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Leader-Member Exchange as a Predictor of Employee Turnover

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Abstract

Knowledge workers form the core of contemporary organizations. However, they have to work with leaders who belong to old school –typically bureaucratic and rigid. Conflicts arise because the highly proficient team-members are not used to control and command and bosses are not ready to step out of their comfort zones and build bridges of trust, empathy and openness. Bosses confine themselves to a few ‘trusted’ lieutenants while majority of people at workplace have to face the roadblocks in spite of their competencies, commitment and ingenuity and thus fail to contribute their mite in organizational success or find meaning in whatever they are doing. On several occasions, such talented people have no option but to change the organization and look for better employment opportunities where their full potential can be capitalized. Such a scenario calls for review of leader-member exchange as a predictor of employee turnover. This paper is a humble attempt to revisit the role of superior-subordinate relationship as an antecedent of employees’ intention or decision to quit the organization.

Keywords: Leader-Member Exchange, Employee Turnover, Organizational Dynamics

Introduction

Organizations in 21st century are different from the ones that existed earlier. Manufacturing as well as service sector are highly knowledge-driven. Traditional bureaucratic paradigm, which effectively worked for great corporations during last 150 years, does not hold any such promise today. Contemporary organizations are bursting with young, dynamic, forward-looking, and hard-working knowledge workers who are always ready to take up new challenges, break new grounds, stretch themselves in case it helps the organization where they work and learn new things that might be useful for their professional self-development. Obviously, profile of people at workplace has changed fundamentally. While the knowledge workers are willing to tread extra miles, take risks and constantly raise the bar for success indicators in their organizations, they are radicals at heart who give a damn to rigidities of all sorts, regimentation in departments, suffocating relationships at workplace based on notion of seniority and archaic rules that usually create hurdles.

Unfortunately, deeply entrenched bureaucratic mind-set in organizations co-exists with new-age knowledge workers. Old guards are scared of the young ones who are professionally far superior, tech-savvy and quick learners –indispensable if we have to use a single catchphrase. Hence, it is interesting to explore how the old guards relate to their subordinates whose overall profile and outlook have changed drastically during last twenty-five years. It is true

that young knowledge workers are generally open-minded and vocal. This threatens the traditional relationship between managers and their team-members where the latter just have to follow instructions or at best, seek clarification in case of serious doubts. Those asking too many questions or taking a line different from the boss are looked down with suspicion and disdain.

Conflicts arise because the team-members are not used to control and command and bosses are not ready to step out of their comfort zones and build bridges of trust, empathy and openness. Bosses confine themselves to a few 'trusted' lieutenants while majority of people at workplace have to face the roadblocks in spite of their competencies, commitment and ingenuity and thus fail to contribute their mite in organizational success or find meaning in whatever they are doing. On several occasions, such talented people have no option but to change the organization and look for better employment opportunities where their full potential can be capitalized. Such a scenario calls for review of leader-member exchange as a predictor of employee turnover.

Defining Leaders-Member Exchange (LMX)

Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) can simply be defined as a reasonably consistent pattern of work and non-work related interactions between leaders/managers/supervisors on the one hand and team-members/subordinates/employees on the other. It is humanly impossible to have identical interactional patterns in the organizational or social contexts. Hence, the leaders develop closer association with a few employees who display exceptional followership traits such as initiative, risk-taking, intrapreneurship, readiness to support the boss whenever required, timely completion of projects, willingness to stretch themselves in case of exigencies and enthusiasm in taking up any new role or assignment howsoever challenging that might be. Such hard-core followers receive special attention of the leaders in terms of resource allocation, participation in decision-making, rewards and recognition. However, such interactional patterns generally go beyond mere 'give and take' relationships. There is an emotional connect between leaders and followers who are contemptuously referred to as 'inner circle', 'in-group', 'ginger group', 'yes-men', 'hired hands', 'psycho-phantoms' etc. by rest of the employees depending on their wild imagination.

Majority of the employees refrain from going out of their way to 'please the boss' (that is the general perception about exceptional followers). Even the leaders do not make any concerted efforts to reach out to large number of employees with immense potentials that can match the competencies of the exceptional followers. However, not only their potentials are wasted, they are usually withholding their discretionary efforts while focusing primarily on routine things. They nurture a grudge against the exceptional followers who always hog the limelight and take lion share of rewards and recognition. Labour of exceptional followers is not generally visible to the mass of employees. Hence a sense of organizational injustice creeps in, leading to withdrawal of discretionary efforts, thus reducing competitiveness of the organization. Such employees derive a lot of pride and pleasure in calling themselves 'out-group', 'radicals', etc. They do not mind being left out in decision making or losing out on key resources or being ignored for rewards or recognition. Rather, they do their routine job and invest rest of their time either in sustaining their grudges against their 'more devoted colleagues' and 'presumably biased bosses' or looking for employment opportunities in other organizations where 'their full potential can be capitalized'.

Interestingly, conceptual framework of LMX has evolved only during last four decades. Earlier leadership studies (prior to 1975), focused on manager-subordinate

relations/interactions based on traits (Stogdil, 1948), behaviour (Fleishman et al., 1955), power (Bass, 1960) and situations (Fiedler, 1967). However, taking cue from social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), scholars began to look at interactional patterns between leaders/managers and their team-members as dyadic relationship –a fundamental departure from traditional leadership theories. Thus LMX brought the followers at the centre-stage of all leadership studies subsequently. Hence organizational outcomes were no longer tied with capabilities of leaders but how they related to their team-members. Obviously, consistent interactional patterns at the workplace became decisive in shaping organizational effectiveness, success and competitiveness.

