

Perceptual Difference of Role based Performance –A Gender Study

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Abstract

People are considered very important in business today as the whole business depends on their effective performance. Low levels of employee performance could lower firms profitability and lead to failure. The factor that explains organizational performance is job performance, which indicates how well an employee performs the (Skinner, Dubinsky, and Donnelly 1984). The aim of this study is to empirically examine the perceptual relationship between the variables in the Role Based Performance Scale developed by Welbourne, Johnson and Amir Erez (1998) and also identify the difference between genders if any, in perceiving the relationship in their performance. This study has been developed using multi dimensional scaling (MDS) to bring out the perception of one variable with others. The primary data was collected from customer service personnel of a government organization who interact with customers on a regular basis through a structured questionnaire. Based on the 304 responses, this study found that the Job role and organization role constructs are perceived together for the male employees and it is distinctly away from career construct in role based performance. With respect to female service personnel the constructs organization role, innovation role and job role are perceived together of which innovation role and organization role are perceived closer.

Key Words: *role based performance, government organization, customer service personee*

1. Introduction

Organizations because of the prevailing intense competition to gain competitive advantage in the global economy today are doing various things. Organizations are trying out various interventions to increase the performance of the firm by affecting the behaviour of the employee on the job. It is also done so that the employees take on more responsibilities and contribute to the objectives of the organization (Lawler 1986). It is seen very often in organizations that the employees do more than what is stated in the job descriptions. According to Bommer, Johnson, Rich, Podsakoff, and MacKenzie, "Job performance is the most widely studied criterion variable in the organizational behaviour and human resource management literatures" (1995; 587). However, most traditional performance measurement systems have ignored updating dimensions of work behaviour that is included in the scope of a specific job itself and this is a major limitation. This limitation is not surprising because recommendations for creating a legally defensible performance appraisal system would require a formal job analysis (Bernardin, Kane, Ross, Spina, & Johnson, 1995). In many instances job analysis by design, does not take into consideration or ignores non-job-related behaviours. This creates problems for firms that intend to reward behaviours such as to make any suggestions, organizational citizenship, or customer service. Earlier performance appraisal methods were fairly simple but had a few problems as it was person based (see the review of error research in Cardy and Dobbins (1994).

This paved the way for researchers to come up with job related assessments which needs accurate job descriptions and understanding of the performance appraisal process. This led to a shift in performance measurement from being person-oriented to being behaviour-oriented, with focusing on those tasks or behaviours that are associated with a given job.

2. Theoretical Background

Job performance is defined as an aggregated value to the organization of the discrete behavioural episode that an individual performs over a standard interval of time (Motowildo, Borman and Schmit, 1997). In this research Job performance is used as another name for work effectiveness and is used to identify to what extent the employees have accomplished their assigned tasks. Job performance is divided into two dimensions task performance and contextual performance. Task performance consists of two types executing technical processed and maintaining and servicing technical requirements (Motowildo, Borman and Schmit,1997). Contextual performance refers to interpersonal behaviours that directly benefit organization i.e. helping others, cooperating with others, following the stated rules and procedures to carry out task activities (Motowildo, Borman and Schmit,1997). Due to the prevailing gap in literature with regard to generic factors to measure job performance, researchers construct factors underlying job performance specifically to their requirements ,this has been initiated by Welbourne, Johnson and Erez (1998).

In this research specifically the researchers have used Role Based Performance Scale to identify Job Performance, and job performance is used as a proxy for the above stated scale. In Role-Based performance scale, role theory and identity theory are used to develop a theory-based generalizable measure of performance. Role theory's most important contribution to performance management is that it provides direction for avoiding errors in measurement in the performance appraisal tools. In order to correct the measurement error role theory suggests that, performance management systems need to account for multiple roles at work. It has been suggested by researchers for using roles as the basis for job descriptions as well as for specifying organizational expectations and performance requirements (Ilgen & HoUenbeck, 1992; Van Dyne, Cummings, & Parks, 1995). In spite of this recognition of the importance of roles and the fact that employees perform multiple roles in their organizations, research has continued to measure employee performance as if only one role job holder existed. On the other side it is also argued that role theory only suggests roles as a way to conceptualize multiple behaviours at work; it does not provide a definition about those dimensions of roles which should be included or excluded in a multidimensional measure of performance. Employees take on many roles at work. The theory that may help in understanding which roles should be measured in an instrument that focuses on behaviour at work is identity theory. Role theory provides an explanation for why work performance should be multidimensional and identity theory suggests how to determine which dimensions to include in a model of work performance. By using these two theories it is suggested a measure of performance that includes five different roles ie. job, career, innovator, team member and organization citizen. There has been ample evidence that roles have been recognized as central to understanding employee behaviour in organizations (Katz & Kahn, 1978) and according to role theory individuals role expectations are influenced by both their personal attributes and the context in which they exist.

