

**CAREER ADVANCEMENT PROBLEMS AND PERSONAL VARIABLES OF WOMEN  
EMPLOYEES IN INDIAN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY INDUSTRY**

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**Abstract**

The role and contribution of womenfolk in shaping the entire economy of a country is remarkable. Women who were primarily attending only the domestic chores has revamped herself to play the multitasking role of career women performing both in home and at work. Without hesitation and compromise, she performs on an equal footing with men. Women were able to enter the various positions at lower and middle level, nevertheless the glass ceiling is hardened when it comes to higher level. The number of women in the top echelons is meagre compared to their counterparts. There is a need to look into the challenges confronted by a woman while moving up her career ladder. The challenges also vary according to their changes in their personal life. The study probes into the various career advancement problems of women employees and examine the relationship between career advancement problems and personal variables of the women employees in the Information Technology industry. The inquiry of relationship uncovers the fact that women vary in her approach and opinion as her personal variables varies over the years. The findings of the study have important implications for the policy makers to consider the various problems encountered by a woman at various age and experience level at the various positions before chalking down the policies.

Keywords: Women Employees, I.T. Industry, Career Advancement Problems, Personal Variables, Glass Ceiling

**INTRODUCTION**

The role and contribution of womenfolk in shaping the entire economy of a country is remarkable. Women who were primarily attending only the domestic chores has revamped herself to play the multitasking role of career women performing both in home and at work. Without hesitation and compromise, she performs on an equal footing with men. She has grabbed each and every opportunity thrown by globalization which uncovers a whole new world and got independence by earning money and respect simultaneously. The revolution in information technology sector has erased the boundary lines of nations, facilitates global communication, knit the world with the world wide web and impacted the government and public to make new polices for governance. A woman should face myriads of problems confronting her and at the same time she

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has to peddle up to the higher echelons of her career. Corporate management took numerous steps to alleviate the problems for women to provide a conducive working environment.

Women were able to enter the various positions at lower and middle level, nevertheless the glass ceiling is hardened when it comes to higher level. The number of women in the top echelons are meagre compared to their counterparts. There is a need to look into the challenges confronted by a woman while moving up her career ladder. The challenges also vary according to their changes in their personal life. This is a study which views and analyses the perception of the women employees along the various stages of their personal life and how it influences their career advancement and suggest suitable measures to overcome the problems in various stages and phases.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Diana S. Hansen (2020) presents the various views on the barriers to career progression in science for women and minority groups. The article probe further and give various suggestions to break the existing career barriers for a women to assure success in their life. Radhika Kapur (2019) studied the challenges confronted by women employees in career development in India and highlights the fact that commitment to family and household was the primary hindrance factor barricading the women scaling up to the high position in their career.

Shuruq Abdullah Alsharif (2018) probe into the challenges affecting career development of women in State Universities in Saudi Arabia. The analysis point out the seven factors affecting women's career development as culture, family, individual, organization, geography, economy, legal and constitution. The study opines that political decision will support women to scale up to leadership position and further recommends a time frame to strengthen the representation of women in higher echelons.

Francis OfunyaAfande (2015) highlighted the importance of individual, interpersonal and organizational variables essential for the career advancement of women in the banking industry in Kenya through a case study design. The analysis throws light on the supportive work environment qualities for the career aspirations of women. The study recommends family friendly policies, career development programme and training and challenging work for the support and advancement of career development in banking industry.

Rehana Queresh (2000) who investigated different problems faced by working women in Faisalabad reported that inability to give quality time to the family members and the consequent deterioration in relationship among the family members, inability to attend social functions to build up their social relations, commuting to work place and home sickness were the problems afflicting the working women.

The various pieces of literature pertaining to problems and challenges confronting women employees across the sector have unearthed a number of factors retarding their career growth. The study makes an attempt to investigate the impact of personal variables on the career advancement problems of women employees in the I.T. sector.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study the problems hindering the career growth of women employees in the Information Technology Industry.

