

**CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS OF WOMEN PROFESSIONALS
IN I.T. SECTOR – A CASE STUDY OF TECHNOPARK,
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM**

THESIS SUBMITTED TO BHARATHIAR UNIVERSITY IN PARTIAL
FULLFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF
PHILOSOPHY IN SOCIAL WORK

By

AJITH S

Reg. No: - PhD-CB-DEC 2013-0159

UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF

Dr. SONNY JOSE

Associate Professor, Head of Social Work Department

Loyola College of Social Sciences, Sreekariyam

Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, India, Pin: - 695017



**RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT CENTRE
BHARATHIAR UNIVERSITY, COIMBATORE – 641 046
TAMILNADU, INDIA**

AUGUST 2018

CHAPTER VI

FINDINGS, SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

6.0 Introduction

The present study titled “Challenges and Prospects of Women I.T. Professionals: A Case Study with reference to Technopark, Thiruvananthapuram”, attempts to document and describe the psychosocial and work-related challenges encountered by women I.T. professionals. The study specifically looks at the challenges- social, psychological and work-related - as perceived by women I.T. professionals. The study further looks into how women professionals perceive implementation of labour laws and administration of policies in I.T., and goes on to document the social and psychological challenges encountered by women professionals in during two phases - early and middle adulthood- as well as in two project contexts - onsite and offshore. The study covers a sample size of 600 and adopts the simple random sampling design and generated data using a self-prepared interview guide. Based on the observations, analysis of the data generated, and interviews with women professionals and key informants, the researcher arrived at certain as summarised in this chapter. The findings are presented in same sequence as objectives.

6.1 Social challenges of Women I.T. professionals:

The respondents of the study perceived that women I.T. professionals experience social challenges from within and outside the work environment.

1. The findings show that most of the I.T. women employees who responded to the research study experienced discrimination based on gender at their work place. A majority of the women opined that men and women employees were perceived and treated differently in all work-related aspects, in their respective organizations. This ‘differential’ treatment is visible at various points - during recruitment, performance appraisal, nomination to onsite projects, promotion, as well as involvement in the integration and maintenance functions of the companies.
2. The study showed that almost half of the women respondents experienced a difficulty in maintaining a work-life balance; i.e., they had difficulties balancing between work schedule & demands from the family. Project deadlines, ‘late

work’ as well as the travel time, force women I.T. employees to skip important family responsibilities, which lead to tensions in family relations.

3. Women I.T. professionals opined that the globalised era demanded a change in the role of women in their families. A majority opinioned that their family ‘resisted’ and to a certain degree abhorred their late-coming. They felt that women’s status has not changed much on account of the predominant patriarchal culture. Women still have little say in economic, social and personal decisions in life.
4. Most of the respondents were frustrated that the society around still covertly stereotyped I.T.women as ‘promiscuous’ on account of their late work schedules. They found their neighbours and society at large, perceiving the nature of work as well as late coming from office in a negative manner. This perception precipitated adjustment problems in their families.
5. At their workplace, women I.T. employees perceive that I.T. companies wrested ‘less confidence’ in female employees in comparison to male employees, while assigning project and client management tasks.
6. Most of the respondents feel that women I.T. employees of large and medium enterprises do have gross issues in maintaining rapport with male colleagues. This manifested in the form of ‘communication gaps’ leading to psychological barriers, eventually resulting in performance issues at work. Women I.T. professionals perceived their male colleagues as ‘reluctant’ in consulting them about key decision making processes. Almost half of the respondents were ‘unhappy’ with the professional support given by their male colleagues, at work.
7. More than half of the respondents opinioned that their families ‘did not offer good support’ when they had to travel onsite projects or stay away from home longer. Some of the respondents shared to the researcher that the global work schedules, assignments requiring travel, and evening meetings, often created a ‘misunderstanding’ among family and close members. This was largely attributed to the conservative attitudes and also, due to the lack of understanding of the scenario. The ignorance of the partner as well as family members about the nature of work and work schedules of I.T. employees created in the family precipitating issues related to work-life balance.