Hence role theory suggests that employee performance will be a function of both individual and the organization. This theory is a combination of both psychological (individual contributions) as well as sociological (organizational framework) perspective. According to identity theory, it is the importance of the existence of roles which affects behaviour (Burke, 1991; Thoits, 1992). The saliency of a particular role is associated with an event to trigger behaviour (Thoits, 1991; 1992). According to Thoits, roles which are most salient to us, provide us with the strongest meaning or purpose. The more meaning we derive from a role, the greater the behavioural guidance which finally leads us to exhibit behaviours associated with that role. Every organization has different expectation of their employees the importance of a role is different across organizations. Employees exhibit and perform multiple roles beyond just "the job" and by employing identity theory it is suggested that roles that are considered important from the organizations point of view should be measured in a assessment of employee performance. The important roles that have to be measured could be identified from the compensation system as these are the roles considered important for the firm's success.

The roles included in the Role Based Performance Scale are the job and organization roles that are easily identifiable as dimensions of work performance .Over the last six decades job role has been heavily researched (Austin & Villanova, 1992), there are also numerous studies recently which brings out the importance of organizational or non required work role (Bateman & Organ, 1983; Borman & Motowildo, 1993).

Job role is clearly supported by compensation system (e.g. merit pay, individual bonus plans). Welbourne and Cable (1995) applied identity theory found that saliency of the job holder role was affected by the implementation of individually – based incentive systems like merit pay sales commission and the organization member role was influenced by the existence of group-based incentive plans like profit sharing, stock options .In the same manner in addition to job holder and organization member role, career, team member and innovator role were included. Career role because companies no longer provide job security and growth opportunities unless the employee attempts to increase their value by learning, undergoing training and acquiring new skills. It is now jointly the responsibility of the employer and the employee towards the employees career (Miner, 1986). This gives career role importance to be considered in the performance model. The inclusion of the team member's role is a very critical component in organizational performance. As it is seen the recognition for the team member role has increased over last several years (Stevens & Campion,1994).Organization now rely heavily on team work and many performance models have included team work as vital component (Borman & Motowildo,1997; Campbell,1990) .The final role included is the role of a innovator where now organization members are required to perform innovators role which contribute to effectiveness of the organization as a whole (Schein,1970;1980;Van Maanen & Schein, 1979).

2.1. Job role

Job has been defined as doing things specifically related to ones job description (Welbourne, Johnson, and Erez, 1998). Task performance or in-role behaviour is critical in the evaluation of employees. It is well understood from previous organizational research that other employee behaviours contribute to overall organizational effectiveness (Motowildo & Van Scotter, 1994).Though the job role is clearly the most heavily researched one over the last 60 years (Austin & Villanova,1992), of late there has been ample work to identify the importance of organizational or non required work roles (Bateman & Organ, 1983;Borman & Motowildo, 1993; Brief & Motowildo,1986; Borman & Motowildo, 1997; Motowildo & Van Scotter, 1994).The employees actually demonstrate that job role is supported by compensation systems (e.g. merit pay).The research by Welbourne and Cable (1995) only took into consideration the job holder role and organization member role. As an extension to this to analyse if varying forms of compensation encourage other types of role related behaviour other roles were identified (e.g. Gerhart, Minkoff & Olsen, 1995; Milkovich & Newman, 1990). The focus of the organization member role is in line with behaviours associated with organizational citizenship behaviours (Organ, 1988).

