also explored that on the average, women are more concentrated in middle management level, while they have a prominent presence in the higher level as well, which is very clear from the given graph

Table 4.4

Management levels	percentage
Higher level	22.8
Middle level	44.5
Lower level	32.7

Fig 4.4

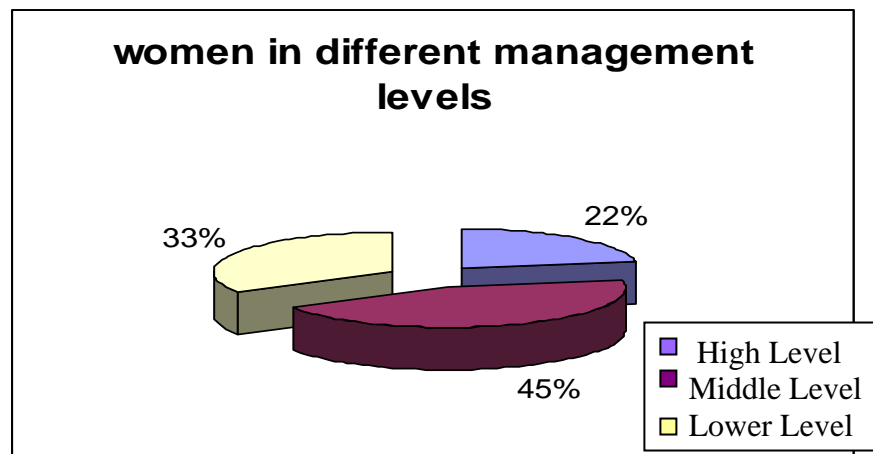


Fig 4.4 Shows that most of the female population (45%) lies in the middle management level and a prominent proportion (22%) is in the high management levels.

Interpersonal skills & behavior

The research shows that the women work force is equipped with the interpersonal skills and attitude required for the specific work environments. 83% of the respondents said that women have equal capabilities as men in this regard, while 8% said that women are even better than men regarding the interpersonal skills.

CULTURE

Perceptions

It is usually perceived that women employees or even the male employees as well are recruited, keeping in mind their geographical and family background (Bourgon.J 1996), but on the basis of the study the reality seems to be different. Only some (26%) consider the background while others don't. It shows that the perceptions related to such phenomenon are no more valid.

Career breaks & social responsibilities

In the literature it is mentioned many a times that women are lagging behind due to their family responsibilities and career breaks (Myerson & Fletcher 2000), but this is not the case in the organizations studied in this survey. The results show that 83% of the organizations don't bother about the female candidate being married or unmarried, due to the fact that in both cases women are as responsible and committed as the men are, or even more than the men (22%).

ORGANIZATIONAL SETTINGS AND WORK ENVIRONMENT

Flexibility

Out of the 36 organizations studied, 27 don't allow shifts, while 18 (50%) don't allow flexible timing. Still there is no performance difference noticed of the female employees, showing that they can work in any sort of environment.

Training

30 out of the 36 organizations provide on the job trainings, which are provided on equal opportunity basis to both male and female employees showing a positive and non discriminatory environment for women.

5. Discussion & Conclusion

The aim of the study was to explore various factors that might be under consideration of the employers, while making recruitment decisions, handling the gender issue. In the study general trends were analyzed regarding the qualification levels of the female employees i.e. whether they are equally capable and equipped with academic qualifications as well as the personality attributes. The personality traits were analyzed based on the perceptions of the employers.

What they think of the females in terms of making themselves fit and value able in the organization, as well as fulfilling the job requirement? How good they are making themselves, mixed up in the organizational environment, with other fellow employees, peers, boss, subordinate etc? How they balance their work life with their official responsibilities? Is there any lack of commitment, seriousness or motivation making them as a less preferred resource or vice versa? The research confirmed that there is no obstacle in the career path of a woman as far as their personality attribute and academic requirements are concerned. They are very well adjusted in the organizational cultures and work environments, and develop impressive social relationships with their co-workers (Davidson & Cooper 1992, Elron & Kark 2002). On the basis of study it is concluded that regarding qualification women are equipped with all necessary education and skills required for any job, so we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis. The paper also examined, the perceptions of the employers associated to different social setups, backgrounds, marital status of the female employees. And all these factors were found to have a negligible impact on the entry of the women in the considered organizations. Most of the employers do not consider the social, geographical background of the employees so it proves that cultural issues or the perceptions regarding any of such issues are not cause of hindrance in the way of women work force. So the hypothesis 2 was rejected and null hypothesis is accepted.

Another dimension analyzed was regarding the facilities and relaxations provided by the employers to their workforce that might make the opportunities easier to avail for the women especially and all other employees generally. This factor might also help the employer making a rational recruitment decision regardless of gender. Most of the organizations under study had no special arrangements for the women workforce, yet it didn't affect the entry or performance of women in the organization. Still it is important to have some arrangements such as day-care facilities, and training after the career breaks (such as maternity leave) might even improve the performance and productivity of the female staff. The equal opportunity organizations and the organizations with flexible work settings (flexible timings, shifts/part times etc) are not noticed to have more of women employees as compared to the others. It shows that women employees are capable of working in any environment and work settings, thus proving this hypothesis (hypothesis 3) to be false accepting the null hypothesis.

The performance of the female employees was a major issue to be taken care of which decided their presence in certain levels of job. The proportional presence of women in certain levels of management was an indicator of their performance. The study revealed that women are performing as well as the men are. Regardless of all the above mentioned factors it was evident that possibility of success of the departments headed by the females is equal to the ones headed by the males. It was further noticed that the environment had positive impact having female bosses. This phenomenon was associated to their better disciplined personalities and leadership styles. It was also seen that female are

observed to have a more focused and organized approach to their work that results in success.

The whole study and its results are not yet so reliable and generalizable, due to the fact that the sample size is not sufficiently large, also the results are very general in nature and do not address the issues in a specific area or industry. So, it can be improved in future by increasing the sample size, making it more specific and analyzing more variables.

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