

Overview of Career Development and Information Technology Sector Women in the Workforce

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ABSTRACT:

In today's world, more women than ever enter the labor force but the majority of top management positions in almost all countries are primarily held by men. Female managers/ executives generally tend to concentrate in lower management positions and have less power than men. At the same time women are still concentrating in conventionally "female" functional areas of companies such as; HR, corporate communications, community and governmental relations, marketing and finance. Although women as a whole may place less emphasis on career success than men, there are an ample number of women who strive for top management positions and are sometimes not able to attain them.

KEY WORDS: Management position, governmental relation

INTRODUCTION:

The Indian Information Technology industry accounts for 5.19% of the country's GDP and export earnings, as of 2009, however, only 2.5 million people are employed in this sector either directly or indirectly. In 2010-11, annual revenues from IT-BPO sector is estimated to have grown over \$54.33 billion compared to China with \$35.76 billion and Philippines with \$8.85 billion. The revenues are expected to touch US\$225 billion by 2020. The most prominent IT hubs in India are located at Bangalore and Hyderabad. The other emerging destinations are Chennai, Coimbatore, Kolkata, Kochi, Pune, Mumbai and Ahmadabad. Technically proficient immigrants from India have sought jobs in the western world as India's education system produces more engineers than its industries can absorb. India's growing stature in the Information Age has enabled it to form close ties with both the United States of America and the European Union. However, the recent global financial crises have deeply impacted the Indian IT companies. As a result, hiring has dropped sharply, and employees are now looking at different sectors like financial service, telecommunications, and manufacturing industries, which have been growing phenomenally over the last few years.

In today's world, more women than ever enter the labor force but the majority of top management positions in almost all countries are primarily held by men. Female managers/ executives generally tend to concentrate in lower management positions and have less power than men. At the same time women are still concentrating in conventionally "female" functional areas of companies such as; HR, corporate communications, community and governmental relations, marketing and finance (Catalyst, 1991; U.S. Department of Labor, 1991). Although women as a whole may place less emphasis on career success than men, there are an ample number of women who strive for top management positions and are sometimes not able to attain them. Women play an increasing and significant role in today's economy, and their salaries and spending capacity is critical to the country's economic well-being. From a consumer perception, women hold a lot of influence. In the "sheeconomy," women are frequently referred to as the chief purchaser of the household. More than 85 percent of household spending decisions are made by them. In recent times women no longer shy away from the typical so called male mainstay, be it education or career. The entrepreneurial

expertise of a woman is far more superior to those of a man, for she does not give up easily. It is gratifying to note that the present day women has broken all these medieval shackles and endeavored to stand shoulder to shoulder with man, and all this by not compromising her traditional role. Something remarkable and to be taken note of by every man The proportion of women in the workforce has grown from just over a third of all workers in 1970 to almost half of the total workforce in 2015.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2003), the “core” IT occupations include: computer scientists, computer engineers, systems analysts and computer programmers, Workers in IT occupations design, manufacture, operate, repair, and maintain the IT infrastructure. The job options in the information technology field can be numerous and can lead to different levels of career growth. Female participation in the IT occupations has varied up to a high of approximately 35% in the early 1990s. From 1990 to 2003, the number of people in IT occupations has more than doubled and the female participation has dropped to approximately 27% (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2003). This decline in female participation has caused concern, not only because of the low participation of women in IT occupations, but because there is a significant labor shortage in those occupations and the drop in participation of women further exacerbates the labor shortage (Freeman & Aspray, 1999; Information Technology Forum, 1999; Tyson, 2001).

According to one of the renowned newspaper, dated 15th Dec.2005, it is marked that women constitutes of 6 percent of the total workforce in the corporate houses and this percentage decreases in the larger organizations, while in medium organizations it stands to 18 percent, a study by Confederation of India Industry(CII) has revealed.

