

## THE ROLE OF GENDER IN WORK RELATIONS SATISFACTION

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### Abstract

This paper empirically analysed the Role of Gender in Work Relations Satisfaction in the NBFC's located in the Districts of Chennai, Kancheepuram and Thiruvallur of Tamilnadu, India, by identifying various key issues in Work Relations and employees' Job Satisfaction; determining the effect of the Work Relations on employees' Job Satisfaction. The respondents for the study were 321 employees employed with different NBFC's located in the Districts of Chennai, Kancheepuram and Thiruvallur of Tamilnadu, India. The result of the findings showed that there is there were more of male respondents than female respondents in the NBFC's are thus indicating that the responses to superior - subordinate relationship tended towards male as result of being the majority. There is a difference in the satisfaction level of Men and Women towards work relations with Subordinates and Co-Workers and there is no difference in the satisfaction level of Men and Women towards work relations with their superiors in NBFC's. And also there were more of satisfied respondents than respondents dissatisfied towards Co-Worker Relationship, Superior Relationship and Subordinate Relationship at Work, in the NBFC's are thus indicating that the responses to Co-Worker Relationship, Superior Relationship and Subordinate Relationship tended towards satisfied as result of being the majority. Hence we conclude that there are more satisfied employees toward work relationship at work than dissatisfied employees are and that Men and Women have different levels of Work Relation Satisfaction towards Subordinates and Co-Workers but they do have difference in the Work Relation Satisfaction level towards Superiors.

**Keywords:** Gender, Men, Women, Superior, Subordinate, Co-Worker and NBFC's.

### Introduction

Work relationships between women have not been well researched; in fact, until quite recently, they have been largely ignored in most of the social science literature (Gurin, 1987; O'Leary, 1988). In the limited (mostly non-empirical) work that does investigate the character of women's relationships with one another at work, there is a pervasive finding/belief that women have difficulty sharing power and authority with each other, and often work to undermine one another, one seeking to replace the other (O'Leary, 1988).

In these studies, however, women's relationships with one another have typically been discussed as though in a vacuum, without attention to the presence of men in the work environment, nor to the typically male-dominated organizational structures within which they are operating. Thus, the work is never fully contextualized, and we fail to understand the role men (especially those in positions of power) may play in women's relationships with each other, nor do we learn as much as we might in these studies about cross-gender relations.

## Review of Literature

In an effort to include the fact of men's presence in an analysis of women's workplace relationships, the present study draws on the intergroup perspectives of Tajfel (1981) and Alderfer (1987). Tajfel's theory describes the social psychological mechanisms by which members of various groups carve out their group identities in relation to one another. Alderfer's work adds the dimension of power, linking much of the variability in interpersonal relationships within groups to power relations between groups. Power relations are shaped by differences in the types of resources groups can obtain and use (Alderfer, 1987). Groups which perceive themselves to be in competition for the same resources become significant to one another, as do groups engaged in an authority-subordinate relationship, where the authority group is defined as that group which controls the flow of resources and rewards to the other (subordinate) group. Applied in the context of this research, Alderfer's work suggests that the distribution of power between men and women at work is a key property of organizations which may help to structure relationships among women.

According to Tajfel's (1981) version of intergroup theory, relationships between groups are established through collective processes of social categorization, social identity, and social comparison which converge in attempts to create psychological group distinctiveness. The recognition of membership in various social categories or groups, and the value attached to such memberships are defined as "social identity," which forms a part of the individual group member's self concept and acquires meaning by comparison with significant other groups (Williams and Giles, 1978). The extent to which a group member perceives her group as favourably (or at least not disfavorably) distinctive from other relevant groups determines the adequacy of that group's social identity for that individual. Groups share collectively in this process and, thereby, social identity becomes a group property relative to other groups.

