

## **OPERATIONALIZATION OF "TALENT" IN INDIAN IT INDUSTRY- AN EMPIRICAL APPROACH**

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### **Abstract:**

Talent and talent management becoming buzz word of contemporary human resource management practices; there exists ambiguities in the real meaning of the word talent in the organizational context. With the support of many talent philosophies developed the talent is seen as both objective and subjective in the modern scenario. Human resource practitioners constantly strike a balance between the exclusive and inclusive aspect of talent identification for better extrinsic benefits. This research paper aims to explore the meaning of the word talent in the organizational context with special reference to software sector. The study found that there is no common acceptance on what constitute real talent and there exists a bizarre gap in the employees and managerial perception about the word talent.

Keywords: talent pool, operationalization of talent, talent management

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## **Introduction**

The wider acceptance of talent management practices as an important intervention in the industry had opened up wide arenas of dilemma regarding the operationalization of the construct talent. Talent management encaptures identification, capture and utilization of organizational talent to maximize the organizational performance and achieve sustainable organizational competitive advantage. Organizations of the modern period exercise two schools of talent identification particularly inclusive and exclusive approach. Under the inclusive talent identification approach all the employees of the organization are treated alike and are given a fair chance in identification and labeling as talented. Contrary to this in the exclusive approach only the star performers or the top performers are considered talent. While the later approach to talent identification saves the cost of the organization it imparts wider inequality and plants the feeling of being rejected. This study set in the context of software companies in Kerala tries to explore the wider and inner aspects of the talent construct and how it is operationalized in the IT industry.

## **Review of literature**

**Dr.GarimaBardia(2010)**has mentioned that out of the four M's only the fourth M i.e., men cannot be replaced and can be taken as a lasting weapon of competitive advantage.Inorder to tackle the pace of globalization and proliferation of competitors, it is the responsibility of the organization to make, build and nourish their talent pool to ensure survival in the long run.

**Dr.Pranab Kumar Bhattacharya (2011)**proved through his studies that in today's highly competitive global economy, the war of talent has transacted regional and national boundaries and has evidently become global. He states that to enhance organizational efficiency, talented employees must be provided with the liberty for change, challenges and creativity at the work place.

**KuleLagunas (2012)**suggested five employment retention strategies for higher performance environment which are hire retainable employees, plan career don't fill rolls, get to the heart of underperformance, invest in young line managers.

**Anand(2014)**explored to understand the talent management innovation, practice and process in a major telecom company in India, Bharti Airtel.The research revealed the process of effective management of the talent pool which led to enhanced employee engagement and reduced attrition and proportionately increased the average tenure of employees.

### **Objectives of the study**

1. To operationalize talent in the IT industry with special reference to Kerala software industry.

### **Research Methodology**

The study follows descriptive research design. The researcher identifies what constitutes talent and what managers consider as talent in their employees. The different manifestations or dimensions of talent are analyzed in this study.

The research is based purely on the primary data collected through interview schedule. Besides the demographic details, the research instrument included a single construct namely ‘talent’ which was measured with the help of statements formulated from existing talent and talent management literatures. The statements/items to measure talent are pertinent with the real organizational perspective of the chosen companies. The respondents were requested to rate their perception about talent in a five point Likert scale. The respondents of the study include the HR managers of three giant IT companies in Kerala chosen on the basis of market capitalization and listed with Bombay Stock Exchange and National Stock Exchange. The top three IT companies which practices talent management strategies are chosen for the study. Tata Consultancy Services, Infosys Limited And Wipro Limited are the three companies chosen for this study. There were 52 HR managers working in the chosen companies if this study. Since it was practically impossible to avail the time of all the 52 HR managers because of their work nature in the IT industry the researcher decided for sampling. 12 HR managers from each of the company were selected for the study and the interview schedule was administered on 36 HR managers. Hence the study trails disproportionate random sampling method.

The reliability of the construct was checked with Cronbach Alpha (0.74). After ensuring the reliability of the data mean was used to measure the perception of managers regarding the ‘talent’ of their employees. The researcher had used analysis of variance (ANOVA) to check how the talent perception differs among managers of different age groups. For this purpose the managers are classified into three age groups- baby boomers (age more than 52 years), generation X (age between 38-52 years) and generation Y or the millennial (less than 38 years). The construct ‘talent’ was measured with the following statements.