The shortage of women in IT fields has made it more difficult for them to obtain management positions in industry (Leever, Dunigan, & Turner, 2002; Frenkel, 1999). Women hold only 8.1% of executive positions (VP and higher) at major technology companies (McGee, 2000). One of the major reasons for the scarcity of women executives is that there are fewer women in the technology pipeline (Catalyst, 2000). There has emerged a concern about the drop in the number of young women entering Computer Science degree programs and a drop in the participation of women in IT occupations (Camp,1997). Research on the career development of women managers in general has referred to the existence of a “glass ceiling” or invisible barrier that restricts the advancement of women to top executive positions (Greenhaus & Callanan, 1994; Igarria & Wormley, 1992; Morrison, 1992; Wentling, 1997). According to the Federal Government Glass Ceiling Commission (1995), whose mission is to identify barriers to the employment and advancement of women and minorities and to encourage companies to build a diverse workforce, less than 5% of women are in senior-level management positions. The literature indicates that such a barrier also exists in the IT field (Camp, 1997; Johnson, 1990; Laberis, 1992). Several of these authors have suggested that proportional presence of women in higher ranks where decision-making takes place will go a long way toward making the workplace conducive to women’s needs (Camp, 1997; Bretts, 1993; Etzkowitz et al., 1994; Frenkle, 1999; Myers, 1990; Marengi, 1992; Mulqueen, 1996; Pearl et al., 1990).

In one of very few academic studies on gender differences in IT careers, Truman and Baroudi (1994) concluded that this field may not be immune to the problems of gender discrimination. They analyzed the data gathered by the Society of Information Management (SIM) and found that women received lower salaries than men even when job level, age, education and work experience were controlled. They also observed that there were a disproportionately high number of men in the managerial ranks. Investigating this issue further, Igarria and Baroudi (1995) investigated the impact of gender on job performance evaluations, job performance attributions and career advancement prospects. Although they did not find any significant differences in job performance ratings, they reported that women are perceived to have less favorable chances for promotion than men.

INDIAN IT IN THE MILLENNIUM:

A joint EU-Indian group of scholars was formed on 23 November 2001, to promote further research and development. On 25 June 2002, India and the European Union agreed to bilateral cooperation in the field of science and technology. The economic effect of the technologically inclined sector in India accounted for 40% of the country's GDP and 30% of its export earnings as of 2006, but employed only 25% of its workforce. Today, Bangalore known as the Silicon Valley of India, alone contributes 33% of Indian IT Exports. According to the data from Indian IT association Nasscom, India's technology and business services revenues accounted for

6.1% of GDP in fiscal 2010, up from 1.2% in 1998. The Indian addressable market for IT products and services is projected to increase from US\$19.7bn in 2010 to US\$41.2bn by 2015.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY JOB OPPORTUNITIES:

The World has entered the new millennium, which is predicted to be an Information Technology Age. Today, Computers have not only assumed strategic importance in the corporate world, they are being effectively used in almost every field ranging from space exploration to food processing and banking to communication etc. In this era of Information Technology, which has revolutionized the world over, INDIA has met to the world standards and is being regarded all over the World for its skilled IT Professionals. Even the government has recognized the promising future of this industry and has formed a new IT Ministry which, will give the much needed boost to this industry. Presence of Multinationals like IBM, HP has made possible, the transfer of hardware technology into the country. Internet has further bridged the time gap, ensuring the arrival of the latest in technology simultaneously in INDIA as in the West without any delay.

The domestic hardware industry has witnessed quantum growth in the turnover and profits, which is largely attributable to our liberalized economy. On the software front various software giants like IBM, Motorola, Oracle, Samsung, HP, Digital, Unisys, AT&T, ICL, Fujitsu etc. have opened software development centers in the country. The number of professionals in this industry is believed to have crossed the 2 lakh mark and still there exists a huge gap between the demand and supply of professionals which is an encouraging sign. The US alone requires around 3 lakh professionals. INDIA is also exporting software to around 100 countries many of which are its exclusive buyers. It is a fact that around 65% of the world's software is produced in INDIA. Many Indian IT companies like Infosys, Wipro, NIIT, Zenith computers, Satyam Computers, STG, Pentafore Software, Mastek etc. are expanding themselves in a big way, making their presence felt globally.

The phenomenal growth which this industry is witnessing has led to it being, recognized as one of the highly paying industry. As this sector is young, the average age of its professionals is lower than that in any other industry. The availability of skilled, qualified professionals is unable to meet the requirements, leaving a large gap to be filled by those with ambition, aptitude and willingness to work hard.

CAREER PROSPECTS:

India is no longer considered as a country of Castes, Curry and Cows with an ossified society. According to India's National Knowledge Commission, India is well positioned to take advantage of the knowledge revolution which can be seen as a dramatic revolution in the field of Information and Technology. This has witnessed a wide range of macroeconomics implications which can be seen in the development of multi-million dollar IT sector and creating of a huge amount of job potential for a large assembly of English speaking scientific professionals. Information Technology encompasses a wide range of activities like Office Automation, Telecommunication and Computing, therefore providing a larger area of job avenues for those who have acquired the right qualifications for it. At the beginning of this millennium NASSCOM, National Association of Software and Services Companies made an estimate that India would

require 10,00,000 trained software professionals in a few years. The present availability, of such skilled people is only 5% of the required amount. So, we can conclude that this sector is going to provide employment to a large number of such professionals.

