

A STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF WORKPLACE CULTURE ON GENDER DIVERSITY IN SMES OF THE MANUFACTURING SECTOR

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Abstract

With more and more women entering the workforce, gender diversity is increasing in organisations. Manufacturing sector that has been traditionally dominated by male employees also shows an increase in gender diverse workforce. This is true even for the manufacturing companies belonging to the SMEs. With high demand for talented and skilled employees and challenges in retaining them, organizations have realized the importance of attracting and retaining women employees, hence, gender diversity in organisations has become important and received lot of attention. Organisations with more women employees have been found to have a work environment that is supportive and sensitive to their needs. Greater gender diversity ensures lesser disciplinary issues and healthy work environment. SMEs provide employment close to 40% of India's workforce after the agricultural sector which employs the largest number of people in India. SMEs also struggle with skilled worker shortages. They too need to attract and retain women employees to ensure good quality workforce. This study attempts to investigate female workforce participation and the extent supportive workplace culture for women influences gender diversity in SME's of manufacturing sector in Coimbatore district. This work also presents the results in support of creating workplaces that supports women and, by extension, all employees. The results of the report will be useful in creating work environments that contribute to improved recruitment and retention of skilled women in the SMEs of manufacturing segment. Respondents were the women employees from 113 SMEs belonging to the manufacturing sector in Coimbatore. Results show a positive relationship between supportive workplace culture and gender diversity.

Keywords:

SMEs, Gender Diversity, Workplace culture, Manufacturing Sector

1. INTRODUCTION

India is the second-most populous country in the world with an estimated 1.26 billion persons at end-2014 [1]-[3]. But India's Female Labour Force Participation (FLFP) rate is 33 percent which implies that only 125 million of the roughly 380 million working-age Indian females are seeking work or are currently employed[1]-[3]. Most of the women labour force participation is in the service sector. Traditionally manufacturing sectors have been dominated by male employees. Women generally opt for occupations like IT, ITES, Banking, Teaching, Nursing etc. The women who are employed in manufacturing mostly occupy administrative positions and engage in work inside the office and are almost absent in the shop floor. But now things are changing as more and more women are entering the workforce.

In the organised Indian manufacturing sector only 20 percent of female participation was present during the year 2000-01 to 2009-10. However, Tamil Nadu is one of the top states with higher proportions of female workers in the manufacturing sector (41%). Coimbatore, one of the most industrialized cities of Tamil Nadu, employs 70% to 90% women workers in its textile firms. During the last few years, women have started joining foundries

and engineering units too in large numbers for different kinds of core and non-core activities. Now, there are engineering units, especially larger ones that have 100 per cent women workers. The units provide all the required facilities, such as transport, to facilitate a good working condition for the women. The Information Technology sector, which is on a growth path here, is also having a larger number of women employees with some of them having 40 per cent of women [4]. Sources from Confederation of Indian Industry, Coimbatore say the work environment is good in IT companies in Coimbatore. Supportive work culture is essential to ensure greater women in workforce. It remains to be seen whether manufacturing sectors are offering supportive work culture to women, as they are an important talent pool and cannot be ignored. As the number of women entering this traditionally male dominated sector is rising, employers realize that women's contribution is no less than men's and they are an important source of labour pool.

Coimbatore, the third largest city of Tamil Nadu has a high concentration of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) as it is home to more than 75220 MSMEs [5]. Thus, SMEs form an important part of its economy and manufacturing firms are an important part of SMEs in Coimbatore. Coimbatore is known for its textile mills and is also known as the 'Textile capital of South India' or 'Manchester of the South'. Other popular industries include pump industry, motor industry and engineering industry.

One of the challenges faced by these small and medium enterprises is the availability of skilled workers. Organizations facing shortage of skilled workforce realize that women constitute an important and large labour pool and ignoring them means missing the opportunity to hire good quality employees. Past research has also established positive relationship between more number of women employees and profitability of a company. Organizations need to therefore understand to what extent their workplace culture.

