Chapter: 6

CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Introduction

Gender discrimination is a serious problem in all the sectors of the economy. Information Technology being a modern sector, we expect the institutional framework and the work culture to be supportive of women. However the existing literature suggests mix opinion, one set of literature suggests that the sector is gender friendly while their other studies suggesting a low rate of female labor force participation, stagnation of females at the lower level in the organization and the glass ceiling, etc. It was found during the secondary research that there are various barriers or dimensions that shape the career growth of female employees in the IT industry. Various researchers have considered specific dimensions from many as being the most implicit one. Tharenou (1999) noted in his study that male stereotyping is the major factor that acts as a barrier to the growth of career of women in India. He stated that there is the huge influence of male stereotyping of the executive roles in the organizations. Also, as a result, women have to face lack of support and at the same time, they are usually excluded from social and professional networks within the organizations. On the other hand, Mattis (1994) stated that there is a lack of effective management training programs and training and development opportunities for women in most organizations. He also hinted towards the inadequacy of compensation systems which were biased in favor of male employees. Mattis also stated that women have to face the consequences of inflexible work schedules and there is a need for companies to introduce specialized programs which may help them in balancing their work life and personal life efficiently (Mattis, 1994).

On the other hand, various researchers have noted the presence of a 'glass ceiling' for women which hampers their growth in their careers. As noted by Wirth (2001), female employees were more likely to resign from managerial positions than male employees when they reach the level. This is because of the 'glass ceiling' barrier faced by women which is invisible but is very much there to hamper their career growth since it leads to

creation of attitudes and prejudices in organizations which eventually do not provide them with opportunities to access higher level positions. Similarly, Igbaria & Wormley (1992) stated that the existence of a glass ceiling acts as a major, but invisible barrier which does not allow women to advance themselves to top executive positions.

However, very few studies have specifically taken the case of IT industry. Further, whatever limited study on IT industry are, have focused on any one determinant of female's career growth. In this background the present study tries to understand the level and pattern of gender discrimination in the labor market and attempts to explore its determinants from the three quadrants vis. Social norms, institutional arrangements and individual characteristics.

While going through the existing literature, the researcher focused in detail upon the status and the changing role of women in the labor force of India, along with a discussion of the social norms, institutional arrangements, labor market discrimination and individual characteristics of women labor force in India. Following the theoretical framework that included different theories applicable to gender discrimination against women labour force such as issues identified like, maximum time spend by women in unpaid household chores than their spouse or male kin, inability to move ahead in career owing to family commitments or facing constraints from family upon late stay, justify the theories of housewifisation (Olsen & Mehta, 2006) and time use survey (Hirway, 2000), are analyzed at length.

In the literature review conducted at the initial stage of the study, no work was found to have considered all the four factors and their impact on the gender gap in India. The earlier works have focused on studying the role of one or few of these factors on the work experience, satisfaction, gender discrimination on wage gap faced by women in different sectors of India. However, there is a need to understand the comprehensive impact of all these factors on the gender discrimination in India. In order to fill this literature gap, the factor analysis was conducted and the importance of all four factors has been studied.

After going through an extensive review the researcher has formulated research questions to study the career path of working women in Information Technology and identifying various dimensions and analyzing the multiplicity of the factors affecting her career growth. Further, the researcher computed a conceptual framework in which social norms, institutional arrangements (official, government policies and labor market discrimination) and individual characteristics have been taken as independent dimensions affecting the career growth of the working women. Career growth has been taken as a dependent composite indicator of appraisal and promotion. In order to explore the above mentioned issues a primary study has been conducted in Delhi- NCR, as in recent times this region of the country has witnessed a tremendous growth of information technology firms. The targeted population has covered 2-3 employees of 84 IT based companies (N=250) and the HR managers of 5 companies among the selected ones (N=5). The primary data was collected from respondents directly by administering structured questionnaire for female employees and interview schedule of HR managers. The primary data collected through structured questionnaires during the course of the study were analyzed using statistical tools such as descriptive statistics, correlation, multiple regression and factor analysis to test the hypothesis formulated in the present work. Further, we have discussed about the findings of the study, following by recommendations. Finally, the chapter concludes at a brief summary and future scope of the study.