Dyadic relationship between leader and organizational members which is mainstay of LMX, evolves over a period through a series of interactions and the leader may consciously or sub-consciously develop different types of exchange relationships with their team-members (Dansereau et al., 1975; Graen & Cashman, 1975) irrespective of how such relationships influence the organizational outcomes. As this dyadic relationship is uneven –one person having authority over the others, scholars prefer to term it as Vertical Dyadic Linkage. Relationship differentiations are augmented due to compatibility of leaders with some of the members and their concomitant dependability and competence. Quality of LMX is said to be good for those who find a place in the inner circle of the leaders while it is bad for those who belong to the out-group. Organizational members respond to good or bad quality of LMX in terms of better outputs or withholding of efforts depending on where they are placed. Perception of the quality of LMX shapes the behaviour and actions of the organizational members and largely determines outcomes in the long run.

Exploring LMX-Employee Turnover Linkage

A number of studies have unravelled association between quality of leader-member exchange and employee turnover (Graen, Liden, and Hoel, 1982; Dansereau, Graen, & Haga, 1975; Graen & Cashman, 1975; Dansereau, Cashman, & Graen, 1973). An employee's intention to stay in the organization or quit depends primarily on unique exchange that develops between self on the one hand and supervisor/leader on the other (Graen, Liden & Hoel, 1982).

A recent study indicates that LMX plays a functional impact on staff turnover intentions while role conflict, job satisfaction and organizational commitment have partial role in mediating the influence of LMX on turnover intentions (Elanain, 2014). A few scholars have also suggested a mediating role of LMX in augmenting employee turnover intentions (Jordan and Troth, 2011). Interestingly, LMX is nonlinearly related to turnover such that turnover is lowest when LMX is moderate (i.e. both “bad” and “good” LMX are associated with higher levels of turnover) (Morrow, et al. 2005).

Employees who perceive lower quality of LMX relationships with their bosses are more likely to exhibit greater intent to quit than those who experience higher quality LMX (Schyns, et al., 2007, Bauer et al., 2006). Further, meta-analysis of Ilies et al. (2007) also indicates a close association between high LMX quality and decrease in employee turnover. Several studies in the past have suggested that low quality of LMX relationship usually augment employees' intention to leave the organization irrespective of geographical location of the firms, size of the firms (in terms of revenue, market share, employee strength), nature and type of firms (private/public, manufacturing/service/research and development) nature and type of employees (blue collar/white collar, permanent/temporary/contractual) (Erdogan, 2002; Gerstner & Day, 1997; Major, et al. 1995; Sparrowe, 1994; Wilhelm et al. 1993; Graen et al. 1982). Such an association of poor LMX and high turnover intention certainly calls for

timely and appropriate managerial interventions. It is imperative for managers to nurture a better quality of relationships with their subordinates in order to arrest their intention to voluntarily leave the organization especially in the context of talent shortages and increasing cost of hiring and retaining the employees.

However, some of the scholars have doubted predictive value of LMX for employee turnover (see Vecchio and Norris, 1996, Vecchio, 1985, Ferris, 1985 for example). Vecchio (1986) has emphasized that leader-member exchange, although consistently related to employee performance, is not consistently related to employee turnover. On the other hand, Harris et al (2005) and Kim et al. (2010) established a curvilinear U-shaped relationship between LMX and turnover intentions implying that employees may have turnover intentions irrespective of good or bad LMX experiences. According to Harris et al. (2005), ‘members with low LMX quality perceive the current job negatively and tend to report high levels of turnover intent because they may feel pushed out of the organization’ while ‘members with high LMX who may have greater job opportunities, tend to have high levels of turnover intent because they may feel pulled away from the organization’. Morrow et al. (2005) also suggest that turnover intentions are high both in cases of low LMX and high LMX. Collins (2007) reaffirmed that ‘the exact nature of the relationship between LMX and turnover intent remains equivocal’.

Conclusion

LMX is characterized by differentiations. Leaders make a conscious (or at times sub-conscious) choice of aligning with a few trusted colleagues while alienating several others in the process. Such interactional patterns have significant impact on relationships between the leaders and their team-members, organizational effectiveness and overall competitiveness. Employees in the in group of the leader tend to feel obligated to stretch themselves towards accomplishing organizational goals in sync with aspirations and expectations of their bosses. On the other hand, employees belonging to out group tend to feel strong sense of alienation and thus focus on routine job and put a full stop on their discretionary efforts.

Employees of both categories i.e. in group and out group are strained beyond limits. In group members take extra burden (both emotional and job load) on themselves so that their bosses do not have to lose face during review meetings. This implies longer working days, lesser holidays/leave of absence, minimal family time, zero vacations, hardly any recreation, petty social life, less friends and more enemies at workplace. Sum of all these may be burnout and eventual stress-driven depression. Such employees also have a grudge against vast majority of their colleagues who have almost free ride, all the time for gossip and rumour mongering and yet they end up getting the identical pay cheques every month. No wonder, in group employees feel exhausted –emotionally as well as physically. At times, they might think if they work for some other organization in the same way as in this organization, they can get much better compensation imbued with attractive incentives and perquisites. So the streak of turnover intent is there even though they are star performers in the current organization and have a greater sense of self-importance thanks to their closer ties with their bosses.

Out group employees are also equally ill-disposed. Such people are by no means less competent than those who are in the in group. However, they alienated at the workplace because the leaders have compatibility issues with them. It is possible that many out group employees are highly talented and in case given an opportunity, they can make significant contribution in the organizational value chain. However, they feel sorry about not being fully utilized just because of whims and fancies of their bosses who are willing to give challenging assignments to those who are in their ‘good books’. Feeling of being under-utilized puts them

under greater emotional and psychological strain. Negativity envelops such employees to the extent that they lose all interest in organizational outcomes and simply focus on their routine jobs. Such employees have hardly any option but to nurture intent of joining some other organizations where their full potential can be utilized. Alienation and lack of opportunities to contribute towards organizational success and limited prospects to find meaning in whatever they are doing consistently undermine their sense of wellbeing and push them towards stress and depression.