Women constitute half the population in Coimbatore and are a good source of talented workforce. But women participation in workforce is still lesser than men in the manufacturing sector though the situation is changing. One of them being not sensitive to the needs of a woman in terms of her role traditionally established as that of a 'nurturer'. Women have to take care of home, children and other dependent members of the family. They cannot work in a work environment that is not supportive or sensitive to their needs as defined by the demands of their personal life.

The present research therefore, proposes to investigate the gender based diversity prevalent in the SMEs and how far the work culture is supportive for women employees in Coimbatore. The research also proposes to give suggestions to SMEs to create a workplace culture to attract, develop and retain women employees. The results of the study will enable organisations to attract and retain female talent as more women employees in the

organisation means a dedicated workforce, less disciplinary issues and an overall improvement in organisational performance.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In today's increasingly complex and ever dynamic global environment, organizations need to rediscover and embrace the value of a more diverse and balanced gender representation at all levels. Also, with the demographic shift in the past few decades leading to greater women participation, both in the workforce and as independent consumers, it is fair to expect and foster gender diversity at all decision-making levels in an organization. Today, women are entering the corporate world much more prepared and qualified; all they require is an impartial and a compassionate environment from their employers. But there is still a long way to go as according to the 'Global Gender Gap Report' of 2016 [6], there is a drop in women's labour force participation, with the global average for women standing at 54% compared to 81% for men. This is despite the fact that women go to university in equal or higher numbers than men in 95 countries.

Diversity is generally defined as acknowledging, understanding, accepting, valuing, and celebrating differences among people with respect to age, class, ethnicity, gender, physical and mental ability, race, sexual orientation, spiritual practice, and public assistance status. Organisations increasingly recognize that having a diverse workforce is important for improving performance, a fact that they can no longer choose to ignore [7]. Organizations which excel at leveraging diversity, in hiring and promotion of women and non-white men into senior management jobs, and providing a climate conducive to contributions from people of diverse backgrounds, could experience better financial performance in the long run than the non-diversity adhering companies or companies which are not effective in managing diversity [8].

To measure diversity, an index given by Blau [9] to calculate heterogeneity for categorical variables can be used. Blau's index was used to calculate organizational gender diversity, based on gender proportions [9]. Using Blau's index, heterogeneity equals $1 - \sum p_i^2$, where p_i represents the fractions of the population in each group. Blau's index of heterogeneity is based on a ratio or continuous scale [10], so the index increases as the representation of men and women in the organization becomes more equal [9]. For gender diversity, the index ranges from zero representing homogeneity (0/100 gender proportions) to 0.5 representing maximum gender diversity (50/50 gender proportions).

India has one of the lowest female labor force participation (FLFP) rates - typically measured as the share of women that are employed or seeking work as a share of the working-age female population - among emerging markets and developing countries. At around 33 percent at the national level in 2012, India's FLFP rate is well below the global average of around 50 percent and East Asia average of around 63 percent. India is the second-most populous country in the world with an estimated 1.26 billion persons at end-2014 [1]. Accordingly, a FLFP rate of 33 percent implies that only 125 million of the roughly 380 million working-age Indian females are seeking work or are currently employed [1]. Moreover, India's gender gap in participation (between

males and females) is the one of the widest among G-20 economies at 50 percent.

That gender equality plays an important role in economic development has long been understood in the literature. Various studies have highlighted how lower female labor force participation or weak entrepreneurial activity drags down economic growth, and that empowering women has significant economic benefits in addition to promoting gender equality [11], [12]. The World Economic Forum's 2014 Global Gender Gap Report finds a positive correlation between gender equality and per capita GDP, the level of competitiveness, and human development indicators. Researchers have established a direct positive relationship between gender diversity and financial performance [13], [14]. Goldin [15] in a seminal work, explored the U-shaped relationship between female labor supply and the level of economic development across countries. Initially, when the income level is low and the agricultural sector dominates the economy, women's participation in the labor force is high, due to the necessity of working to provide for consumption of goods and services. As incomes rise, women's labor force participation often falls, only to rise again when female education levels improve.

