



Professional Competence among Indian Executives

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Abstract: The present paper is an empirical inquiry into the implications of personal and organizational variables of the executives in achieving their professional targets. The study is based on the empirical data pertaining to 126 executives functioning in 126 large scale, public and private manufacturing and service organization in the state of Karnataka. The study indicates, the executives in the Indian context exhibit high level of professional competence. Further, the finding indicate that, professional competence is the function of age, as the age of respondents increases the level of professional competence also increases. The urban background of the respondents seems to be distant advantage in determining the professional competence. Coming to the organizational variables the findings indicate that, executives in manufacturing firms tend to be more competent than executives in service organizations. However, the level of professional competence seems to vary in depend of sector and age of the organization. The findings refute the general belief that, executives in the private sector are more competent. Further, the findings seem to suggest such beliefs are unfounded and such generalizations are unwarranted

Keywords: Competence, Professional , Indian , Executives

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INTRODUCTION

Indian social scientists have taken to the systematic study of Professions quite recently. Obviously, the development of well defined and streamlined professions as in the West, is a recent phenomenon in India, as occupational and professional specialization are the functions of large scale industrialization and urbanization and real breakthrough in this sphere came about in India only after independence. As such, the emergence of these new occupational groups and their implications for social structure have come under sociological scrutiny during the last two decades, leading to the creation of some integrated body of knowledge about occupations and profession in Indian social setting. A few empirical sketches that can testify to the increasing interest of India sociologists in the study of professional groups are those on lawyers (Sharma 1984), academicians (Bhoite, 1987), nurses (Domen 1978), industrial workers, (Shiva Rao, 1939; Lambert Richard 1963; Vaid 1965, Sharma 1982, Holmstrom Mark, 1976), teachers, (Aggarwal 1988) entrepreneurs (Venkatasubbaiah, 1977; Sing Sheobal 1985) and even trade union leaders (Punekar and Madhuri, 1967; Hiremath, 1989).

Compared to the professions such as teaching, legal practice, medicine and engineering the profession of management is of much recent origin and represents one of the most important occupational category and works on Indian executives and extremely sparse. In commensuration with this dominant scientific surge in the Indian Sociological circles, the present study seeks to probe into the realities pertaining to the executives as representing an important occupational category in the contemporary society. To this extent the present article " Professional Competence Among Indian Executives " seeks to probe into the realities pertaining to

the executive competence in the Indian setting.

Professional competence generally refers to the level of professional skills, knowledge and expertise achieved by one in course of ones professional cereer. Further, it is generally believed that the professional competence is instrumental in achieved that the professional competence is instrumental in achieving the targets one sets for one self or an organization sets for an individual. In the context of the present study, the concept of professional competence of an executive refers to how successful and efficient he has been in achieving the professional targets set for him and his organization in terms of organizational goals.

METHODS OF INQUIRY

The findings of the present study are based on the relevant data gathered through the introduction of an interview schedule. The data pertaining to the organizational and professional context, however, are collected with the help of an information schedule.

The data gathered from the field are primarily qualitative. Using the suitable coding and scoring techniques, the same are transformed into quantitative. Further, for the purpose of analysis and interpretation data the statistical tests such as chi-square and C test are employed.

THE STUDY GROUP

The present study is based on an inquiry into functioning of executives in a of the study of 126 large scale public and private work organization drawn from Bangalore urban division-I. In view of the objectives of the stuby it was decided to confine the study to only those executives who are functioning in work organizations with a minimum work force of 500. In all there are 130 work organizations with a work force of 500 or more. It was decided to to cover the top executives of all the 130 such work organizations for the purpose of present study. However, the executives of four work organizations did not respond to the investigation and as such, the actual study group constitutes 126 top executives of the 126 work organizations.

PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE

The level of professional compence represents an important dimension of professional career. The professional competence can also provide us with an estimate of the kind of professional executives available for managing the work organizations in India aned the type of people who constitute the India executive class cested with the responsibility of leading the economic progress. It is but natural to assume that, the efficiency and profitability of the work organization depend to large wextent on the competence and caliber of the people who manage the top positions in these organizations as such the findings on the professional competence of executives are not only of academic interest but also are of applied significance. The level professional competence of executives is ascertained on the basis of work targets achieved by them and the achievement of the general goals of the organizations they manage. the executives are classified as those with low and high level of competence.

Table 1: Professional Competence Of Executives

Professional Competence	No. of Respondents	Percentage
LOW	23	18.25
HIGH	103	81.75
TOTAL	126	100.00

It is quite gratifying to note that, over 80 (81.75) percent of the executives studied exhibit high even when the competence is quite conservative. This could indicate that, India executives are well equipped with the requisite skills, knowledge and expertise to stand them in good stead for the efficient management of work organizations under their charge. It could also be taken as a testimony to the fact that management as a profession has come a long way and developed into a streamlined and well established profession by itself. On the basis of this we also infer that the Indian work organizations are professionally managed by the competent body of executives

An attempt is made in this article to ascertain the correlates of professional competence. An important factor assumed to be associated with professional competence is the age of the executives. It is generally believed that, the competence increases with advancing age, due to increasing experience, exposure and maturity.

