

RE-THINKING WORKFORCE DIVERSITY IN THE CONTEXT OF INDIA

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Abstract *Workforce diversity refers to a model of inclusion that reflects a globalized economy and a multicultural workforce where diversity of thoughts and perspectives, based on individual differences are leveraged by organizations for growth and progression (Harvey 2012). This study is focused on understanding aspects of 'Diversity' that is cultural (impact of national culture), generational or gender-related, and its imperatives-cum-constraints in managing a diverse workforce in India through a critical literature review process. The context of this study is rooted in the challenges being faced by both MNEs and local Indian managers towards managing expectations and aspirations of a globally dynamic and knowledge intensive workforce that is in a phase of rapid metamorphosis and transition from being only Indian to being 'Global Desis'¹.*

Keywords: *Cultural, Diversity, Gender, Generational, India, Workforce.*

INTRODUCTION

The aspect of workforce diversity has been steadily gaining acceptance as an area of strategic interest for academicians and practitioners alike. Rapid business progression, globalization, and aspects of a volatile business environment have necessitated the need to understand effectiveness accrued in utilizing this diverse pool of talent. The adage "shrinking world" is apt in the current context with increased immigration leading to an amalgamation of culturally diverse ethnic communities and religious groups fabricated into the societal arena impacting business firms and their performance levels. Research related to understanding perspectives of managers and management towards diverse workforce and their co-operative aspects towards understanding and managing such employees have increased manifold in past decade (Smith et al., 2002). The term 'diversity' has been used in different context by researchers (Awbrey, 1997; Richard, 2000; Kochan et al., 2002), generally based on understanding this aspect through factors like race, gender, and age.

'Diversity' in organizations is viewed from two major perspectives: demographic diversity that refers to visible diversity with inclusion of visible differences related to race, ethnicity, gender and age; the other being more invisible related to religious beliefs, national origins, and differences based on personality, learning process, lifestyle, or social framework (socio-economic parameters)². Researchers working on the business case for inclusion of diversity in workplaces believe that diverse workforces bring in

different views and perspectives based on their demographic and cultural differences, enabling higher productivity, better problem-solving capabilities, and growth for organizations that fabricate diversity inclusion strategies in their policies and business practices as they are more adept at handling business contingencies based on an understanding of diverse markets through the knowledge base of their diverse workforces (Harvey 2012).

Despite such rigorous and comprehensive studies in western nations, there has been less research on understanding specific aspects or factors that impact workforce diversity in relation to the Asia-Pacific region especially India³. Budhwar and Debrah (2009) in their research paper on future directions for research in Asia-Pacific region critically outline cross-cultural studies and diversity aspects to be the major focus for organizations that operate on a global platform specifically those that incorporate a multi-cultural diverse workforce within their organizational fabric. They have identified 'research on diversity management' in Asian organizations as one of challenges for firms given their demographics and ethnicity.

This paper attempts to understand meaning of 'workforce diversity' for organizations based in India (both MNEs and Indian organizations) which may pose challenges for effective implementation and functioning of people management practices. While the demographics of this country is vastly different from any of the western nations⁴ wherein the term 'diversity' took birth and was widely researched upon, it would be interesting to understand if diversity really does matter for organizations operating in

India wherein an amalgamation of different castes, religion, languages, dialects, generations, and genders already co-exists.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Cultural Diversity

Anthropologists define ethnic origins, religions, and languages as the major sources of cultural diversity. (Das, 2004)⁵

"[Culture] is that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by [a human] as a member of society." (UNESCO 2001)⁶

UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity embodies this factor as a source knowledge exchange, innovation and creativity; citing its strategic importance in a global society for mankind akin to biodiversity for nature (Article 1). It emphasizes the need of this very factor not only for societal existence and economic growth but also as a means towards achieving satisfactory intellectual, emotional, moral, and spiritual existence (Article 3).