- To make suggestions for ensuring more effective functioning of women employees in Information Technology Industry.

### **HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY**

- H<sub>0</sub>: Level of career advancement problems do not vary across the cadre
- H<sub>0</sub>: Levels of career advancement problems do not vary by different experience groups
- H<sub>0</sub>: Level of career advancement problems do not vary because of marital status
- H<sub>0</sub>: Level of career advancement problems do not vary with age groups

### **PROBLEMS OF THE WOMEN EMPLOYEES IN I.T. SECTOR**

Many problems peculiar to women employees have been well researched by earlier researchers in various contexts across the sectors in India and abroad. However, problems of women employees in Asian countries are quite different from those of their Western counterpart in the sense that the former cannot shed together their conventional role of homemaker while discharging their professional duties. This poses a serious challenge to women in Asia. In other words, the additional burden resulting from the need to shoulder household responsibilities multiply the various other problems of women employees. Women in Western countries by virtue of the culture, educational background, social environment, family set up, network of relationship with extended families and relatives, etc. inborn traits, values, etc. are on a different plane. All these differences get reflected in their career.

There are certain problems unique to employees of I.T. sector in general in terms of the very nature of the industry. The need to work at odd hours to suit the various time zone, pressure to hit the target in the time stipulated and the consequent penalty in the event of failure to adhere to deadlines, relocation to different places in the country and abroad on work assignment, constant exposure to radiation from systems, inability to avail leave facility thanks to hectic work schedule, compulsive need to mingle with opposite gender and the consequent intimacy leading to inter caste, religious and racial marriage, social ostracism, live-in relationship, economic empowerment at young age, party culture, increasing incidence of divorce thanks to lack of understanding between the spouse, change in food habits when working in foreign locations, sedentary work style, etc. are some of the problems specific to I.T. work force. The career advancement problems like fear of relocation due to promotion which disturb the family life, inability to compromise the family responsibility, inadequate soft skill, fear of challenges to be faced in higher position, etc. have been included in this head.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The present study is confined to women employees of Information Technology Industry and it adopts multi stage random sampling. Among various cities, Chennai city has been chosen for the study as it is one of the main hub for the I.T. sector in general. In the initial stage, all the companies listed in the BSEIT index were selected for the study. Those companies which has a lifespan of more than 10 years were taken in the second stage. As the study is women centric, data was collected only from women employees in the final stage. The sample size of the present study has been fixed at 517 women employees by applying sampling formula. Career advancement problems have been identified after the review of various works of literature. They impact the different categories of employees at different levels in different degrees. Hence, the

magnitude of the problem has been split into low level problem and high level problem in terms of median. The chi-square analysis has been used to test the association between the level of problem and the level of employees. The response of the subjects has been tabulated as under.

### LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- Women employees from select firms of Information Technology Industry in Chennai city alone have been studied. Perception of such employees elsewhere is likely to vary.
- The perception study during a specific time period cannot be generalized across the time zone and geographical area. Thus this study is exploring the perception of women employees in this time period in Chennai city alone.

### DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATIONS

**Table 1**  
**Magnitude of Career Advancement Problems in Different Levels**

Level of Employee	Level of Problems Hindering Career advancement		Total	Chi Square value	P value
	Low	High			
<b>Entry level</b>	85 (25.0) [55.6]	255 (75.0) [70.1]	340 (100.0) [65.8]	2.811	0.000**
<b>Middle level</b>	46 (32.8) [30.1]	94 (67.2) [25.8]	140 (100.0) [27.1]		
<b>Higher level</b>	22 (59.4) [14.3]	15 (40.6) [4.1]	37 (100.0) [7.2]		
<b>Total</b>	153 (29.6) [100.0]	364 (70.4) [100.0]	517 (100.0) [100.0]		

Source: Primary data

The career ambition would be on a higher side for entry level workers and middle level workers who like to prove their mettle by accomplishing the challenging task. One of the reasons for higher level of attrition in these two levels is lack of challenging jobs in a given enterprise. Many research studies have confirmed the fact that the attrition of employees is triggered by want of challenging work. As regards entry level workers, it is manifest from the table that 255 subjects representing 75 per cent and 94 subjects representing 67.2 per cent middle level employees are facing higher level of problems in their career advancement. During the course of interview it was expressed that marriage related problems, need to take care of elders and children, physical strain associated with job, etc. are stated to be the barriers to their career advancement. However, 22 subjects forming 59.5 per cent are facing lower level of problems in career advancement.