**Table- 1****Operationalization of the construct ‘talent’ in the IT industry**

| <b>S.I Num</b> | <b>Statements</b>  |
|----------------|--|
| <b>1</b>       | Set of competencies and skills used to increase productivity.                      |
| <b>2</b>       | Uniqueness and employee poses that makes him distinct from one another.            |
| <b>3</b>       | Talent denotes the special position an employee occupies.                          |
| <b>4</b>       | The capacity to take senior jobs and detect the future leaders.                    |
| <b>5</b>       | Talent is performing consistently at their personal best.                          |
| <b>6</b>       | Talent is a combination of ability and affective components.                       |
| <b>7</b>       | Talent is an amalgam of high performance and high potential.                       |
| <b>8</b>       | Talent is adaptability, flexibility, learning orientation and learning agility.    |
| <b>9</b>       | Personal and behavioral dispositions that employees bring into actual performance. |
| <b>10</b>      | Talent is innate and inherited giftedness.   |
| <b>11</b>      | Talent is the capacity of delivering excellent performance.                        |
|                | Cronbach Alpha= 0.74   |

Source: talent literatures and annual reports of chosen companies

**Analysis and Interpretations**

The table showing the mean value of the perception of managers about the term ‘talent’ in their organization is presented below.

**Table 2****Mean value of manager's talent perception**

| S.I | Talent Statements  | Mean | S.D  |
|-----|--|------|------|
| 1   | Set of competencies and skills used to increase productivity.                      | 4.20 | 1.84 |
| 2   | Uniqueness and employee poses that makes him distinct from one another.            | 4.27 | 1.81 |
| 3   | Talent denotes the special position an employee occupies.                          | 4.34 | 1.96 |
| 4   | The capacity to take senior jobs and detect the future leaders.                    | 4.38 | 1.90 |
| 5   | Talent is performing consistently at their personal best.                          | 4.03 | 1.72 |
| 6   | Talent is a combination of ability and affective components.                       | 4.22 | 1.69 |
| 7   | Talent is an amalgam of high performance and high potential.                       | 4.00 | 1.68 |
| 8   | Talent is adaptability, flexibility, learning orientation and learning agility.    | 4.07 | 1.74 |
| 9   | Personal and behavioral dispositions that employees bring into actual performance. | 4.09 | 1.73 |
| 10  | Talent is innate and inherited giftedness.   | 3.39 | 1.13 |
| 11  | Talent is the capacity of delivering excellent performance.                        | 3.14 | 1.17 |

Source: Computed from primary data

The analysis showed that the word talent is not vague among the managers of the Indian IT industry. The respondent's perception is positive towards the 'talent' construct. Adding to the researchers merry, the analysis shows that the managers have somehow started recognizing the 'talent' of the employees.

Talent is least viewed as the capacity of delivering excellent performance. The manager doesn't consider talent as the major criteria for being talented. Organizations that are widely considered as the knowledge economy focus on how the competencies of individual will contribute to the goals of the organization rather than the focus on the excellence of their employees. The managers turned their face against the talent to be perceived as innate and inherited giftedness (Elaine Farndale, 2012). Considering talent as an inborn ability of the employees are vague to define talent in the present industry. The managers prefer the definition offered by Gagnes, 2000

who viewed talent as what an employee gains from his or her learning experience (F Gagne, 2000).

The managers attach the term ‘talent’ with the position an employee occupies in an organization. It is quite often considered as the potential to handle seniority position and tackle increased responsibilities (Bailey R, 2006). A person is considered talented based on the level of responsibility he manages successfully. Talent is considered as a combination of competencies and the uniqueness employees enjoys in doing a job. It is very often recognized as the willingness to commit themselves to challenges. In IT industry where the challenges are never ending, managers consider ‘talent’ as the ability to manage these challenges distinctly from other employees ( JyotsnaBhatnagar, 2007) . The managers of the Indian IT industry agree with considering talent as a proper mix of ability and affective component. Regarding the ability component, managers’ views talent as the ability to promote superior performance in employees’ specific domain (J.Vallernd, 2003). The managers operationalized the word ability as technical ability, interpersonal ability, leadership ability, performance ability and the ability for proper and in time decision making. The affective component covers the behavioral and personal aspects of employees. The managers believed that these dispositions are shaped by the organizational motivation and employee interests.

