TRACING A WOMAN'S CAREER: CHALLENGES AND PATHWAYS WITH EMPHASIS ON IT SECTOR

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Abstract

India has traversed a long way when it comes to giving opportunities to women which are equal to that of men in terms of career. Because of this, a major change in the statistics has been noticed for the last few decades in the number of women professionals. But what has also come to light with this is the sudden break that is imposed on many women's careers as and when they come to a certain age. Where earlier only marriage and the responsibilities which came along with it were the major reason for this dropout, today many more factors have come into the picture. This paper is an attempt to highlight such factors. It will help women and corporates to be well prepared for their future and in turn, have a better and more successful career.

Keywords: Career restart, woman working professionals, glass ceiling, career pipeline, career break, challenges, leadership.

Introduction

The past few decades have witnessed a lot of families supporting their girl child to study further and eventually take up a job and be financially independent. The vast increase in career options has further strengthened this trend. But Indian women are expected to play a dual role. Alongside their careers, they are also responsible to run a household by taking care of the elderly and the children. It often becomes challenging to manage both these responsibilities with perfection and dedication. Things boil down to choosing one among the two and more it has been observed that many women opt for their family and decide to give up on their careers. This is the reason why there's a sharp halt in their career graphs despite them having huge potential and dedication towards work.

Though many women are looking up to restarting their careers again once when the magnitude of household responsibilities diminishes. But the sad reality is that many corporate companies hesitate before hiring such professionals. The reason can be many from the threat of them again giving up on their jobs or the gap that has been built in their skills since they first quit to this time. But keeping these in mind the Indian corporate sector may end up losing a pool of potential candidates who are not only passionate to start working again but also have a lot of potentials.

Having said that many companies have already realized this opportunity and are ready to tap on their potential. They have already made policies around the same and are more than willing to incorporate these women among their workforce.

Women have actively taken up various roles in the Indian IT sector and this is validated by NASSCOM, stating that 37% of the workforce in this sector comprises of women.

However, it further states that almost 48% of women attire from their job before the age of 30. This number is alarming as it is one of the major reasons why we don't see women at the top positions in any company.

In this paper, an attempt has been made to study and analyse the career trajectory of a working woman professional. It holistically studies the factors affecting their career and lays a road ahead for an attempt to mend or assuage those difficulties. The study also sheds light on a few practices when can minimize the duration of a career break and will in turn enable and empower women and help them have a long sustainable career.

The Indian Female Professional

Indian women differ from their counterparts around the globe. In our country, a woman's top priority is considered to be the roles bestowed upon her on marriage be it of a spouse, a daughter in law and eventually of a mother. However, the past few decades have seen a deviation from this trend. It is delightful to notice that with the boom in the Indian IT industry a lot of women have taken up jobs and ensured a secure career for themselves. In the year 2010, out of the total percentage of the graduates that passed out, a whopping 42% belonged to the female category.

The Indian IT sector provides many lucrative options in hand for such women. But it is disheartening to notice that the attrition rate is also quite high of the Indian female professionals. A woman in India has to take a break due to many reasons' family problems/support, spouse relocation, work-life balance, child care/elderly care are a few such examples. This is the major reason for the glass ceiling in the Indian IT industry wherein, it is merely 5% women whom we see at the top-notch position in a company and the rest resign from their jobs much earlier to this. Gender biased stereotypes are further deteriorating the situation by having a mentality that women are much better than their male counterparts in doing a routine, standard, and repetitive work. This type of thought process plays a very damaging impact on a woman's career, right from the recruitment to her promotion. Studies have further revealed that women are shy when it comes to negotiating their salary and perks, are not able to sharpen their skills, and do not have a very strong network as compared to their male colleagues. A major reason for this problem is that women hardly stay after office hours as they have commitments at home and therefore get deprived of the networking sessions that take place after working hours. Their career growth is further hindered by household responsibilities, minimum support from family, and a lot of further social factors.

This study focuses on women who had to take a career break and have been affected by the glass ceiling. It brings out the many factors which affect her career and eventually leads her to resign.