Thus we find that irrespective of quality of LMX (good for in group members, bad for out group members), employees tend to have turnover intentions. This has been reaffirmed in a number of empirical studies conducted over last decade. Turnover intentions often get translated into reality as there is always a talent shortage across industries. Hence it may be a great idea to re-orient LMX and work towards developing interactional patterns based on equity, transparency and fairness as opposed to the current foundation of differentiation which is serving no purpose for ensuring long term competitiveness of organization. So long as LMX is practiced with jaundiced eyes of the bosses, employees will continue to dream of working in some other organization and morning after morning such fantasies will come true –almost mortifying the leaders who are responsible for motivating and retaining their talented workforce rather than letting them go.

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Role of HR in Augmenting CSR Practices in Family-run Businesses in India

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Abstract

This paper examines the evolving role of Human Resource (HR) in family run small and medium enterprises (SMEs) where business has culturally held a welfare perspective and supporting employees and community is integral to business practice without an understanding of what professionally run business describes as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Case study approach has been used to bring out the perspectives of entrepreneurs and owners of SMEs who hold a welfare approach to business and have been practicing it with benevolence. Data for the case study has been gathered through semi-structured interview and open-ended questionnaire. The study reveals that HR can play a crucial role in formalizing the CSR as evident from the case studies. The best practices which the paper brings out can be used by micro organizations which are moving up the revenue ladder and by other SMEs which are still in the process of structuring their CSR processes.

Keywords: CSR, Family-run Businesses, India

Introduction

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in India is not an alien term as the practice of business with a welfare approach has been integral to indigenous entrepreneurial activities. In fact, CSR is socially and culturally intertwined in organizational practices and fare far better as compared to their western counterparts (Tewari and Dave, 2012, Sundar, 2000). Charitable streak is more pronounced in family-run traditional businesses.

Business enterprises in India largely comprise of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) which are family run and managed by owners themselves. MSMEs contribute 7% to India's GDP and constitute 90% of the industrial units in the country and also contribute to about 35% of India's exports (Pandey, 2007). As compared to large corporate enterprises, MSMEs contribute more extensively as they have a share of 40% in terms of volume, 80% in terms of employment, 60% in terms of exports and 92% in terms of number of enterprises. (OECD, n. d).

However, this engine of growth and development faces tough competition from the larger and bigger firms which are increasing in number in India and adding to their might. Globalization in 1991, opened doors of the Indian economy to the organizations across the world and as a result several large multi-national companies (MNCs) set up their offices and operations in the country. They brought along business practices which were prevalent in their home countries and other countries globally, CSR being one of them. While Indian businesses traditionally supported charitable initiatives and community development projects, there was a marked difference in conceptual understanding of CSR in India and other western countries. In the west, CSR is construed as high impact initiative aimed at empowering the communities

through competency building, livelihood development programs, sustainability development projects, etc.

Recent changes in the Company's Law (Business Standard, 2014) has opened a floodgate of opportunities for Indian companies to match or surpass the best CSR practices of the west. According to the new CSR provisions, charity is just a small part of the broad spectrum of activities for the benefit of the communities. It is true that all the SMEs may not fall under the mandatory CSR provisions. However, new approach to CSR as envisaged in the new Company's Law will go a long way in shifting the focus from temple-building to skill building even in smaller and mid-sized companies.

A contemporary *avatar* of CSR is likely to co-opt HR departments of business organizations as natural choice for planning, designing, implementing and evaluating community building endeavours in place of more simplistic charitable activities like building temples, orphanages, hostels, *dharmshalas*, community halls or disbursing scholarships to needy students from marginalized sections of society or instituting literary/cultural awards. In emerging scenario, HR professionals working in various small, medium and large companies will play a crucial role in shaping CSR policies, plans and approaches.

In this research paper, the authors have tried to explore the CSR practice in small and medium organizations where these activities have largely been the entrepreneurs' initiative inspired by their personal value and guided by their commitment to do good to people and communities. The study also captures the changing role of HR in SMEs to plan, execute and evaluate CSR activities while coping with the business owners' views and ways. Much to the relief of HR professionals, CSR also comes across as a competitive tool and a marketing gimmick which ensures a steady fund flow and long-term commitment of the promoters of business firms.

Literature Review

Roots of business enterprises in India dates back to five thousand years before Christ i.e. Indus Valley Civilization when the country had trade relations with other parts of the world as evident from the coins of the period found during archaeological exploration. In Vedic period and subsequent ages, trading was carried out by Vaishya community. Vaishyas traditionally combined business with some charitable contributions which can be summed up as 'welfare approach to businesses'. As a result, affluent business people have built temples, hospitals, orphanages, schools, etc. They generally treated their employees as members of the extended business family leading to lifelong employment. Even today, benevolent employer and loyal employees typify Indian business model. Mahatma Gandhi defined Indian approach to managing business through the prism of trusteeship. Hence it goes without saying that the contemporary CSR practices are merely extension of the traditional benevolent paradigm of doing good while doing business.

