

JOB SECURITY: AN INDIAN EMPLOYEE'S FIRST PRIORITY

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Abstract:

While “Job security” is obvious priority of any employee, researcher conducted in-depth study in this topic to understand outcome of predominance of this priority on employee or potential employee, amongst all other priorities (like job satisfaction, high compensation, employer’s brand, organization leadership and professional growth) .

The study was conducted over 100 fresh graduates, post graduates “job aspirants” and 100 experienced professionals. The study revealed that Indian employees prefer secured job over wage levels, professional growth, employer’s brand and organizational leadership. The study also reveals that the gender orientation of an employee largely influences his or her priorities .

Keywords: Job Security, Wage level, Employer Brand, Job Content, Employee Priority

Introduction

“Only the insecure strive for security”.

Employees in Indian private sector are currently blessed with the “job insecurity” because of ‘Constantly changing skills requirements’, ‘turbulent market conditions’, ‘fluctuating demand-supply percentage of talent’, coupled with ‘Economy’ and ‘Government Policies’ to blame so. Employees, irrespective of their level in the organisation seem to live in the shadow of uncertainty of job stability.

While the external factors doesn't change much for the rest of world and may influence job aspirations / priorities of employees globally, the magnitude of the effect of these external factors is more in Indian corporate perspective. In India while the economy cannot be blamed enough, dispassionate approach of Government, to address issues like unemployment & under-employment and absence of appropriate policy framework for private sector and its execution (if present) is equally to be blamed.

Unlike other countries, concept of ‘self employment’ or ‘entrepreneurship’ has still not flourished in India. For more than 80% earning population, salary received out of their job remains major or the ONLY source of income. For them, stable job is simply sure and consistent income. Any threat to the job is essentially a threat to their financial security and perhaps to their existence. Job security greatly relates to the financial security and autonomy of the employee. Absence of any other mode of income, earning opportunities and ability except for ‘being employee’ or ‘having a job’ makes the threat even significant. A greater part of the Indian population is largely dependent on the job for their survival. As most of the motivational theories suggest, existence, survival or subsistence needs, being a hygiene factor prevail all other motivational needs.

While job content, wage level, employer's brand, organizational leadership and professional growth are much higher in the employee's priority list, job security still remain the first priority of employees' for such reasons. The survey result for 'BEST COMPANIES to work for' in the last few years together, have revealed that the companies in the list seem to have got top places just for the job security that they offer to their employees and are preferred by the employees as their potential or enduring employer.

Another fact that relates to employees' strives for job security is that the young talent is progressively pursuing career in academics, which is more stable as compared to the corporate. There is an obvious current trend of young talent and middle to senior level employees joining educational institutions, leaving their lucrative pay packages that their corporate jobs have to offer. As a matter of fact, many management graduates from top management schools like IIMs / XLRI and many others have preferred career in academics for the security that these jobs offers. Despite the huge disparity in the pay package, the obvious reason why the academics jobs are preferred by most of them is mainly for the job security that these jobs offer and less for their strive to learn or contribute to the education field. It's evidential from the aforesaid fact that 'job security' is the first priority of Indian employees.

However there is a flip side of the phrase 'Job Security'. The term itself is very relative and the context and relevance varies from person to person. There is thin line between 'Job security' and 'Job complacency'. There is high risk of employee becoming complacent once he attains job security. It is a known fact that there is no dearth of job for a right talent. In fact, there is dearth of right talent for the jobs those are available in the market in abundance. The job requirements in terms of technical knowledge, skills and attitude are changing rapidly. The skill that was desirable yesterday is obligatory today and will be obvious, mundane or possibly outdated tomorrow. In current scenario, to get a job or even to continue in the present job, employees are expected not just to learn new skills and upgrade themselves, but also to demonstrate ability to adapt to change and successfully face challenges that the economy and market simulates every day.

In a lighter term, a classic example of job security is 'House Wife'. "A house wife is an unpaid employee in her husband's house in return for the security of being a permanent employee"

While strive for Job Security is understood and the fact remains that Job Security is the first priority of Indian Employees', it's inevitable on employees' part to continually improve and upgrade his skills to be prepared for the prevailing needs of job market. Inability / unwillingness or inability of an employee to do so will just increase his fear of insecurity; he will thus strive for a more secured job by defying his own growth and will go in to complacency.

Employees need to understand need of the time and work upon overcoming strive for the only security needs and strive to be 'ABLE' than 'EARNINING' to instill growth needs. Developing entrepreneurial ability amongst employees is need of time to help eradicate their sense of insecurity is essential on employer's part.