Literature Review

(Dr. Radhika Kapur, 2018) "**Challenges Experienced by Women Employees in Career Development in India**". The paper concludes that many women often have to do a trade-off between a successful career and family responsibilities. It also highlighted the issue of social discontentment and rejections faced by a woman who gives more importance to her career than everything else. (Ruth B. Ekstrom, 1981)"**Psychological And Sociological Perspectives On Women's Paid And Unpaid Work Choices**", illustrated how unpaid women working at home often perceive it to be a 'feminine' thing to do and often feel that they absence the required skillsets for a profession. On the other hand, a working woman has to face a lot of issues because of their varied roles (of a wife, mother, and employee) daily. "**Socio-Cultural Determinants of Women's Achievement of Management Positions in Turkey**" highlights how women coming

from an upper-class family have been found to get a formal education followed by a job. It further illustrates how political measures affect women's career. However, the paper talks about how these measures often get limited to upper-class families only. The government should make sure that even the rural population should get benefited from this.

(Saundarya Rajesh, Karthik Ekambaramthe, 2013) "**Career Trajectories Of Indian Women Professionals In The IT Industry: An Empirical Study**". The paper tracked a woman's career trajectory right from the beginning till the end and shed light on points that can hinder her ambitions of a successful career. It stated that identifying these pitfalls in advance will help a woman to be proactive in protecting her career from such factors. Also, a better-informed woman will in turn be a better-prepared woman and thus will be more successful in safeguarding her career. (Felista Njiru, 2013) "**Factors Affecting Career Progression of Women In The Corporate Sector: A Case Study Of Standard Chartered Bank In Nairobi**". This paper speaks about how family-friendly policies are no doubt advantageous for a woman's career but often such policies are present in a company only for a symbolic reason rather than any substantive reason. It also highlights the stress that can be caused if there is an absence of work-life balance in an organization. (Sumita Datta, 2017) "**Factors affecting career advancement of Indian women managers**". Where many papers have been written on the subject of gender diversity in the workplace, a majority of them have used western conceptualization and measures. This paper provides a unique and very useful cross-cultural comparison on this topic. The paper talks about how women professionals perceive their careers and how they distinguish their career advancements.

(Nilufer Azeez PV and R G Priyadarshini, 2018) "**Glass ceiling factors affecting women career advancement in the IT industry in India**". This paper illustrates how the glass-ceiling factors affect the women employees in the Indian IT sector. The Indian IT industry contributes to 8% of the country's total GDP. However, despite being such a big industry only a few women manage to reach the top management positions. The major reasons have been clustered into personal, organizational, and societal reasons. It is often how women perceive themselves which hinders their growth and success. (Katherina Kuschel and Erica Salvaj, 2018) "**Opening the "Babsence Box". Factors Affecting Women's Journey to Top Management Positions: A Framework Applied to Chile**". This paper discusses in detail why the number of female employees

decreases when one looks up at the management pyramid of an organization. It states that poor performance is not the cause why women do not climb up the ladder but the factors intrinsic to the culture which plays a vital role here. An organization can reap many benefits of women employees only if it changes its culture positively. (Aklima Marjia Tofa, 2017) "**A research on "Factors influencing women's decision to choose their career**". This paper sheds light on how in certain regions where women have just recently started working have their own set of problems to deal with. Though the government is supportive and provides more opportunities some unseen factors still deter women in making decisive career moves. It also talks about how women can climb the ladder of success by learning how to deal with professional problems and family obligations. (Zahid Ali Channar, 2011) "**Gender Discrimination in the Workforce and its Impact on the Employees**". This paper talks about gender discrimination and how it affects negatively on a woman's job satisfaction and motivation. It also states gender discrimination as a reason for less commitment and enthusiasm among women employees. Finally, it talks about the stress level and its direct relation to gender discrimination.

Research Gap

Various papers have shed light on the problems and challenges that a woman faces in her career journey. However not much research has been done on the pathways that she can take in order to overcome such hindrances. This paper holistically discusses both, the problems and the solutions which a woman can adopt to have a sustainable and fruitful career.

Research Questions

The research questions for the topic were:

1) What is the major reason which compels a woman to take a career break?

2) What factors can aid a woman to have a long uninterrupted career?

Research Objectives

The research objectives are: -

(a)   To identify the factors/policies which affect the span of a woman's career.

(b)   To suggest a few suggestions for corporates which will aid a woman's career.

Research Methodology

The research work included data collected from various sources. The research methodology adopted is given in succeeding paragraphs.

Method of Data Collection

The various ways of data collection were:

(a)   **<u>Primary</u>**
        The primary technique of data collection was through e-questionnaire asked from both the men and the women working at different IT companies in the country.