Broadly speaking, there have been four prevalent approaches to CSR namely ethical model, statist model, liberal model and stakeholder model (TERI Europe, 2004). Ethical model is based on Gandhi's principle of trusteeship where the business entities take upon themselves the responsibilities of socio-economic development of the nation and it is in line with this ideological thought that companies like TATA contributed to the process of social development through their commercial activities. Statist model got a fillip in independence era when India followed the socialist pattern of nation's economic development and public sector units were established to contribute to nation building. The liberal model of social

responsibility emphasizes on economic responsibility of businesses such as paying taxes and obeying rules while the government takes care of social development. The stakeholder model ensures that the companies do not ignore any of the stakeholders while working on CSR activities.

Since there is a cap on the size of the firms for which CSR has been made mandatory according to the Company Law of 2013, most of the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) fall outside the purview of mandatory CSR spending. Though MSMEs are not legally bound by CSR, they operate with an unstated obligation imbued with altruistic motive (Parker, et.al, 2009). Only drawback at the moment is that the MSMEs' approach to CSR is largely restricted to philanthropic acts of institution building (CII & PwC, 2013) and charity in the form of donation towards religious and community-based trusts and individuals (Tewari & Pathak, 2014) or through contributing and participating in association and club activities of which the owner of the MSME is a member (Revenkar , 2013).

While CSR in contemporary sense is not practiced by the MSMEs, it is understood as welfare and philanthropy and is practiced as stand-alone acts of goodness which are largely driven by the owners of the enterprises. They hesitate to engage in modern CSR practices due to lack of disposable resources (Revell & Blackburn, 2007), knowledge and time (Bradford & Fraser 2008; Collins et al. 2007). Most MSMEs fail to see any business value in CSR (Collins et al. 2007; Revell & Blackburn 2007) which further dampens their inclination to take up socially responsible acts whereas research clearly indicates that responsible MSMEs which communicate their CSR effectively garner a positive reputation and increased sales (Dzansi & Pretorius 2009; Nielsen & Thomsen 2009; Revell et al. 2010) along with a more satisfied workforce (Nambudiri & Tewari, 2014).

HR can be a game changer in altering the CSR practices in SMEs. HR plays a critical role in the growth and development of an enterprise because organizational growth and productivity is dependent on the output generated by various resources one of which is human resources. HR is considered critical primarily because it is the most important agent which acts upon the other resources and secondly because of its dynamic nature.

As HR functions are handled by owners/promoters in micro and small firms, CSR is solely guided by them without any professional tinge. Softer functions like HR, accounting, media relations and communications are either not present or play a very negligible role as compared to larger firms (Barron et al., 1987; Hornsby and Kuratko, 1990). As these MSE's grow into medium sized organizations, functions like HR, accounting, procurement/purchase etc. take shape. In the formative stages of medium sized enterprises, HR can play a significant role in defining values and culture while setting up systems, processes, policies, metrics, reporting arrangement, etc. This is the right time when HR can also build strong CSR focus in sync with the motivation and aspirations of the promoters/owners.

Case Study: Bodhi Tree

Roots: Navneet Education Limited (NEL) was established in 1959 by the Gala family, a devout Jain family which hailed from north Gujarat region and has run the organization driven on principles of giving, charity and collective well-being in line with the tenets of Jainism. NEL was market leader in the field of educational books, general books, all forms of scholastic papers and non-paper stationery products. Gradually, NEL diversified into varied associated and non-associated fields. NEL is now a professionally managed company and has translated its values into a code of conduct which is strictly adhered to by all the employees,

managers and owners. Code of conduct has become a guiding principle to achieve its mission.

Spreading Stems: Mr Sandeep Gala took a bold decision to enter into infrastructure sector in Ahmedabad after having stabilized his core business of publications. He was aware that he was entering into a sector which was the second largest economic activity in India (The Ambekar Institute for Labor Studies, 2013) which was a perfect mix of organized and unorganized business activities (<http://www.ritimo.org/>). He launched Gala Infrastructure Pvt. Ltd in 2009 with a clear focus on bringing in the industry best practices to Ahmedabad where the real estate and in particular the construction sector was random and disorganized – marked by a complete absence of standardized systems and processes.

GALA Infrastructure Pvt. Ltd. had completed its first project and they were planning and charting their resources for the second project. On the day of foundation stone laying ceremony, the members of the top management decided to invite the labourers whom they had hired on a long term contract for the project site. The labour hiring in construction sector largely falls into two categories –formal long term hiring and informal short term or daily hiring (<http://www.ritimo.org/>). It was here that Gala's managing director Mr Sandeep Gala came face to face with labourers and their children.

From the ceremony, Sandeep directly headed to a seminar on the 'Best Practices in the Construction and Real Estate Industry' organized by an industry association. One of the best practices discussed there was the real estate companies taking up socially responsible activities ensuring an increased stakeholder engagement and satisfaction. That evening at the family dinner (Gala family lives in a joint family set-up of 20 members), he initiated a discussion on the role and responsibility of a business man as per the Jain traditions where apart from economic success, the welfare and social development are considered integral part of businesses (Shah, 2007).

Sandeep decided to handle the next project holistically and more responsibly. He spent the next four days thinking and discussing ways of responsible activities which he can implement in his residential project. The discussions helped him concretize a program which he called the 'Bodhi Tree'. Under this program, Sandeep targeted the labourers on the project site as key stakeholder and decided to provide a healthy and meaningful life to their children.

Bodhi Tree: Young children in the age bracket of 5-15 Years at the construction site are the most vulnerable group. These formative years when spent at the site leads to loss of an opportunity to education, exposure to unhealthy material and unsafe equipment which can lead to physical damage and due to pre-occupation of both the parents engaged as labourers, the children are largely left unattended.