Perhaps the fact of having reached the targeted positions might have eased them from career advancement hindrances. But 15 executives forming 40.5 per cent continue to face career advancement problems. On enquiry with the latter category, it was stated that the burden of shouldering higher responsibility, separation from the family and constant challenges emerging from exigencies of circumstances are some of the challenges encountered in the career ladder.

As regards the employees across the cadres' 364 employees forming 70.4 per cent are facing problems of high magnitude in their career advancement journey. It was hypothesized that all the employees irrespective of cadre face the same level of career advancement problem. This hypothesis was rejected at 1 per cent level as the chi square value of 2.811 is below the table value. It implies that level of career advancement problems faced by different groups of employees differs category-wise.

**Table 2**  
**Magnitude of Career Advancement Problems by Different Experience Groups**

Experience in years	Level of Hindering Career advancement		Total	Chi Square value	P value
	Low	High			
<b>Below 5</b>	190 ( 55.1) 69.6]	155 ( 44.9) 63.5]	345 ( 100.0) 66.7]	11.780	0.000**
<b>5-10</b>	44 ( 41.5) [16.1]	62 ( 58.5) [25.4]	106 ( 100.0) [20.5]		
<b>10-15</b>	13 ( 31.0) [5.3]	29 ( 69.0) [10.6]	42 ( 100.0) [8.1]		
<b>Above 15</b>	10 ( 41.7) [3.7]	14 ( 58.3) [5.7]	24 ( 100.0) [4.6]		
<b>Total</b>	273 ( 52.8) [100.0]	244 ( 47.2) [100.0]	517 ( 100.0) [100.0]		

Source: Primary data

It is common knowledge that more the experience the higher the career advancement problems. In other words, employee climbs up the career ladder by virtue of length of experience though extraordinarily talented employees are given out of turn promotion in exceptional cases. The range of exposures, rich training, experience of having addressed challenges, knowledge updation, etc. gained over the years shape the employee into value added manpower making them fit for higher end jobs.

The employees in terms of experience have been grouped into 4 categories. Percentage analysis of the figures given in the table 2 shows those women employees with less than 5 years of experience report lower level of career advancement problem. Those with 5 – 10 years of experience face more career advancement problems. The ambition to reach the different phases of their career, the dislocation caused in the family thanks to relocation, pressure to shoulder higher responsibilities, difficulty in adjusting to alien environment in foreign assignment, quest for challenging jobs, complexity in harmonizing work and home life, lesser time spent in child and elder care, etc. may be contributing to the greater magnitude of problems faced by this group.

The aforesaid variables hold good for the employees with 10 – 15 years of experience and those with more than 15 years of experience. In short it can be summed up that except employees with less than 5 years of experience, all other experience groups are under constant pressure to prove themselves eligible for higher end jobs. The chi-square test results confirm the existence of difference in the magnitude of problems experienced by the employees across the cadre.

**Table 3**  
**Magnitude of Career Advancement Problems due to Marital Status**

Marital Status	Level of Hindering Career advancement		Total	Chi Square value	P value
	Low	High			
Single	216 ( 60.8) [79.1]	139 ( 39.2) [57.0]	355 ( 100.0) [68.7]	29.389	0.000**
Married	57 ( 35.2) [20.9]	105 ( 64.8) [43.0]	162 ( 100.0) [31.3]		
<b>Total</b>	273 ( 52.8) [100.0]	244 ( 47.2) [100.0]	517 ( 100.0) [100.0]		

Source: Primary data

Table 3 shows the response of the employees in relation to their status vis-à-vis hindrance in career advancement. One’s marital status has a bearing on one’s career advancement problems. In other words, being a single enables women employee to combat the career advancement hindrances comparatively better than the married ones who are forced to shoulder the dual responsibility of career and home.