Further, studies by researchers and diversity scholars have proved that female managers bring distinct values and competences to organizations [16]-[17]. Ryan and Wessel [18] found that perceptions of a negative climate for women were significantly related to lower reports of job satisfaction for both women and men. However, perceived organizational support moderated this relationship, such that the job satisfaction of men who felt highly supported by the organization were unaffected by the perceived climate for women. Also, with the demographic shift in the past few decades leading to greater women participation, both in the workforce and as independent consumers, it is fair to expect and foster gender diversity at all decision-making levels in an organization.

In a competition for skills, workplaces that are welcoming of women significantly increase the size of the talent pool they can draw upon. They will have more applicants and will generally be able to hire more qualified people. Similarly, being known as an 'employer of choice' improves an employer's ability to attract and retain the most capable workers from the labor pool. As said, this can have a significant bottom-line impact. Management practices and workplace cultures that are good for women are also good for men and for the employer's financial results [19]. Also, in a study conducted by Catalyst, "The Bottom Line: Connecting Corporate Performance and Gender Diversity," examining 353 Fortune 500 companies from five industries-consumer discretionary, consumer staples, financial, industrial, and information technology/telecommunications services it is found that, "Companies with the highest representation of women on their top management teams experienced better financial performance than companies with the lowest women's representation. This finding holds for both financial measures analyzed-ROE, which is 35% higher, and TRS, which is 34% higher." [20]. In another previous study of 195 for-profit U.S. firms find that work-life benefits are associated with higher productivity for firms employing a higher percentage of women [21]. In a study of 527 U.S. firms, Perry-Smith and Blum [22] found that firms with more extensive work-life benefits were

more likely to be perceived by their peers as high performers. In sum, human resource practices aimed at effective diversity management appear to be associated with moving a more diverse group into management as well as better firm financial performance.

According to McLean [23] Workplace culture includes the beliefs, attitudes, practices, norms and customs ('how things are done around here') that characterize a workplace. They can be both obvious and implied. Previous literature shows that supportive workplace culture is related to reduced turnover and job satisfaction. Ahmad and Omar [24] in their study reveal that positive perception towards Family supportive work culture reduces turnover intentions and is also positively related to affective commitment of employees. The findings state that perceived family supportive work culture is a significant and negative predictor of turnover intention. Previous research suggest that formal organizational family supportive work culture which includes benefits and flexible schedules and informal support like supervisor and co-worker support have been found to reduce employee turnover. Yanadoria and Katob [25] examined the effects of work-family support at the workplace in Japanese firms and found statistically significant associations between work family support and female employee turnover in Japan. Liou et al. [26] in their study of female faculty members of Taiwanese Universities find that a supportive culture in universities is directly and positively related to job satisfaction.

A supportive culture exhibits teamwork and a people - oriented, friendly, encouraging, and trusting work environment [27], which increases the likelihood that employees feel comfortable using friendly benefits like flextime, as they are less likely to worry about possible negative career consequences [28]. Kossek et al. [29] demonstrate that work-family-specific support plays a central role in individuals' work-family conflict experiences. Increased attention to work-family-specific support will also enhance general effectiveness of human resource systems. Organizations are hiring increasing numbers of workers who are bringing their family demands with them while they are on the job. Given work-family conflict is associated with many health, well-being, and organizational outcomes [30], [29] by changing workplaces to be more socially supportive of positive work-family relationships, employment contexts serve a proactive role that shape critical employment and societal outcomes.

Ramadoss [31] in a study examines the role of job demand, job control, support at the workplace (co-worker support, organizational support, supervisor support for work related issues, supervisor support for family related issues) and one's own coping resources on positive spill over from work-to-family among employees in the Information Technology enabled Services. Support in the workplace for employees to manage their work and family demands include organizational support, supervisor support and co-worker support [32]. Organizational support includes both formal family-supportive policies and benefits, such as those administered through Human Resources departments, and informal family-supportive work cultures.

Co-worker support has been found to be associated with organizational outcomes such as turnover intentions [33]-[35] job satisfaction [36], [37]. For the individual, co-worker support

has been found to be associated with increased psychological well-being [38], decreased role conflict [33] and increased positive spill over from work-to-family.

