The gendered and cultural realities of managing a global workforce: Implications for research and practice

Kaumudi Misra
kaumudi.misra@csueastbay.edu

This paper examines the role of *gender* and *cultural differences* on individuals that work as part of global teams, highlighting the influence of societal contexts in shaping employees' experiences and work outcomes. Using matched supervisor-employee data from the India sites of three multinational companies, the study hypothesizes than gender and cultural intelligence moderate the effects of flexible working arrangements and work schedules on the work-family balance, performance and stress outcomes of global team employees. Results from multi-level analyses of the matched data indicate that, even though they work as part of multinational organizations as global team members, men and women employees in this particular societal context marked by collectivistic and paternalistic interactions, experience the effects of flexibility practices differentially. Cultural intelligence is also found to play a significant role in the performance of global teams in this context. The study findings are discussed with respect to academic and managerial implications. Flexible work policies need to address the cultural context in which they are applied, and leadership development must include cultural training. More importantly, HR leaders must be sensitive to the gendered norms of the cultural context in which they operate, and managers must fine tune the use of flexible work practices and work schedules to suit the differential needs of men and women in such societies, so that global employees remain efficient and productive. A decentralized approach, with greater supervisory discretion would help in this regard.