(b)   **<u>Secondary</u>**
        Reference to books, articles & papers by various scholars has been included as a secondary mode of data collection.

Sample Size

An e-questionnaire was sent to 102 IT professionals working at different companies all across the country.

Sampling Method

Purposive sampling method was used to survey the target audience.

Population of the Study

Population universe consisted of the people working at different IT institutions.

Measurement Scale

Likert scale has been used for the respondents to specify their level of agreement or disagreement for a series of statements. Thus, the range captures the intensity of their feelings for a given statement or question. The responses have been classified and the corresponding value is given to each response on a reducing scale namely:

S No	Response	Value
(a)	Strongly Agree.	5
(b)	Agree.	4
(c)	Neutral.	3
(d)	Disagree.	2
(e)	Strongly Disagree	1

Likert scale

Results & Discussion

Reliability Test

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
0.916	0.914	36

Reliability test

To check the internal consistency of the questionnaire, a reliability test was done. The Cronbach Alpha score of 36 items obtained was 0.916 which is above the minimum ideal limit of 0.7. Therefore, further analysis was carried out.

Factor Analysis

KMO & Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: The table below demonstrates the result obtained from the principal component analysis. The approx. the chi-square statistic is 2193.319 with a 630 degree of freedom which is significant at .000 levels. The KMO results (0.749) is also large (>.50). Thus, factor analysis is an appropriate technique for analysing the correlation matrix.

| KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	
0.749	Approx Chi Square	2193.319
	Degree of freedom	630
	Significance	0.000

KMO and Bartlett's Test

Factor analysis with varimax rotation method was applied to 36 variables to reduce and purify the data which were then clubbed under 9 independent factors using SPSS. Variables with an eigenvalue equal to or above 1 were retained. The nine factors extracted in this process were **Career aspirations, Gender biases, Personal matters, Organizational matters, Opportunities and roles, Ambition and size, male supremacy, Pregnancy, and Working aids**. These have been discussed in detail in the following paragraphs.

Factor Naming and Descriptive Statistics			
	Mean	SD	N
Career Aspirations			
Learning opportunities	3.80	1.051	90
Opportunities for leadership	3.92	1.094	90
Scope of career growth	3.99	0.942	90
Mentoring sessions in the office	3.72	1.006	90
Management style	3.96	0.97	90
Career counselling	3.79	0.93	90
Professional prestige	3.84	0.886	90
Job security	3.92	0.986	90

Organizational structure	3.88	1.026	90
Gender Biasness			
Absence of equity in promotion decisions	3.79	1.176	90
Absence of equity in training	3.62	1.186	90
Absence of equity in pay	3.79	1.176	90
Absence of job knowledge	3.36	1.230	90
Absence of mentoring	3.42	1.122	90
Discrimination	3.88	1.130	90
Male dominated environment	3.92	0.952	90
Personal matters			
Spouse relocation	3.77	1.028	90
Family commitment	4.28	0.765	90
Marriage	4.12	1.026	90
Infant care	4.33	0.899	90
Family support	4.38	0.758	90
Organizational matters			
Less flexible hours	3.69	1.056	90
Long commuting hours to the office	3.58	1.122	90
Shift hours	3.89	0.977	90
Long and stretched working hours	3.71	1.063	90
Opportunities and roles			
Overseas opportunities	3.80	0.974	90
Gender specific role	3.74	1.117	90
Male supremacy			
Gender Inequality	3.92	1.201	90
Chauvinism	3.60	0.969	90
Pregnancy			
Pregnancy	4.33	0.972	90

Ambitions and size			
Higher studies	3.84	1.048	90
Firm size	3.60	0.946	90
Working aids			
Presence of creches at work	4.04	0.733	90