Family-supportive supervisors help to reduce their subordinates' work-related concerns which then help the subordinate to fully participate in family activities [39]. In a research work [40] states that for employees, informal support was more closely associated with reduced conflict and exhaustion than the availability of formal work/life benefits. Satinback, Ratliff, and Roscigno [41] in their study conclude that supportive workplace culture mitigates sex discrimination and sex composition also influences discrimination. As individuals may be the most likely to experience more discrimination in job environments where they are in numerical minority.

Work environments with supportive cultures and histories are likely to reduce the likelihood that workers will interpret work-related experiences and tensions as sex discrimination. Consistent with this possibility, studies have shown that greater co-worker social support reduces reports of workplace sexual harassment [42], [43]. Workplace cultures supportive of work-family relations have been found to reduce work-family conflict, particularly for women, whereas company policies do not [44].

Stainback et al. [41] include five measures of Workplace Culture in their study – co-worker support, supervisor support, Employer work-family support, advancement opportunities and anonymity. Bergman and Hallberg [45] also developed Women Workplace Culture Questionnaire.

The manufacturing units of Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) has been a significant contributor to the industrial sector in India. Research into small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) and entrepreneurship has grown rapidly over the years. Worldwide, the maximum numbers of firms are SMEs and they play an important role in the economy. The performance of the SME sector has a direct impact on the performance of the nation [46]. In case of enterprises engaged in the manufacturing or production of goods, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises [47] in India are defined as below,

- i. A micro enterprises, where the investment in plant and machinery does not exceed twenty-five lakh rupees;
- ii. A small enterprise, where the investment in plant and machinery is more than twenty-five lakh rupees but does not exceed five crore rupees; or
- iii. A medium enterprise, where the investment in plant and machinery is more than five crore rupees but does not exceed ten crore rupees.

Though they provide employment to 1.3 million people [48] one of the challenges faced by SMEs is shortage of skilled workforce as they struggle to attract and retain talented employees. Women constituting half the population are an important labour pool. Moreover, an increasing number of women are getting educated and skilled, and rapidly entering the workforce. The proportion of women employees are increasing in number even in sectors traditionally dominated by men or considered unfit for women.

Coimbatore, the third largest city of Tamil Nadu, is one among its most industrially developed and commercially vibrant districts. It has got high concentration of small and medium scale industries and is known for its entrepreneurial spirit. Coimbatore

is popularly known as the 'Manchester of South India' because of its well-developed flagship textile industry and other industrial base. Coimbatore has textile industry, automotive industry, engineering products manufacturing industry and technical institutes. Coimbatore has more than 25,000 small, medium, large scale industries and textile mills. Coimbatore is home to more than 75220 MSMEs [49]. Approximately 80% of the MSME investment in the state has been in textile and related industries [49]. Coimbatore district has grown to specialize in certain products in the engineering goods & services sector. The specialization has been due to a natural vertical integration from the cotton mills boom into the machinery manufacturing. Coimbatore is famous for pumps & wet grinder products. The district also has presence in jewellery and electronic products. The total population of Coimbatore is 3458045, male - 1729297 and female 1728748. Of which working population is 1567950, Male workers are 1083125 and female workers 484825 [1]. This shows less than 28% of the female participation in the workforce whereas, 62% of males participating in the workforce. This is less than the national level of 33% [1]. Perumal [8] in a study reports that data on diversity relating to women participation stands at 31 % on an all India level, as per the 3rd census of Small Scale Industries by the D.C of SSI, 2001-02.

According to Coimbatore District Profile 2013 report there are 1653 registered MSMEs. It is therefore understood that they play an important role in providing employment to the people in Coimbatore. There is also a lot of focus on manufacturing with "Make in India" campaign, an initiative of government to promote manufacturing.

The present research therefore, proposes to investigate the gender based diversity prevalent in the SMEs and how far the work culture is supportive for women employees in Coimbatore. The project also proposes to give suggestions to SMEs to create a workplace culture to attract, develop and retain women employees.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study have been framed as:

- i. To study the extent women supportive workplace culture is present in the SMEs of manufacturing segment of Coimbatore.
- ii. To explore the impact of supportive workplace culture on gender diversity in the SMEs of manufacturing segment of Coimbatore.
- iii. To investigate the differences in perception of supportive workplace culture among the respondent groups based on age, years of work experience and marital status.