2.2. Career Role

Career role was identified in addition to job and organizational member role as promotion systems reward individuals for career accomplishment (Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart &Wright, 1994). Career has been defined as obtaining the necessary skills to progress through ones organization (Welbourne, Johnson, and Erez,1998) .The concept of career have been elaborated in relation to career commitment and career satisfaction. Career commitment refers to identification and involvement with one's occupation (Meuller, Wallace, and Price,1992) and career satisfaction refers to one's feeling of satisfaction with one's career as a whole (Lounsbury et al.,2003). Employees who are satisfied would exhibit commitment and also learn the required skills to progress in the organization, and also set career objectives Poon (2004). The new psychological contract has been developed between employers and employees and this is another reason why career roles need to be considered, as these are responsible for career planning (Miner, 1986). This way employee makes an effort to increase their value to employers by taking responsibility for career planning, for a well developed career program (Noe, et al.'1994). Therefore it is seen that employers can emphasize the importance of career roles either through compensation plans or by providing career development opportunities for employees.

2.3. Team Role

Team role has been defined as working with co-workers and team members, toward success of the firm (Welbourne, Johnson and Erez, 1998). To acknowledge the importance of team role, team role has been included in some work performance models to better reflect the practice (Borman and Motowidlo, 1997; Campbell, 1990).The other work role identified is the team member role. There are a number of factors that affect team effectiveness even at its early stage of development. George (1990) studied ongoing emotional reactions of work team members, was found to affect the group. Teams need to be mindful of the emotions of its members, and the emotions of other groups and the individuals outside its boundaries, to develop an effective team, Druskat and Wolff (2001).

“Group emotion results from both the combinations of individual-level affective factors that group possess and from group or contextual-level factors that define or shape the affective experience of the group” (Kelly and Barsade, 2001). Many of the new performance models have included teamwork as a vital component (Borman & Motowildo, 1997; Campbell, 1990) and it is also identified that pay systems also encourage cooperation among team members and between teams (Welbourne & Gomez-Mejia, 1995).

2.4. Innovator role

To attend to the needs and concerns of today’s customers one need to possess a certain level of creativity and innovation. The rapid pace at which change is taking place in many industries has made job descriptions obsolete to a certain extent. Schein (1980) strongly states that if firms intend to survive and remain competitive in a complex and dynamic environment, organizations must have employees who will be creative on behalf of the entire organization, not just creative in one’s job. It is not possible to carry on in a traditional way and they need to be innovative and perform an innovators role which will make one effective and contribute to the effectiveness of the whole organization (Schein, 1970; 1980; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). Creativity has been defined as “the product of novel and useful ideas”(George and Zhou, 2002, Madjar, Oldham and Pratt,2002).

2.5. Organization Role

Recent studies have identified the importance of organization role in employees work performance model (Borman and Motowildo, 1993, Brief and Motowildo, 1986, Campbell, 1990, Johnson, 2001, Mackenzie, Podsakoff and Ahearne, 1998, Motowildo and Van Scotter, 1994, Podsakoff and MacKenzie, 1997 and Rotundo and Sackett, 2002). Organization has been defined as going above the call of duty in ones concern for the firm (Welbourne, Johnson, and Erez, 1998). This concept is a lead from Organizational citizenship Behaviour which represents a very old human conduct of voluntary action without expecting any formal rewards. Employees go beyond the organizations expectation and contract and perform tasks which are not expected from them without expecting explicit rewards and recognition (Organ, 1988). OCB is often described as behaviours that go beyond that which is expected of an individual in a specific role (Brief and Motowidlo, 1986). Studies reveal that women performed higher levels of OCB than men male counterparts (Lovell *et al.*, 1999) and women are more concerned than men in helping others (Bridges, 1989).

The intent of this study in a public sector in Indian context was to identify the perceptual relationship of the roles a customer service personnel performs in the organization, as stated earlier the shift from person oriented performance measurement to behaviour oriented performance measurement has added more roles for measurement. It was also done to study the differences prevailing among genders in public sector with reference to roles.

