THE ROLE OF CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE IN ENHANCING EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AMONG WOMEN IN IT SECTOR

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the role of Cultural Intelligence (CQ) in enhancing employee engagement among women in the Information Technology (IT) sector. In an era of globalization and increasing workforce diversity, CQ has emerged as a critical competency for fostering inclusive and high-performance work environments. Despite the significant contributions of women to the IT industry, they continue to face unique challenges such as gender bias, limited career advancement opportunities, and work-life balance issues. This paper examines how culturally intelligent organizations and leadership practices can address these barriers by promoting an inclusive culture that values diversity and fosters employee engagement. Drawing on existing literature, the article highlights the link between CQ and engagement, emphasizing how cultural intelligence can improve communication, collaboration, and support for women in the workplace. Furthermore, it provides practical recommendations for IT organizations to invest in CQ development programs, implement supportive policies, and create an environment conducive to greater engagement and retention of female employees. The findings suggest that enhancing CQ in the workplace not only benefits women but contributes to overall organizational success by creating a more inclusive, motivated, and engaged workforce.

KEYWORDS: Cultural Intelligence (CQ), Employee Engagement, Women in IT Sector, Cross-Cultural Competency, Diversity and Inclusion, Gender Equity

INTRODUCTION

The globalized nature of today's workplace, especially in the technology sector, demands an unprecedented level of cultural understanding and adaptability. The IT industry, known for its dynamic work environments and diverse teams, has seen significant growth in women's participation, yet gender-based challenges persist, often affecting engagement levels, career progression, and overall job satisfaction among women employees. Employee engagement, defined as the emotional commitment an individual feels toward their organization, has been linked to numerous positive outcomes, including enhanced job performance, innovation, and organizational loyalty. However,

factors such as cultural and interpersonal challenges can often hinder engagement, particularly for women in multicultural IT settings.

Cultural intelligence (CQ), a person's ability to relate to and effectively work within diverse cultural contexts, has become a critical asset in fostering successful workplace interactions and promoting inclusivity. Comprised of four key dimensions—metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral—cultural intelligence enables employees to navigate cultural nuances, manage diverse team interactions, and build rapport across cultural boundaries. In the context of the IT sector, where diverse teams work across geographies and cultures, cultural intelligence plays a vital role in helping employees, particularly women, feel more engaged, included, and supported.

For women in IT, cultural intelligence may be especially valuable in overcoming challenges related to gender stereotypes, cultural biases, and team dynamics. Research suggests that culturally intelligent individuals are more adaptable and resilient, leading to higher engagement levels and a greater sense of belonging within their organizations. Despite these potential benefits, there remains a limited body of research on the specific impact of cultural intelligence on the engagement of women in the IT sector.

This study aims to address this gap by exploring how cultural intelligence influences employee engagement among women in the IT industry. By examining the role of each dimension of cultural intelligence, this research seeks to provide insights into how organizations can enhance employee engagement through targeted cultural intelligence training and inclusive practices. In doing so, this study contributes to the growing discourse on gender equity and engagement in the workplace, offering actionable recommendations for creating a more supportive and culturally aware environment for women in the IT sector.

Statement of the problem

In the rapidly evolving IT industry, characterized by diverse, multicultural work environments, employee engagement has become a critical factor for organizational success. While there is a growing focus on promoting diversity and inclusion, women in the IT sector continue to face unique challenges, including gender biases, cultural stereotypes, and limited access to opportunities for leadership. These challenges can hinder their level of engagement, job satisfaction, and career advancement, leading to higher turnover rates and reduced organizational loyalty. Cultural intelligence (CQ), or the ability to effectively interact with people from different cultural backgrounds, has been identified as a potential enabler of enhanced employee engagement and adaptability. However, the specific impact of cultural intelligence on the engagement of women in the IT sector remains largely unexplored. Given the unique challenges women face in a multicultural, male-dominated industry, it is essential to understand how cultural intelligence could empower them to better navigate cultural complexities,

overcome gender-based barriers, and feel more engaged and connected in their roles.

Objectives
1. To determine the level of Cultural Intelligence dimensions among women employees in IT sector.
2. To examine the relationship between Cultural Intelligence and Employee Engagement of women employees in IT sector.

Research methodology
This study adopts a quantitative research design to examine how cultural intelligence affects employee engagement among women in Tamil Nadu's IT sector. Using purposive sampling, data will be collected through a structured survey with sections on demographics, cultural intelligence (measured via the Cultural Intelligence Scale), and employee engagement. Descriptive, correlation, and regression analyses will be conducted to explore the relationships between cultural intelligence dimensions and engagement. The survey's reliability will be pre-tested with a pilot study, and ethical standards such as confidentiality and voluntary participation will be strictly followed. Limitations include the study's geographic focus and reliance on self-reported data. The results aim to provide actionable insights for enhancing workplace engagement and inclusivity for women in the IT industry.

Significant of the study
The study lies in its exploration of how cultural intelligence can enhance employee engagement for women in the IT sector, addressing a vital gap in research on engagement and inclusivity. In today's globally diverse workforce, cultural intelligence is increasingly essential, especially in the male-dominated IT industry where women often encounter challenges related to cultural stereotypes and gender biases. By analyzing the ways cultural intelligence impacts engagement, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment, the study provides valuable insights into how women can better navigate multicultural work environments and overcome gender-related barriers. The findings aim to offer practical guidance for HR professionals and organizational leaders on creating effective cultural intelligence training programs that support an inclusive and supportive work environment. For IT companies, building cultural intelligence can improve team dynamics, increase engagement, and foster innovation, all while contributing to diversity and inclusion efforts. Ultimately, this study highlights cultural intelligence as a critical tool for cultivating equitable workplaces that empower women and positively impact both organizational performance and employee well-being.