4. HYPOTHESES

The following Hypotheses are framed based on the literature:

H₁: Supportive Workplace Culture will be positively related to Gender Diversity.

H₂: Dimensions of Workplace Culture will be positively related to Gender Diversity.

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.1 SAMPLE AND DATA COLLECTION

The study adopts simple random sampling. Respondents are female employees at the executive level or office employees working in the SMEs of manufacturing sector in Coimbatore district. The population is all the women employees working in the SME's who are members of Codissia (Coimbatore District Small Scale Industries Association). There are 1129 small and medium manufacturing companies listed in the member list of Codissia as of 2015-16. 113 organisations are chosen through lottery method which is 10% of the total of 1129 companies identified. From each of these companies all the women working in the office i.e. executive level except the chief executives are selected for the study. Nearly 20% that is 23 of the organisations of the 113 organisations visited, that is 23 did not have any women employees.

Both secondary and primary data is collected for the study. Primary data is collected through survey method using the questionnaire during February 2015 - January 2016. All the measures are adopted from previous studies and the reliability of the constructs is ensured. The respondents are contacted after seeking permission from the concerned authority at organisations. Before administering the questionnaire, the purpose of collecting data and importance of the study are explained to the participants. Doubts are clarified and adequate time is given to fill the questionnaire. Questionnaires are distributed to respondents personally. Finally, of the 326 questionnaires, 321 are usable and had complete data. The response rate is thus 98.5 per cent as of the 326 questionnaires.

Secondary data is collected from journals, internet, books, survey reports, newspapers and business magazines.

5.2 MEASURES OF THE STUDY

The questionnaire consists of three parts. The first part is related to information about the demographic characteristics of respondents namely age, marital status, number of children and work experience. The second part measures the workplace culture (sixteen items). The third part consists of questions to the HR manager of the organisations. The questions pertain to the total number of Employees and the total number of women employed. This is to get information on gender diversity.

The tool for measuring workplace culture has been adopted from Satinback, Ratliff and Roscigno [41] that included five measures of Workplace Culture - Co-worker support, Supervisor support, Employer work-family support, Advancement opportunities and anonymity. In the present study only four measures are adopted and 'anonymity' has been excluded as it was found not suitable to the Indian context. The co-worker Social support index is based on an average of the following three items: "I feel I am really a Part of the group of people I work with," "I have the support from co-workers that I need to do a good job," and "I have support from co-workers that helps me to manage my work and personal or family life" (alpha = 0.77). The Likert response items include "strongly agree" (1), "somewhat agree" (2), "somewhat disagree" (3), and "strongly disagree" (4). Items were reverse coded so that higher values indicate greater co-worker social support. Supervisor support measure is based on an

average of nine Likert-scale items (alpha = 0.90). Response items include “strongly agree” (1), “somewhat agree” (2), “somewhat disagree” (3), and “strongly disagree” (4). These items include questions such as, “my supervisor or manager: keeps me informed of the things I need to know to do my job well, has expectations of my performance on the job that are realistic, and recognizes when I do a good job.” Items were reverse coded so that higher values signify greater supervisor social support. Work-family supportiveness measure is based on four items. “There is an unwritten rule at my place of employment that you can’t take care of family needs on company time.” “At my place of employment, employees who put their family or personal needs ahead of their jobs are not looked on favorably.” “If you have a problem managing your work and family responsibilities, the attitude at my place of employment is: ‘It is your problem’, ‘at my place of employment, employees have to choose between advancing in their jobs or devoting attention to their family or personal lives’.

The Likert response items include “strongly agree” (1), “somewhat agree” (2), “somewhat disagree” (3), and “strongly disagree” (4) (alpha = .72). Higher values indicate greater work-family support. To measure advancement opportunities at the organization one item is included –“How would you rate your own chance to advance in your organization?”. The Likert response items include “Excellent” (1), “Good” (2), “Fair” (3), and “Poor” (4).

