

Women, Work and Empowerment: A Case Study of the IT Sector

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Abstract

IT industry is one of the largest employers of women in the country. It is intriguing observation that though the sex ratio is mostly balanced at the entry levels, it continues to recede towards higher levels as most women get concentrated at lower levels in the IT industry. Only a handful of women are able to move to the middle and higher ranks in the industry. In this research paper, an attempt has been made to find the challenges encountered by women IT professionals in climbing up the career ladder. This paper explores the bottlenecks and hurdles that women IT professionals encounter in their lives that inhibits their career progress. A qualitative approach is adopted to investigate the factors that create a 'glass ceiling' for women in the IT industry.

KEYWORDS: IT Industry, Women IT Professionals, Glass Ceiling, Feminization, Empowerment.

Introduction

Paid employment has been identified as one of the most effective channels for ensuring empowerment of women. Despite the widespread assumption that paid employment leads to empowerment of women, there has been very little empirical research to establish this relationship. Studies¹ have revealed that women who work have a greater likelihood of empowerment than those women who do not work, but the strength of this relationship is dependent on the context. The conditions under which employment takes place are significant in determining whether paid employment leads to empowerment. Research by Assad et al (2011)² has highlighted that the relationship between employment and empowerment is not a linear one. The barriers that stand in the way of women's control over their lives are too complex to be overcome by paid work alone. Many a times, structural factors like poverty push women into low skill, poorly paid work options that afford no security and hence no scope for empowerment. Thus, it needs to be examined when and how paid employment would lead to empowerment of women and when it would not.

In sociological research, resource dependency³ theory states that women's socio-economic resources determine her intra-house negotiating power. Fewer economic opportunities and multiple socio-economic constraints limit women's intra-household negotiating power, hence their ability to mitigate or defend themselves from domestic violence⁴. Kabeer (2011)⁵ introduced a distinction between objective and subjective independence, objective independence largely coinciding with economic

¹Upadhya, Carol and Vasavi A.R, Work, culture and Sociality in the Indian IT Industry: A Sociological study, Report submitted to Indo-Dutch Programme for Alternatives in Development, NIAS, Bangalore, 2006.

²Assad, R., H. Sholkamy and C. Krafft (2011) Is Work Empowering for Women? Evidence from Egypt. Mimeo .Social Research Centre, Cairo.

³Kabeer, N., S. Mahmud and S. Tasneem (2011). Does Paid Work Provide a Pathway to Women's Empowerment? Empirical Findings from Bangladesh. IDS Working Paper No. 375. Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex.

⁴Kandiyoti, D., (1988). Bargaining with Patriarchy, Gender and Society, 2(3)

⁵Kabeer, N. (2011). Contextualizing the Economic Pathways of Women's Empowerment. Findings From a Multi-Country Research Programme. Pathways Policy Paper. Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, Brighton.

independence. The bargaining position that women obtain on account of economic independence translates in to empowerment. However, the caveat is that ‘choice to work’ or ‘compelled to work’ are contexts that demand reflection before inferring that work delivers economic independence and empowerment⁶. Resorting to paid employment on account of structural factors such as poverty and family needs or being forced to undertake employment by a dominating spouse or family members will not result in economic independence as there is no scope to exercise control on the earning and income. Thus, work will yield empowerment only when work is taken as a choice to earn an income and when she is able to exercise her control on her earnings. This will engender a sense of economic security as women will have access to resources and a bargaining position.

My research is set in the background of Information Technology industry in Bangalore. Acclaimed as the poster child of arrival of New Economy, IT industry is considered to be non-discriminating and an equal opportunity employer for men and women, minorities and handicapped all alike. It is characterised with several distinguishing features such as high degree of integration into the global economy; employee friendly human resource policies and women-friendly work environment posing as an attractive option for female graduate engineers. The emergence of Information Technology industry in mid-1990s has unveiled a potential employment opportunity for women with befitting job environment and offering, in principle, least gender discrimination.⁷ Its employment potentiality provides inspiration to female students to take up technical and professional courses with an eye on the job market. This is evidenced in the participation of women in the IT industry which has been rapidly growing as compared to other sectors of the economy. The increased business requirement, diversity of skills and competencies has posited IT sector as a major job creator with handsome pay packages.