CORPORATE WORLD AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SECTOR WOMEN IN THE WORKFORCE:

Women have worked as long as men, as evidenced by cave drawings that show women toiling in fields and over fires. As well, the Old Testament describes stories of women collecting water at wells and tending flocks. In the modern era, the phenomenon of women in the workplace is closely tied to economic and social trends. When, for example, women were needed to support men in times of war, institutional childcare to support working mothers was created. Evidence of this type of institution exists from the Civil War, 1860, through World War II, 1945. These institutions survived, intermittently during that time for the sole purpose of caring for the children of widows who were forced to work.

The first of these federally-funded institutions was established in 1863, during the Civil War, in Philadelphia by Hanna Biddle. She modeled the program after the French institutionalized childcare programs which began in 1844 called "creches", which looked after the children of the poor to keep them off the streets of Paris. The crèche was funded through charities, the run by wealthy Social Catholics. The crèche looked after pre-school children and infants, freeing up older siblings for school. The crèche offered better care for the children than they received at home because there was formal training for employees and physicians who took care of the children, and education to the mothers was available.

MORDERN WOMEN VALUE TRADITIONAL IDEALS:

Women today are independent, confident and have carved a niche for themselves in various spheres of their personal and professional lives. While, we all have been under the assumption that these 'up on their feet' women prefer nuclear families and plan to go the concise way, a survey conducted by Shaadi.com, a matchmaking website, reveals a trend completely at the other spectrum of the family continuum. According to their annual survey of its members' matrimonial attitudes, the number of women preferring to live in a joint family post marriage is way more than those who prefer a nuclear family arrangement. The survey, conducted on a sample of 150,000 across India, Australia, UK, US and Canada, revealed that almost 54% of women favored an extended family, alongside parents and siblings, while only 21% of women showed their preference for nuclear family. One can detect a growth of 14% in women opting for marriage in joint families since the last survey conducted in 2004, wherein only 40% women wanted to live in a joint family milieu. The survey points out that a support system is needed in today's industrialized and globalized world. Dr. Rohan Kusumgar, consultant psychiatrist, is of the opinion that, there are 3 main reasons as to why women are increasingly opting for joint families post marriage.

VISIONARY OF TODAY'S COMPETITIVE MARKET:

Success often comes to those who have the aptitude to see way down the road. Success is a matter of attitude. It is a matter of futuristic thinking and planning and is about doing things carefully. Relying on the same, Indian women are becoming increasingly visible and successful in the professional and public sphere. The Indian women have proved their footage in the male dominated business arena. For a nation where the only identity of a woman some time back used to be that of a homemaker, hogging the corporate limelight has been a journey to empowerment and strength.

Today innumerable women are filling colors of success in their life and moving a step closer to their dreams of being self dependent. Many of them are entering the corporate field as financial advisors, investment bankers, chartered accountants etc. and doing their job with unmatched excellence and poise. From the confines of four walls to outer space, the Women of today are busy writing the golden tale of emancipation. Call it her urge to prove herself equal to man or even better or the plain conviction that she

has left marks on the tallest of peaks and the deepest of oceans. Any discussion on the status of women in India tends to conjure up pictures of Illiteracy, exploitation, discrimination and low life expectancy. Although this is still true for many Indian women, another reality is driving the new India and relates to a booming nation, powered by female business leaders. Though they are not the majority Indian women professionals are definitely on the rise and are paving the way for future generations.

Despite, these numerous barriers and tangible obstacles women are, today, entering the field of business in increasing numbers. Although, Women are increasingly making their mark in the typically male dominated workplace, they comprise a very meager portion of the entrepreneurs in India. The woman in India still need to be courageous, risk taking, challenge seeking and above all they are required to be independent. They need to break themselves free of the confines of the four walls of a home, which is the traditionally recognized role of women in our country, and to come out of the cocoon of a subservient living provided by male family members.