2.6. Gender differences in performance measures

It has been almost five decades of planning and it is essential to examine the growth of employment in the public sector and its changing role in the organized employment in India. Among the Asian countries, share of public sector in India, covering major sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, banking, and trade, was relatively higher than the private investment. It was expected that public sector would create more employment opportunities and would achieve high growth rate of output in the long term. Hence the public sector investment was considered more important for more than three decades. It is also seen India recorded a slowdown in the public sector employment and a marginal decrease of 0.9 percent in 2001, over 2000. Though India was known to be a male dominated society the Union Government of India has always encouraged the participation of women in the corporate and other social sectors. This has paved way for a majority of women getting employed both in public and private sectors. Gender differences are studied by researchers across different cultural settings over a period of time. This study is developed with the intention to identify perceptual difference if any between genders. According to Source: NSSO 62nd Round , Employment and Unemployment Situation in India, Report No 522, 2005-06 , in India the proportion of male employed is more than the female. However in recent years there is a huge encouragement for the females to be employed.

The earlier researches helped develop a person based appraisal system .The shift from being a person based system to a behaviour based appraisal system has been recent. In this study Role Based Performance Scale developed by Welbourne, Johnson and Amir Erez (1998) is used which consists of five role measures of performance.

Understanding relationship among the variables would strengthen the body of knowledge related to role based performance measure. Hence this study intends to bring out the perceptual relationships among Job, Career, Innovator, Team and Organization at an aggregate level as well as to examine if there exists any difference in perception of these variables between the genders of employees working in a public sector in India.

3. Research Methodology

This study has adopted a single cross-sectional survey design for better understanding of role based performance scale in a public sector enterprise in India. Data for this study was collected from the Customer Service Executives, Assistant Managers and Managers from a leading Indian public service enterprise during October 2010 spread across different locations in central TamilNadu (India), which was so chosen for convenience. The Role Based Performance Scale instrument by Welbourne, Johnson and Erez (1996) was used to measure performance with a few adjustments.

3.1. Multidimensional scaling

MDS technique attempts to bring out the structure, in a set of distance measures, among objects or variables. It is performed by assigning observations or variables to specific locations in a conceptual space (it is usually two or three dimensional) such that the distances between points in the space match the given dissimilarities as closely as possible. The primary purpose of the low-dimensional space is to bring out the relationships between the objects or variables. Thus, by restricting the solution to be a linear combination of independent variables, the researchers may be in a position to interpret the dimensions of the solution in terms of these variables in a better way. Given a set of objects or variables, the goal of multidimensional scaling is to find a representation of the objects in a low-dimensional space. This outcome is identified by using the proximities between the objects. The procedure minimizes the squared deviations between the original, possibly transformed, object proximities and their Euclidean distances in the low-dimensional space. The stress and fit measures give an indication of how well the distances in the solution approximate the original distances.

This research uses the ALSCAL Algorithm module in SPSS 12 (Alternating Least-Squares Algorithm) to perform Multi-Dimensional Scaling (MDS). Iteration history for the two dimensional solutions (in squared distances) has been obtained. The researchers use Stress measures, which indicate the proportion of the variance of the disparities not accounted for by the MDS model (Hair et al, 2003). Stress values are indicative of the quality of MDS solutions. Whereas R-square is a measure of goodness of the optimally scaled data (RSQ), stress measures badness of fit (Malhotra, 2004). Thus, by using both stress values and R-square values the results are summarised.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Perceptual difference of role based performance with respect to both genders

Table 1: Iteration history for the 2 dimensional solution (in squared distances)

Iteration	S-stress	Improvement
1	0.01187	
2	0.01107	0.00081

*Young's S-stress formula 1 is used.

*Iterations stopped because S-stress improvement is less than .001000

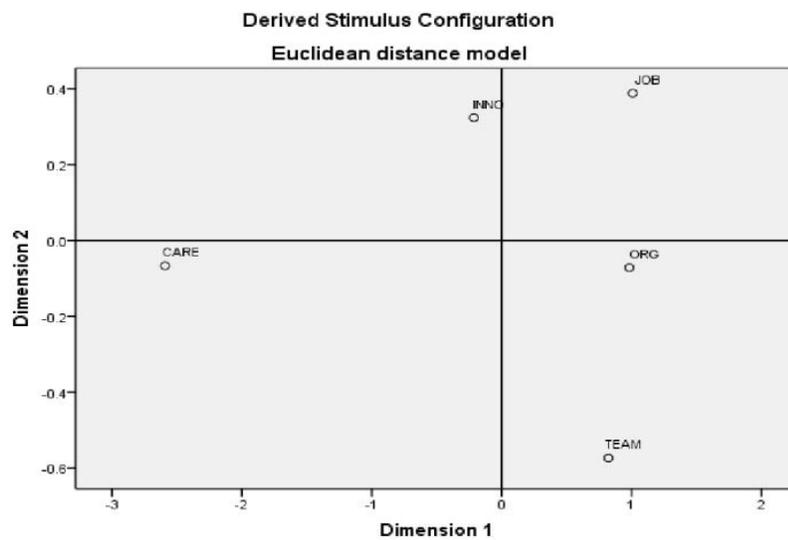
*Stress and squared correlation (RSQ) in distances