Scree Plot
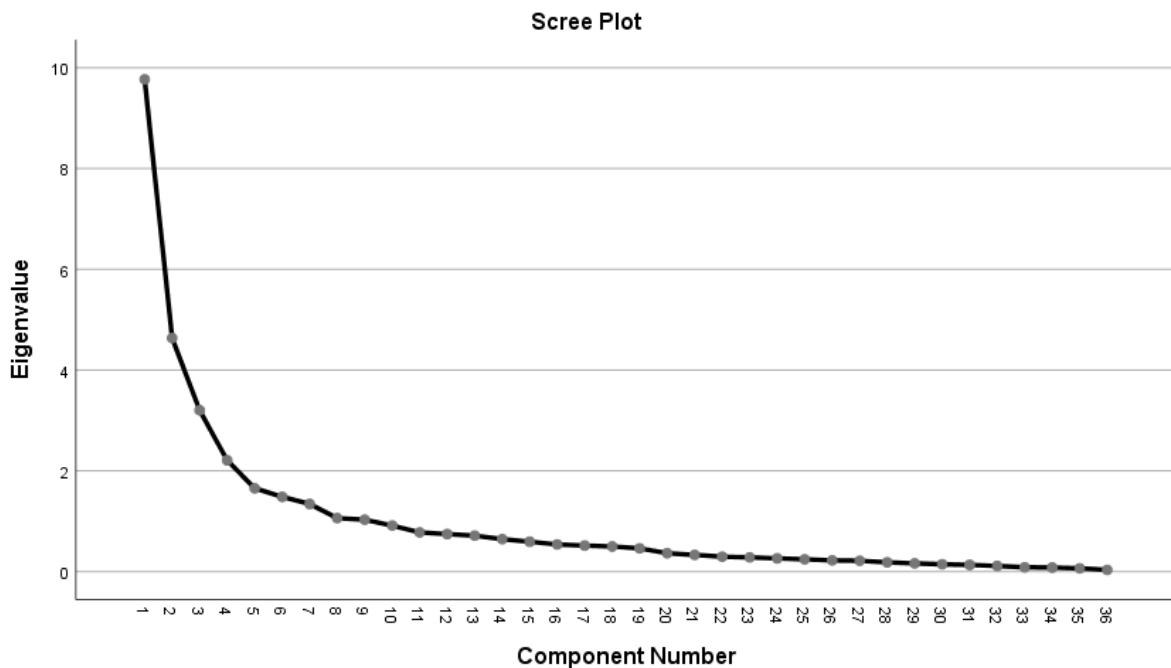
Career aspirations

 The variables extracted under this factor were Scope of career growth, Mentoring session in office, Opportunity for leadership, Career counselling, Management style, Professional prestige, Learning opportunities, Organizational structure, and Job security.

Scope of Career Growth

With changing times, the career needs of a woman have also changed. One of the major issues affecting a female's profession discovered was to be the scope of career growth. Today a woman does not only prefer a "settled job" for herself but is ready for a diverse role provided that she

gets a wide scope for her career growth. This reflects the ambition of today's working woman to climb the ladder of success and be in the top management levels of the company she is working with. A challenging job is no longer an issue for her as long as she sees success at the end of the tunnel. So, we can conclude that a lot of work is promised by today's working woman provided she sees a clear pathway for her career to move forward.

Mentoring session in an office

This factor reflects that the population of working woman professionals is very much flexible in their work and would like to listen to and be guided by someone who holds expertise in that domain. It shows her desire to produce quality work by learning from others and they often want someone to guide when in need. That is the reason mentoring session in offices is looked up by most women. We should also keep in mind that a woman lives her life differently from a man and naturally she has different problems also. The corporates must pay heed to this demand and make sure that regular mentoring sessions are provided by them to their woman professionals.

Opportunity for leadership

One of the interesting and positive factors that emerged was a leadership opportunity. It is very heartening to notice that woman today do not merely want to work but are willing to and want to be a leader. They know they can perform the task diligently therefore they also want to guide others in doing it. Many times many working woman professionals are left behind in the race because of factors such as the glass ceiling. The policies should be tailored keeping this point in mind.

Career Counselling

Career counselling is another sought after factor by women as it not only educates them on how to take their career forward but also helps them with dealing with day-to-day hassles that a woman faces in her career. It is different from a mentoring session in office as it deals with her work exclusively whereas mentoring in the office is a wider domain. Career counselling starts with the kind of work a woman should pick based on her aptitude and followed by the various ways wherein she can upscale her career.

Management Style

It has been brought out that management style is another major factor that has a huge impact on a woman's career. There are various ways in which an organization can work. While some of them adopt very strict, authoritative ways, some others are more lenient and flexible in their working pattern. These patterns consolidate to become the style in which an organization works. So, it consists of the nitty-gritty of the various ways in which a corporation works therefore women strongly believe that the management style affects their career in a big way.