This fact detailing culture as a secondary factor of diversity in organizations beyond standard parameters as highlighted above has been critically examined by many researchers to outline that this particular factor related to values, attitudes, and behaviours as impacted by the national culture of the country of origin in turn impacting work practices and organizational effectiveness (Tayeb, 1997). The author herein also highlights that this aspects is like a baggage for employees that transits across organizations and impacts their relationships with co-workers and the organization as a whole. Cultural diversity as a research topic-cum-inquisitive phenomenon thus has garnered immense interest from researchers as meticulously detailed in a comprehensive literature review by Seymen (2006). Cultural diversity is sensitive information; hence most of the studies done in this domain have focused on understanding impact of cultural diversity, more specifically 'racial diversity' on firm's performance. Richard (2000), through his study on 574 American banks could not find a direct, positive correlation in impact of racial diversity on firm's business performance, concluding that it also depends to an extent on the organization's strategy, its leaders and ability to manage diversity. Kochan et al. (2002) through diversity research network, conducted case based study on 4 large organizations in the US to understand the effect of diversity on group/team performance, in turn impacting organizational performance. Their studies again found that it is very difficult to establish direct link between effect of diversity (racial or gender) on business performance.

Gender Diversity

World Health Organization⁷ defines "gender" to be the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women.

Gender diversity in organizations refers to presence of both male and female genders in the workplace availing equal work opportunities, growth options, and fairness in management process. However this understanding seems to be more theoretical than practical in the real world wherein women participation in the workforce (overall participation) is less than 50% even across some developed nations while the figures are alarming for developing nations wherein majority of the women participation is in the agricultural sector than organized manufacturing or service sectors. The ILO report on Global employment trends for Women 2009, details that women participation in the labour force depicted an increase from 52.4 percent in 1998 to around 52.6 percent in 2008, marginally increasing to 52.7% by year 2009⁸. ILO research depicts the share of women in workforce steadily went up to 40.5% in 2008 from 39.9 % in 1998. It further portrays an average increase of female employment ratio by 1.2% for adult employment-to-population ratio across nations, with significant increase happening in Latin America (almost 8.4%); the only exception being South East Asia and the Pacific decreasing by 1.1% (Rai, 2012). The ILO Global Employment Trends report 2011 depicts an overall increase in the Female employment-to-population ratio across the world from 48.2% in 2000, to 49.2% in 2006 with a marginal increase in 2010 to 49.4%.⁹

Adler (1986) conducted a study on the global scenario of women in management giving an interesting portrayal of different nations and their stature with relation to female managers. She highlights that one of the primary reasons for Sweden leading the gender equality chart in terms of labour force participation rates may be attributable to separate taxation norms for married women in 1971 and parenthood insurance introduced in 1974 along with norms for flexible work arrangements and strong societal support by the government through child-care facilities, ensuring higher percentage of married women in the workforce (Rai, 2012). This fact is supported through the ILO Women in Labour markets report 2011, which details aspects of other Scandinavian nations like Finland and the Netherlands wherein female labour employment rates have increased significantly with a sharp rise in the Netherlands (at 19.1%), which has been attributed to strong support by the concerned governments in initiating policies that support women career development like part-time working arrangement, child care facilities etc. The report cites that in the Netherlands, part-time employment is almost a female domain with female part-time employment rates being the highest in the European Union at 59.9% in 2008.¹⁰ However the issue on

gender disparity across EU nations exists with Adler (1986), citing a difference in the perception towards female managers across these countries wherein ‘most organizations had never thought of creating policies for women development’ (Rai, 2012). The belief that women could and can make a difference at top level management was almost beyond the realms of imagination by most businesses, a societal expression so deeply engrained that even women executives in some countries (see Italy, Adler 1986, Pg 13) believed that the onus for this change in perception is the responsibility of women and they need to prove themselves capable of handling such senior positions before any form of societal change. This thought process is radically different from US women executives, who believe that change is needed first in form of societal support than in the women themselves for making a difference in the workplace (Rai, 2012).

To portray the aspect of gender diversity lacunae in the real business world, Adler (1986), cites the case of developed nations like Japan wherein cultural viewpoints cloud organizational attitude towards women representation in managerial positions with disparity existing in their career progression, pay levels and quality of work (Rai, 2012). Japanese women consider and understand employment to be a ‘stop-gap’ arrangement between ‘marriage’ and ‘child-birth’, striving to balance both as part of their sole responsibility. The situation does not change much with other nations of the region like Philippines and Indonesia wherein strong viewpoints towards women as nurturers and providers for the family dominate their career progression as managers, with women seldom echoing their stand in the business domain relegating themselves to administrative or low paying jobs like nursing and teaching trying to walk the tight rope of work-life balance (Rai, 2012)¹¹.