8. Most of the respondents opined that young women I.T. employees in general found it difficult to 'get alliances' from men outside I.T. sector. Equally concerning, was the finding that, almost half of the respondents thought that young I.T. ladies 'faced constraints in getting marriage proposals and alliances' exclusively from the I.T. sector. These views were attributed to the prejudice in the society that 'I.T. jobs would precipitate 'imbalance in personal and married life'
9. Almost half of the respondents opined that 'arranged marriages' were much more common than impulsive marriages in I.T. sector. In the opinion of the participants, impulsive marriages resulted in an incompatibility in marriage life, further contributing to marital disharmony.
10. The highly demanding work schedules beyond work timings on one hand, and the family commitments on the other hand, often created role-conflicts causing disharmony in married life. Almost half of the respondents opined that the 'nature of work', 'busy work schedules' and the 'focus on career-building' in the I.T. sector contributed to marital disharmony. Slightly above a third among the participants claimed 'able to lead a harmonious family life' despite busy work schedules.
11. Slightly above half among the participants were apprehensive that the society in general perceives them as an 'elite' group isolating them from common interactions. Half of the women I.T. employees claimed to have 'experienced cultural conflicts on account of high living standards and perceived status.'
12. Close to half of the respondents agreed to the fact the busy work schedules and client timings make them unavailable to participate in family and social engagements.

6.2 Psychological challenges of Women I.T. Professionals:-

The study found the perception of women I.T. professionals about some of the psychological challenges experienced by working women in I.T. sector.

1. Half of the respondent women I.T. professionals, were unable to maintain work-life; they claimed to experience "burnout". Women I.T. professionals explained burnout as a result of an inability to balance over work load against family

demands over a substantial period of time. High aspirations about lifestyle, focus on career building and drive to make money demand every employee toil more than their abilities; such unrealistic aspirations create strains them causing burnout. This also forces them to consider quitting their jobs with the intention of gaining physical and psychological balance.

2. A little above half of the respondent women I.T. professionals, in general, experience 'frustration' and 'poor job satisfaction'. The perception about a "glass ceiling" capping on their possibility for advancement within the industry frustrates them. On the other hand, women I.T. professionals in general believe that they deserved opportunities and higher responsibilities involving decision making and leadership roles. Unfortunately, this is not offered to women I.T. professionals when compared to their male counterparts.
3. Two thirds of the responding women I.T. professionals were found to be 'hypersensitive' and 'defensive' while being given performance feedback, when compared to their male counterparts. During the study, Women I.T. professionals revealed that they are not getting deserved promotions and job roles as they move up the career ladder. As a result, they do have a feeling that the performance feedback process will not make much impact even if they perform at a high standard level.
4. The study indicates that women I.T. professionals in general experienced a 'psychological barrier' while communicating with their male superiors as well as their peers; they perceived their male superiors to be 'not always receptive' to their communications.
5. Majority of the respondents did not experience any 'role conflict due to the demands from personal and professional lives'. The few who perceived a role conflict explained this as arising out of the dilemma between attending to demanding work schedules beyond work timings and family commitments. This dilemma often create conflicts, rendering high pressure on them.
6. Irrespective of whether they worked in large or medium scale enterprises, almost a third of the respondents are of the opinion lived under the 'constant fear of losing their jobs' and 'worried about their job security'. This fear prevails despite the fact that many of them enjoy high levels of compensation packages as well as positions.