With the onset of globalization, values of Gender Inclusivity, Diversity and Equality became the buzzwords determining work culture in the corporate world coupled with an increased awareness that women are talented and competent in performing the jobs professionally. IT industry best represents the ethos of globalization wherein the values of equality, inclusivity and diversity have actually become a business imperative and been integrated in the HR policies. However, this story is not all fair as it seems. According to NASSCOM-Mencher(2009) report⁸, there are large differences among companies while adopting the inclusivity measures. Most research reveal that, notwithstanding the gender neutral policies of the IT sector, an optimal level of gender inclusivity is yet to be achieved, especially at the higher levels. Gender inequalities and discontentment are very much present among the women employees in this sector along with the gender-based social constraints. Despite an increasing number of women graduates entering into the workforce, it is noticed that the Information Technology is still a male-dominated industry, a product of the masculine culture developed over the years that tends to exclude and marginalize women. Women employees are considered important and most suitable to fill the shortage of talent, for cost advantage, for brand building and for better understanding of customer requirements. This kind of segregation and classification has led to a ‘Feminization’ of certain category of jobs and imposition of ‘Glass ceiling’⁹ for women professionals. The intersectionality of factors such as; working conditions and

⁶ibid Assad et al .p 16

⁷Nayyar, Deepak, Globalisation: What Does It Mean for Higher Education?, Economic Political Weekly, 42(50), 2007.

⁸ NASSCOM-Mencher, Gender Inclusivity in India: Building Empowered organisation. New Delhi: NASSCOM, 2009.

⁹ Arfken, D. E., S. L. Bellar, M. M. Helms, The Ultimate Glass Ceiling Revisited: The Presence of Women on Corporate Boards”, Journal of Business Ethics, 50 (2), 2004, 177-86.

work timings, family and societal obligations also present many hindrances to women professionals when compared to men.

This indicates that it is not naturally obvious that economic independence will translate into empowerment for women. It is acknowledged that the growing role of IT in India's economy and the focus fold with which the industry is driving around is in part owing to the fact that they are accommodating more women in the workforce. The Indian IT industry has set benchmarks and has been the initiator of pioneering work culture for women employees. More than any other industry in India; it has also launched several initiatives which are tailored to women in their workplaces.¹⁰ Yet, the challenges of gender pay gap, glass ceiling continue to persist here. With these characteristics, IT industry is a befitting field to study the relationship between work and empowerment. Understanding women's participation in IT industries is important for understanding how women are participating, than just understanding how many are participating.

In this background, this study aims to explore the lives of women IT professionals and investigate whether their work empowers them to act in their own agency. The study investigates whether women IT professionals are able to break the glass ceiling that they invariably confront at the workplace. This question is well placed to test the effectiveness of the HR policies of inclusion and gender parity in this sector. The study further explores where do women locate themselves in the opportunity structure of IT industry and probes into why very few women are able to move up the ladder and reach top management positions despite the 'equal' space that IT sector represents in all aspects.

Literature Review

Shanker's study (2008)¹¹ states that IT industry is the destination of the privileged-young, educated, urban and upper caste women with middle class family background which constitutes the majority of the workforce. The study of Carol Upadhyia (2006)¹² has drawn inference that flexibilised labour market in this high tech sector improves women employees' financial autonomy, imparts greater mobility and gives them a larger social acceptance in a male dominated society. She further observes that women professionals are able to enhance their social status in terms of having 'economic capital (high income, foreign travels), social capital (role model and greater prospects of marriage) and symbolic capital (prestige attached to profession)' by working in the IT sector.

Kelkar et al (2002)¹³ in their research stated that direct opportunity for career advancement offered by IT sector enhances the agency of women. Very often on their jobs, they are required to take instant decisions and make strategic choices that help in boosting their agency. Women are able to augment their family income which enables them to enjoy a better bargaining power within the households. This can be evidenced in the flexibilized division of labour and the decision making power that women exercise within the household. Kelkar et al.¹⁴ have observed that women working in this sector become socially mobile to live in other cities away from their male

¹⁰ ibid 8

¹¹Shanker, Deepika, Gender Relations in IT Companies: An Indian Experience, Gender, Technology and Development, 12 (2), 2008,

¹²Upadhyia, Carol, Gender in the Information Society: Emerging Issues" in Gurumurthy Anita, P. J. Singh, A. Mundkur and M. Swamy (eds.), Gender issues in the Indian Software Outsourcing Industry, 2006, (24).

¹³Ibid

¹⁴Kelkar, G., G. Shrestha, and N. Veena, IT Industry and Women's Agency: Explorations in Bangalore and Delhi, India, Gender, Technology and Development, 6(1), 2002

relatives and families for availing job opportunity. They no longer constrain themselves to opt for jobs which are near to their home town alone.