Generational Diversity

Generational diversity or multi-generational workforce have been steadily gaining research attention over the past two decades with a plethora of research focusing specifically on dynamics of these generational cohorts such as Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y. Most researchers agree that with increase in life expectancy and survival of the working population, there is an existence of different generational cohorts working alongside across organizations. Kopperschmidt (2000, Pg 66) refers to generational cohorts as “identifiable groups that share birth years, age location, and significant life events at critical developmental stages”. The questions that organizations seek to understand about generational cohorts is related to the difference between these cohorts in terms of values and preferences that impact their learning process and work style; highly important in understanding the management aspects of generational cohorts.

Researchers argue that differences in generational cohorts is related to their learning process that is impacted by their early socialization process impacting development stages of life and adulthood, socio-cultural events like disasters, wars or it’s aftereffects, advent of technological factors that impact family and life patterns, political events like protests, revolts, or collapse of political machinery (nation specific), socioeconomic events like market collapses, depressions and successive recessions (Macky, Gardener and Forsyth, 2008).

McGuire, Todnem and Hutchings (2007) point out that these differences in learning process of generational cohorts are widely exhibited through their outlook and approach, while ageing employees have high experience levels, maturity, work-orientation and stability; the younger workforce is highly mobile, impatient, and exhibit less organizational commitment but are entrepreneurial, better educated and technologically more competent than previous generations. They further argue that it is these differences in generational cohorts that give way to intergenerational conflicts impacting organizational performance; failure to understand and manage intergenerational conflicts in severe economic situations leads to further complications in terms of lower employee morale, productivity and innovation in turn impacting corporate citizenship resulting in higher employee attrition and turnover.

WORKFORCE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN INDIA

Literature review in relation to understanding of workforce management practices in the Indian context has primarily been based on the post-liberalization era, wherein the focus has been generic in nature; studying the Indian way of managing human resources across wide spectrum of the Indian industry. The focus has been on understanding what does Human Resource Management signify in the Indian context across the industries (Singh, 2005), how does this particular discipline help Indian firms cope against competition from emerging multinational companies post-liberalization (Som, 2006, 2008), with majority of studies being conducted in the cross – cultural context through comparative analysis of HRM practices existing in US and UK (Amba-Rao, 1994, 2000) (Budhwar et al., 1997, 2001, 2003, 2004).

Research related to Indian organizations have tried to understand the unique value systems and cultural context of the country in relation to its counterparts in the western nations like US, UK and Germany (Tayeb 1987, Tripathi, 1990 and Singh 1990). Sparrow and Budhwar (1997) outlined that this country had its own philosophies deeply rooted in cultural beliefs, traditions and habits that dominated its human resource management principles and functions. The best part about evolution of human resource

management practices in the country has been its ability to incorporate principles, approaches and models from across the world that have been understood as conducive to effective functioning of Indian organizations (Rai, 2012). India during its evolutionary journey of management growth borrowed aspects and principles of labour and personnel management from the United Kingdom, approaches and models of human resource management from the United States, quality consciousness and norms from Japan, thus creating a concoction that was not only powerful but productive being sprinkled with indigenous Indian values and ethos – evolving as successful Indian recipe even during the times of recent economic recession (Rai, 2012).

DIVERSITY RESEARCH IN INDIA

“In India”, Stern (1993) observes, “you will find a society that has, like Europe’s, the diversities of a continent and the unities of a civilization”

India has ever been a land of paradigm and fascination. Western nations had always portrayed this country as a land of mythology, spirituality, and mysticism – a perception that took a long time to erode even with globalization and economic liberalization (Rai, 2012). Today the country proudly exhibits its diverse culture, considerably huge population (a strong factor for growth given the dynamics of a young population), and economic disparity catapulting its status as one of the fastest growing developing nations in the world arena. The nation has the largest English speaking population and the world’s largest base of middle class that has contributed to the growth curve even during times of recession in the western nations. The country represents a statistical data that depicts every major religion, almost two thousand ethnic groups, four major language families containing a total of 1,652 languages and dialects and a strong social hierarchical structure unparalleled by any country other than the continent of Africa in terms of linguistic, social, and cultural diversity (Rai, 2011)¹². Indian work organizations respect and exhibit this vast diversity through its employees wherein every organization in itself represents a mini India with its cultural flavors as people from varied religion, ethnic group, caste and language work together for a common organizational goal (Rai, 2011)¹³.

