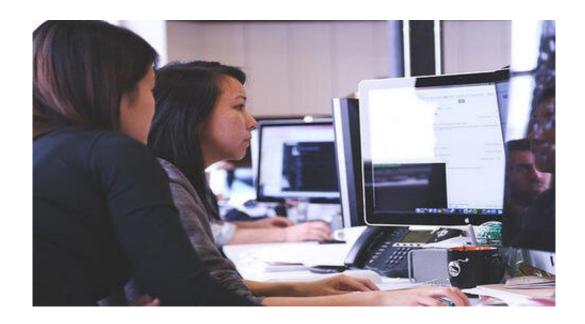# Training linked to stronger promotion chances for women in IT over work performance

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Credit: Institute for Operations Research and the Management Sciences

Job performance has long been understood to be the primary equalizing factor affecting promotions for men and women in the workplace, but research shows, women don't gain as much from the same performance improvements as men do. New research in the INFORMS journal *Information Systems Research* shows training plays an important part in promotions for women in the field of information technology.

"Women are more likely to be credited less for their performance improvements because of inherent biases against women in tech jobs, which may lead to management attributing performance improvements to luck or other factors rather than ability," said Nishtha Langer, one of the authors from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.

Women make up 57% of the U.S. labor market and 23% of computer and information technology careers. The study, "Onwards and Upwards? An Empirical Investigation of Gender and Promotions in IT Services," conducted by Langer, Ram Gopal of the Southern University of Science and Technology and Ravi Bapna of the University of Minnesota, found that women are more likely to be promoted than men, but not merely based off of performance improvements or work experience gains. Instead, oftentimes the promotion is based off training opportunities they have been involved in.

The researchers looked at data from a leading IT firm in India consisting of records of more than 7,000 employees from 2002-2007. It showed women benefit disproportionately more from training in increasing their chances of promotion but may be penalized for better performance in that their promotion likelihood is lower compared to men

"Women may see training as a credible signaling mechanism to let senior management know they are investing in themselves and are able to take on more senior roles," said Langer, a professor with the Lally School of Management at Rensselaer. "We believe training allows them to circumvent any social and structural biases that may have otherwise prevented their chances of promotions."

The researchers explain these findings by suggesting women may be more opportunistic when it comes to enrolling for courses because it can ensure faster promotions, or they may imbibe knowledge more effectively and are more adept at translating knowledge gains into

promotability.

More information: Nishtha Langer et al. Onward and Upward? An Empirical Investigation of Gender and Promotions in Information Technology Services, *Information Systems Research* (2020).

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