The studies¹⁵ in the same line further suggest that this achievement is however selective. It has not been possible for the women professionals in the IT sector to challenge the structural inequalities and gender relations respectively at both work place and at home. They are in a constant internal struggle to challenge the embedded patriarchal relations and existing structural inequalities which restrict them. It, therefore, raises the question as to what kind of gender relations, women IT professionals face at the work-place, where gender neutral equal opportunity policy is bound to be followed as the protocol of Human Resource Policy.

With the acknowledgement that IT industry is a large scale employer of women professionals, studies¹⁶ have also underlined the fact that women workforce are majorly concentrated at the lower level of job ladder. A very few women work as Software developers, Architectures, Tech leads, Consultants or Project managers whereas a bulk of them work at the lower level as testers, programmers or quality assurances and such other low-end jobs. But at the senior level, women representation is only around 5 per cent. The report by NASSCOM –Mencher¹⁷ echoed the same findings to the effect that women professionals were mostly concentrated at the entry and intermediate levels rather than climbing to the middle and upper ranks. Such clustering of certain services, activities and consequential segregation has led to ‘feminisation’ in the IT sector.

This trend calls for an exploration into reasons of what inhibits the upward flight of women professionals. The questions of glass-ceiling, gender pay gap and discrepancy prominently surface here. NASSCOM surveys have underlined the existence of feminisation and glass-ceiling in the IT industry; since the women workforce gets concentrated mostly at the lower level of job hierarchy. Not only there is clustering of women professionals at the lower levels, they are also paid less and have fewer channels of growth and lesser chances of going onsite. “Culturally, there is prevalence of gender-biased stereotypes adopted by the management for its ‘ideological construction’ of women’s skills as ‘soft skills’. It is assumed that women are good at routine, standard and repetitive works. This notion shapes the recruitment and promotion practices”¹⁸. The combination of three factors: stereotyping female professionals, personal sense of mid-career guilt and, glass ceiling that women confront acts as a sieve limiting the opportunities for their career growth and promotion (NASSCOM-Mencher report 2009).

Research Methodology

The study is based in Bangalore which has a population of approximately 12 million. Bangalore is one of the prime cities in India, the pace of its industrial and commercial growth being unparalleled across the country. For its success in attracting a large volume of software and IT businesses, Bangalore has earned the sobriquet of ‘Silicon Valley’ of India. Bangalore has emerged as a major hub for the IT industry and it alone contributes nearly 33 percent of the total Indian IT exports. The United Nations Human Development Report (UNDP, 2001) has also recognized it as one of the

¹⁵A.W. and T. V. Sekher, „Can Career-Minded Young Women Reverse Gender Discrimination? A View from Bangalore’s High-Tech (5) Sector”, Gender, Technology and Development, 11 (3), 2007

¹⁶Kelkar, G., G. Shrestha, and N. Veena, IT Industry and Women’s Agency: Explorations in Bangalore and Delhi, India, Gender, Technology and Development, 6(1), 2002, 63-84.

¹⁷NASSCOM-Mencher, Gender Inclusivity in India: Building Empowered organisation. New Delhi: NASSCOM, 2009.

¹⁸ibid

leading global hubs of technological innovation. With these factors in consideration, Bangalore suited as most appropriate to undertake fieldwork.

3.1 Research Questions

The study gathered information on the following broad areas.

- What are the experiences of women IT professionals at the workplace?
- Their feeling about the economic independence that their work gives them, their income and how they utilise it.
- The amount of support their family was giving them, future career plans, marriage and family options.
- Where do they place themselves in the opportunity structure for career advancement?
- What factors inhibit women from climbing up the higher level positions?

To gather the data needed to answer these general questions, semi-structured face to face interviews were conducted. The above questions were the starting point for the interviews but due to the open ended nature of the discussions, numerous other questions arose. Discussions often stretched beyond the bound of the initial questions in ways that informed the objective of the study.

3.2 Method of data collection: Interview

Interviewing people seemed to be a good way to get new information about experiences of women IT professionals. Having reviewed previous data based on work life balance, gender disparity; the researcher identified a scope to understand the constraints faced by women IT professionals. A need for direct communication with the women IT professionals who face hurdles in climbing to higher ranks and positions in the IT sector was felt. Interviewing people as the principal method of data collection envisions the emergence of knowledge as a result of conversation.