Scope of the study
The study centres on understanding how cultural intelligence enhances employee engagement specifically among women in Tamil Nadu's IT sector. It investigates how the four dimensions of cultural intelligence—metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral—contribute to higher

levels of engagement, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment in multicultural team settings. By focusing on the IT industry, the study addresses the unique challenges faced by women in a highly globalized and male-dominated field, where cultural intelligence may play a critical role in navigating cross-cultural interactions and overcoming gender-based barriers. Insights from this research aim to inform HR practitioners and organizational leaders on effective strategies for developing cultural intelligence training and fostering an inclusive, supportive workplace environment for women in IT. Although the study is limited to IT companies in Tamil Nadu, the findings have the potential to offer valuable guidance for other technology-driven and culturally diverse sectors.

Analysis

Table no. 1 Determining the Level of Cultural Intelligence Dimension- Mean Score Analysis

Dimensions of Cultural Intelligence	Variables	Average Mean Score
Meta Cognitive Cultural Intelligence	Consciousness of cultural knowledge	2.741
	Customization of cultural knowledge	
	Checking accuracy of cultural knowledge	
Cognitive Cultural Intelligence	Awareness on the legal and economic implications of cross cultures	3.229
	Awareness on cross cultural languages	
	Awareness on religious beliefs of cross cultures	
	Awareness on cross cultural marriage system	
	Awareness on cross cultural non-verbal behaviors	
Motivation Cultural Intelligence	Peaceful interaction with cross-cultures	3.068
	Confidence in socializing with cross-cultures	
	Manage stresses of cross-cultures	
	Happiness in accommodating cross-cultures	
Behavioral Cultural Intelligence	Flexible verbal behavior on cross cultural interactions	3.169
	Maintaining silence to suit cross cultural interactions	
	Attitudinal modification during cross cultural interactions	
	Non-verbal behavior modification during cross cultural interactions	

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Overall mean score	3.0866

Source: Primary Data

The above table depicts the results of Mean Score Analysis of the level of Cultural Intelligence Dimensions of women employees in IT sector. Four dimensions of Cultural Intelligence namely, Meta Cognitive Cultural Intelligence, Cognitive Cultural Intelligence, Motivation Cultural Intelligence and Behavioural Cultural Intelligence have been studied. The table shows that Cognitive Cultural Intelligence has the highest average mean score (3.229), indicating moderate awareness of cultural differences, such as legal, economic, and non-verbal behaviours across cultures. Meta-Cognitive Cultural Intelligence has the lowest score (2.741), suggesting individuals may struggle with being aware of and accurately adjusting their cultural knowledge. The overall mean score across all dimensions is 3.0866, indicating a generally moderate level of cultural intelligence.

Table no.2 Relationship between Cultural Intelligence Dimensions and Employee Engagement-Correlation Analysis

H0: there is no significant correlation between dimensions of Cultural Intelligence and Employee Engagement

Dimensions of Cultural Intelligence	Employee Engagement	
	p-value	Correlation coefficient
Meta Cognition	0.921	0.08
Cognition	*0.000	0.287
Motivation	*0.000	0.321
Behavioral	*0.000	0.302

*Significant at 5 percent level of significance

The p-value of the correlation analysis is below 0.05 for all dimensions except Meta-cognition. Therefore, at a 5% level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected for the Cognitive, Motivational, and Behavioral dimensions. This indicates that Employee Engagement has a significant positive correlation with employees' Cognitive Cultural Intelligence, Motivational Cultural Intelligence, and Behavioral Cultural Intelligence. However, no significant correlation was found between Employee Engagement and Meta-cognitive Cultural Intelligence.

DISCUSSION:

The study examined the levels of Cultural Intelligence dimensions among women employees in IT sector and their relationship with Employee Engagement. The overall Cultural Intelligence level was found to be moderately average, a result consistent with findings from Arthi R (2019) and Sandeep Singh (2019). The mean score analysis shows that the Cognitive Cultural Intelligence has the highest

mean score, followed by Behavioral Cultural Intelligence, Motivation Cultural Intelligence and Meta-Cognitive Cultural Intelligence. Additionally, the highest three dimensions like Motivation, Cognition and Behavioral dimensions of Cultural Intelligence revealed to have significant and positive correlation with Employee Engagement. In the case of private sector bank employees, no significant correlation was found between Employee Engagement and Meta Cognitive Cultural Intelligence.

CONCLUSION:

In this study, the level of Cultural Intelligence was assessed among 110 women employees working in IT sector in Tamilnadu. It was found that the level of Cultural Intelligence is moderately average for the employees. A positive relationship between Cultural Intelligence and Employee Engagement was cited, where it can be inferred that higher level of Cultural Intelligence shapes effective and satisfying work engagement for the employees in banking industry, specifically in the private sector. Developing Cultural Intelligence across its key dimensions strongly influences better enthusiasm in the work environment. It is integral for the private sector banks in the state to implement psychological training programs for enhancing the Cultural Intelligence of employees. Face to face sessions, lecture and workshops can contribute to the training programs for developing and promoting Cultural Intelligence for the employees starting from clerical level to managerial level. Being a giant employing sector in the country as well as in the state, IT sector in Tamilnadu must focus on the key ingredients of employee engagement. Like Emotional Intelligence, Cultural Intelligence is also considered to be crucial for the employees in the competitive working environment. Individuals are not hired just to fill positions; rather their holistic growth must be initiated by the new generation IT sector to ensure their longevity in the industry.

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