Statement of Problem

The researcher's experience in corporate have revealed a huge gap between employees expectations from employer as to that of what employer has to offer to their existing or potential employees in terms of job content, future growth prospects, organizational leadership and of course job security . While other aspects are negotiated and evaluated well within the two parties i.e. employee & employer, before entering into employment agreement, "job security" is the only aspect that is not discussed in detailed between the two parties and thus remain a "grey area". Researcher thus felt the need to study this topic further and to orient employers about need and significance of offering 'job security' to their employees.

Objectives of study

The study was conducted with the following objectives:

- To study and explore the priority of job security amongst all others.
- To study further that the relation, if exists, the degree diverge as per gender, experience etc.

Research Methodology

Sample Size ; 100 working professionals, across India were selected randomly, working at junior, middle and senior level. In addition to working professionals, 100 fresh graduate, post-graduate job aspirants were selected randomly.

Following tools were used to collect the data and analyze the same.

- Detailed questionnaire including open ended and close ended multi-choice question was prepared and employed over the sample
- The data received in response to the questionnaire and interviews from respondents was collected, compiled and analyzed through percentage techniques and descriptive analysis as appropriate.

Scope and limitations

The scope of the study was restricted to study the priorities of Indian employees working in private sector only and to explore linkage between “job security” amongst all other priorities of Indian Employees and the career path they choose.

Data Representation and its analysis

The received data was analyzed employing percentage comparison technique and other appropriate statistical tools.

Following is graphical representation of collected data :

I Priorities of fresher while selecting job :

Respondents were asked to prioritize their needs or drivers to select job or field of their choice, as a fresher. The responses received are graphically represented as under :

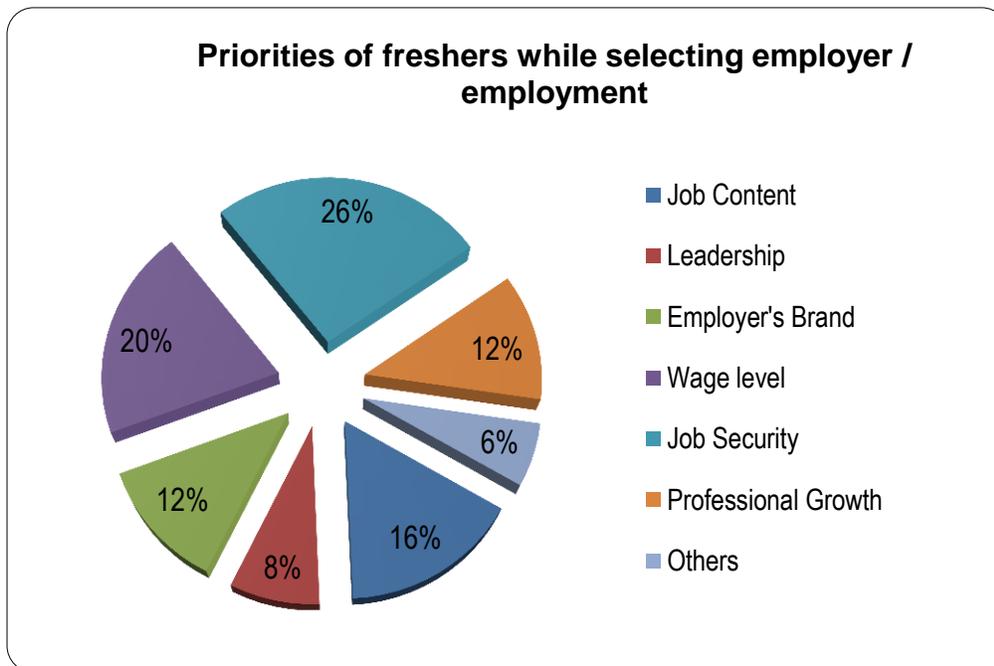


Chart I (a) - *Priorities of freshers while selecting employer / employment*

Majority of the freshers preferred Job Security (26%) as a criterion to select their first job or field of employment, followed by wage level (20%) and Job content (16%). Freshers seem to have

given equal importance to potential Professional Growth and Employer's Brand image (12%). Leadership/Management (8%) was much low in the priority list. Others included miscellaneous priorities like convenience, known management etc.

The data was further analyzed to understand influence of gender, if any on the priorities that the employee have. Following is the graphical comparison of the data received.