RSQ values are the proportion of variance of the scaled data (disparities) in the partition (row, matrix, or entire data) which is accounted for by their corresponding distances. Stress values are measured based on Kruskal's stress formula 1. The stress value was found to be .01826 (which is less than the 5% level as prescribed by Malhotra, 2004). The two dimensional reduction the RSq Value was 0.9985 which is above the prescribed level of 0.9 as prescribed by (Malhotra, 2004)..

Table 2. Configuration derived in 2 dimensions

Stimulus Number	Stimulus Name	Stimulus name as in diagram	Stimulus Coordinates	
			Dimension	
			1	2
1	Job	Job	1.0066	0.3891
2	Career	Care	-2.5906	-0.0670
3	Innovativeness	Inno	-0.2162	0.3241
4	Team	Team	0.8200	-0.5742
5	Organization	Org	0.9802	-.0720

Figure1.Consolidated level of gender



From the above perceptual map it is very evident that for both the genders as a whole, Career role is perceived distinctly from the rest of the variables. This means the implications from the career perspective in the role based performance scale is not connected to other performance measures in a public enterprise. This could be true in the case of a public sector in India, as growth in the career happens only over a period of time. It is also expected of the employee to only do what is stated by the organization. It is also evident that organization role and team role are perceived closer and hence the implications of these roles could be connected to performance. This may be considered as this particular public sector has been reworking the way it has been positioned in the minds of the customers over the last few years .A lot of exercises have been carried out to change the outlook of all the outlets across the country. With respect to Innovation and Job variables from the above diagram it could be perceived that innovation is not very essential for customer service personnel as they only execute prescribed set of services. Hence the job can be performed with limited innovation. It can also be seen that the job and career roles have occupied diagonally opposite position which means that they are not perceived in similar lines.

To bring out the gender difference on the perceptual dimension of the role based performance variable the analysis was repeated with gender specificity. The results are summarised below

4.2. Perceptual difference of role based performance with respect to Male

Table 3. Iteration history for the 2 dimensional solutions (in squared distances)

Iteration	S-stress	Improvement
1	0.02096	
2	0.01764	0.00332
3	0.1680	0.00084

*Young's S-stress formula 1 is used.

*Iterations stopped because S-stress improvement is less than .001000

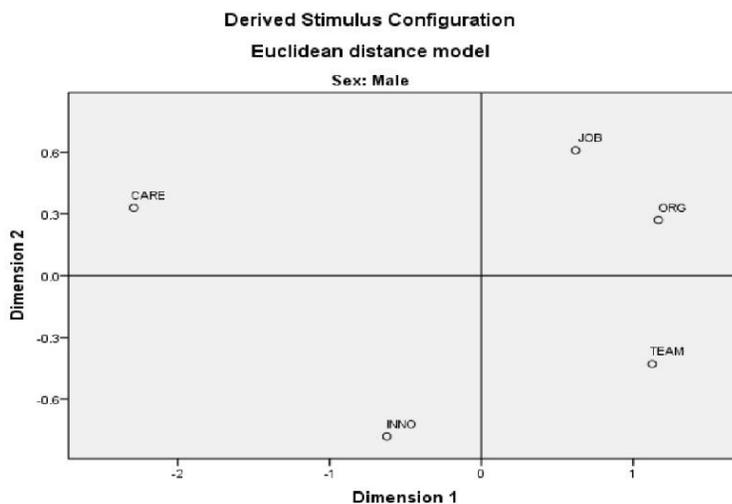
*Stress and squared correlation (RSQ) in distances

RSQ values are the proportion of variance of the scaled data (disparities) in the partition (row, matrix, or entire data) which is accounted for by their corresponding distances. Stress values are measured based on Kruskal's stress formula 1. The stress value was found to be .03067 (which is less than the 5% level as prescribed by (Malhotra, 2004)). The two dimensional reduction the RSq value was .99682 which is above the prescribed level of .9 as prescribed by (Malhotra, 2004).