CAREER ORIENTED WOMEN IN MODERN INDIAN SOCIETY – PRIVILEGES AND PROBLEMS:

Indian women live in a noninterventionist society. The phenomenon of democracy and open education has bridged the abyss of inequality between the sexes to a great extent. Modern education has allowed women to come out of the confines of their home and, take active part in society and to work shoulder-to-shoulder with men in every field. It is not to say that she has forgotten the valued customs but, she has simply realigned herself. Nature has placed more compulsions on woman by virtue of her being a mother. Financial independence is the key to self-reliance and this is what drives women towards it. Modern living has become costly and has become one of the reasons for her accepting a job. It is especially true for the lower and middle class where, women seek employment to sustain their family incomes. The women of the higher class too, ardently seek jobs not because it easily gets them higher position, but they do it chiefly to improve their social prestige and to uphold lavish lifestyles. Women also look for employment to become more acceptable from a marriage viewpoint. It has been seen that the groom's family favour employed girls in comparison to sitting girls. Earning women would be helpful in running the family seems the obvious conclusion. But it is however not the end case.

The pressure to adjust personal and professional lives sometimes becomes agonizing with the result that one of them suffers. The working women may be subjugated at their work places, face problems due to overtime or work at night hours where security becomes an issue. In such case, profession doesn't become a cathartic gate but a bondage; this could then, never be the purpose of her employment because, it doesn't make her contingent. Nothing can take away the privilege of women to take up jobs of their choice. Parents are now giving equal attention to the education of girls and boys.

Daughters have been found to be dashing and achieving in their academic fields. The Indian women today stand second to none. The society should learn to respect her. At home the husband should learn to share the burden of running the household. The wife should be treated like a co-partner..

The men have to give up their authoritarian role, as whatever he has, is also contributed by his wife's earnings. This feeling, if it gains ground would make life a more pleasurable experience. After all, modernism in its essence is to exercise one's own choices freely in the good of all. Employment in the context of women can bring good results only when they exercise it prudently. The liberty of modern social setup should not lead to unopposed behavior. The power of social choices given to her, call for virtuous use. The balance between personal fulfillment and social responsibility must be achieved pleasantly.

HEALTHY LIVING FOR WORKING MOTHERS:

Women apart from juggling their domestic chores and office work should find time for their Power Yoga classes at least thrice a week. It is a part of the ever- growing brigade of health-conscious working

mothers who are considering health as the biggest asset in their life and are leaving no stone unturned to always be in the pink of health. Rising cases of osteoporosis and different kinds of cancer in women, has led women to take care of themselves, especially the working women. As a working woman and a mother, they need to be on their toes all the time and it is very important that they eat well. They even consult a dietician to keep a track of their food habits and ensure that their food intake contains enough nutrients. Also there are many women who visit dieticians, nutritionists and health experts to lead a healthy and active lifestyle. Apart from a daily intake of fresh fruits and vegetables, especially green leafy ones, women should also have plenty of fluids in the form of juices. Women should avoid smoking and drinking.

Working late-nights and endless meetings, take a toll on their body. Besides, which they have to take care of their children. In a few families children are well- taken care of by their in-laws and husband. To stay healthy, they make it a point to never miss their morning jog/walk and their yoga sessions, apart from getting 7-hours of sleep. Working mothers have complaints of not being able to balance domestic and work life. They have to eat well and exercise. When the body is fit, the mind is relaxed. Working mothers need to spend 15-20 minutes every day on them to just relax and do nothing. Also, they need to unwind with their spouse and children more often than not and avoid getting bogged down by office work. Women right from packing off their children to school in the morning, to preparing themselves to go to office, are constantly on their feet, putting themselves under tremendous stress.

BENEFITS OF COMBINING WORK AND FAMILY:

Work-life balance is an issue of paramount importance to individuals, organizations, families, government and society. Techno-economic changes have increased the pressures on organizations and employees alike. It highlights the inherent incompatibility between the role requirements of work and non-work life (e.g. family). The underlying reasons are that work and family constitute two different domains and have different set of demands and investments in terms of time, energy and behavior. Moreover, the increasing number of women in the workforce, nuclear families and dual earning couples has made work-life balance a crucial concern for employees as well as organizations across industries and occupations. The need for a balance between work and personal life has become an integral element of expectation by employers from employees.

Career success today is defined not only in terms of promotions and lucrative assignments but also by the ability to balance work and non-work life. In this regard helping employees to have a healthy work-life balance has become a challenge for employers and human resource professionals. The level of work-life balance significantly influences various individuals, families and organizations with relevance to various outcomes such as employee health, employee commitment, job satisfaction and family satisfaction.

Time and energy being limited when invested in one domain is likely to reduce the time and energy available for other domains. Hence, participation in multiple roles leads to negative consequences such as stress and poor health. Stress, a negative emotion and behavior arising from one domain (e.g. work) often transfers to the other domains (e.g. family) affecting the performance in the target domain resulting in work-life imbalance or work-family conflict. The conflict and stress inherent in managing work and family responsibilities found to be counterbalanced by the socio-psychological benefits that stem from participating in work and family roles.