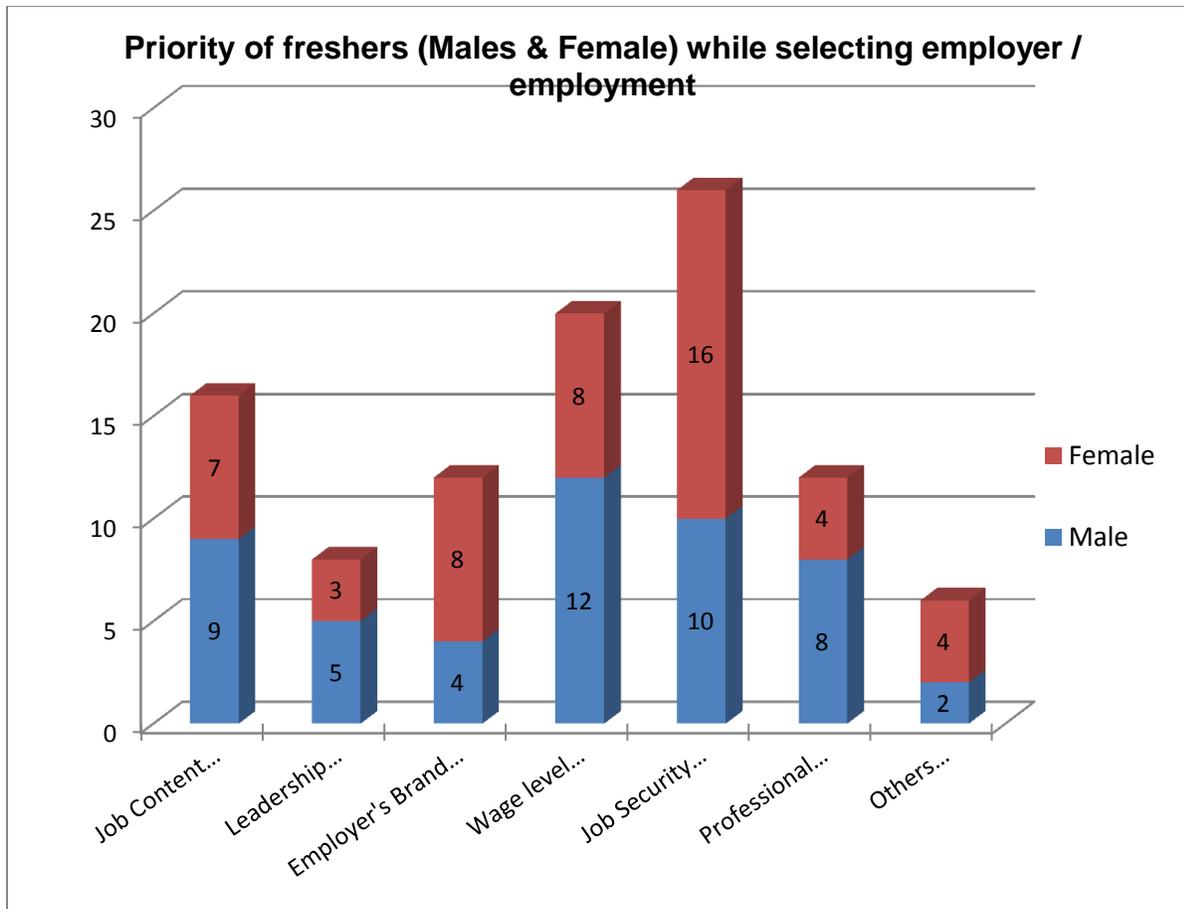


Chart I (b) - Priorities of freshers while selecting employer / employment (Gender bifurcation)

Female seem to strive for Job security more than wage and Employer Brand, while males strive for better salary followed by Job Security and then job contents and professional growth.