Professional Prestige

Professional prestige consists of the pride one takes from the work one does. It has been found out that women have increasingly started taking pride as a major factor in their work. They want their work and themselves to be treated with respect at their workplace. Many women professionals feel that their subordinates at work do not take them seriously as she is a "woman". Today's working professional woman wants this mind-set to change and to be treated with dignity and respect.

Learning Opportunities

Learning is a lifelong process and the current women population working at various IT firms know this. Therefore, they have given learning opportunities huge importance as a factor affecting their careers. Firms that provide more learning opportunities to women in terms of training and other workshops have higher chances of attracting this talent pool. The women want to keep learning and re-skilling themselves with the ever-dynamic environment of their careers so that they never go out dated and are valued at their respective organizations.

Organizational Structure

This refers to a system via which roles, responsibilities, information, etc. flows in an organization to achieve a common goal. Structure of an organization matters for a woman's career as it provides her with the opportunities and designations she strives to get at. An open and transparent structure will allow her to dream big and reach higher levels of organizations.

Job Security

A stable and reliable career is something that many women today are relying on. This is not a new trend as women have often sought job security while choosing a career for them. Many women do find it a hassle to look for new careers while carrying additional household responsibilities. Therefore, many women look for options where they know they are not at the edge of being fired and have a stable career.

Gender Biasness

The various variables extracted under this factor were Absence of equity in promotion decisions, Absence of equity in training, Absence of equity in pay, Absence of job knowledge, Absence of mentoring, Discrimination, and Male dominated environment.

Absence of equity in promotion decisions

Again, the glass ceiling factor is one of the major reasons why women face a absence of equity in promotion at their workplaces. Women have often faced a situation where more preference is given to their male counterparts when it comes to promotions. Not being selected only due to belonging to a specific gender affects a woman's career adversely. She not only feels cheated but also loses the motivation to work further or with the same dedication.

Absence of equity in training

As has been discussed before, women today seek equal opportunities in all spheres of their careers. An equal opportunity in training equates to an equal opportunity to learn, leading to better performance and delivery of work. That is the reason why an absence of equity in training came out is a variable affecting a woman's career. If in the initial years only she does not gets treated equally and is kept devoid of this occasion then this leads to serious consequences throughout her career.

Absence of equity in pay

Money is the motivation for work for a large chunk of the population today. Be it a male or a female everybody wants to earn more. Even after delivering on the table equal to what their male counterpart is offering; women often get paid less. It has come up time and again that even when both the gender is performing equally well, the woman gets paid less for an equal amount of

work. This affects a woman's motivation adversely and rightly so, she feels resentful. Legally and ethically a firm must pay equal to everyone who is working at a certain level irrespective of their gender.

Absence of job knowledge

Job knowledge relates to the technical, legal, and procedural know-how of a job. It facilitates a person's ability to deliver a quality result. A person gathers the job knowledge not only by reading and practicing it but also from their colleagues who have been doing that work for a long time now. Women when face with negligence from the other gender and get refrained from acquiring the required job knowledge lose the motivation and desire to work.

Absence of mentoring

Mentoring consists of the experiences, anecdotes, knowledge, etc. that one uses to guide others. One often feels lost and clueless when the job, culture, and the organization is new. Mentoring gives a clear roadmap that one adopts to get successful in one's career. Therefore, today's working professional women give a lot of preference for mentoring and believe that mentoring affects their careers in a good way.

Discrimination

Discrimination is giving less or more preference to one over the other. Discrimination can take various forms, based on opportunities, having faith, giving equal platform, or giving equal compensation. Discrimination in any of these forms affects a woman's career and leads her to a more stressful life. A woman facing discrimination will always have low job satisfaction and morale. Thus, she will never be able to give her 100% during such circumstances. Therefore, corporates must make sure that no woman faces discrimination of any sort while working with them.

Male-Dominated Environment

Women as a gender have seen oppression for a long time in various aspects of their lives. Many of those factors changed with changing time but the dominance of the male gender in the workplace persisted for long. Not only the ideas and drive of a woman get killed by being suppressed but her will to provide her cent percent to the work also gets affected negatively.

Personal matters

The variable extracted under this factor is Spouse relocation, Family commitment, Marriage, Infant Care, and Family Support.