6.2 Career Growth Path of Women in IT

According to the primary survey conducted by the researcher in Delhi – NCR region of the country, it was found that the career path of the women working in IT was not steady. It was found that 48 percent had 1 to 5 years of total work experience while about 31 percent had work experience of 6 to 8 years. Maximum of the respondents had been in the same job since 0 to 5 years. 90 percent worked since 1 to 5 years in their previous jobs. All the respondents have changed maximum one job in the past 5 years. Those respondents who changed their jobs reported that their hectic schedule, unequal treatment between male and female workers and relocation of husband's job were the main reason for switching their job. This shows that the respondents did not prefer to change their jobs

very often. Rather, they preferred to settle down in their jobs if the job was not too overtiring and overburdening in consideration with their family responsibility and domestic duties along with husband's stability in job at one place..

6.3 Factors Affecting Career of Working Women

The secondary research revealed that there are multiple dimensions which affect the career growth of female employees in the Indian IT industry. These factors include individual characteristics, social norms, cultural backgrounds, structural factors, job related factors/professional factors. In this regard, Ahuja (2002) noted that women face social and structural barriers in the IT industry. On the other hand, Moore (2000) concluded in his study that women participated lesser in the IT workforce because they were usually dissatisfied or not satisfied with their jobs. He pointed out that their satisfaction level was lower than their male counterparts, which led to their discouragement.

The present work revealed that there are multiple factor which affect career growth of female employees in IT organizations. They are social norms, institutional arrangements and labor market discrimination. The social norms refer to the situations faced by female employees due to the strong cultural and social stereotype and the perceptions of people towards working Indian women in India. It also includes the pressures faced by them within the confines of their homes and families and the responsibilities they are bound to fulfill regardless of whether they have sufficient time to do it at all. The institutional arrangements include the issues faced by female employees in offices while dealing with supervisors, colleagues and subordinates. This also includes the treatment given by companies to these women in terms of grievance redressal, attitudes of supervisors, training and development and promotions and appraisals. Lastly, labor market discrimination was found to be another significant factor in explaining the growth or hampering thereof the career aspects of women in Indian IT industry. This includes the difference in salaries and pay packages of male employees and female employees with the same level of competency and skills. It also includes the partially observed in organizations at the time of appraisals and promotions wherein male employees seem to get an advantage over female employees. An important observation under this factor was

that female employees faced wage discrimination in case of long leaves due to pregnancy (maternity leaves) rather than in other cases.

6.4 Multidimensionality of Factors Affecting Career Growth of Female Employees

The secondary research revealed that more and more women are participating in the IT industry during the recent years. As a result, women are treading the career growth path in this industry increasingly. Such participation and career growth path of these working women is influenced by a number of factors as noted by number of researchers. It has been noted that women started participating in the IT workforce because they were able to earn comparatively high salaries while these jobs provide them easy international mobility. At the same time, IT companies have gender neutral policies implemented in their systems which are based on the possession of knowledge-centric skills. In addition to this, the jobs in this industry are not physically demanding for females and they are also provided with a comfortable indoor work environment (Kumar 2001; Shanker, 2008). In this regard, Kelkar, Sreshta & Veena (2002) noted that Indian women prefer to work outside their homes since they view this as an opportunity to break free from being dependent on other people for their financial needs and at the same time, working outside helps them in improving their social position.

However, with regard to the career growth of these women, it was found that there are certain un-breach-able barriers that hinder the path of women and do not allow them to reach new heights in terms of wages or ranks. These barriers also prevent them from rising to the higher hierarchical levels in an organization, even if they are highly qualified (Harris & Wilkinson, 2004; Kaminski & Reilly, 2004; Perrons, 2002; Sumner & Niederman, 2003; Upadhya, 2006). It can be seen that the past studies indicate that there were more than one factor impacting career growth path of women in the Indian IT industry.

This hypothesis has been tested by taking into consideration the results of factor analysis and regression analysis conducted for the study. These results of factor analysis revealed that the career growth path of working women in IT industry is influenced by three different dimensions rather than one single dimension. These dimensions are social

norms, institutional arrangements and labor market discriminations. However, it was found that there were three sub factors which were identified as insignificant under the component institutional arrangements, namely, easier jobs than male colleagues, supervisor biased towards male colleagues and people drawing conclusions about character, reputation and attitude. Thus, it has been determined that the career growth path of working women is not uni-dimensional but multi-dimensional in IT organizations.

However, with respect to the perceptions of the HR managers, an interview schedule revealed that they found social norms to be the most influencing factor for the of working women. According to them, female employees find it difficult to manage their work life and personal life and are not able to devote sufficient time to their up-gradation and skill improvisation. They also stated that female employees need more flexibility and more leaves due to their family responsibilities which again hamper their career growth.