Bodhi Tree was a proactive step from Gala to provide a safe and healthy life to the children of the construction workers. Sandeep Gala conceptualized and got his team to execute his plan. All children in the age bracket were provided free education in a specially developed school on a location on the site but distant from the construction area. The first Bodhi Tree school started in 2009 with 30 children and the last school ran in 2013. Altogether 120 children have benefitted from Bodhi Tree schools. Healthy balanced diet was provided to the students at the school. A weekly visit of a doctor and a dietician was made to check and monitor the health and diet of the students.

The HR department was engaged in hiring teachers for the Bodhi Tree schools, ensuring that their salaries were paid in time and it coordinated with the external vendors like the placement agency for hiring teachers, doctors and dietician. It facilitated the maintenance of the infrastructure of the Bodhi Tree schools through timely payment to various external agencies involved in the project.

The Bodhi Tree program has been a part of Gala since its first residential project site was launched and has been a regular feature of the every construction site (all six) launched and completed till now. Sandeep Gala, candidly admitted, 'I want every member of the Gala family to feel as deeply and strongly for Bodhi Tree as I do but I have no idea how to grow it further or integrate it deeper into the organizational fabric'.

From Bodhi Tree to Bodhi Garden: Reflections on Opportunities for HR in CSR Initiatives

Identifying and planning new CSR activities: Gala as an eight year old company has been able to successfully run four CSR programmes but all these programmes were conceptualised, designed and planned by the owner Sandeep Gala and HR played the role of coordinator ensuring that the administrative responsibilities like making payments to teachers, maintenance agencies etc. were done on time. HR in Gala has yet not taken up leadership role. It exists as a coordinating and facilitating department. But CSR can be used as a platform by the HR department in occupying a central position in the organization. Gala as an organization is sensitized to the welfare perspective of business and its stakeholders know it as an ethical and sensitive organization. This makes gala a fertile ground for implementation of innovative HR practices.

Strategic hiring to bring in workforce with high empathy and human values: Hiring in Gala happens through referrals or with the aid of placement consultants. All hiring is done through a match of the technical skills and knowledge of the candidate. The work experience of the prospective employee with the current need to the organization is matched through an interview process followed by reference check.

However, HR can play an important role in introducing a more scientific and holistic hiring at Gala. The attitude, skills and knowledge (ASK) consideration in hiring will help the organization in mapping and profiling the softer human skills of employees. These skills can be used for activities beyond the immediate responsibility of the employee leading to a better engaged employee. To successfully design and execute CSR activities skills like empathy, team handling, high sense of value orientation along with analytical skills and a strategic thinking are required.

At Gala, the HR department can begin strategic hiring where skills and attitude which shall facilitate a CSR program are screened and looked for. A complete involvement of the employee in the organization especially in activities like CSR leads to higher job satisfaction which can help create a win-win situation for both the employer and the employees.

Employ CSR as a tool for employee engagement: Gala currently has a workforce of 90 full time employees spread across various departments with varying academic backgrounds. An activity like the 'Bodhi Tree' which involves providing a healthy, holistic life to the children of the labourers needs a variety of human skills which all human beings possess in varying degrees. The concept of employee volunteerism can be the first step towards an improved employee engagement at Gala.

Currently Gala hires teachers for Bodhi Tree schools from external sources. They even engage agencies to take children out for picnics and visits. With a six day, eight hour working schedule which Gala follows, a strategically worked out scheme for engaging the current employees in CSR activities may lead to several positive consequences like improved employee esteem, higher integration of the CSR activity within the organization, improved productivity of the employees, higher job satisfaction apart from the obvious benefits of a better engaged employee.

Communicate CSR for employer branding: Typical to any Indian organizations (Gautam and Singh, 2010) Gala has invested resources in CSR activities but it does not have internal process or system to communicate the same. The conceptualisation of the CSR activity was done by the owner and he had hired an external agency to design the communication of the same. This communication included pre-launch marketing tools like logo, stationery etc. But inconsequential and random efforts have been made to a post-activity communication.

The HR department can take up the task of communicating the progress and impact of CSR through the existing channels and to the current stakeholders. The several positive attributes attached to CSR communication can help in organisational growth (Tewari, 2011). A few definite positive outcomes attached to CSR communication are corporate repute and employer branding. Both these responsibilities are largely handled by communication departments in large corporate houses but can be taken up by the HR under the guidance of owner.

Conclusion

CSR initiatives in small and medium family run business enterprises are generally conceptualized and promoted by owners in sync with family values and philanthropic traditions. However, such initiatives have serious limitations in terms of long-term commitment, sustained resource allocation, employee involvement, assessment and communication of CSR outcomes. Besides, quality of CSR deliverables may also be questionable in case it is exclusively driven by business owners. HR can help in taking the CSR initiatives at the next level by professionalizing planning, implementing and assessing CSR services to the utmost satisfaction of all the stakeholders. Involvement of HR in CSR activities will ensure higher degree of employee engagement and enviable employer branding. HR alone can leverage CSR initiatives by converting a Bodhi Tree into a Bodhi Garden.

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Bullying of Female Employees at Workplace

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Abstract

Patriarchal culture upholds the superiority of its male members and accords them supremacy over their female counterparts. The societal sanction unintentionally spills over to the workplace where the male members try to exercise their superiority over female employees. The resultant imbalance in power perpetuates violence against women at the workplace. Forms of violence against female employees are more subtle and tend to affect the victim both socially and emotionally. This research paper tries to explore how one gender uses self-assumed power to subvert the other through a range of case instances. Outcome of the study conforms to the feminist theory that women are subjected to bullying by the overuse/misuse of male privileges and self-assumed power at the workplace. The paper also emphasizes inadequacy of law in preventing bullying of female employees at the workplaces.