3.3 Interview procedure

Original data set was collected by interviewing respondents which belonged to a specific category of women IT professionals –women who have been working for over five years and were looking for a long term career in the sector. All the women were between the ages of 24 and 35; three were in their thirties and the rest in their twenties. Five of the women were married and the rest were single. All interviews were conducted in person and most of them averaged an hour. Interviews were audio taped and transcribed. Coding and analysis was done manually.

3.4 Sampling

Since the research was an exploratory study and sought to identify significant concepts and their relation, theoretical rather than statistical sampling was used. Theoretical sampling differs from statistical sampling in that latter is conducted with specific intent to capture a representative group of a large population. It is concerned with the representativeness of the concept rather than the representativeness of the individual interview respondent per se (Strauss and Cobin 1998: 212-215).

There are no pre-existing sampling frames of Women IT Professionals, thus several non-probability sampling techniques were used for selecting interview respondents. Using a combination of purposive, convenience and snowball sampling,

respondents were identified for conducting interviews. Applying purposive selection methods (Bernard 1988:97), those women IT professionals were contacted who have had over five years of experience in the IT sector and had the ambition of progressing in the career ladder. Snowball sampling (Goodman 1961) also played a role: for each woman IT professional, suggestions were received for others who were good candidates for an interview.

3.5 Grounded Theory

Scholarship on women IT professionals includes little or no work grounded in the lives, experience, definitions and perspectives of those women who are unable to climb to higher positions in the IT sector. This paper reveals new information drawn from the experiences and perspectives of women IT professionals by applying the ground theory method. Grounded theory is defined as “theory...derived from data, systematically gathered and analyzed through the research process” (Strauss and Cobin 1998:12). This method of qualitative analysis originally introduced by sociologists Glaser and Strauss (2006) refers to a “non-mathematical process of interpretation... for the purpose of discovering concepts and relationships in raw data and then organizing these into theoretical explanatory schemes (Strauss and Cobin 1998:11)”. Grounded theory explicitly prioritizes the gathering of data in conjunction with, rather than entirely prior to or subsequent to, the process of theory generation.

Grounded theory is appropriate for topics about which little is known because data collection process is integral. While qualitative research does not test a hypothesis or theory in the strict sense that quantitative research does, qualitative research does offer a basis for evaluating the plausibility of various claims (Creswell 1994). Therefore, the study of glass ceiling faced by women IT professionals is well suited for qualitative approaches as there has been a lack of theoretical development in the previous works and there is a need to explore and describe phenomena that are not easily quantifiable.

Discussion

Existing literature and surveys done on the career progression of women in the IT sector have shown that most of the women are concentrated in the lower and middle level ranks and have marginal representation at the top levels. The higher the career level, the lower is the female participation. A particular characteristic of the Indian tech industry is high mobility of employees. IT workers tend to change employers frequently and build their careers in several companies and organizations along their professional trajectories, rather than staying in one company¹⁹. This mobility helps the employees to enhance their pay packages. Women employees face this constraint as their mobility is restricted due to family obligations. A promotional opportunity may demand a change of location with an attractive package. Such experiences are counted as ‘on site exposure’ and facilitate career advancement. Owing to social constraints and cultural expectations, most of the women are not able to avail such an opportunity with ease, unless there are **mechanisms for social support** in the family.

Vidya, 34, works as Delivery Manager in an IT firm. With 12 years of experience in the IT sector she has had two onsite opportunities. She had changed five companies in

¹⁹Upadhyaya, Carol, Gender in the Information Society: Emerging Issues” in Gurumurthy Anita, P. J. Singh, A. Mundkur and M. Swamy (eds.), Gender issues in the Indian Software Outsourcing Industry, 2006, (24).

this duration, joining each on a higher package. Vidya lives with her in laws and credits her family for the continued support that she has received. “I have been very lucky to have such supportive in laws. When I had to travel and be away from my son for work projects for 6 months, I was assured my mother in law would take care of my son. They have been living with us since my son was born and it has been very helpful for me to continue my career alongside family responsibilities.”