5.3 STATISTICAL TOOLS USED

The data are analysed and hypotheses tested applying appropriate statistical tools like Descriptive statistics, Correlation Analysis and Hierarchical Multiple regression. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS-18) have been used to execute the statistical analyses.

6. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

First, to study the extent women supportive workplace culture is present in the SMEs of manufacturing segment of Coimbatore, mean of the study variables and demographic profile of the respondents are presented using Descriptive statistics and Percentage Analysis.

Table.1. Descriptive Statistics - Demographic Profile

| | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Dev. |
|--------------------|---------|---------|---------|-----------|
| Age | 21.00 | 57.00 | 34.5250 | 9.11387 |
| Work Experience | 0.05 | 28.00 | 8.6844 | 7.03728 |
| Valid N(list wise) | | | | |

Source: Primary Data

The Table.1 displays the descriptive statistics of age and work experience. The average age of the respondents is 34.5 years. The minimum age among the respondents is 21 years and the maximum is 57 years indicating that women as young as 21 years and as old as 57 years are part of the workforce. The average age profile of the respondents is 34.53 years. The average or mean work experience of the respondents is 8.68 years indicating the most of the women working the SMEs of manufacturing sector in Coimbatore do not have too many years of work experience. This

again implies women’s inability to continue their career over long duration.

Next, percentage analysis is presented mapping the demographic profile of the respondents.

Table.2. Percentage Analysis: Demographic Profile of the Respondents

| | | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|---------------------------|--------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Age (years) | 20 – 25 | 72 | 22.43 |
| | 26 – 30 | 61 | 19.00 |
| | 31 – 40 | 96 | 29.91 |
| | 40 and above | 92 | 28.66 |
| Marital Status | Unmarried | 76 | 23.7 |
| | Married | 245 | 76.3 |
| Work Experience | ≥ 1 year | 36 | 11.21 |
| | 1 – 5 years | 100 | 31.15 |
| | 6 – 15 years | 137 | 42.68 |
| | 16 years and above | 48 | 14.95 |
| Number of Children | No Children | 96 | 30.0 |
| | 1 | 121 | 37.5 |
| | 2 or more | 104 | 32.5 |

Source: Primary Data

The Table.2 shows the demographic profile of the respondents. Majority of the respondents are between the age group of 31- 40 (N = 96, 29.9%) and 40 years and above (N = 92, 28.7%). Majority of the respondents, 76.3% are married and 23.7% of the women are unmarried. Thus it can be seen that most of the respondents are married women and after the 31 years when they are quite settled with their family. The numbers of respondents are less the age categories below 31 years because that is the period most women are newly married or set to get married and most often have very young children to look after. Majority of the respondents have work experience between 6-15 years (42.68%). Majority (37%) of the respondents have one child. 32.5% have 2 or more children though majority among them have 2 children. Very few numbers of women are found to have three children and none of the respondents have more than three children. This is typical of families where women work, where they have only one or two children as having more children means more commitments and responsibility towards family and therefore, less focus on career.

To investigate the relationship between supportive workplace culture and gender diversity, stepwise multiple regression analysis is performed. This is to study the relationship of perceived supportive workplace culture and gender diversity in organisations (SMEs). The Table.3 and Table.4 present the results. Gender diversity is measured through heterogeneity index of Blau [5]. Blau’s index is found to be less with mean proportion, M=0.32 (the index ranges from zero representing homogeneity, 0/100 gender proportions to 0.5 representing maximum gender diversity, 50/50 gender proportions. This shows women are less

in number in SMEs of the manufacturing sector at the middle and upper management level.

Hypothesis 1 (H_1) is therefore accepted that there is positive relationship between supportive workplace culture and gender diversity.