Keywords: Patriarchal Culture, Societal Sanction, Female Employees, Workplace Bullying

Introduction

Indian society is conservatively patriarchal in nature. Male domination naturally extends to workplaces much to the peril of female employees. While women have been gradually accepted at the workplace, they are often subjected to bullying notwithstanding an array of constitutional and legal provisions. The Constitution of India ensures and guarantees every individual the right to practice any profession or to carry on any occupation, trade or business as enshrined under Article 19 (1) (g) (Bhasin, 2008). Women are protected by right to equality (Article 14), non-discrimination by the State (Article 15(1)), equality of opportunity (Article 16), equal pay for equal work (Article 39 (d)), special provisions by the State in favour of women and children (Article 15 (3)), prevention of practices derogatory to the dignity of women (Article 51(A) (e)) and provisions of just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief (Article 42) (Menon and Shivkumar, 2001). Further, the All India Services Conduct Rules of 1968 (Govt. of India, n. d.) ensures that the rights of the employees in the public service organization are protected.

The degree and quality of a safe working environment ensures the 'right to work' and the 'right to live with dignity'. In absence of a safe working environment, all the rights meant for protection of women are violated leaving them in deplorable conditions as hapless victims of violence. The United Nations defines violence against women as 'any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life' (WHO, 2011). The forms of violence against women need to be contextualized within the Indian variant of the patriarchal ideology which has been considerably reinforced by being sanctified through the ancient Hindu religious texts which still exercise a strong influence over the Hindu and in general Indian society (Kishore, 2014). Women are much more likely to be victims of external harassment precisely because they lack power, are in a more vulnerable and insecure position, lack self-confidence or have been

socially conditioned to suffer in silence. The 'feminist theory' conforms that violence against women in a patriarchal social structure is utilised to maintain power and establish control over the woman in society in general and at workplace in particular.

Women are more prone to subtle and hidden forms of violence referred to as 'psycho-social hazards' at workplaces where there is an imbalance in equality of opportunity and gender-based differential treatment. Psycho-social hazards like bullying have the potential to damage an individual's psycho-social well-being. 'Workplace bullying' is often understated and characterized by destructive communications and social isolation of the victim (Georgakopoulos, et al., 2011). 'Bullying' at the workplace has been described as 'repeated inappropriate behaviour, direct or indirect, whether verbal, physical or otherwise, conducted by one or more persons against another or others, at the place of work and/or in the course of employment, which could reasonably be regarded as undermining the individual's right to dignity at work' (HSA, 2015). In this definition of workplace bullying there are four characteristic features: (a) the behaviours need to be perceived as negative and unwelcome; (b) they have to be persistent and long term; (c) they need to involve an imbalance in power; and (d) they do not have to be intentional to cause bullying to have taken place (Tehrani, 2012).

Unlike everyday clashes at work, bullying is a long-lasting conflict, where an employee is systematically harassed by one or more colleagues or superiors, resulting in severe damage to the victim's psychological and physical health. Bullying happens under the noses of those who should care enough to stop it but who do not, either because they simply cannot believe it could happen, or because they fear of the consequences (for them) of doing something about it. Thus, targets of bullying and abuse are often not believed when they do report it. The outcomes of bullying behaviours have been shown to cause clinically significant distress and impairment in social, occupational and other areas of functioning. It also creates an unhealthy working atmosphere usually by intimidating the rest.

Workplace bullying is witnessed widely as covert and overt harassment. 'Overt' type of bullying is the more visible form of intimidation which is exhibited as verbal abuse, hostility, rages and tirades. 'Covert' type of bullying is more subtle and exhibited as sabotage, undermining the individual's position in the organization and isolation. Bullying can take many forms. Bullying can be physical, psychological, verbal, sexual or racial. Bullying can be seen as threats to personal standing, threats to professional standing, or as control or manipulation tactics. It has also been described as the assertion of power through aggression. Workplace bullying occurs in three phases: (a) isolation, (b) control and subjugation, and (c) elimination.

The notable traits in people who are 'bullies' are that they are charismatic, deceptive, manipulative, ruthless and unpleasant. They resort to bullying behaviour such as:

- Purposely undermining someone;
- Targeting someone for special negative treatment;
- Manipulation of an individual's reputation;
- Social exclusion or isolation;
- Intimidation;
- Aggressive or obscene language;
- Jokes that are obviously offensive to one individual by spoken word or email;
- Intrusion by pestering, spying and stalking;

- Unreasonable assignments to duties which are obviously unfavourable to one individual;
- Repeated requests with impossible deadline or impossible tasks;
- Spreading malicious rumours;
- Unfair treatment;
- Picking on someone;
- Regularly undermining a competent worker;
- Denying someone's training or promotion opportunities.

According to Namie (2009), workplace bullying occurs due to the following reasons:

- a. the victim refuses to be subservient or resist control;
- b. the bully envies the victim's competence in the work to be done;
- c. the bully envies the victim's social skills, being liked, positive attitude;
- d. the victim displays ethical behaviour or acts as whistle blower while the oppressor acts in retaliation;
- e. cruelty personality of the bully.

The present research is based on close examination of the various bullying behaviour with the feminist theory in understanding violence against women. Since women engaged in public institutions are more prone to violence, the researcher has chosen case studies from an educational institution to unfold this form of subtle harassment.

Research Methods

Workplaces in India are pigeon-holed by visible and invisible mechanisms of power, privilege and influence that characterize the dominant-subordinated system of cultural oppression that robs masculinity of its dignity by the overuse/misuse of male privilege and subjects women in our society to the dark shadow of an age-old patriarchal culture. The researcher has undertaken recourse to face-to-face interview and observation while developing case studies for the purpose of this study. These case studies are a first-hand report of certain demeaning incidents in a public institution which are used by the researcher to analyse the feminist theory of violence against women.