There is very less data available on holistic understanding of the effect of cultural diversity on work organizations (related to human resource management aspect) in the country. Review on Indian organizations by prominent researchers have addressed major issues related to Indian values and its unique value system (Sinha 1980, 1988, 1990; Singh 1990), Indian leadership context (Sinha, 1984) and specific practices in the domain of employee performance management (Amba- Rao et al., 2000; Rao, 2007) or has

been based on understanding evolution of Indian unions and its related issues in the industrial relations domain (Deshpande and Flagan, 1996; Ramaswamy and Schiphorst, 2000; Bhattacharjee, 2001; Bhandari and Heshmati, 2005; Bhandari, 2010). Majority of the studies have focused on the underlying dominant theme of cross-cultural management (comparative studies with western nations) with limited views on understanding organizational issues, management factors and impact of specific factors like cultural diversity on HRM practices specifically related to Indian work organizations¹⁴, managed either locally or as subsidiaries of MNEs (Rai, 2012). This lack of focus may be attributable to the fact that diversity in terms of ethnicity is not considered a major aspect in the country wherein even the Government census survey doesn’t give any data on ethnic races in India (although India is home to about two thousand ethnic groups¹⁵). Historical data on India accounts for consequent invasions, colonization and subsequent impacts of globalization as factors influencing Indian traditional values and beliefs. Indian nationals born and brought up in the country learn to understand and respect this diversity in early stages of their lives as part of their social upbringing, assimilating ways of relating and managing to survive in a land of burgeoning population, diverse religions, languages, castes, and traditions (Rai, 2012).

Ratnam and Chandra (1996) conducted a research study on case-based review of selected organizations across Indian firms, detailing the varied aspects of diversity in the Indian context (like age, gender, caste) and further highlighted related challenges for both employers and HR practitioners in the backdrop of managing the aspects of equality and equity for these diverse work groups. Their paper detailed broad challenges of HRM related to coping with issues of workforce diversity while strategizing its resources to deal with issues of employment and sustainable development for the organization. Cooke and Saini (2010), through an in-depth case study of 24 Indian firms of different ownership patterns, tried to understand the concept of diversity and its meaning in context of HRM. They found that there existed a differing viewpoint in which diversity is viewed by either Western MNC managers or their Eastern counterparts – the Indian managers. Interestingly in the study of organizational behaviour related to Indian organizations, most researchers have agreed upon Indian employees displaying a mixed set of values and characteristics adapted from both Western and Indian culture and traditions (Rangnekar et al., 2009; Sinha et al., 1990, 1997), which may again be attributable to the adage ‘Western style, Indian roots’¹⁶.

Women comprise one-third of the Indian workforce with about 40% graduates in the country belonging to the fairer sex. However in terms of gender equality index (GEI), India with an index value of 0.748 ranks 122 out of a total of 168 countries in 2008¹⁷. This low representation of women in the

workforce seems to be reflected even in research conducted on diversity aspects of women inclusion in the workforce (Rai, 2012).

Kundu (2003), through a comprehensive study conducted on Indian employees of both sexes across racial and social categories, attempted to understand the aspect of diversity related perception amongst Indian employees. His study found discriminating evidences of male perception towards female employees and colleagues, to an extent that even female employees felt that they were less likely to be given preferences in promotions, salary increases or working facilities vis-à-vis their male counterparts. This comprehensive study outlines the perceptual status towards women in a pre-dominantly male dominated society like India, wherein women themselves tend to feel disadvantaged in the career sphere with virtually no chances of advancement or growth due to perceptual discrimination (Rai, 2012).

Budhwar (2005) conducted a research study on Indian women managers at management levels in the new economic order of business, detailing perspectives and challenges being faced by women management professionals at the higher echelons of management (Rai, 2012). He presents his viewpoint in relation to India, wherein women have generally been deprived of responsible roles at managerial levels due to cultural factors and societal viewpoint. Contrary to the traditional viewpoint that women are not capable of undertaking managerial roles, this study summarizes strengths of Indian women managers in the context of adaptability to situations, collaborative work style, crisis management capabilities, and sensitivity in managing work relationships making them better and capable candidates for leadership in the new economic order of a volatile business environment (Rai, 2012).