II Priority of working professionals while Job taking up a new job or to be in present job:

Working professionals from varied industries and different level were asked to prioritize their needs or drivers to take up a new job or to be in present job. The responses received are graphically represented as under :

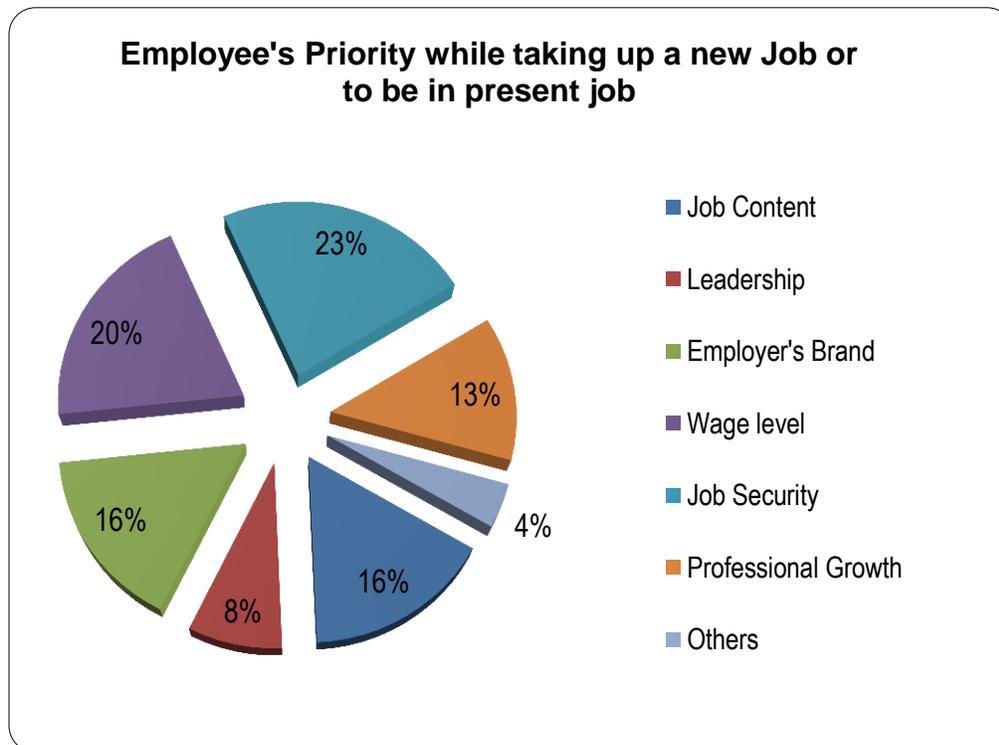


Chart II (a) - Priorities of working professionals while taking up a new job or to be in present job

Working professionals preferred Job Security (23%) as a criterion to select their prospective employment, followed by wage level (20%). Job content (16%) and Employer's Brand (16%) seem to have got equal significance in the decision making of new job or to be in present job in view of working professional. Leadership/Management (8%) was much low in the priority list. Others included miscellaneous priorities like convenience, known management etc.

The data was further analyzed to understand influence of gender, if any on the priorities that the employee have. Following is the graphical comparison of the data received.

