Gender Diversity and Safety Culture on the Track

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INTRO

• The Federal Railroad Administration identified gender diversity as one of the rail industry’s top workforce challenges
• The present study provides a more detailed view of gender diversity in rail transportation, and how factors such as gender and management status interact to affect perceptions of safety culture

METHOD

• Participants: Utilized archival survey data from 1,239 individuals (N_{craft~employees} = 814, N_{managers} = 425) from 23 short line and regional railroads across the U.S. who participated in the Short Line Safety Institute’s Safety Culture Survey between 2016 and 2018
• Measures:
  • Demographics (e.g., gender (male, female), management status (manager, craft employee), etc.)
  • Perceptions of the railroad’s safety culture (78-item survey; all items scored using a 5pt agreement scale)
• Analyses:
  • A series of one-way ANOVAs and chi-square tests explored relations between genders on various demographic variables
  • A univariate analysis tested the interaction between gender and management status on safety culture perceptions

FINDINGS

- Managers had more positive perceptions than craft employees
- Female craft employees had more positive perceptions than male craft employees

Women tended to be older than men, have more education, and were more likely to be employed at larger organizations. Despite being employed in the railroad industry for fewer years than men, women in our sample were also more likely to be managers.

IMPLICATIONS

• Highlights the underrepresentation of women in the industry
• Senior leadership should be cognizant of potential gender differences in safety culture perceptions
• Utilize management training programs to develop and prepare safety leaders for a diverse workforce
• Senior leadership should ensure female representation across different job types
• Show the railroad as a career destination for women
• Help women visualize their advancement within the industry

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