Research Findings

In order to understand the premise of the present research, two particular case studies from a public institution has been chosen by the researcher. The case study goes to display the prevalence of subtle forms of harassment on women which undermine their worth and potential. The case highlights the apathetic attitude of the employers in protecting the 'harassed party' from the 'perpetrator'. Also, a considerable time lapses before the victim is even considered to be 'harassed' has been underlined.

Case Study 1

Suma is employed as a Professor in a leading university. However, her travails to reach this mark in her career were filled with enumerable blockades. Suma had rightfully joined the university having been selected through the recruitment process conducted by the university. But her ordeal started five years later with a new entrant, Madhan, in the department where she was posted. Madhan was equal to Suma in several aspects except in seniority, which irked him. Due to her seniority, promotions duly came to Suma. But Madhan, with friends in high places, ensured that this was sabotaged and he was promoted to the ranks of a Professor a few days before Suma. However, knowing that Suma was still senior to him and would have a bigger stake in being the Head of the Department, Madhan used several tactics by joining

with other colleagues in maligning Suma's recruitment process itself. Suma, in the meanwhile being the senior, was offered to step in as the Head of the Department by the university but refused due to health reasons at that time. Seeing the potential threat of her gaining power over him, Madhan issued various threats and legal suits by which the university cowered down to him and made him the Head in charge of the Department. Still not entirely satisfied with the situation, Madhan resorted to other tactics to corner and isolate Suma.

Suma started being excluded from official meetings, blamed unreasonably, ridiculed and undermined in front of co-workers and students, denied access to resources and projects, spied by students and office clerks who were hand in glove with the perpetrator. Her classes were cancelled or else students were absent and engaged in activities given to them by Madhan. She was constantly subjected to unfair treatment and made the fodder for malicious gossip.

Unable to withstand these forms of harassment which was taking a toll on her health and increasing her stress levels, Suma sought the aid of the higher officials by putting on paper her situation and seeking a remedy. After much deliberation, the university decided to take a stand by officially reprimanding Madhan for harassing a senior lady Professor in the department. But this did not go down well with Madhan. He knew the university officials were not going to back him this time nor bow down to his political threats. Wherein, he channelized his power game by engaging students in anti-university activities. Madhan, has been a good Samaritan in the eyes of his students who were unaware of the high level politics and under-hand techniques their demi god was playing. But, the university officials knew the power politics Madhan was playing within the campus and thereby engaged an external committee to resolve the matter. The committee meeting was held despite the chaos Madhan perpetrated to stall it. It is yet to be seen how the report of the committee would quell the bully and render justice to the victim. So, this leaves Suma still awaiting justice and peace of mind to work in a congenial atmosphere.

Case Study 2

Regina taught as a Professor in a public institution. But she was the only female member in her department leading to constant bullying by her male colleagues. She was often assigned unreasonable projects and regularly undermined before her peers by her seniors. Her ordeal heightened with malicious rumours being spread about her. She was hospitalised for an increase in stress levels. When she could take no more of such harassment, she approached the authorities of the institution who wanted her to wait before they could take action on the bullying. But fate did not wait for justice to be served. On the day she put in her complaints against the bullies, Regina was once again admitted to the hospital for severe cardiac problems due to increased stress and mental trauma. The very same night she was proclaimed dead.

Both Case 1 & Case 2 exhibit how justice delayed is tantamount to justice denied. In the case studies it has been observed that there is a considerable lapse of time before authorities take notice of the bullying. In fact, bullying is almost a sanctioned behaviour where in both cases the harasser is the male and the harassed is the female. In both the cases it is observed that there is an absence of any clear cut policy or legislation to tackle bullying at the workplace. However, the various forms of harassment perpetrated on both Suma and Regina are none other than forms of bullying behaviour. Also, despite both having lodged complaints against their bullies, it does not give them the taste of victory rather sadly, negative consequences such as image tarnishing in Suma's case and death for Regina. Both the cases reflect the three

phases of bullying where the victims were isolated, controlled and subjugated and finally eliminated. Maybe in Suma's case the last phase is yet redeemable if the authorities are to act speedily and use an iron hand to put down the harasser. In the words of writer Tom Engelhardt, 'Words denied mean analysis not offered, things not grasped, surprise not registered, strangeness not taken in, all of which means that terrible mistakes are repeated, wounding ways of acting in the world never seriously reconsidered'.

Conclusion

Globally, one of the less known and less acknowledged forms of violence against women is bullying at work. This form of violence puts both the employees and employers in increasingly vulnerable positions. Violence in the workplace is fast becoming the number one problem for employers (Workplace Violence Statistics, 2010). The gender-based violence/workplace violence results due to the traditional practices illegitimately authorising men to deprive women of their liberty in public or private life. The tender nature of women, lack of social support, patriarchal norms and poor access to information make the women defeated in spite of her strength.

For meaningful enjoyment of life under Article 21 of the Constitution of India, every woman is entitled to the elimination of obstacles and of discrimination based on gender (Radhakrishnan, 2008). Effective and clear-cut judicial measures to safeguard the interest of women at the workplace are the need of the hour. There is an essential need to identify 'bullying' as a form of violence and give it the necessary legal interpretation rather than cover it under a wide umbrella of various other judicial measures. It is imperative that every institution must have an anti-bullying and harassment policy in place so that can be disposed of quickly to the satisfaction of the victim. The organizations must closely examine the climate in which they expect the people to work (Adams, 1992). Where a bullying culture has been identified, (through a number of complaints being received, for instance) employers must take reasonable measures to prevent incidents of bullying occurring (through awareness raising and training as well as reacting speedily to resolve issues early/progress investigations and/or initiate control measures). When and if instances of bullying occurs, employers should prevent the risk of injury to the health of employees worsening by providing and implementing support and assistance throughout the process and reviewing and monitoring the environment afterwards, as far as is possible (HSA, 2015). Safeguarding the female employees against bullying is in the best interest of the organization.