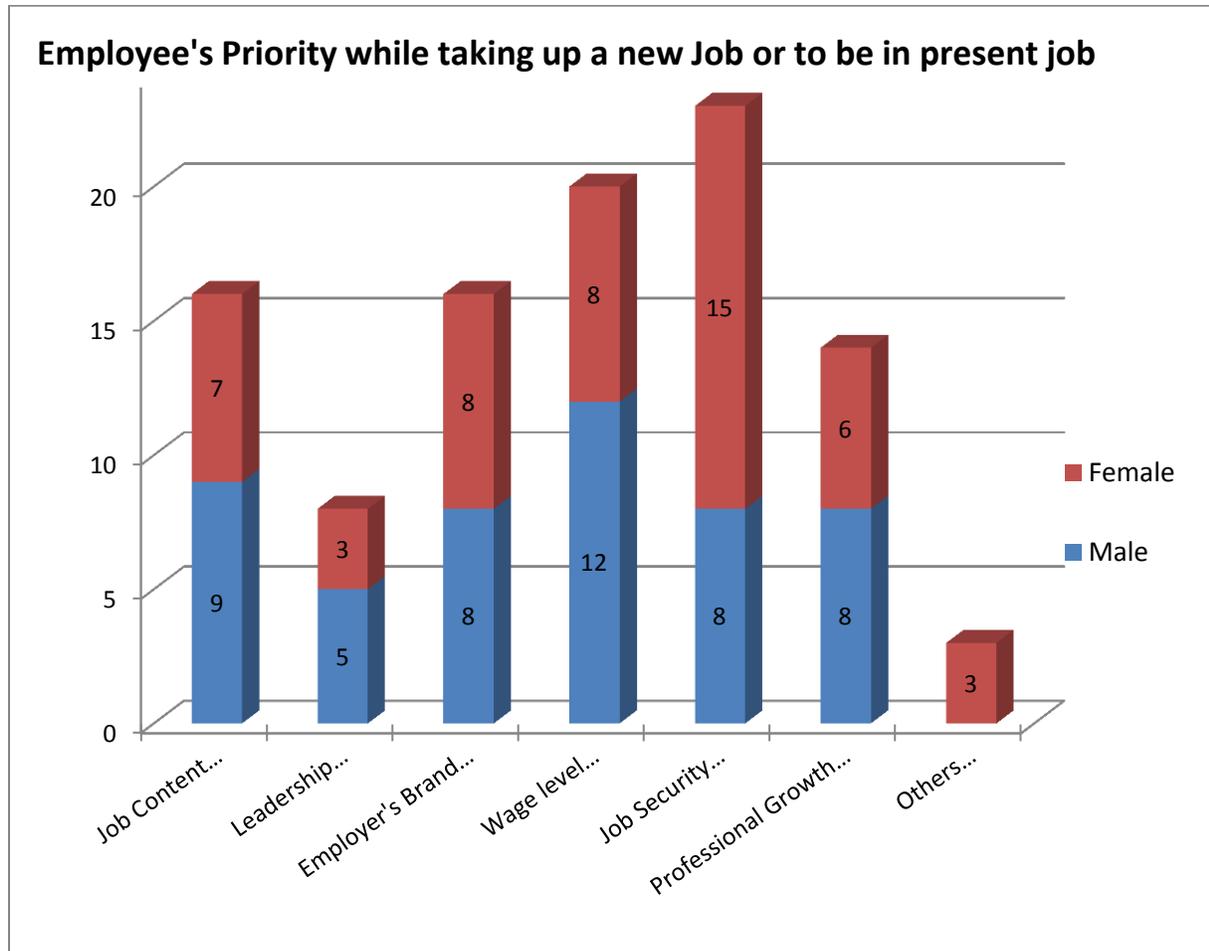


Chart II (a) - Priorities of working professionals while taking up a new job or to be in present job (Gender bifurcation)

Working female seems to strive for Job security followed by wage and Employer Brand, while males strive for better salary followed by Job contents and then job security and professional growth.

III Preferred industry to work with for Job security

Freshers and working professionals from varied industries and different level were asked which industry does they perceive as more stable and would prefer to work for as they offer greater job security. The responses received are graphically represented as under :