6.3 Work related challenges of Women I.T.professionals:-

1. A majority of the women I.T. employees perceived that they are not getting 'equal preference' in the hiring process, even though they possessed the same qualification and experience to that of their male counterparts. The respondents feel that despite the increase in the intake percentage of women employees in I.T. firms in Technopark, most of the employers give 'less preference' to women professionals during hiring process; they tend to focus on women's limitations rather than strengths at the time of hiring process. This is perhaps an indication of the prevalence of 'glass ceiling syndrome.'
2. Two third of the women I.T.professionals generally observe of an absence of any encouragement in the form of 'rewards' and 'acceptance' even in the event of them 'out-performing male colleagues'. This perception prevails even though most of them are happy with compensation standards provided by large scale companies.
3. Almost half of the women I.T. employees who responded to the study are of the view that the managements of the company are under-utilizing their professional strengths at work.
4. More specifically, women employees in general experience a steady career growth during the first five years of their career. Beyond that, their career hits a trough. The study also shows that learning and growth opportunities for women I.T.employees decline sharply on moving up the career ladder. Almost half of the respondents believed that 'experienced female I.T. professionals do not get better learning and growth opportunities', when compared to the young female I.T. professionals (< 5 Years).
5. The study indicates that the majority of the respondents were 'not satisfied' with the 'flexi-work schedule' nor with the 'work-from-home' arrangements provided by their companies working from the Technopark campus. They observed that most of the companies did not encourage flexible work option such as 'work-from-home', 'flexi-timings', 'virtual support', which would have otherwise, permitted them to attend to family commitments of top priority.
6. Most of the women I.T. professionals were not happy with the 'salary' and 'perks' provided to them. They want to have a change in both the payment

system as well as the timing of payment. The salary and its disbursement are the main causes of worry for them.

7. The study shows perceived inconsistencies in the manner with which supervisors communicate and implement career growth plans in most companies. Women employees of companies who participated in the study shared that definite career growth policy, processes for monitoring and evaluating outcomes and development programs are lacking in many companies. In the same vein non-implementation of career planning process by supervisors are seen even in large scale companies, although it is well documented.
8. Most of the women employees who participated in the study revealed that they do not get adequate opportunities or platforms to clarify long-term objectives of the company. This makes it tough for them to visualize and plan their respective career path. This apparent lack of clarity results in disparities while matching individual goals and organizational goals.
9. Most of the women I.T. employees perceive that both companies and clients prefer male consultants for critical as well as high value projects, which in turn hinder the career growth prospects of women professionals.
10. More than two thirds of the respondents opined that I.T. companies do not always offer women employees equal opportunities for occupying senior management and leadership roles when compared to men.
11. More than half of the participants of the study opine that the women I.T. professionals experience harassment from supervisors and male colleagues. The harassment are more often verbal and non-verbal communication sexual overtones, in work related conversations.
12. A weighted average analysis of the perception regarding career inhibiting factors shows that respondents picked following factors of career inhibition in the descending order. The career inhibiting factors in the descending order were perceived to be 'lack of involvement in direct client interaction', 'limited promotion opportunities for women employees', 'inequality between male and female employees' in terms of status and opportunities, 'lower wages for female employees' and 'lack of training opportunities for women employees'.

6.4 Women I.T. professionals and their perception of Labour Laws

The findings of the study show perception of women I.T. employees about the labour laws and its administration by their employers

1. Almost half of the respondents are dissatisfied with the manner in which labour laws were administered and implemented in their respective organizations of employment.
2. Almost half of the respondents expressed dissatisfaction in the manner with which the safety and security arrangements of their respective companies were implemented. Such lapses were a matter of worry and tension to women employees when they stepped out after work from these I.T. zones. Their anxieties compounded because they felt that many companies and Technopark authorities were callous in the monitoring and implementation of these vital matter. Weighted average analysis about the availability of statutory and welfare measures by respondents yielded the following results. Two-thirds of the participants confirmed that their organization's canteen or pooled canteen facilities are available conveniently close to their office premises. Two-thirds each of the respondents expressed satisfaction in the manner their organizations provide maternity benefit and implemented Employee Provident Fund. A little above half each claimed that their respective organisations provided for ESI facilities as well as medical allowances. However only two-fifths were satisfied with the conveyance option and only a tenth with the executive check up options provided by their respective companies. Factors such as transportation and health check-up were of significant importance to women I.T. professionals. Transportation was a hygiene factor much appreciated by women employees. What made it more appealing was that only a few companies offered it during the day; although the same provision was offered by most companies during the night, security became a worry for women