A large portion of Tajfel's theory concerns groups which possess an "inadequate social identity." Inadequate social identity may be due to affiliation with a group which offers its members little satisfaction--perhaps because of a consensus about its perceived negative characteristics or inferior status (Williams and Giles, 1978). Such a consensus may be achieved in relation to other more powerful groups in whose interest it is to reinforce and perpetuate this notion of inferiority, and/or the reality of a less powerful status. In these circumstances, members of "inferior," or less powerful, groups often will attempt to change the situation, in an effort to achieve a positive social identity, by means of certain individual or collective group actions.

The present work focuses on work relations between men and women, manifested in and maintained by the distribution of men and women in positions of organizational power, as a significant factor shaping work relationships among women. Drawing on Alderfer's ideas and Tajfel's notion of the processes by which group members develop a social identity, it is possible to construct an understanding of how this might happen: The nature of women's relationships with each other should be partially a function of the degree to which women define their gender group membership as distinctive from men along certain relevant dimensions and whether distinctions drawn between the two groups favour one or the other group. That is, if women draw distinctions which either favour or disfavour women as a group, then their relationships with one another may be more problematic than if their distinctions carried no evaluative component. Alderfer's work suggests that a negative social identity for professional women (i.e., comparative distinctions disfavour women) is more likely to develop the more consistently power differentials in an organization are constructed along gender lines (i.e., when more powerful organizational groups are populated almost exclusively by men). Under these circumstances, senior men (by definition) are in a position to define the relevant dimensions for intergroup comparison and to uphold certain criteria for success in the organization. For women, several forms of male identification may constitute attempts to achieve a positive social identity, each of which has implications for the kinds of relationships women might establish with one another at work.

First, as a function of women's historical dependence on their more powerful male counterparts, women may accept traditional male definitions of what it means to be and act as a woman. Women's dependence on men may make it more difficult for them to provide and turn to each other for support (Lipman-Bluman, 1976). One manifestation of this form of male identification is the "sexualization" of the woman as part of her job. The economic realities of women's lives, resulting from women's generally inferior position in the workplace, may place demands on them to "market sexual attractiveness to men, who tend to hold the economic power and position to enforce their predilections" (MacKinnon, 1979: 174). Under these conditions, the possibility of sexual interest or involvement, rather than competence, as a criterion for men's sponsorship of

more junior women heightens competitive reactions from female peers who may be vying for, or critical of, the sexual attention of men.

Second, women may attempt to assimilate culturally and psychologically into the dominant group. That is, they may alter their thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and expectations to mirror more closely those typically associated with men, while denigrating "feminine" traits. Both the popular and scholarly literatures are permeated with descriptions of the ways in which women striving to get ahead often adopt male practices and techniques in order to gain acceptance in the male-dominated upper levels of their organizations. Gutek (1985) has described this phenomenon of women "acting like men" as one of the outcomes of "sex role spillover." A high percentage of one sex in an occupation causes the gender role for that sex to spill over into the work role for that occupation, especially if the numerically dominant sex also occupies the high status positions in the work group. Thus, people in men's jobs often are required to "act like men" to be perceived as good workers. This strategy, as a possible means for women to enhance their social status vis-a-vis men, again may have a tendency to preclude the kind of identification with women that might be required for the development of integrated, supportive networks by and for women.

A third form of male identification which renders invisible, or at best marginal, the possibility for constructing a network of mutually supportive relationships among women is the legendary "queen bee syndrome" (Kanter, 1977; Staines, Jayaratne, and Tavis, 1973; Williams and Giles, 1978). "Queen bees" are token women in traditionally male-dominated activities who actively work to keep other women from joining them. The queen bee is highly rewarded for denigrating other women and thus refuses to identify with them. Instead, her male colleagues become her reference group (Williams and Giles, 1978). Similarly, Kanter (1977) found that women in token positions often developed a stake in not sharing the spotlight with other women: Their price for being "one of the boys" was often a willingness to turn against "the girls." This form of male identification is distinguished, not only by women psychologically leaving their gender group, but, in addition, by women actively taking over "gatekeeping" functions for dominants, letting dominants appear free of prejudice while women act to exclude other women (Kanter (1977).