Spouse relocation

Spouse relocation is another major reason that hinders the career of a woman. If the husband is working in a different city or country it is assumed that it is the woman who will have to leave her current job and move to the new city to have a family. It is a societal belief and a woman often has very little say in this. If the working conditions in the new city are unfavourable then she may end up losing her career.

Family commitment

There are many roles that an Indian woman is expected to play in society. Any Indian woman professional, along with being a working woman plays various roles in her family. There are a plethora of events in her life which forces her to take a break from her career. She believes it is her ethical and moral duty to cater to everyone's needs. Therefore, a majority of working woman professionals do believe that family commitment is an issue that affects their careers.

Marriage

Since ages in our countrywoman leave her house on marriage and moves to her husband's house. The groom's family often considers it best for the bride to take a break and adjust to the new role she has entered. This forces a woman to attire faster than she should. Marriage along with itself brings a lot of obligations that a woman has to fulfil. Thus, we can say that marriage does affect a woman's career.

Infant Care

A woman's life changes dramatically once she enters the stage of motherhood. She gets an additional responsibility for a baby whom she has to take care of all the time. The baby depends solely on her and thus the mother has to be available for the infant every time. It often becomes difficult for a woman to hustle between the child's responsibilities and her career. It is a very challenging time where most women give preference to their kids. Therefore, infant care is another major variable affecting a woman's career.

Family Support

It is distressing to see that many families still believe that women are not meant to earn bread and butter for the family. It has often been observed that a girl who grew up in an orthodox Indian family, who has been taught since a child that the primary function of a woman is to take care of her family and raise her kids, she often puts her career secondary. Not only she struggles to get a job but also has a lifelong battle to sustain it. And whenever a time comes where she has to choose between her family commitments and her job, she chooses the former because she has been designed to give more importance to it. This results in the phenomenon known as the pipeline leakage of women. Whereas, her career can thrive when she has the support of her near and dears one. That is why family support is an important factor affecting a woman's career.

Organizational matters

The various variables under this factor was Less flexible hours, Long commuting hours to office, Shift hours, and Long and stretched working hours.

Less flexible hours

As has been discussed that a woman has to play many roles and has many responsibilities on her shoulders, a woman often struggles between her household chores and her official duties. Household work often gets rigid and has to be done at a particular time only. If the timing of such work and a woman's office hours clash it becomes increasingly difficult for her to manage them both. Therefore, providing flexible hours can work tremendously in favor of such women. Less flexible hours is a big difficulty that women believe affects their career negatively.

Long commuting hours to the office

Time is money. And with the ever-increasing traffic in most of the cities, coming to office becomes a task in itself. A major chunk of a woman's time is spent while traveling only. Therefore, women do feel that long commuting hours to office eats a lot of their time. Now this problem does not has a full proof solution but corporates can curb this problem by providing options such as work from home to women as and when they require.

Shift hours

With the increasing cases in crimes against women, the safety of the women employees becomes a subject of utmost importance for the organizations. Many women feel unsafe while traveling at odd hours for office. And night timings do not suit many women for a similar reason. Therefore, providing shift timings where women are comfortable and their safety is not at risk becomes increasingly important.

Long and stretched working hours

According to a study done by Serena Reece, an employee is productive only for three hours a day out of the total working hours. The additional hours are often wasted in the office cafeteria or small talks. A woman has many demands to cater to even at her home. So, if she completes her assigned duty for a day efficiently in less time she should be let go for the day. It would not only boost her morale but also ensure that the employees are eager to complete their task well in time and are not strolling around the office premises.

Opportunities and roles

The various variable extracted under this factor was Overseas opportunities and Gender-specific role.

Overseas opportunities

Going abroad to work has always been a lucrative option for most of the employees as it not only means more compensation but also a chance to explore a new culture and country altogether. Therefore, many people are eager to go "onsite" to work. The interesting thing that has been observed is that the number of women employees willing to go abroad has increased over the past few decades. Time has changed for the better, and when more and more men are coming forward and are providing a helping hand in the household responsibilities, the easier it has become for a woman to explore their overseas opportunities.

Gender-specific role

Women have often shown their distress when certain roles are classified as gender-specific. Especially when it comes to tasks that involve a lot of traveling, men are considered to be an ideal option for it. With changing time women are showing their eagerness to be a part of such

job roles and when they are not getting this opportunity due to their gender, it demotivates them and thus this affects their career negatively.