Literature review and previous studies done in the context of Indian organizations highlight that while a lot of studies have been initiated and conducted in the cultural context, leadership and work values¹⁸, almost minimal research has been initiated in the context of generational perspectives; whether multi-generational or with focus on a particular generational cohort. This is surprising given that with increase in life expectancy almost 3 generations (Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y) are working alongside in the work domain across major Indian organizations. Research report by Haworth, iDea and Johnson Control on Gen Y and Workplace, 2010 and Ma Foi Randstad Workmonitor – Wave I Report 2011, gives a different picture relating to Indian youngsters (Gen Y employees) (Rai, 2011). The reports portray Indian youngsters as being highly demanding with high expectations from the workplace, wherein mobility intent index is highest amongst the 18-24 years age category of Indian employees who are quite open for change and evaluate organizations on the availability of learning and growth opportunities including better engagement processes

(Rai, 2011). This generation of Indian youngsters is tech-savvy, entrepreneurial, ambitious, optimistic and is strongly influenced by social opinions, basing their judgments on peer factors much like their western counterparts on the other side of the globe (Rai, 2011).

DISCUSSION

National culture by way of influence through factors like learning experiences, beliefs, religion, language and geographical diversity is said to deeply impact human values or managerial perception related to work characteristics, in turn impacting organizational values and work framework. Studies in this aspect have deeply delved on understanding the influence of national culture on organizational practices (Child 2002a, 2002b) (Tayeb 1987, 1997, 2000). India is a unique representation of a land where diversity flourishes in all aspects through an amalgamation of language, religion, caste and beliefs amongst varied individuals from different communities and strata's of life. This diversity impacts their learning process, attitude, perceptions and relation to work (Rai, 2012).

Rao (2012), in her study related to impact of religion in the Indian workplace, outlines the presence of employees from major religious faiths (Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs and Buddhists) working alongside with varying interpretations of 'value of work' based on their religious beliefs. However her study finds that most organizations operating in India only considered the impact of religion in the workplace at surface level, with both expatriates and locals (Indian managers) unable to cite instances wherein this aspect of religious diversity might have truly impacted their organizational processes; other than instances of more religious holidays or specific customs adopted by members of certain religious communities for observance of their faith¹⁹. This means while the Indian workforce incorporates members of varied race, caste, religion and language into its organizational framework, this aspect of diversity does not have a major impact on the processes of the organizations, neither does it necessitate the need to carve out specific inclusion policies for 'Equality' as is the norm in western countries. To further delve on this aspect, we consider a study by Saha (2012), that looks at the aspect of managerial values and hiring preferences in the background of six decades of affirmative action in the country. The study reports that managers during the process of hiring do not give much consideration to aspects of diversity based on minority like preferential hiring of prospective employees from schedule caste or schedule tribes²⁰.

While previous studies conducted in the cultural context and values related to India, define the country being high on power-distance, paternalism and fatalism (Hofstede 2001); it is important to understand that this context is

rapidly changing with external environmental factors like globalization and the entry of a younger generation of workforce wherein employees of both genders²¹ work alongside.

CRISIL 2010 Report on Skilling India highlights the tremendous opportunity and challenges for Indian business organizations, given its vast demographic diversity (particularly the aspect of economically active working population). The report states that the country with a population of 1.2 billion (as on 2010) has 17.6% share in the world population pie making it the second largest country after China in terms of demography. This is slated to change by 2030, with India reaching 1.5 billion populations crossing China and becoming the largest populated country in the world (Rai, 2011). While this may seem challenging, there is also an opportunity; India's working population (15-59 years) will swell from 749 million to 924 million by year 2030, making it the most desired location of talent acquisition (employee availability) heightening business growth and progress in the country (Rai, 2011). Interestingly as on 2010, half of India's working population, around 362 million was below the age of 25 and this number shall only increase with the population figures making it one of the youngest countries of the world. It is estimated that the Gen Y²² population is India almost 19.2% of the total population with a median age of 25.6 years for male and 26.9 years for female (CIA world fact book, 2011).

Research report by Haworth, iDEA and Johnson Controls on Gen Y and Workplace, 2010 gives a different picture relating to Indian youngsters (Gen Y employees) through their global survey. Indian Gen Y workforce is considered the most demanding population with high expectations from the work environment in terms of better on-site support facilities and norms for work-life balance. They believe in not only socially collaborating but also engaging socially as an extension of their workplace to enhance learning opportunities and maintain a balance between their personal and professional lives (Rai, 2011). Ma Foi Randstad Workmonitor – Wave I Report 2011, details the changing work characteristics of Indian Gen Y employees. The report states that while 78% Indian employees (across age groups), have a social profile on the web, an equal percentage of them use this medium for gathering information about prospective employee organizations; while 84% of Indian employees use social media tools & platforms to understand prospective employee work culture. Detailing the impact of social media and peer opinions pertaining to prospective employees, the survey states that almost 75% employees are hesitant to join organizations which have been negatively rated on this medium. Moreover 63% employees don't think that access to social media at workplace impacts their productivity, while 79% actually believe that this medium helps increase their work output through sharing and collaboration (Rai, 2011).