Underlying each form of male identification is the notion of women's dependency on men in a system where men are dominant. Smith's (1982) work, however, suggests an alternative reaction women may have under conditions where they tend to occupy the low power, low status positions in organizations: These women may establish a relation of counter-dependency with their male superiors. Rather than conforming to the norms and rules developed by men, women may interpret them as oppressive, and respond by turning to other women for support or protection. Therefore, men may also play a role in relationships among women, either actively or de facto, that can facilitate closeness among women. Conflict in relationships between professional women thus may reflect differing degrees of identification and involvement with their gender group, which in turn may be shaped by differing values associated with their group's social identity, or differing views on the appropriate strategies to adopt for achieving a more positive social identity. Moreover, an imbalance of power between men and women in organizations, signaled by a predominance of men in positions of organizational authority, may affect the dynamics of social comparison and differentiation between gender groups, thereby shaping women's gender identification and subsequent orientation toward women. These, in turn, may propel a set of centrifugal or centripetal forces in relationships among women, leading to various forms of function or dysfunction in their interactions.

The work presented here investigates women's interactions with one another as a function of actual or anticipated interactions with men in positions of organizational authority. At the outset of this study, we had anticipated that organizational conditions where men were clearly dominant in positions of authority might place pressures on women to identify with men rather than with women. Male identification might then foster a dependency relationship between women and their male superiors by orienting women to look toward men for cues about how to behave, and for approval, attention, recognition, and support. If women shared a sense that these "commodities" were distributed on a zero sum basis--a sense that may be more likely characteristic of individuals who feel powerless in the resource distribution game--feelings of competitiveness might be enhanced. Moreover, under these conditions, we had expected that women might behave in ways that encouraged men to participate in their relationships with other women. Men, in turn, might be motivated to intervene in those relationships to the extent that cohesion among women was seen as disruptive of traditional sex role arrangements. Intervention on the parts of men might be explicit and conscious, or subtle and unconscious, as might the invitation to intervene on the parts of women.

There was little in the literature that could be brought to bear on the role of men in relationships among women in organizations where women share high status positions with men. Under these conditions, however, it would seem that women might be less likely to devalue their gender group, and therefore may be less likely to resort to either exclusively male or female alliances as strategies for surviving and thriving in their organizations.

**Research Objectives**

The following research objectives have been formulated to support the study;

1. To find the relationship between Work Relations with Co-Worker, Superior and Subordinate and Gender at Work
2. To analyze the Gender difference on Employee Work Relations with Co-Worker, Superior and Subordinate at Work

**Research Methodology**

The research work made use of both primary and secondary data. Information extracted from journals and other documented materials were used as secondary data. Questionnaire was used as the primary data instrument which was developed 7 point rating scales i.e 7 = Highly Satisfied, 6 = Satisfied, 5 = Slightly Satisfied, 4 = Neither Dissatisfied nor Satisfied, 3 = Slightly Dissatisfied, 2 = Dissatisfied, 1 = Strongly Dissatisfied to elicit relevant information from the respondents who were chosen through the Non-Probability Convenience sampling technique was used in the course of administering the questionnaire. The respondents for the study have a total number of 321 employees from different Non-Banking Financial Companies located in the Districts of Chennai, Kancheepuram and Thiruvallur of Tamil Nadu, India.

The administered questionnaire has two sections labeled as section A and B. The section A has information on the bio data of the respondents while section B has information inform of questions on the Work Relationships of the respondents. The research design followed in the study is Descriptive Research Design. Descriptive statistics and Mann-Whitney U Test were used to analyse the data collected and to test the hypotheses stated at 0.05 level of significance.