6.5 Social and psychological challenges of Women I.T. professionals in Early and Middle Adulthood

The perception of women I.T. professionals about the social and psychological challenges faced by working women in I.T. sector during their early adulthood and middle adulthood are given below:-

1. Almost half of the responding women I.T. professionals in early adulthood claimed to be free of any major marital adjustment issues when compared to those in their middle adulthood.
2. Almost two-third of the respondents in their early adulthood enjoyed a 'high' lifestyle when compared to those in middle adulthood. In other words DINK syndrome (Double income – No Kids option) was more prevalent among young adults. The former generally spent their income on gadgets, vehicles, lifestyle shopping and good food.
3. Nearly two-thirds of the respondents among the young adult women I.T. employees (20-39 years) were more psychologically prepared than middle-aged women I.T. professionals (<40 years) for career advancements even if there are challenges - social, psychological and physical - at work. All the same it was found that the middle adulthood women were adjusting reasonably well despite biophysical health degeneration and life style diseases.
4. The women I.T. professionals cited their psychological challenges as 'frustration', 'boredom', 'stagnation on the job' (career plateau), etc. Re-engagement after an empty nest syndrome is found to be prevalent more among women employees in middle adulthood, when compared to those in early adulthood.
5. The issues differed across the two cohorts - young adults and the middle-aged - among the women I.T. professionals'. The inability for 'personal adjustment' and 'conflict and defiance towards with the supervisors' is commonly found among middle-aged I.T. women professionals. However, impulsive relationships issues, over-enthusiasm at work and tendency for job changes resulting in attrition, are more among young adult women I.T. employees.

6.6 Perception about challenges of women I.T. professionals working on onsite and offshore projects

1. Nearly two-third of women I.T. employees studied claimed that those employed on-site, face more issues in 'coping' with 'family demands' compared to those employed offshore. Being on-site demands long stay, away from home, to cater to project demands.

2. In tandem with finding 6.6.1, close to two-thirds of the respondents working offshore, faced fewer adjustment issues at work compare to those employed onsite.
3. The nature of work contributes to health issues for women working in both contexts- onsite and offshore. However, the change in climate, cuisine, and time zones, besides travel,expose onsite women I.T.professionals to health hazards in comparison to those employed offshore. Almost two-third of the respondents vouch that women I.T. consultants working on onsite projects, suffer more health issues than those working offshore.
4. Almost two-thirds of the respondents observed that women I.T.employees employed offshore experience high level of communication issues compared to onsite employees. This problem is on account of transmission loss in communications owing to the filtering occurring dring interactions between clients and supervisors. The offshore employee is often the third-person in the communication which ought to be direct.
5. Women I.T. professionals working offshore experience ‘boredom’ as a result of work monotony, denial of benefits and the lack of opportunities for personal skills upgradation.
6. A comparative study between offshore and onsite employees show that the latter among women I.T. employees experience imbalance in marital life as well as face challenges in taking care of family and children. Women employees employed onsite experience isolation, marital disharmony, anxiety about family & children, and stress due to lack of family bonding.
7. WomenI.T. employees employed offshore experience more role conflict than onsite women I.T. employees. This is due to inability to balance office, household and travel. Two-thirds of the respondents experienced observed that ‘role conflict’ and ‘low job morale’were more among offshore women employees than among onsite women employees.
8. The findings show that offshore employees are ‘uncertain’ and ‘worried’ about their career trajectories when compared to their counterparts working in the long-term onsite projects.
9. It was observed that offshore women I.T. employees lack ‘multicultural exposure’ compared to onsite women I.T. employees. The same variation applies in the case of earnings too.Two-thirdsof the respondents, opined that lack of both

‘multicultural exposure’ and ‘earnings’ affect the productivity of offshore women employees.