Mellahi and Guermat (2004) in their study on age-related impact on managerial values amongst Indian managers found that amongst two generations of managers, the younger generation cohort did have different managerial values and practices. Their research corroborated the fact that Indian managers are generally well equipped to deal and manage people from diverse linguistic, cultural, ethnic and religious background as has been evidenced earlier based on their social upbringing. However the aspect of generational differences is clearly visible in the managerial values and practices of two different generations with the younger generation being more tuned to collaborating and experimenting on varied methods of doing the work than their older counterparts from earlier generations. This may be a result of their access of technology, knowledge collaboration, and free access to global information sources; albeit development of the process of inquisitiveness, enthusiasm and multi-tasking competency.

Women literacy levels have been steadily growing in India (Census Survey 2011 recorded women literacy rate at 65.46%, up by 11.79% as against the male literacy rate at 82.14%, going up only by 6.88%)²³, however recent surveys on participation of women in leadership roles portray a pathetic picture of gender equality amongst Indian organizations. In terms of assessing the impact of gender diversity in the Indian workforce, research has systematically been limited with major focus on understanding perspectives of male employees towards female employees (Kundu 2003; Budhwar 2005). Forum for Women in Leadership (WILL Forum) and KPMG conducted a survey in 2009 to understand the context of women in leadership roles through the viewpoints of senior management personnel, both male and female comprising a total of 104 employees. The study found that over 60% of these executives believed that women are equally capable in strategic decision making at senior levels in comparison to their male counterparts with an overwhelming 90% agreeing that women are adept at managing both clients and teams in a fair and consistent manner (Rai, 2012).

The Cranfield School of Management in association with Community Business conducted an extensive survey on BSE-100²⁴ listed companies in India, covering a total of 1,124 directorships to understand the status of women representation in corporate boardrooms across these top listed Indian companies. This was further followed by interview data collection for 18 senior women leaders to understand their perspectives towards women participation in Indian boards (Rai, 2012). The survey found that of the total 1,124 directorship in the BSE-100 listed companies (comprising 26 industry classifications)²⁵, only 59 directorships (just about 5.3%) and 8 executive directorships (around 2.5%) out of 323 total executive directorship positions, were held by women. In terms of companies, the survey portrays

54 companies having no female directors on board (54%) with 46 companies having at least one female director and only 12 companies with multiple female directors (more than one). Worldwide survey by Governance Metrics International (GMI)²⁶ on the average percentage of women on board globally, depicts a slight increase of 0.58% from 2009 (4.21%) to 2010 (4.79%) for India (Rai, 2012).

CONCLUSION

Diversity is a way of life in a country like India wherein aspects of racial, ethnic, religious, and linguistic diversity are incorporated in the social fabric of the nation. Given this background most researchers from western nations or MNEs seeking to enter India, have portrayed the country as being traditional, value oriented and to an extent chaotic. However this view can only be described as perceptual stereotyping and myopic based on analysis of an entire nation through the cultural looking glass. Post-globalization (1992), India as a nation has vastly evolved from being dubbed as protectionist, paternalistic, and fatalistic to being more open, inquisitive, and competence oriented. This change in the socio-economic framework is being represented by the changing values and aspiration of the younger generation of Indian employees wherein collaboration, networking and technological advancement bear more importance over aspects of 'shraddha' or respect as has been previously outlined about Indian work culture by researchers (Sinha, 1980, 1984; Sinha and Kanungo 1997).

With an increasing participation and inclusion of competent women in the Indian workforce, the tide is slowly turning in favor of empowering women, valuing their perspectives and incorporating their capabilities in the organizational growth story. Organizations in India are waking up to the advent of a competitive and competent female workforce that is not only technologically capable but also more enthusiastic, inspired and ambitious; willing to walk the extra mile for individual learning and growth in tune with their male counterparts. Indian women even at senior positions strongly believe in their capabilities and feel that gender should not be a bias for growth²⁷.

