**Why Women’s Participation Is Lesser Than Men**

**In The IT Industrial Sector?**

Women in tech face a lot of challenges like stereotyping, unequal pay, lack of representation and inspirations and many more that discourage women from participating in the IT sector. Usually, social, economical and educational discouragement create strong barriers for women to explore this field of great opportunities. The primary factors that cause women’s less participation in the tech sector are discussed in details below.

**Pay Inequality In Tech Industry:**

Various studies and reports verify that there exists a gender pay gap in the tech industry. Women in tech earn approximately 82 cents for every dollar earned by men where it drops significantly up to 78 cents as the position gets higher *(U.S Census Bureau)*. For example, In tech hubs like Silicon Valley, women earn 84% of what men do. Additionally, women are offered lower salaries than men by 63%.

These statistics prove that the imbalance of pay in the IT industry is a significant issue that fails to provide value to women’s talent and efforts which discourage women from joining this industry. Some of the reasons behind this discrimination in the gender pay includes:

* **Fewer high paying jobs opening for women:** There are often less high-paying tech roles like software engineering, data science, data engineering and other AI related jobs that allow only men to apply, not women. Generally, women get offers from lower-paying job roles like project management or HR.
* **Negotiation ability of women:** Women are less likely to negotiate their salaries compared to men. When they do negotiate, they often ask for less. Men are three times more likely than women to negotiate a raise *(source: Glassdoor)*. This difference in negotiation skills between men and women causes visible differences in the pay gap for women.

**Lack Of Representation:**

Only 26% of tech-related jobs are held by women where about 25% are in leadership positions and only 14% are in software engineering roles. Again, the media does not promote or highlight much of female IT experts, their achievements and contributions compared to male ones. Thus, the tech industry suffers from a significant lack of representation of women.

The absence of visible examples of successful women in the IT sector discourages other women from following this career. Besides, they doubt themselves to their own abilities and feel they will not fit in this sector.

*“Most women think technology is more like a boy’s club and they(women) will not fit in”.- Regina Agyare.*

According to PwC reports:

* 78% of students can’t name a female working in tech.
* Only 16% of females have had a career in tech suggested to them as an option.
* Just 3% of women have tech as their first choice career path.

As there are few women in the workplace or on their team, they feel isolated which later turn to demotivation. Sometimes, it can become exhausting and reduce their confidence working in male groups alone, resulting in most of them leaving their IT jobs.

**Social Stereotypes:**

There are some common myths in society for women that make it difficult for them to advance in a tech career or to follow this passion. These stereotypes have become common that it creates an impact in the hiring process, promotion opportunities and workplace culture. Some of the myths are discussed below:

* Most people think that women are good at theory based education and less on the technical or practical side. Thus, they have created a myth that a woman should study medical or subjects related to that domain where men should study engineering. They think women are more suited to non-technical or soft roles. Thus, very few girls see dreams of becoming software engineers or IT specialists in their childhood.
* There is another myth that IT careers are only for individuals with strong mathematical or technical skills only but there are a wide range of IT careers options that do not require a strong mathematics or technical expertise like ui/ux design, web design, software testing, technical support engineer etc.
* Tech is a male dominating field and women cannot fit in this career is another myth.
* Women cannot balance family and personal life with a career in tech.
* Women are less passionate about technology.

These are some common stereotypes causing limitations in women's minds and not allowing them to study IT related subjects. Thus, less women in the tech sector resulting to create an image that IT is a male dominating sector.

**Work-Life Balance For Women:**

Generally, maintaining a balance between work and personal life is challenging for everyone, but it can be more challenging for women. There is a social expectation that a woman should excel both at work and home which creates much more pressure on women compared to men. In the IT sector there are normally long working hours, tight deadlines and constant learning and connectivity as this sector evolves quicker than other sectors.

Sometimes, maintaining both family and work load is difficult for women. Women may feel they are falling short in one or both areas. The fear of being perceived as less committed or competent if they prioritize family responsibilities can lead to overcompensation at work and they may feel self doubt. Moreover, the lack of flexible work policies in some tech companies can make it difficult for women to achieve the balance they seek. Even in organizations that promote work-life balance, women may feel reluctant to take advantage of these policies, fearing it will affect their career progression or reinforce stereotypes about women’s commitment to their careers.

**Microaggressions Towards Women:**

Women often face microaggression that is a form of discrimination that can be intentional in tech. For example they get interrupted or talked over in meetings, not taking their ideas seriously and being subjected to inappropriate comments or behavior.

A study found that of 2400 job candidates, ¾ female respondents said that they experienced discrimination in the form of an inability to be taken seriously by company leadership *(source: Hired Research)*. Some of the forms of this type of discrimination include:

* Women are often interrupted or talked over in meetings, even when they are trying to contribute to the team. This leads to a sense of frustration for women and they feel less important in the IT sector as this work culture hinders them from sharing their ideas and expertise.
* Women are also often subjected to inappropriate comments or behavior such as sexist jokes by their male colleagues. These types of incidents create a hostile work environment and can make women feel unsafe or uncomfortable at work.
* Women in tech may feel like they don’t belong in a male dominated industry which leads them to the feeling of imposter syndrome. This can make it difficult for women to build networks, find mentors and advance in their IT career.

Thus, These microaggressions towards women damage their interest in IT sectors as well as make less women participate in this industry compared to men. These are some of the reasons behind the lower number of women in the IT industry.

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