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IMPACT OF GENDER ON PERCEIVED WORK CLIMATE IN BUSINESS INFORMATION SYSTEMS

Georg Disterer

University of Applied Sciences,
Hannover, Germany

georg.disterer@hs-hannover.de

ABSTRACT

Aim/Purpose	The low proportion of women currently working in the field of business information systems presents an opportunity to attract more women to this field. For example, in Germany, the proportion of women studying business information systems is currently 21%, compared to 48% in business administration (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2020). Which characteristics make the professional field of business information systems appear attractive to women and men – and which characteristics do not?
Background	Studies on careers in business information systems are important to mitigate the long-lasting shortage of IT specialists, yet research is limited in this area.
Methodology	To capture empirical data, graduates of the Business Information Systems program at the University of Applied Sciences in Hannover were surveyed.
Contribution	The results show that women and men perceive the work climate and working conditions very differently and are also satisfied to a different extent. Characteristics of the work climate place significantly more restrictions on satisfaction for women than for men. Women primarily criticize characteristics that can be described as involving “a lack of fairness”.
Findings	The differences in perceived work climate may negatively impact the proportion of women in business information systems. A number of measures have already been established to support women in coping better with the prevailing climate. However, some measures bear the risk that women are thus accused of assimilating to the prevailing climate. This can seem presumptuous since the dominant male culture is taken for granted and “set”. Measures for team-building and personnel development appear to be more suitable if these address the actual values and norms of teamwork, question them where necessary, and change them for everyone.

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Impact of Gender on Perceived Work Climate

Recommendations for Practitioners	Women's career goals are clearly different from men's goals, and women do not achieve goals with high priority very well. Work climate is perceived more critically by women than by men: less fair, less supportive. Advantages of diversity and plurality are put at risk if women should put aside their different "other" perceptions of cooperation and negotiation in order to act according to the rules of the male-dominated system.
Impact on Society	Studies on careers in business information systems are important to mitigate the longer-lasting shortage of IT specialists. The low proportion of women currently working in IT presents an opportunity to attract more women to business information systems.
Keywords	job satisfaction, career goals, work climate, gender, fairness

AUTHOR



Georg Disterer is Professor of Information Management at the undergraduate and graduate levels at the University of Applied Sciences Hannover (Germany). He holds degrees in Mathematics and Business Administration and is a certified public expert in information systems. Before joining the university, he worked as a consultant with international consulting firms and as an administrative director for a professional service firm.