Table.3. Regression Analysis with Workplace Culture as Independent Variable and Gender Diversity as Dependent variable: Model Summary

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate | F | Sig. |
|-------|--------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|--------|--------------------|
| | 0.477 ^a | 0.228 | 0.220 | 0.118 | 28.865 | 0.000 ^a |

^aPredictors: (Constant), Workplace Support

The Table.3 shows the results of linear multiple regression analysis with 'Gender diversity' as dependent variable. It is seen from model that Workplace culture is a predictor of Gender diversity (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.220$). Further from the model it is observed that the predictor items 'Workplace culture' accounts for 22.0% ($R^2 = 0.220$) of the variance in the dependent variable 'Gender diversity'. The Table.3 also gives the probability of the F statistic for the regression relationship. Considering the model F (28.863); $p = 0.000$ which is, less than the level of significance of 0.05. Thus, it is understood that there is a statistically significant relationship between the independent variable, 'Workplace culture' and 'Gender diversity'.

Thus, it can be concluded that supportive workplace culture influences gender diversity that is higher the perceived supportive workplace culture, the greater will be the number of women working in the organisations.

Table.4. Coefficients^a of the Regression Model

| Model | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|-------|
| | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| (Constant) | -.405 | 0.135 | | -2.988 | 0.004 |
| Workplace culture | 0.241 | 0.045 | 0.477 | 5.373 | 0.000 |

^aDependent Variable: Gender Diversity

The Table.4 gives the coefficients for the regression equation. The regression equation is as given below:

$$\text{Predicted Gender diversity} = -0.64 + 0.165 (\text{Workplace culture})$$

The Table.4 also gives the values of the standardized regression coefficient Beta (β) which is very useful, as Beta (β) gives the relative strength of each independent variable's relationship with the dependent variable. The independent variable 'Workplace culture' significantly influences 'Gender diversity' index ($t = 5.373$, $p = 0.000$, $\beta = 0.477$). Hypothesis 1 (H_1) is accepted that there is positive relationship between the supportive workplace culture and gender diversity

To investigate the relationship between dimensions of supportive workplace culture and gender diversity, Correlation analysis, and stepwise multiple regression analysis is performed. This is to study the relationship of dimensions of perceived supportive workplace culture and gender diversity in

organisations (SMEs). The Table.5, Table.6 and Table.7 present the results.

Table.5. Mean, Standard Deviation and Inter-correlation between dimensions of Supportive Workplace Culture, Perceived Advancement Opportunities and Gender Diversity

| | Mean | Std. Dev. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|------------------------------|-------|-----------|---------|----------|--------|---|
| Co-worker Support | 3.584 | 0.335 | 1 | | | |
| Supervisor Support | 3.228 | 0.414 | 0.145 | 1 | | |
| Employer Work-Family Support | 2.047 | 0.563 | -0.028 | -0.275** | 1 | |
| Gender Diversity | 0.320 | 0.134 | 0.490** | 0.428** | -0.125 | 1 |

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). $N = 321$

The Table.5 presents the mean, standard deviation and inter correlations among the variables. The correlation analysis results show that there is a positive relationship between Gender diversity index and 'Co-worker support' ($r = 0.490$; $p < 0.01$) and 'Supervisor support' ($r = 0.428$; $p < 0.01$). This implies stronger association of 'Co-worker support' and 'Supervisor support' with gender diversity that is greater the support from co-workers/colleagues greater is the gender diversity.

This shows that the gender diversity index or the proportion of men and women are positively associated with 'Supervisor support' and 'Co-worker support'. Higher gender diversity index indicates almost equal proportion of men and women. The results indicate that to have high gender diversity index or almost equal number of men and women in an organisation, support of the supervisor and co-workers are necessary. This is because if supervisors and co-workers do not have a favourable disposition towards women employees, it is likely that they will not stay with the organisation. Hiring more women also requires a positive attitude towards employees both by co-workers and supervisors.