Table 4. Configuration derived for male in 2 dimension

Stimulus Number	Stimulus Name	Stimulus Coordinates	
		Dimension	
		1	2
1	JOB	.6214	.6087
2	Career	-2.2912	.3299
3	Innovativeness	-.6231	-.7807
4	Team	1.1264	-.4289
5	Organization	1.1666	.2711

Figure 2. Consolidated level for Male



The Job role and organization role constructs are perceived together for the male employees and it is distinctly away from career construct in role based performance. This indicates that the above two roles are perceived closer because in a public sector with specificity to customer service personnel they carry out the task as prescribed by the organization because the job is of routine nature.

In India the male member is expected to run a family and hence loyalty towards the organization is high. In this public sector during the discussion the researchers got to understand the emotional attachment of the service personnel to the organization, as it has provided them employment. The construct team role is perceived distinctly away from the organization and job construct and innovation construct and it is also perceived diagonally opposite to the career construct. Innovation role is perceived diagonally opposite to Job and organization construct. Hence it could be identified from the above analysis that career and innovation construct is perceived away. This could be due to growth in such organizations are based on the number of years of service one puts in an organization. The routine nature of work does not permit one to exhibit innovativeness to a large extent while providing service. In this situation a customer meets the service personnel in the counter and the duration of the interaction is also very short. The service personnel just give what the customer asks for or responds to any query of the customer. Growth in these organizations is also possible only if the employees take up certain internal examinations.

4.3. Perceptual difference of role based performance with respect to Female

Table 5. Iteration history for the 2 dimensional solution (in squared distances)

Iteration	S-stress	Improvement
1	0.04364	-
2	0.03666	0.00698
3	0.354	0.00126
4	0.03513	0.00027

Young's S-stress formula 1 is used.

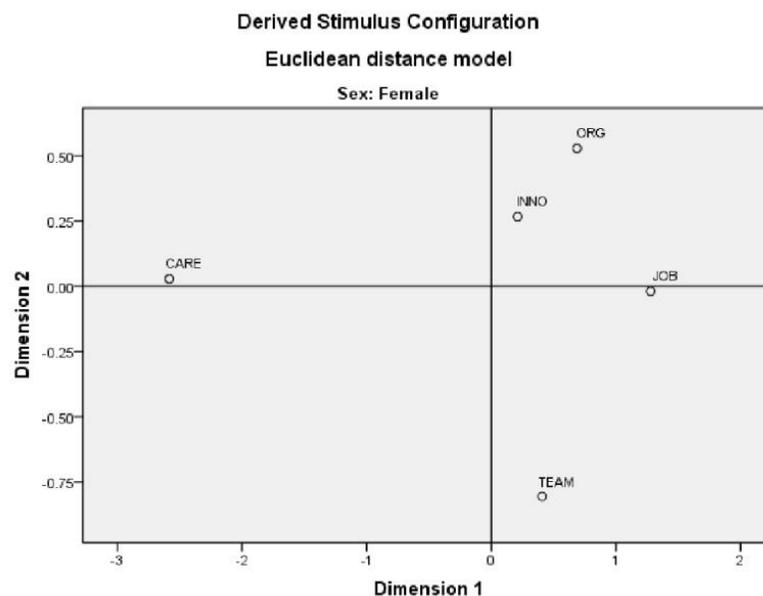
Iterations stopped because S-stress improvement is less than 0.001000

Stress and squared correlation (RSQ) in distances

RSQ values are the proportion of variance of the scaled data (disparities) in the partition (row, matrix, or entire data) which is accounted for by their corresponding distances. Stress values are Kruskal's stress formula 1. The stress value was found to be .05973 (which is marginally above than the 5% level as prescribed by (Malhotra, 2004)). The two dimensional reduction the RSq value was 0.98691 which is above the prescribed level of .9 as prescribed by (Malhotra, 2004).