Male supremacy

The variables extracted under this factor were Gender Inequality and Chauvinism

Gender Inequality

Gender inequality has been an issue that women all over have faced in every domain of their lives. The working domain is no exception to it. Women for a long time did not get an equal opportunity than their male counterparts. Though we have come a long way from there but saying that this factor has completely eradicated would be a utopian dream. Therefore, when it comes to their careers, gender inequality affects them significantly.

Chauvinism

Chauvinism refers to giving excessive importance to one's gender. Women in a team often feel neglected by the other gender. Similarly, women at a higher management role often experience disobedience from their male juniors because they don't believe a lady can give them "orders". The woman gets in a dilemma and often is left clueless about the situation.

Pregnancy

A woman's body changes dramatically when she gets pregnant. Fatigue and sickness becomes a perpetual companion making it more and more difficult to work. Also, a new-born baby requires constant supervision and care. Maternity break may not suffice for the upbringing of the baby and thus many women decide to take a career break at this stage. Therefore, many women have experienced their career taking a turn when they have entered the stage of pregnancy.

Ambitions and size

This factor consists of higher studies and firm size which are discussed further below.

Higher studies

With changing time, more and more women are pursuing a higher degree and often take a break from their current job to get an additional degree. These kinds of breaks are known as structural

breaks as they further aid a woman to get a more desirable job and status. Thus, though this reason very much affects her career there is no negative connotation attached to this.

Firm size

A different woman has different preferences for the size of the firm they want to work in. while some women want a more diverse work option by working in a small start-up where they get different kinds of work to try their hands in. Some other women prefer to work in big organizations that provide a brand name and a more specific work guideline. When a woman does not get the type of firm she wants to work in, she often struggles with the job and may end up leaving it. Thus, we can say that firm size affects a woman's career.

Working aids
Presence of creches at working place

Various organizations have come up with various new ideas and strategies to aid the working woman and the presence of creches at the workplace was one such innovative and accommodating move. Various women have benefitted with this and they do believe that the presence of creches makes things a lot easier for them as they can give their attention to the work and the baby both. So, it is a win-win situation for both.

How can the duration of a career break be minimized?

As has been discussed, many factors affect a woman's career. She encounters one or more factors during her career journey. Now a few factors are more rigid and non-workable than the others. But a majority of them can be worked upon. Corporates should style their policies in such a way that they become more accommodating and compassionate with their women professionals. Flexible work timings, a part-time job, and work from home are a few options that will facilitate her career. Corporates can negotiate with the compensation and the employees will get the choice of timing for their work therefore it would be a win-win situation for both the parties.

Few suggestions for corporates which will aid a woman's career:

1) Foster the essence of inclusivity in your organization.
2) Pay utmost importance to gender diversity and the issues related to it.

3) Emphasis more on productivity of the employee rather than the "seat time".

4) Acknowledge and curb the implicit biasness existing within the firm.

5) Ensure training to every employee on performance evaluations and the appraisals related with it.

6) Evaluate and work on the attrition of women employees and work on the root cause.

7) Provide aids to working mother by providing creches, subsidized child care etc.

8) Generate awareness on time management and policies such as flexible working hours.

9) Sponsor women employees for top management and other leadership roles.

10) Spread and highlight the success stories of women leaders in order to motivate others.

Future Research

This paper was focussed on the factors affecting a woman's career and a few suggestions which will aid her career and may avoid a break in her career. Future studies can be done on a few specific policies taken by the respective organizations and firms which will increase the awareness further.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of the research were:

(a) The Primary limitation of the research is the unwillingness of working women professionals to participate in the survey.

(b) Larger sample sizes may result in more reliable results.

(c)   A paucity of the time frame to conduct the research.

Conclusion

Indian women professionals have come a long way. They are not only working diligently with their male counterparts but are also leading the way in many places. But there is no denying the fact that women do face a lot of challenges throughout their careers. A very interesting fact that has been highlighted via this research is that today women are no longer considering marriage,

pregnancy, child/elder care as the only reason of a career break but the absence of leadership opportunities, less mentorship, and less scope of career growth are some major reasons affecting their career. It shows that women are becoming more ambitious and the desire to get to a higher level of management has increased. Corporates must consider all these factors while designing their policies. Also, knowing these factors well in advance will help women to plan their career graph and they will be well prepared for these future deterrents and thus have a smoother career trajectory.

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