6.7 Perception about the career Prospects of women I.T. professionals working on onsite and offshore projects

1. Most of the participants of the study perceived that career prospects of onsite women employees are influenced by factors such as ‘competence in international consulting’, ‘project exposure’, ‘job enrichment’, ‘better earnings’(due to high allowances and perks), ‘multicultural sensitivity’, ‘multi-skilling’, ‘opportunities for career advancement’, ‘opportunity for a job shift to global organizations’, etc.
2. The study shows that career prospects of offshore women I.T. professionals include opportunities to take up in-house project management role by moving up the career ladder, multitasking in project support, in-house training and certification, a steady work environment, opportunity to mentor new employees, etc.
3. Respondents of the study perceived that prospects such as hierarchical growth, compensation benefits, global competency are acquired more by women I.T. employees who take up onsite project consulting assignments.
4. The study shows that prospects such as consistent work environment, learning and development, family time are more when women I.T. employees work from offshore delivery centers.

6.8.Suggestions based on the Thesis Study:

The study on the psychosocial and work-related challenges covered 600 women I.T. professionals. These women were sampled from various companies operating in Technopark, Thiruvananthapuram. Suggestions were elicited from I.T. professionals with regard to improving work environment and better adjustment, based on which social work interventions have been generated:. Suggestions are presented under three headings:

1. Measures to improve quality of work-life of women I.T. employees
2. Suggestions to employers for ensuring effective adjustment of women I.T. employees at their work place
3. Suggestions for enhancing personal coping mechanisms of women I.T. employees

6.8.1 Suggestions to improve the quality of work-life of women I.T. employees

1. Women Employee Welfare Fund Board at Technopark

The woman participants suggested the need for a separate welfare fund especially for women employees working in Technopark campus. A proper welfare board will ensure health, safety and welfare for women employees by implementing various clauses mentioned in Factories act 1948 and Shops & commercial establishment's act 1952. Since women I.T. employees are making contributions to workers' welfare board, hence there must be mechanisms to ensure proper support for employees by assuring all the welfare facilities mentioned in the labour laws.

2. Career Counselling

As women employees in I.T. sector experience various social and psychological challenges in the work context, companies must provide facilities for career and personal counselling assisted by professional counsellors. Such kind of diversity and inclusion programs will enhance the brand value of the organization and attract more women employees to join it. Career counseling facilitates to get women back into the work after a break, as well as also assists the women to plan a break properly. The same may be undertaken in a confidential manner

3. Pre-marital Counselling & Marital Counselling

Many of the women employees interviewed mentioned about marital disharmony, adjustmental issues with partner, impulsive marriages and the resultant issues as well as soaring divorce rates. It is suggested that pre-marital and marital counseling services in companies be made optional. The employees who are about to get married may avail the pre marital counselling services by informing the respective HR departments. Married employees who want couple or marital counseling may also avail services of experienced counselors by taking prior appointments through respective HR departments.

4. Mentoring Program

Professional mentoring process must be implemented in organizations, and the mentors must be proper trained besides being given awareness sessions on mentoring. Similarly, an emphasis on the prospects and advantages of mentoring may be imparted to the employees at the point of induction and subsequently. It gives the women I.T.

employees the necessary confidence to communicate effectively with their superiors and male counterparts. Besides, mentoring equips them to plan their career by getting professional inputs from seniors.

5. Implementation of succession planning

“Who will succeed whom” concept must be given serious consideration and implemented; and select women employees must be given understudy training, so that they take up positions vacated and perform successfully perform as soon as they take charge in the new role. Proper succession planning process should help many of the potential women employees in I.T. sector to come up to decision making and leadership roles.

6. Adherence to the enforcement of labour laws

Many of the respondents are not aware about major labour laws and their rights. In this study, the researcher noted that neither did many companies bother to not honour or implement labour laws. Statutory benefits such as maternity benefit, ESI, EPF, health benefits, canteen etc were not offered to many women I.T. employees. The labour department and more specifically Technopark authorities must be mandated to honour and enforce labour laws and monitor so as to ensure that all the companies adhere to the provisions in labour laws.

7. Transparent performance management systems

Many women I.T. employees vented out during the study that they were not being properly assessed neither were rewards commensurate with their performance given. Almost all women I.T. professionals felt that they were discriminated when compared to their male counterparts. The absence of transparent proper performance management systems gave occasions for such complaints. Performance management systems and process in place, would ensure proper assessment, communication, documentation and promotion of deserving women I.T. employees.

