



# Perceived Career Success and Career Advancement of Women: Challenges in the Indian IT Industry

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## ABSTRACT

There have been a lot of challenges that a woman has to go through to make her career a success. The study focuses on the challenges that women face as a result of organizational and family barriers. The current study aims to test whether mentoring, perceived organizational support (POS), and family responsibilities (FR) have an impact on perceived career success (PCS) and career advancement of women working in the Indian IT industry. Three hundred and seven respondents have been analyzed, and the reliability and validity of constructs have been checked using exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). For hypotheses testing, path analysis has been employed. Results reveal that mentoring, POS, and FR significantly impact PCS and career advancement of women working in the Indian IT industry. The results offer insights for organizations to implement leadership strategies and activities to promote gender equality.

## KEYWORDS

Career Advancement, Challenges, Discrimination, IT Industry, Women

## INTRODUCTION

Although there is an increase in women's involvement in the field of qualifications, employment and professional commitment, there are still less opportunities for women to reach senior positions. Women who have achieved managerial roles faced challenges in their career development. While women have the equivalent abilities and expertise as their male counterparts, still they are expected to work harder and perform better to achieve managerial positions. Women represent just 30 percent of the technology sector in seven countries, and representation in leadership positions is still narrower (The Economic Times, 2020). In a study by Amudha (2016), the CEO of The National Association of Software and Service Companies (NASSCOM) stated that women participation in the IT industry is 23 percent, out of which only three percent of women have reached top-level positions. In addition, it was mentioned that men women ratio in the IT industry is 4:1. Gender disparity exists at all hierarchical levels but

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it is extreme at top-level positions (Baxter and Wright, 2000). India stands 108<sup>th</sup> position out of 145 countries in the globe with a cumulative score of 0.664 (0 = inequality and 1 = equality), according to the Global Gender Gap Study 2015 published by the World Economic Forum (Amudha, 2016). A report by Catalyst (2012) revealed that only 3 to 6 percent women are found at senior managerial positions in Indian corporate sector. The 15th Census, carried out in 2011, provides some data on female jobs in the Indian scenario. There are 481.7 million employees in India, of which 331.9 million (68.9 percent) are men, and 149.9 million (31.1 percent) are women workers. In addition, a small decline in women's work participation rate (WPR) is noteworthy in this context. WPR was found to be declined from 25.6 percent in 2001 to 25.5 percent in 2011 (Verma, 2018). In a study by Webster (2005), three major reasons for the lower representation of women in the IT industry have been working hours, biased promotion systems, and turnover rate of women in IT profession. Although the entry of female workers is also a fact and experience that the Indian economy is having. Hence, it becomes important to understand more about the career advancement of women professionals, so that female participation is continued and enhanced with time in the economy. Kishore (2016) mentioned that female family members are appointed on Board of Directors of the Indian IT industry just to comply with the legal necessity of Companies Act, 2013. NASSCOM Mencher report 2009 indicated that women employees are found more at lower and middle-level jobs where there is no supervisory role and less seen at top managerial positions like director, CEO, and Vice President (VP) positions.

Various researchers mentioned that organizational policies and practices are more likely to favor men's career success and restrain women's career development (Kanter, 1977; Powell and Mainiero, 1992). Sheth (1997) disclosed that the thought of working under a female executive was unacceptable to male workers. Gupta *et al.* (1998) have emphasized on the fragile outlook of females in management, e.g., a major percentage of men and one-third of women feel that women managers are more emotional and they let their feelings affect their managerial decisions, perceived to be less spirited, less driven and less hostile in fulfilling the expectations of business circumstances. The major barriers to career success of women working in Indian IT industry are family responsibilities, long working hours, and maintaining work life balance (Bharathi and Bhattacharya, 2015). Family responsibility is the factor that affects the willingness and ability of an individual to work as it involves the time and energy that one has to decide whether to invest in the family or at work. Women have to play a dual role as a working person and as a responsible family member or caregiver. Therefore, it becomes difficult to balance their home and work at the same time. The primary responsibility of household activities or childcare lies with the women in the family and they need to devote a good amount of time with their family irrespective of their employment status to fulfill their societal obligations so that they are not socially rejected (Buddhapriya, 2009; Ugwu, 2018). Women executives say that keeping them at a lower level enables them to balance their work and family (Bourne and Wickler, 1978).

## Challenges

Sources of support involve the nature of the job, conditions like mentors, feedback on information and networks, organizational and family support for opting dual-career plans (Morrison *et al.*, 1987). Numerous researchers have confirmed that women in IT industry are more likely to be found at lower and middle-level positions and are only a few can reach top-level positions (Ahuja 2002, Bhattacharya *et al.* 2018; Frenkel, 1990; Mulqueen, 1996). Lyness and Thompson (1997) disclosed that challenges encountered by women at senior level positions are more as compared to the women at lower level managerial positions. Even when the career histories and experiences are the same for males and females, still female professionals have to face more hurdles to achieve their career advancement (Lyness and Thompson, 2000). It has been mentioned by women in a study by Wellington *et al.* (2003), that they did not achieve top-level positions just because their senior leaders were unable to presume accountability for women's progress. Women are more likely to face challenges in their career advancement in the industries where organizational cultures are male-dominated (Jandeska and Kraimer, 2005). Jawahar and Hemmasi (2006), disclosed that the advancement of women can

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