Table 6. Configuration derived for male in 2 dimensions

Stimulus Number	Stimulus Name	Stimulus Coordinates	
		Dimension	
		1	2
1	JOB	1.2785	-0.0186
2	Career	-2.5848	0.0286
3	Innovativeness	0.2114	0.2671
4	Team	0.4075	-0.8058
5	Organization	0.6873	0.5287

Figure 3. Consolidated level for Female

The constructs organization role, innovation role and job role are perceived together of which innovation role and organization role are perceived closer. This could be because a lot of commitment is exhibited by the female customer service person at any point in time. It is also noticed that the women service personnel exhibit interest to answer the questions of the customer and the customer also feels that the women service person would give a genuine reply. Women are often seen to be more concerned with relational issues than are men (Gilligan 1977), perhaps because women are more socialized to value and maximize interpersonal elements of relationships whereas men have been socialized to value material outcomes (Kulik, Lind, Ambrose and MacCoun 1996). The intention of the women service personnel is to always satisfy the customer to the maximum extent. This paves way reason for employing women as customer service personnel. It is only assumed from what was seen in the organization when the researcher was interacting with the service personnel. The career role construct is perceived to be away from the other constructs. This could be due to the dependency by women on the formal processes for career growth and promotion than men (Cannings and Montmarquette 1991). Culturally the most of the Indian women were not seen as very ambitious and hence don't exhibit qualities for growth in their organization. Most often the reason a women seeks employment is to help the family financially as the cost of living has gone up considerably in India.

In this study it could be noticed that team role is distinctly away from the innovation, organization and role constructs which contradicts the earlier research and this could be because the nature of work does not require team work. This means the service personnel only perform stated duties at the sales counter. For example when a customer asks for postal stamps the requirement of the customer sales person is to just sell it.

5. Conclusion

Private sector jobs were very attractive for many eligible individuals in India and was most sort after . However in recent years the preference has increased towards public sector jobs by eligible individuals in India (Navjeet 2009). This may be due to many reasons, one of which could be the security of the job. Indian public sector companies normally do not retrench people. They are known to retain and help people through in their profession, which is a huge advantage for the employees as he/she is aware that they cannot be retrenched .This could also be the reason for not being innovative at work. The employees deem it sufficient to perform to the required or stated level by the company, over a period of time. If this could be viewed from another perspective, even if an employee exhibits creativity at work, it takes a long time to gain acceptance and get acknowledged by the organization. Unless an employee realises the importance of being innovative at work, one does not try to be exhibit this quality. It is important to know that this quality is measured in performance. Most Indian men consider employment as very important and is concerned about being continuously employed and may not be very concerned about growth in career.

The customers sometimes perceive service as poor quality due to the inflexibility exhibited by men. Here being flexible could also mean trying out new methods to perform a task during a service encounter. Mostly women customer service personnel are seen as a bit more flexible and hence exhibit new ways of performing the task. This helps the customer perceive the service as good and prefer a service counter where a woman is. Through this the women are perceived as committed to the job, which leads to organizational benefit. It could be easy for the customer service personnel if the organization states or communicates the permitted level of deviation from accepted procedures that will be tolerated and/or rewarded. This may help the service personnel to try and perform something new without fear. This promotes creativity and trust is also exhibited towards their workforce. The importance of working as a team should be explained to the customer service personnel. As most of them work in counters and work independently it is very important to advocate the concept of interdependency. It is known that the organization has planned a series of training programme to enhance team work.

Studies have revealed that women take on relatively higher family responsibilities to men (Reifman, Biernai. and Lang 1991) which could be contributing to greater interference between work and non-work responsibilities (Greenhaus, Bedeian. and Mossbolder 1987). In India specifically until recently it was expected of the women to take more family responsibilities. A typical woman is stereotyped as emotional, weak, dependent, passive, uncompetitive, and unconfident" (Fiske and Stevens 1993, p. 179). This could also be one of the reasons for women employees not to consider career as very important and must device a career path for growth. This could help them be motivated and perform at a higher level.

This study provides empirical evidence for a customer service person, those variables that are perceived closer to another set of variable in a public sector enterprise. Further research can be done to study the condition or the control methods which could be adopted to help perceive all the variables close by customer service personnel in a public and a private sector. Evidence suggests that male and female customers differ in their judgments of male and female service provider performance (Iacobucci and Ostrom 1993). Further research might be pursued to match the process between customer and employee gender and its affect on performance perceptions.

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