**Research Hypothesis**

Evolving from the review of literature to guide the direction of the study the below hypothesis were formulated;

- H1: There is no significant difference between men and women towards Work Relation Satisfaction with Subordinate
- H2: There is no significant difference between men and women towards Work Relation Satisfaction with Superior
- H3: There is no significant difference between men and women towards Work Relation Satisfaction with Co-Worker

**Data Analysis and Interpretations**

Table 1 below has 248 male respondents representing 77.3% of the total respondents and 73 were female respondents representing 22.7% of the total respondents. The implication of this was that there were more of male respondents than female respondents in the NBFC's are thus indicating that the responses to superior - subordinate relationship tended towards male as result of being the majority.

**Table No. 1: Gender Frequency Table**

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Men	248	77.3
Valid Women	73	22.7
Total	321	100.0

Table 2 below has 145 satisfied respondents representing 45.2% of the total respondents, 111 highly satisfied respondents representing 34.6% of the total respondents and 2 dissatisfied respondents representing 0.6% of the total respondents towards Co-Worker Relationship at Work. The implication of this was that there were more of satisfied respondents than respondents dissatisfied towards Co-Worker Relationship at Work, in the NBFC's are thus indicating that the responses to Co-Worker Relationship tended towards satisfied as result of being the majority.

**Table No. 2: Co-Worker Relationship Frequency Table**

Co-Worker Relationship	Frequency	Percent
Dissatisfied	2	.6
Slightly Dissatisfied	16	5.0
Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	12	3.7
Valid Slightly Satisfied	35	10.9
Satisfied	145	45.2
Highly Satisfied	111	34.6
Total	321	100.0

Table 3 below has 173 satisfied respondents representing 53.9% of the total respondents, 65 slightly satisfied respondents representing 20.2% of the total respondents and 4 respondents dissatisfied representing 1.2% of the total respondents towards Superior Relationship at Work. The implication of this was that there were more of satisfied respondents than respondents dissatisfied towards Superior Relationship at Work, in the NBFC's are thus indicating that the responses to Superior Relationship tended towards satisfied as result of being the majority.

**Table No. 3: Superior Relationship Frequency Table**

Superior Relationship	Frequency	Percent
Dissatisfied	4	1.2
Slightly Dissatisfied	16	5.0
Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	10	3.1
Valid Slightly Satisfied	65	20.2
Satisfied	173	53.9
Highly Satisfied	53	16.5
Total	321	100.0

Table 4 below has 115 satisfied respondents representing 63.2% of the total respondents, 53 slightly satisfied respondents representing 29.1% of the total respondents and 2 respondents dissatisfied representing 1.1% of the total respondents towards Subordinate Relationship at Work. The implication of this was that there were more of satisfied respondents than respondents dissatisfied towards Subordinate Relationship at Work, in the NBFC's are thus indicating that the responses to Subordinate Relationship tended towards satisfied as result of being the majority.

**Table No. 4: Subordinate Relationship Frequency Table**

Subordinate Relationship	Frequency	Percent
Dissatisfied	2	1.1
Slightly Dissatisfied	9	4.9
Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	3	1.6
Valid Slightly Satisfied	53	29.1
Satisfied	115	63.2
Total	182	100.0

Table 5 below reveals the results of Mann Whitney U test for the Work Relations with Subordinate based on Gender which did show statistical difference ( $Z=-2.398$ ;  $p=.016<.05$ ) between Men and Women in the workplace. Hence H1 is rejected. The rank average of the Men was 87.41, while the Women were 107.00. The difference in the rank averages of Men and Women indicate that there is a difference in the satisfaction level of Men and Women towards work relations with subordinates in NBFC's.