Based on the perception of the word ‘talent’ from the respondents, the researcher had operationalized the word talent in the organizational context as given below:

*“Talent can be defined as a definite set of tangible dispositions, uniqueness, thrive, thirst and unleashed potential of employees when identifies, monitored and nourished effectively results in infinite tangible results to the organization”*

The researcher had conducted analysis of variance to figure out whether the perception of managers about the word ‘talent’ significantly differs among different age group of managers. The Indian IT industry witnesses the presence of multigenerational workforce who has divergent views in the work environment. The table below shows the F statistics computed in analysis of variance.

| S.I | Perception about talent  | F     | Sig   |
|-----|--|-------|-------|
| 1   | Set of competencies and skills used to increase productivity.                      | 12.36 | 0.01  |
| 2   | Uniqueness and employee poses that makes him distinct from one another.            | 0.418 | 0.619 |
| 3   | Talent denotes the special position an employee occupies.                          | 8.99  | 0.00  |
| 4   | The capacity to take senior jobs and detect the future leaders.                    | 1.53  | 0.23  |
| 5   | Talent is performing consistently at their personal best.                          | 6.74  | 0.02  |
| 6   | Talent is a combination of ability and affective components.                       | 0.487 | 0.61  |
| 7   | Talent is an amalgam of high performance and high potential.                       | 9.08  | 0.05  |
| 8   | Talent is adaptability, flexibility, learning orientation and learning agility.    | 2.610 | 0.89  |
| 9   | Personal and behavioral dispositions that employees bring into actual performance. | 1.695 | 0.199 |
| 10  | Talent is innate and inherited giftedness.   | 4.55  | 0.029 |
| 11  | Talent is the capacity of delivering excellent performance.                        | 0.764 | 0.474 |

Source: computed from primary data

The ANOVA results depicted the multigenerational managers perception about the word ‘talent’ differs for the following operationalization:

- a) Talent as a set of competencies and skills used to increase productivity.
- b) Talent denotes the special position an employee occupies.
- c) Talent is performing consistently at employees personal best.
- d) Talent is an amalgam of high performance and high potential.
- e) Talent is innate and inherited giftedness.

Further the researcher proceeded with post-hoc analysis to identify which age groups differs significantly in their perception about the word ‘talent’. The researchers observed significant difference between perception of the baby boomers (managers of age above 52) and generation Y (managers less than 38 years). All the five statements stated above marked significant difference between the baby boomers and millennial manager perception about the word ‘talent’. The baby boomers widely believed that the talent is innate and in born in employees. The millennial perceived ‘talent’ as a phenomenon one develops through learning orientation. The millennial managers believe on the secondary aspect of talent philosophy, i.e., the inclusive developable aspect of talent. The baby boomers attached the word ‘talent’ with the special position an employee occupies in an organization whereas the millennial viewed talent as more

versatile. According to the millennial managers 'talent' is expertise in all the positions (including future positions). They beheld talent as dynamic and cannot be confined to specificity.

The baby boomer managers who considered talent as inherited ruled out the possibility to reflect talent as an amalgam of high performance and high potential. In contradictory, the millennial believes 'talent' as what the employees showcase in the organization to enhance the productivity. In other words the veteran managers viewed talent as 'what an employee has' but the generation Y managers consider 'talent' as 'what an employee does with what he has'.

The baby boomer managers who reverse challenges and changes attach consistency in the employee performance with 'talent'. The millennial manages who hunt for challenges and changes contemplate an employee talented who manages commendably in the inconsistencies of the organization. The millennial managers comprehend nothing as constant in the IT industry. They pronounce being consistent is not talent but fairly expetive to self-realization and self-actualization.

## Conclusion

The researchers examined how the term 'talent' is operationalized and perceived I the Indian IT industry. The study found substantial difference in the perception of talent between the multigenerational managers. The baby boomers (veteran) managers perceive talent in a passive manner whereas the millennial managers consider talent in an active way. The innate characteristics, talent and success of the employees must be treated distinctly for creating the best talent pool. The researchers had studied talent in the context of Indian IT industry and inferred talent as an intangible phenomenon when applied tactically yields tangible results to the organizations.

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