Table.6. Regression Analysis with Work Experience, Age, Supervisor support, Employer Work-Family Support and Co-worker Support Independent Variables and Gender Diversity as dependant variable: Model Summary

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate | F | Sig. |
|-------|--------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|-------|--------------------|
| 1 | 0.484 ^a | 0.235 | 0.209 | 0.11644 | 9.198 | 0.005 ^a |
| 2 | 0.599 ^b | 0.359 | 0.315 | 0.10841 | 8.113 | 0.002 ^b |

^aPredictors: (Constant), Co-Worker Support

^bPredictors: (Constant), Co-Worker Support, Supervisor Support

The Table.6 shows the results of stepwise linear multiple regression analysis with 'Gender diversity' as dependent variable. The variables or items are included stepwise. It is seen from model 1 that Co-worker support is the major predictor of Gender

diversity (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.209$). Further from model 2 it is observed that the predictor items 'Co-worker support' and 'Supervisor support' accounts for 31.5% ($R^2 = 0.315$) of the variance in the dependent variable 'Gender diversity'. The Table.6 gives the probability of the F statistic for the regression relationship. Considering model 2, $F(8.113); p = 0.002$ which is, less than the level of significance of 0.05. Thus, it is understood that there is a statistically significant relationship between the independent variables, 'Co-worker support' and 'Supervisor support' and 'Gender diversity'.

Thus, it can be concluded that support from co-workers majorly influences gender diversity that is higher the co-worker support and also, supervisor support, the greater will be the number of women working in the organisations.

Table.7. Coefficients^a of the Regression Model

| Model | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|-------|
| | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| (Constant) | -0.367 | 0.227 | | -1.614 | 0.117 |
| Co-Worker Support | 0.191 | 0.063 | 0.484 | 3.033 | 0.005 |
| (Constant) | -0.640 | 0.241 | | -2.655 | 0.013 |
| Co-Worker Support | 0.165 | 0.060 | 0.417 | 2.752 | 0.010 |
| Supervisor Support | 0.113 | 0.048 | 0.359 | 2.369 | 0.025 |

^aDependent Variable: Gender Diversity

The Table.7 gives the coefficients for the regression equation. The regression equation is as given below:

$$\text{Predicted Gender diversity} = -0.640 + 0.165 (\text{Co-worker support}) + 0.113 (\text{Supervisor Support}).$$

The Table.7 also gives the values of the standardized regression coefficient Beta (β) which is very useful, as Beta (β) gives the relative strength of each independent variable's relationship with the dependent variable. Of the 3 independent variables only 'Co-worker support' and 'Supervisor support' significantly influences 'Gender diversity' index ($t = 2.752, p = 0.010, \beta = 0.417$ and $t = 2.369, p = 0.025, \beta = 0.359$). The variable 'Employer work-family support' does not significantly influence 'Gender diversity'.

Hypothesis 2 (H_2) is accepted that there is positive relationship between the dimensions of supportive workplace culture and gender diversity.

7. CONCLUSIONS

The findings of the study give insights into the gender diversity existing in the small and medium enterprises of manufacturing sector in Coimbatore. Also, the study helps in understanding the extent workplace culture is supportive for women in these enterprises. The results of the study will be useful to small and medium enterprises in hiring and retaining more women employees by focusing on developing a supportive workplace culture for women. Further, the results will give female employees' perspective of the workplace culture of SMEs in the manufacturing sector in Coimbatore.

Despite the significance of the findings, one of the major limitations of the study is its reliance on a questionnaire survey, which does not allow for hermeneutic analysis. Therefore, the study provides a relatively static understanding of Gender Diversity. These insights could be supplemented with a qualitative study so that there is an understanding of the dynamic nature of supportive workplace culture. The study is confined to the manufacturing sector SMEs in Coimbatore therefore, generalizing from these findings in relation to large organizations and from other sectors may not give the same result as the size of the company, geographical location, demographics, economy of the state or city and the kind of political environment may impact the findings. The results can also not be generalized to all organizations, as other factors such as city, economic and political environment, are likely to impact the responses. The results cannot be extended to women at the shop floor or those at the operator level as respondents are not from the shop floor. The respondents are working in the office and are not from the top management also. They are all executives and administrative staff.

Thus, organisations in order to enhance their performance by employing more women employees need to focus on a work environment with a culture that is supportive of women. From the study it is found that for greater gender diversity it is important to have more Co-worker support and Supervisor support. Women in SMEs in the executive level do not expect much in terms of advancement opportunities. For these women a supportive work environment is defined by supervisor support and co-worker support.

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