This study during the review process found that there seems to be lack of research in aspects of gender or generational diversity in the context of India, as the bulk of previous research on the country had steadily been focusing on cross-cultural differences and national cultural impact on the Indian workforce. There is thus an urgent need to come out of the aspect of treating the Indian workforce as a culturally homogeneous workforce and understand the aspect of heterogeneity in relation to age and gender differences that have more impact on the behavioural aspects of the workforce. McGuire, Todnem and Hutchings (2007) argue that generational differences in the process of socialization

and learning have more impact on organizational performance than the factor of national culture, which deems more appropriate in a globalized world wherein national boundaries are shrinking and virtual boundaries are steadily replacing physical frontiers of demarcation. The need is for organizations operating in India, to understand these winds of change and work towards creating processes across organizations that value diversity related to age and gender than having a myopic view of the country and creating processes that address issues related to the western outlook of 'diversity'. Realization that today's Indian employees are part of a global workforce with global perspectives, rooted to Indian values will help MNEs and international managers go a long way in creating diversity inclusive workplaces.

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END NOTES

(Endnotes)

- 1 Global desis is a term that has been coined for Indian nationals who are well travelled, armed with global knowledge and citizens of a global era amalgamating both Indian and Western values. The term is also interchangeably used for Non-Resident Indians (NRIs). This thought process is also reflected in the name of a very famous Indian apparel brand that believes in Global styling with Indian threads.
- 2 <http://cobweb2.louisville.edu/faculty/regbruce/bruce/rflct600/mark2.htm>
- 3 Refer section on HRM research and Diversity research in India.
- 4 Refer U.S. Department of State: Background note on India, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3454.htm>
- 5 <http://www.bangladeshsociology.org/BEJS%203.2%20Das.pdf>, Accessed on 17th January 2012, at 12.55 pm
- 6 <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/social-transformations/international-migration/glossary/cultural-diversity/>
- 7 <http://www.who.int/gender/whatisgender/en/index.html>

- 8 Source: ILO Global Employment Trends 2011, Table A9
- 9 Source: ILO Global Employment Trends 2011, Table A5
- 10 Refer ILO Women in Labour Markets Report -2011, Pg 71
- 11 Refer Rai., S. (2012). Female presence in boardrooms: Review of global scenario in the context of legislative reforms in corporate governance, *Asian Journal of Management Research*, 3 (1), 45-67 for detailed study on women participation in workforce and across global boardrooms.
- 12 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics_of_India
- 13 http://www.siu.edu.in/Research/pdf/Soumi_Rai_2011FM.pdf
- 14 Refer Rai., S., (2012), *Human Resource Management and Labour Relations in the Indian Industrial sector*, Discussion Paper , SP III 2012-301 , WZB (Social Research Center) Germany for detailed study
- 15 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics_of_India
- 16 A thought process depicted even by a leading Indian Apparel brand – Global Desis, Brand tag: Global styling with Indian threads.
- 17 The Economic survey 2010-11 on India
- 18 Refer section of studies in context of HRM and diversity related to India under Literature Review
- 19 The author cites instances of prayers by members of certain religions (Islam) during lunch time, or keeping of ‘fasts’ (not having food for a day), or putting ‘nama’ (holy ash) on forehead by South Indian men etc.
- 20 India as a country does not recognize racial diversity but has quota reservations in government jobs for minority communities like Scheduled castes, Scheduled tribes and Other backward castes; to an extent even for minority religious group members like Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, Sikhs and Jains.
- 21 The researcher herein has given consideration to the primarily classified genders as per social standing and acceptability, which is the male and female gender.
- 22 Gen Y are loosely defined as a group born 1982-2000 (hence the term Millennial Generation) who would range in the age groups of 15-29 years identified as the young generation. Statistics by the U.S. Census Bureau, estimate that Generation Y comprises of around 25.7% of the world total population given the age category of 15-29 years
- 23 [http://www.censusindia.gov.in/2011-prov-results/data_files/india/Table-2\(3\)_literacy.pdf](http://www.censusindia.gov.in/2011-prov-results/data_files/india/Table-2(3)_literacy.pdf)
- 24 BSE-100: Bombay Stock Exchange 100 public listed companies
- 25 Refer Standard Chartered Bank: Women on Corporate Boards in India 2010
- 26 Governance Metrics International Survey 2010
- 27 Refer survey Cranfield School of Management and Community Business