Job hopping is acknowledged as a prerequisite in the IT sector to avail handsome pay packages and quick promotions. Though there are monetary increments and promotions within the same company, however, the same cannot be paralleled with the opportunities that one can avail with job change. IT sector is extremely dynamic wherein the employees need to regularly update their skill set to suit the new demands. This is possible only via on job training and/or opting for an online course. With an updated skill set, employees have the competitiveness to ‘negotiate the package’ when looking for a job change. Women employees face this limitation as they are not able to update their skill set on job, especially in the initial few years after marriage. The work life balance theory comes into play wherein there are only a limited number of hours they can invest at work, which leaves no spare time for undertaking a course or training on a new skill set that is seeing recent demand. This creates a lag wherein they are forced to be stuck in the same company.

Shagufta, 32, works as a software developer in an IT firm. She has changed two companies and has been doing well. However, post her marriage, she has not been able to change as she lacks the skills that are now in demand. “I am basically a coder; I have been working on ABAP: it’s a language. But now the demand is very high for HANA , SAP.I need to learn that thoroughly to be able to clear the interview as they ask very basic operational questions. After my marriage, I can’t find time after 9 hours of work at office. I know what I am looking for but I am unable to switch and I am stuck. I need to learn new language, there a lot of openings for that. It’s been two years and I have been planning to learn but it is getting badly delayed”.

Company parental policies also determine the retention and progression of women for career advancement. Policy measures especially targeted at supporting women to return to work after maternity leave are very significant here. This is one of the major challenges that Indian companies within the IT sector have been trying to fix over the past decade to ensure a gender inclusive workplace. NASSCOM report has revealed that the IT companies did not perceive the costs related to maternity leave as a constraint, but the key concerns were the low rate of return to work and managing the changes in working, that women returning from maternity leave might not be able to balance work and caring²⁰.

Radhika, 29, was given maternity leave for three months. She has been working in the firm for 3 years and returned to work after her maternity leave. However, in the absence of any support system at her home, she had to resign and take to full time caring for her new born. “My mother left after 6 months, I had employed a nanny for my baby so it was going well. But, then, how is it with babies, I did not know, I had to take so many leaves. I was not questioned as I had genuine reasons. But, I was not able to concentrate in work or meetings, neither meet deadlines. I discussed with my

²⁰ Clark, A.W. and T. V. Shekher (2007): “Can Career-Minded Young Women Reverse Gender Discrimination? A View from Bangalore”s High-Tech Sector”, Gender, Technology and Development, 11 (3): 285-319.

husband. I had no option left but to take a break for two years until my baby grows up and can be put in a play school. I wouldn't have had to resign, had someone from my husband's family or my mother come and lived with us for a year or so, but that's not possible at all. So, this was the only option left."

It is a perception among the employees that **networking** is a significant dimension that impacts career opportunities in the IT industry. Team outings, socializing and building network also determines promotional prospects. Failure on the part of women professionals to put up late hours to build informal networking debars them from getting information on career openings and promotions (Upadhyaya 2006). They are constrained due to distance from home, personal security or domestic responsibilities.

Priety, 24, has been in IT firm for last one year. She resides with her relatives in Bangalore and cannot afford to put up late in the team outing and parties which are frequent in her company. Her colleagues however spend quite a lot of time networking in these outings and have been able to get good referrals for new projects. "I was not aware of a new project in my company. I have been on bench for the last three months, as my project was over. I am still waiting to be included in the new project. Had I been socializing like my colleagues, I would have known and by this time been working on some new project. I would have immediately opted if I knew."

Wajcman et al. (2004) found that in Vietnam, IT employers' perception of women's 'skill' was nothing to do with ideological and social constructions but with the technical competence that are possessed by men and not by women. "This led to strong gender segregation in software work where women were concentrated in jobs that were considered to be less skilled such as testers and coders while jobs carried out by men are in design and specification. Consequently, leading to feminization of jobs and creating a gender gap in pay and training. She asserted that neither work experience nor technical qualification explained gender segregation here; rather it was employers' perceptions of women's vis-a-vis men's skills and their suitability for particular types of work. This reinforces gender based stereotypes that creates a culturally and structurally defined glass ceiling for women."²¹

Patriarchal attitude sustains the expectation that women will bear the primary household and parenthood burden even when employed outside the house. This feeds into hiring discrimination in the IT sector when employers consequently see women as less reliable employees, prevents women from accumulating human capital at the same rate as men and has a cumulative hamstringing effect as women progress in their careers²². **Gender pay gap** is a reality in the information technology sector. With the same skill set, experience and training, women take home less than men. This is a widespread grievance among the women IT professionals. The pay gap widens from managerial level whereas it is more or less the same at the entry level positions. The 'Monster Salary Index India IT Sector Report 2014 revealed that a male IT worker received a gross salary of Rs 359.25 an hour while a female worker received Rs 254.04 an hour.