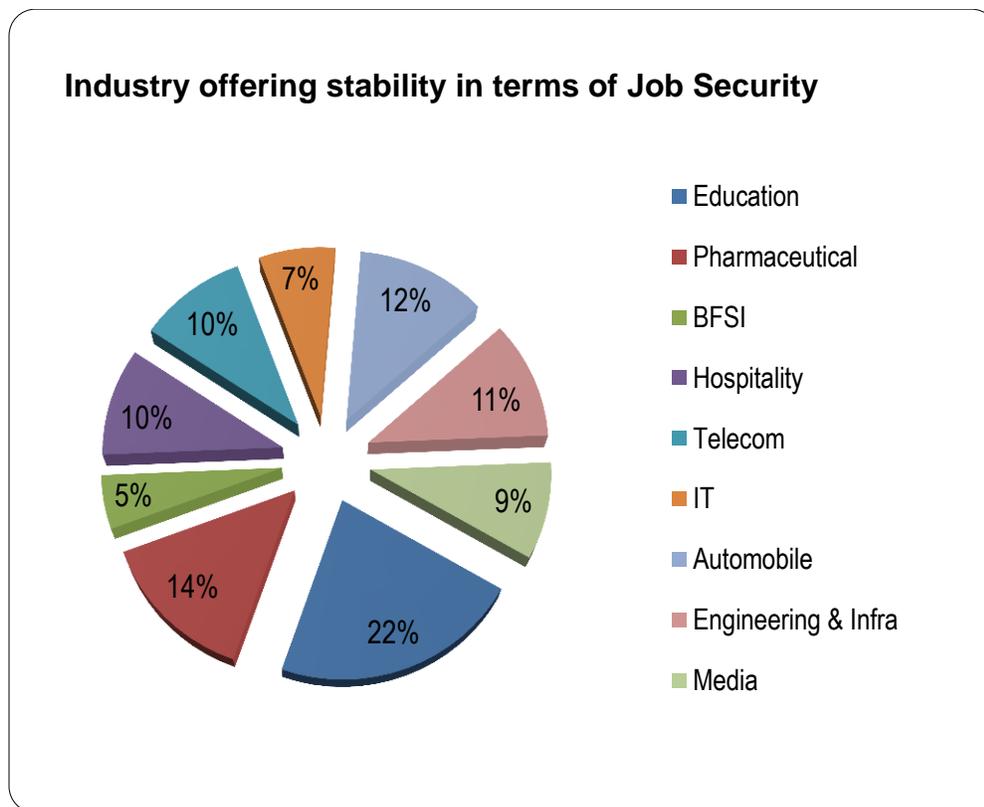


Chart III - Preferred industry to work with for Job security

Education industry is perceived to offer greater job security (22%), followed by Pharmaceuticals (14%) and Automobile (12%). BFSI industry is perceived to be less stable and offering minimum job security (5%).

Data Interpretation and Discussions

It is obvious from Chart I (a) & II (a) , that the top most priority of job aspirants remains Job security, irrespective of their status whether “Fresher” or “Experienced”.

Detailed examination of Chart I (b) & II (b) reveals that there is a definite connect of priority and the gender orientation. Female job aspirants, fresher or experienced, are found striving for secured job more than males.

While the prime priority of job seeker, whether fresher or experienced, remains Job Security, it’s interesting to know that the magnitude of importance of Job Security is declined in case of experienced working professionals as compared to freshers (26% to 23%) and the significance of Employer’s brand shows significant increase (from 12% to 16%) along with importance of Potential Professional Growth (from 12% to 13%)

Priority of female employees, whether fresher or experienced, has a consistency in terms of significance of priority for job change / employment. On the other hand in case of male employees, while first priority remains wage level, secondary priority shifts from job security to employer’s brand.

Also open ended questions revealed the following facts

- Over 20% of the total employees, who have left, have chosen to shift either the industry (Finance) or the function for the sake of more stable job environment.
- Around 68% employees choose to continue to work for the same company (in pharmaceutical sector) despite of the low/insignificant or no growth in career and compensation as they were happy in the comfort zone and low risk taking ability.
- Over 44% new recruits accepted the offer simply as they thought the organisation and the job can offer ‘Job Security’.

Conclusions

- Priority of Indian Employee while choosing a employment or career is the stability or Job Security.
- Female employees prefer Job security over wage level and employer's brand whether freshers or experienced. However experienced female employee seem to also give significant importance to Professional Growth along with other factors.
- Male employees prefer higher wages as Job security lies second in priority list. While the same pattern prevail for most of the factors in case of freshers as well, a clear decline in need of job security is observed in case of experienced employees. Experienced male employees prefer Employer's brand over Job Security.
- Education industry is perceived as most stable industry offering higher job security.

Suggestions

Organizations should provide secured job atmosphere to its employees. Setting expectations right at the time of recruitment, providing proper and adequate performance feedback, having robust manpower planning mechanism to avoid excess manpower, handholding with underperformers to enhance their performance through training, coaching, mentoring may help reduce insecurity to a greater extend.

OD interventions like Team building activities, organization surveys, skip level meetings, role clarity workshops, goal setting exercises will help soothe the uncertainty.

Like many developed and developing countries, Indian Government can introduce schemes and initiatives to address concerns of unemployed. Even the legal framework, though it exists, to protect interest of employees', who are vulnerable to potential job loss, doesn't seem to have positive impact or are inadequate to protect all, as the policies, abide by the Acts are extended to only hand full of people or to a very small group of employees at very junior level. Junior level,

middle level and thereof are expelled from any strong legal framework. Efforts can be made to have inclusive efforts to reduce the feeling of insecurity.

Bio:

Shilpa Kulkarni Dang

Shilpa hold Masters Degree in Human Resources and possess professional certifications like “Psychometric Assessor”, “ADC Evaluator” and “ISO Internal Auditor”.

An astute HR professional with over 16 yrs of corporate experience in HR Consulting, Pharma and BFSI industry coupled with 10 yrs experience in Teaching and training.

During her tenure with corporate, Shilpa has successfully contributed to improve and maintain Organizations’ Effectiveness by performing critical Leadership and Strategic Business partnering role.

She is also a visiting faculty and HR mentor for some of the reputed Colleges, Management Institutes in and around Mumbai. WLCI (UK), Welingkar Institute of management, Lala Lajpatrai Group, Pune Institute of Business Management etc to name a few.

Currently she is pursuing Doctorate (PhD) in “Application of Competency Based HRM to Improve Organizational Effectiveness” through JJTU, Rajasthan. She has to her credit 3 research papers and a few article reviews.

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