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Corporate Interface

Unfolding Employee Engagement in India

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Abstract

This article is based on an interview with Pronoy Dutt, Co-Founder, Executive Director – Human Resources & Mentor-In-Chief, 360° Engineering & Consulting Services Limited, New Delhi. He has over 12 years of experience in Management consulting, talent acquisition, employee engagement and organization development. Pronoy has earlier worked as Director, Talent Sourcing at Gallup Consulting, Head HR at Costa Coffee and Director, Research and Consulting at Umbrio Consulting. In this interview, he provides incisive views on the idea and importance of employee engagement, global best practices in Indian context and prospects of employee involvement initiatives in India. This interview brings in a corporate perspective on employee engagement so as to trigger typical academic research with valuable and genuine inputs from the field.

Keywords: Employee Engagement, Best Practices, India

[Interview for the Corporate Interface conducted by Srirang Jha]

How do you articulate the idea of employee engagement?

The idea of employee engagement has gradually evolved from job satisfaction, job involvement and organizational commitment. It is an inner state that drives the employees to stretch themselves to accomplish organizational goals out of their own volition. An engaged employee uses his/her discretionary efforts even at the cost of their personal discomfort so that the organization may thrive. He/she consciously makes a choice to use personal resources and invest own time to realize vision and mission of the organization.

Credit of coining the term ‘employee engagement’ goes to Gallup Research Group which has worked on this theme for several years. In recent times, employee engagement has caught the imagination of HR professionals who are putting all efforts to leverage it as a differentiator in highly competitive market. In fact, engagement is a unique relationship between employees and the organizations that moves beyond give and take, reward and punishment and expectation and fulfilment. Employees are simply crazy and organizations are more than willing to nurture them with unfailing support mechanism.

Why employee engagement is important today?

In contemporary organizations, majority of employees are Gen Y. They are willing to go the extra mile to make their organizations competitive and successful. However, they can easily get frustrated and withdraw efforts or focus on just the routine things at the workplace in case there is no emotional connect between them and their respective organizations. After all they

are men and women destined to make a difference wherever they are. At the same time, they are restless, running to achieve more in less time and have their footprints embossed in gold by extra-ordinary feat.

Hence, engaging the Gen Y employees is absolutely necessary if the organizations desire to remain relevant and competitive. This can be accomplished by providing what they want – more challenging and meaningful assignments, ownership of what they are doing, pride derived from their accomplishments, difficult targets, instant feedback, steady resource allocation, opportunities to learn, transparency at workplace, job autonomy and above all an enjoyable work environment. In the bargain, they are willing to be game changers and push their organizations ahead of the competitors.

Employee engagement is a passport to ensure retention of highly talented people and thus maintain superb position in the market in terms of top-line and bottom line. Engaged employees not only bring in breakthrough thinking and innovation but also guarantee greater customer delight and customer amazement by value added and experiences generated. They are quick to respond to fast changing market dynamics and tune delivery of their services or products to surprise the customers beyond their imagination.

Fostering employee engagement has been major part of your work in various companies. Why did you focus on involving employees as HR professional?

It is important that employees are aligned to the vision and mission of the organization from day one of joining the organization. Such an orientation is likely to help the employees internalize core values of the organization and develop a strong sense of ownership and belonging. Initial bonding helps nurture a long term relation of the employees with the organization enabling them to achieve business objectives and contribute towards fostering culture of excellence and innovation. Obviously, no HR professional may like to ignore employee engagement given its magical powers to boost fortunes of the organization.

How did you augment involvement of employees in various companies you earlier worked for?

I used to conduct ‘Role Clarity Workshops’ for all the employees of the organization by establishing the inter-linkages between individual goals and business goals. This was usually followed by demonstrating the interconnectedness between each role/set of roles for superior business performance. Setting up a Balance Score Card based Performance Management System to recognize top performers also help in enhancing employee engagement.

I also experimented in terms of creating well-defined career plans with structured Individual Developmental Plans (IDPs) to encourage all the employees to advance both horizontally through role enlargement and vertically by role advancement after successfully qualifying all developmental training programs. Results were amazing so far as increased engagement among employees was concerned.

Would you like to share some of the interventions that promoted involvement of employees in organizations you were associated earlier?

I launched the Great On-boarding Program at Costa Coffee India for ensuring strong engagement among employees during the first year of joining the organization through enhanced role clarity, resource enablement, role-to-talent fitment, filling 40% of all positions through internal job postings (IJPs), manager development training workshops and recognition programs for both employees and their immediate families. The Great On-

boarding Program at Costa Coffee India was successfully able to significantly reduce annualized employee attrition from extremely high 120% for the period 2009-2010 to industry best 31% for the period 2010-2011.

How do you see employee engagement practices in India?

Employee engagement practices in India are among the best in the global context. However, further reinforcement is required in terms of enhanced buy-in at CEOs and top management level, where employee engagement becomes a key performance indicator for all business heads/functional heads and is not confined to an HR-driven business objective.

In fact, 40% of manager performance should be assessed on basis of parameters of employee engagement/ drivers of creating employee engagement at the workplace. All functional heads and line managers must be held responsible to ensure creation of customer- centric talent powered work-places for superior business performance through high employee productivity, customer delight, profitability and low employee attrition/ absenteeism.