In this context an investigation is made to examine the association between the two variables. It is manifest from the table that 216 employees (60.8 per cent) are facing lesser career progression problems than 139 employees (39.2 per cent) who are encountering the career advancement problem of high intensity.

The situation is quite contrast in the case of married women. The marriage casts additional obligations on women respondents in the Indian context. Indian women especially in career cannot avoid altogether the conventional responsibilities imposed on women from generation to generation. They have to bear the

household responsibilities in addition to the professional ones which interfere with the career progression of married employees.

One hundred and five employees (64.8 per cent) are perceiving higher degree of career advancement problems. Therefore, it can be summed up that the marital status has potential to aggravate the factors hindering career advancement of women employees. The chi square result also corroborates the variations in the magnitude of the career advancement problems experienced by different marital status groups.

**Table 4**  
**Magnitude of Career Advancement Problems with different Age Groups**

Age Group in years	Level of Hindering Career advancement		Total	Chi Square value	P value
	Low	High			
<b>Below 30</b>	208 ( 58.6) [76.2]	147 ( 41.4) [60.2]	355 ( 100.0) [68.7]	15.249	0.000**
<b>30-40</b>	47 ( 40.5) [17.2]	69 ( 59.5) [28.3]	116 ( 100.0) [22.4]		
<b>Above 40</b>	18 ( 39.1) [6.6]	28 ( 60.9) [11.5]	46 ( 100.0) [8.9]		
<b>Total</b>	273 ( 52.8) [100.0]	244 ( 47.2) [100.0]	517 ( 100.0) [100.0]		

Source: Primary data

Table 4 presents the gravity of career advancement obstacles faced by different age groups under survey. A keener look at the table brings to fore the fact that the respondents below 30 years of age numbering 208 constituting 58.6 per cent are perceiving low level of problems in their career track while 147 respondents forming 41.4 per cent are encountering higher level of problems. Since most of the new hires may not be knowing career prospects available in the firm, they might not have faced any hindrance in this regard. Therefore many companies offer mentoring service and career counseling service at this phase. However a minority of respondents admit that they encounter career advancement obstacles.

As regards the subjects in the age group of 30 and 40, and 40 above, it is manifest from the response of 69 persons (59.5 per cent) and 28 persons (60.9 per cent) divulge to have suffered from career advancement hitches. It can be attributed to heavy load of professional responsibilities coupled with familial responsibilities they have to shoulder. Therefore, their inability to balance both the domains poses a greater threat to their smooth upward journey in their career path. An analysis of overall response across the category brings to light

that the response category is equally divided between high problem and low problem sufferers. The existence of difference across the response groups is further validated by the rejection of the null hypothesis.

## CONCLUSION

The study probes into the various career advancement problems of women employees and examine the relationship between career advancement problems and personal variables of the women employees in the Information Technology industry. The inquiry of relationship uncovers the fact that women varies in her approach and opinion as her personal variables varies over the years. Age plays a key role in the way a woman approaches her career advancement problems. While at entry level, when the age group is below thirty, she can manage her career problems well and has dreams of career advancement with a high expectation.

With the ageing when she enters into middle and higher-level position, the increase in responsibility coupled with shouldering additional responsibilities of the familial obligations make her career a tough and difficult one. She wants to climb up but the magnitude of problems poses a threat in many stages and dimensions. Another interesting fact is being a single enables women employee to combat the career advancement hindrances comparatively better than the married ones who are forced to shoulder the dual responsibility of career and home. The findings of the study has important implications for the policy makers to consider the various problems encountered by a woman at various age and experience level at the various positions before chalking down the policies.

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