Thus, the secondary analysis as well as a primary analysis indicates towards the factors of social norms and institutional arrangements as being important in explaining the variation in occupational participation and career growth path of women in IT industry.

6.5 Recommendations

The researcher has been able to come up with the following recommendations for the study at hand. These recommendations are based on the findings of the study and aim at improving the work scenario for women in the Indian IT industry with respect to their work participation and career growth trajectory. However, these recommendations may be followed with due consideration for the limitations of the study as stated in the research methodology chapter. Following are the recommendations of the study:

- The primary analysis found that due to their family responsibilities, women are unable to devote enough time towards their skill up-gradation which eventually hampers their career growth. Thus, it may be recommended that IT companies provide their employees with training and development opportunities within the company so that the employees can upgrade themselves and at the same time, prove to be a more valuable asset for the organization.

- The primary analysis revealed that women were dissatisfied with the leaves provided by the office, rest period and the fact that they had to work overtime in the office. However, it is not practically possible for companies to increase the number of leaves or rest period. Thus, it may be recommended that the companies ensure that female employees do not have to work overtime so that their professional life doesn't conflict with their personal lives.

- The primary analysis showed that female employees were sometimes unable to attend social outings with their colleagues due to which their equation with supervisors was hampered. Thus, it may be recommended that companies may try to plan social outings within work hours of the office so that women do not have to miss out on them and eventually suffer in terms of career growth.

- The primary research revealed that female employees face occupational health problems due to their jobs in IT organizations. Thus, it may be recommended that companies provide their employees with a more comfortable environment wherein employees do not feel overstressed or overburdened with their work.

- It was found during the primary research that female employees were less satisfied with the percentage of appraisals and the number of promotions they got than their male counterparts. Thus, it may be recommended that companies ensure that there is no gender bias in their organizations with regards to appraisals and promotions.

- It was also found that women felt that pregnancy or maternity leaves hampered their wages on re-joining post maternity leaves. Thus, it may be recommended that the companies ensure that such wage discriminations do not happen and the performance of the employees should be the only criteria for wage determination.

- The primary analysis found that female employees did not feel that they were given easier jobs than their male colleagues. However, with respect to their personal commitments, it may be beneficial for women to be given easier jobs than their male counterparts. Nevertheless, the companies should not give easier jobs to female employees because it is likely to hamper their self-esteem and self-worth regarding their capabilities to perform difficult tasks.

6.6 Summary and Future Scope

The current study determined that the career path of women in IT industry is affected by various dimensions, ranging from social norms to cultural perceptions. The researcher

has focused only on IT industry based in Delhi-NCR region. In the study, the researcher has examined various social, cultural, economic and personal aspects of women's life in India. There is a huge gender disparity in India considering both home and labor market. The current status of women is examined in a broader context where in their educational, health and employment profiles across states was examined and analyzed. The change in roles of women in India has gained a huge momentum on the social and economic grounds of the Indian economy. There has been a structural shift in the Indian economy since 1991 which has led to a continuous shift in the societal attitudes towards employment, education and health status of women in India. The researcher has followed a realistic philosophy in order to analyze the social, institutional and market pressures on the women working in the IT sector. However, their impact is not equal and some factors were found to exert more influence than the others, specifically on the career path of women employees. The stereotype that women are the weaker sex and cannot perform as well as men has been found to be at the core of institutional arrangement issues, wage market discrimination as well as social norms, which the women labor force still suffer from even today. Thus, it is important that the new age and time be embraced and companies start valuing their female employees as much as they value their male employees and not treat them as the weaker sex. At the same time, the limitations women face due to cultural and societal norms prevalent in India cannot be ignored and female employees must be provided with flexibility and appropriate working conditions accordingly. The future scope for the study may include a more detailed research by taking into consideration the various other factors that have not been considered for the current study. These may include qualitative factors like cultural or religious backgrounds of women, their personal characteristics and their career aspirations and ambitions. Also, women sometimes take long breaks from their careers due to specific life events. Thus, futures studies may be conducted based on such women are in their second innings of working in the Indian IT industry. A future study may also include the perceptions of male employees in this regard so that gender bias in the analysis can be further normalized and more credible results can be obtained. Further, future studies may be based in other Indian cities, including the metropolitan cities as well as small Tier II cities where there is a growing population of working women for the past few years.