Table 2: Age of the Respondents & professional competence

Professional competence	Age of the Respondents				Total
	25-35	36-45	46-55	56+	
Low	3 (13.04)	10 (18.52)	-	10 (55.56)	23 (18.25)
High	20 (86.96)	44 (81.48)	31 (100.00)	8 (44.44)	103 (81.75)
Total	23 (100)	54 (100)	31 (100)	18 (100)	126 (100)

$\chi^2 = 20.12$ d.f=3 c=0.371 Significant at 0.01 level.

However the findings seem to indicate that the age could determine the level of only up to a particular stage beyond which which redundancy could step in. The data indicate that, the level of professional competence increases with age upto the age of retirement or over 55 years and there after is a decisive fall or decline in the level of professional competence exhibited by the executives. It is significant to note, the age of retirement in India is around 55 to 58 years and the competence shows a declining trend that age. It could as well mean that those who are in service after the age of 55 years could face the problem of obsolescence and redundancy due to the rapidly changing technology and work culture or they are the ones who are re-employed after retirement in an organization other than the one they served in which they are yet to acclimatize and identify themselves with the new organization Irrespective of this argument being tenable the association between age and professional competence is found to be statistically significant at 0.01 level.

In terms of span of career also the findings indicate that as in the case of age, the level of professional competence is relatively higher among those with short span of career. This finding the competence and

age are associated only upto a point. Since span of career is determined by the age the competence could as well be associated with span of career. However, the relationship between span of career is not statistically significant.

On the other hand rural Urban background of the executives appears to have significant implications for their level of professional competence.

Table 3: Rural-Urban Background and Professional Competence

	Rural	Sub-Urban	Urban	Total
Low	4 (57.14)	6 (11.11)	13 (20.00)	23 (28.25)
High	3 (42.86)	48 (88.89)	52 (80.00)	103 (81.75)
Total	7 (100.00)	54 (10.00)	65 (100.00)	126 (100.00)

$\chi^2=8.74$ d.f= 2; $p = 0.025$ significant at 0.05 level.

Those the association between rural urban background and level of professional competence is significant is significant only at 0.05 level, it could be observed from the data that, bank ground is of considerable advantage for executives to attain a higher level of professional competence. It could be seen from the table that as many as 90 (88.89) percent and 80 percent of the respondents with Sub-urban and urban background respectively have high level of professional competence, whereas, the corresponding proportion among those with rural background is as low as 43 (42.86) percent. Thus, it could be stated the level of professional competence appears to be influenced by rural urban background of the executives. This may be attributed to the better communication skills and greater rationality so characteristic of urbanites that enable the executives with urban background to achieve better results in their pursuit of organizational goals in a bureaucratic setup.

Further the finding indicate to a significant association between the type of firm and level of professional competence.

Table 4: Type of Firm and Professional Competence

Competence	Type of Firm		Total
	Manufacturing	Service	
Low	14 (13.08)	9 (47.37)	23 (18.25)
High	93 (86.91)	10 (52.63)	103 (81.75)
	107 (100)	19 (100)	126 (100)

$\chi^2=46.27$; d.f=1 $p=0.000$ significant at 0.01 level.

It is interesting to note that, the executives in manufacturing firms tend to be more competent in realizing the organization goals than are their counterparts in service organizations. It could be observed from the data that about 87 (86.91) percent of the executives operating in manufacturing work organizations exhibit a high level of competence as against 53 (52.63) percent of such executives in service organizations. The association which found to be significant statistically being associated with type of firm. This could be so because, the manufacturing firms have a relatively more concrete targets and more accurate measures for ascertaining the extent of realization of these tasks. Further, the output of manufacturing firms is more easily amenable for quantification, measurement and constant mentoring enabling accuracy in planning and achieving, whereas, in case of service organizations the objectives and targets tend to be more vague and less amenable for accurate measurement. Thus, the difference between the general nature of work and mode of operation seem be of considerable implications for determining the level of executive competence.

CONCLUSION

An attempt is made in this section to summarize the findings of the present study. The findings of the present study indicate that in contrast to the general belief the India executives exhibit high level of professional competence. This could clearly indicate that Indian work organizations are professionally managed by the competent body of executives.

It is significant to note that, the association between age of the respondents and professional competence is found to be statistically significant at 0.01 level. Further the urban background seems to distant advantage in determining the professional competence this could be attributed to the greater exposure to the knowledge better communication and rationality so characteristic of urban community, that enable the executives with urban background to perform more successful than their counter part executives with rural background.

Coming to the organizational aspects, the findings indicate that executives in manufacturing firms tend to be more competent than their counterparts in service organizations. This could be attributed to the fact that, the organizational goals set for the executives in manufacturing firms are more concrete and more accurately measurable. In case of service organizations the targets tend to be more vague and less amenable for accurate public sector organizations are more complacent and less enterprising due to higher degree of job security and low degree of incentives or rewards for hard work. On the other hand it is

believed that the executives in private sector are not only held personal responsibilities and accountable for achieving the organizational tasks but also are better compensated and rewarded for hard work they turn out. These assumptions have led to a general belief that the private sector organizations are manned by highly competent and enterprising executives, whereas, the other way being true with the public sector undertakings. The findings of the study seem to suggest beliefs are unfounded and such generalizations are unwarranted

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