**Table No. 5: Mann-Whitney U Test for Work Relations with Subordinate based on Gender**

	Gender	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U	Z	p
Work Relations with Subordinate	Men	144	87.41	12587.00	2147.000	-2.398	.016
	Women	38	107.00	4066.00			
	Total	182					

Table 6 below reveals the results of Mann Whitney U test for the Work Relations with Superior based on Gender which did not show a statistical difference ( $Z=-0.114$ ;  $p=.909>.05$ ) between Men and Women in the workplace. Hence H2 is accepted. The rank average of the Men was 160.71, while the Women were 161.99. The very less difference in the rank averages of Men and Women indicate that there is no difference in the satisfaction level of Men and Women towards work relations with their superiors in NBFC's.

**Table No. 6: Mann-Whitney U Test for Work Relations with Superior based on Gender**

	Gender	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U	Z	p
Work Relations with Superior	Men	248	160.71	39855.50	8979.500	-.114	.909
	Women	73	161.99	11825.50			
	Total	321					

Table 7 below reveals the results of Mann Whitney U test for the Work Relations with Co-Workers based on Gender which did show a statistical difference ( $Z=-2.407$ ;  $p=.016<.05$ ) between Men and Women in the workplace. Hence H3 is rejected. The rank average of the Men was 154.71, while the Women were 182.38. The difference in the rank averages of Men and Women indicate that there is difference in the satisfaction level of Men and Women towards work relations with their Co-Workers in NBFC's.

**Table No. 7: Mann-Whitney U Test for Work Relations with Co-Worker based on Gender**

	Gender	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U	Z	p
Work Relations with Co-Worker	Men	248	154.71	38367.50	7491.500	-2.407	.016
	Women	73	182.38	13313.50			
	Total	321					

### Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study based on Descriptive Statistics revealed that there were more of male respondents than female respondents in the NBFC's are thus indicating that the responses to superior - subordinate relationship tended towards male as result of being the majority.

The findings of the study based on Descriptive Statistics revealed that there were more of satisfied respondents than respondents dissatisfied towards Co-Worker Relationship at Work, in the NBFC's are thus indicating that the responses to Co-Worker Relationship tended towards satisfied as result of being the majority; there were more of satisfied respondents than respondents dissatisfied towards Superior Relationship at Work, in the NBFC's are thus indicating that the responses to Superior Relationship tended towards satisfied as result of being the majority and there were more of satisfied respondents than respondents dissatisfied towards Subordinate Relationship at Work, in the NBFC's are thus indicating that the responses

to Subordinate Relationship tended towards satisfied as result of being the majority as well.

The findings of this study further revealed that there is a difference in the satisfaction level of Men and Women towards work relations with Subordinates in NBFC's; there is difference in the satisfaction level of Men and Women towards work relations with their Co-Workers in NBFC's and there is no difference in the satisfaction level of Men and Women towards work relations with their superiors in NBFC's as well, when tested at 0.05 significance level at 95 per cent confidence using Non-Parametric, Mann-Whitney U Test.

### Conclusion

The significant results obtained in this study are consistent with many of the theoretical notions that precipitated the analyses of these relationship configurations. Emerging from the findings of this study were some salient issues identified in the Work Relationship and Gender which were cornerstones serving as the impetus and catalyst for what is to be done to get true satisfaction of employees in the jobs of the organization. It was found that there is there were more of male respondents than female respondents in the NBFC's are thus indicating that the responses to superior - subordinate relationship tended towards male as result of being the majority. There is a difference in the satisfaction level of Men and Women towards work relations with Subordinates and Co-Workers and there is no difference in the satisfaction level of Men and Women towards work relations with their superiors in NBFC's. And also there were more of satisfied respondents than respondents dissatisfied towards Co-Worker Relationship, Superior Relationship and Subordinate Relationship at Work, in the NBFC's are thus indicating that the responses to Co-Worker Relationship, Superior Relationship and Subordinate Relationship tended towards satisfied as result of being the majority. Hence we conclude that there are more satisfied employees toward work relationship at work than dissatisfied employees are and that Men and Women have different levels of Work Relation Satisfaction towards Subordinates and Co-Workers but they do have difference in the Work Relation Satisfaction level towards Superiors.

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