INDIAN WOMEN IN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY:

Akila Krishnakumar is the chief operating officer and the country head of India for SunGard Technology Services. She plays a central role in managing SunGard's global product delivery model, working with more than 60 SunGard business units across the globe. Ms. Krishnakumar began her career with Wipro in customer support and application development before moving on to manage the regional professional services for ICL-Fujitsu with focus on ERP and banking solutions.

She joined SunGard in 2004 following the acquisition of an Indian product development center, a business she helped to start in 1993. During this period, Ms. Krishnakumar has built and led product development teams in banking, higher education and the public sector.

Ms. Krishnakumar has extensive experience managing global product development, where a key success factor is balancing the physical constraints of globally dispersed teams with the need to bring development teams as close to the customer and the market as possible to continually improve customer satisfaction. Ms. Krishnakumar frequently speaks at industry forums about the IT services industry and emerging market needs. She is widely recognized as one of the top women technology leaders in India. Akila is much known and appreciated for her inclusive and uniform gender based policies and strongly believes in the capability of women in the sphere of technology..

A dynamic entrepreneur, and successful IT professional. Revathy Kasturi is the founder and the CEO at the Laqsh Job Skills Academy. She was awarded the Woman of the Year by Business Today for the year 2001. She has been on the board of NASSCOM as an Executive Council Member for 6 years. She is also a charter member of TIE Bangalore and is actively working on Fostering Entrepreneurship Amongst Women through TIE for Women.

CAREER AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT:

In addition to helping people acquire job-related knowledge, skills, and abilities, employers have a stake in helping employees develop from both career and personal perspectives.

CAREER:

While most people think the term career means “advancement” in an organization, a broader view of career defines it as an “individually perceived sequence of attitudes and behaviors associated with work-related activities and experiences over the span of a person’s life.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT:

A career development system is a formal, organized, planned effort to achieve a balance between individual career needs and organizational workforce requirements. For example, the organization has certain needs for staffing and employees have needs to effectively utilize their personal skills.

Career development practices are designed to enhance the career satisfaction of employees and to improve organizational effectiveness. It may be difficult, however, to completely integrate individual and organizational career efforts because the rate at which an individual grows and develops may not be parallel to an organization’s needs. For example, many of the baby boomers in the workforce are interested in advancing their present positions, yet are finding those positions to be scarcer given the thinning out of management jobs in organizations due to downsizings. With all of the recent changes in organizations (e.g., downsizings, mergers, divestitures), it has become even more important to try to integrate the needs of the employers with those of the employees.

Career development in an organization requires an examination of two processes: career planning - how individuals plan and implement their own career goals and career management - how organizations design and implement their career development programs.

IMPORTANCE OF UNDERSTANDING CAREER DEVELOPMENT:

Today’s competitive business environment has forced organizations to restructure and downsize, resulting in fewer hierarchical levels and traditional promotional opportunities for employees. At the same time, there is increased pressure to improve productivity at the risk of falling prey to larger corporations. The creation of new technologies requires individuals to update their skills or else they become outdated. A number of organizational change initiatives could have unintended and undesired consequences for individuals. These include the following:

Downsizing – jobs are cut from the organization.

Delayering - jobs are reclassified more broadly, yet old reporting lines exist to maintain managerial control.

Decentralizing - responsibilities are reassigned from the corporate centralized function to functions in each location or at lower levels.

Reorganizations - company may be refocusing around core competencies.

IT innovations - how the work is done is altered due to advances in information technology.

Competency measurement - skill sets required of employees are redefined or measured in different ways.

Performance –related pay - pay is linked to performance and used as a motivator.

CONCLUSION:

The culture and environment in IT sector is fast changing, but still gender discrimination prevails. In today's modern world, it is known that a glass ceiling exists for women in management and it is being studied and remedied from varying perspectives. A few women have moved beyond the glass ceiling into the executive suite, yet their number is not proportionate to their representation at middle management levels and is far below that of their similarly qualified male counterparts. In order to continue to ease the process of women entering the workforce, women must learn from mistakes of other women, and organizations and governments must treat them as equal to men and give them the respect and the responsibility to grow in leadership positions and in entrepreneurial endeavors. Now it is time to identify and understand women's needs and concerns, to address the problems they are facing, and to initiate an honest and straightforward analysis of how these problems can be resolved..

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