Payal, 26, has five years of work experience and has recently changed her company. On her interview, she was questioned on her marriage plans and whether she will

²¹ Abraham Margaret (2008): "Globalization and the Call Center Industry", *International Sociology*, 23 (2): 197- 210.

²²ibid

leave work in the wake of family obligations. Payal is an assertive young woman who chose to have career in IT as she equated it with her identity and vouches to never leave her career. “ I was asked about marriage and family, as they think women will opt out of work when they get married or plan to extend their family. I am looking for a partner that will share equal responsibility in each phase, working women should not be expected to manage home responsibilities single handedly. Unfortunately, that is still the perception and that is why I was offered a lower package than my male batchmate as the recruiters perhaps saw no such constraints for him:”

IT industry characterises itself as a gender neutral workplace. The above themes resonate a need to examine whether ‘gender neutrality’ needs to be replaced by gender sensitivity. Moser (1989) has coined ‘Women’s Special Need Gender planning approach’ to take into consideration the different gender needs for men and women, as they play different roles in the society. “Gender planning relates to identifying women’s triple roles (reproductive, productive and community) and distinction between practical and strategic needs. Women involved in participation of labour force are constrained by aforementioned triple commitments (practical needs). Strategic gender needs involve abolition of gender division of labour, alleviation of the burden of domestic chores and control of male violence”²³. Recognizing the triple roles that are played by women will provide methodological tools for planning to fulfil strategic gender needs. A noteworthy example is provision of off-peak transport facilities that meets the practical needs, but ‘Women only’ transport particularly at night provides strategic gender need of countering male violence. Similarly, provisions of crèche, parenting workshops and women’s forums can be adopted to ensure gender inclusivity. NASSCOM-Mencher, 2009 report has pointed out that a comprehensive and holistic policy needs to be formulated for greater inclusivity and empowerment of women that encompasses all the levels of ecosystem.

Conclusion

It is intriguing that such bottlenecks are persistent in an industry that boasts itself as the highest employer of women workforce. These discriminatory practices prevalent in the IT sector are a manifestation of the patriarchal culture entrenched in society. Gender pay gap, feminization, glass ceiling and such other factors that have been identified for restricting the upward flight of women in the Information Technology industry are an outcome of the cultural expectations and social obligations that tend to bind women. Women show a constant zeal in their struggle to challenge these constraints but an enabling infrastructure and cultural juggle is essential to liberate women in the work environment. Men and women start their careers in IT companies at similar ages but women progress more slowly, so men at senior positions are often younger than women at a similar level. Reinforcement of gender based stereotypes creates a culturally and structurally defined glass-ceiling²⁴. Women workforce in Information technology sector face glass-ceiling and are not able to rise high after certain level of hierarchy as they fail to bargain for proper perks, stock options, pay scales etc²⁵. As a failure to upgrade their skills that see recent demand; women employees tend to stay in a company for a longer period rather than going for job

²³Moser, Caroline ,Gender planning and development: Revisiting, deconstructing and reflecting. DPU60 Working Paper Series: Reflections NO. 165/60

²⁴Abraham, Margaret, Globalisation and the Call Center Industry, International Sociology, 23 (2), 2008

²⁵ibid

change, thus sticking to immobility. Failure to put up late hours to build informal networking debars them from getting information on career openings²⁶.

“The impression of stereotypical image for women employees on the part of recruiters, team lead and male colleagues results in marginalisation of women at the workplace especially during the time of project deadlines, other constraining factors include recruitment and promotion filters for selection of certain ‘social types’²⁷, lack of mentors and want of network for women at higher position”. Non implementation of women sensitive flexi-time policy further hampers promotional prospects of women software professionals. The sustained patriarchal norms in Indian society restrict the empowerment of women. However, women who were interviewed showed a dogged determination and enthusiasm to challenge these norms, taking social support as their very own right for career development. They questioned the practice of allocating ‘care work’ to women which limits their career progression.

In this perspective, this paper places some important questions that can guide future research. How does working outside influence the social position of women? How far is the “equal opportunity” practice of the IT sector effective in reality? What is the interaction of public private patriarchy and how does it impact the working women? To what extent has individualization of women at workplace liberated her from traditional gender roles? These arenas demand careful investigation for guiding policy action and policy course correction in future.

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²⁶ibid Upadhyya 20016, p13

²⁷ibid Shanker 2008, p 14