8. Facility for taking children and family during onsite projects

The study results found that women I.T. employees working in onsite projects undergo issues related to child and family care. There are very few companies that provide family visa or option for taking the family along with the employee when they travel on assignments (onsite). The women I.T. professionals surveyed were of the

opinion that provision of facilities or options for employees accommodate their children and family during onsite project will definitely improve the quality of work-life and productivity of employees.

9. Establishing a Women Police Help Desk

Women I.T. employees expressed their anxiety about the lack of safety and security, especially, when they egress after spending late hours or work on night shifts. Although Technopark provided security check by Kerala police at the main gates the women professionals found it not sensitive to their specific needs. Hence, it would be ideal to establish a women police help desk to allay their fears in travelling in and out of work especially during odd hours.

10. Community participation for ensuring local safety and security

Technopark should involve the local community in associating with the technopark companies as well as the local bodies adjacent in ensuring local safety and security especially for women employees. Establishing *jagrathasamithis* for the purpose would go a long way in involving the local community in the protection of women I.T. professionals. Similarly, the organisation of awareness programs involving employer representatives, employees and locals would definitely enhance the image of technopark campus, and it will provide a sense of security and communion with the local community and enhance their psychological comfort. This is necessary to women I.T. employees as they need to walk or travel outside the technopark campus for seeking public transportation or to reach their place of stay.

Such social work interventions suggested above may contribute for enhancing quality of work life of women I.T. professionals at Technopark, making it perhaps one among the most women-friendly work sites.

6.8.2 Suggestions to employers for ensuring better adjustment of women I.T. employees at work

The findings and opinions generated from the respondents of the present study helped the researcher to formulate suggestions aimed at employers for ensuring effective adjustment of women I.T. professionals, at work. It may be considered generally under two headings:

- Career Facilitators

- Career Enhancer.

The above mentioned factors resemble the dual factor theory of F.Herzberg. In his theory, Herzberg explained about motivation and hygiene factors. According to him, recognition, job status, responsibility and opportunities for growth fall under motivators while salary, working conditions, the relationship with colleagues and physical work place come under hygiene factors. The researcher attempts to connect career facilitators to hygiene factors and career enhancers to motivators.

A).Career Facilitators

The following suggested initiatives may be classified together under the heading “career facilitators”:

- **Flexible Working Arrangements:** Companies must provide flexible work arrangements to employees. Such arrangements will help working women in succeeding and attaining their career potential and also help in balancing their work and family. Moreover, such arrangements would attract more women employees to take up employment in those companies.
- **Provision of crèche / day-care centers:** Employer must ensure the availability of day care centers or crèche for young working mothers. Availability of safe and day care centers for their children ensures psychological comfort to women professionals, and enables them to commit themselves fully to their work. Moreover, crèche and day care centers are mandatory as per Factories Act 1948 and Shops and Commercial Establishments Act, 1952. So, companies should assist working mothers in availing either company day care centre or common daycare centers run by technopark authorities.
- **Transportation:** Employers should initiate steps for providing transportation for all women employees. It was a matter of concern that many companies did not provide transportation to women employees working beyond 7 pm. An audit of the existing transport systems available in companies would give a clear picture and help to improve the effectiveness of the various modes of transportation including company bus, cabs and pooling taxis.
- **Opportunities for offshore work:** Many of the respondents observed that employers as a practice used to send women employees on extended onsite projects

without break. In their opinion it would be more palatable if employers assigned short-term onsite projects to those working women whose presence was compulsorily required at home due to genuine reasons such as parental care, child care etc. Those employees should be allowed the choice of working offshore.

- **Proper administration of security agencies:** Most women professionals interviewed expressed their apprehensions about the personnel as well as the security systems in place. This was of vital concern for women employees who had to work late hours to cater to project demands. Rather than deputing security guards for the sake of deployment, employers must do proper selection as well as background check of security guards as well as properly monitor security agencies and personnel.
- **Implementation of workplace harassment committees:** There are many unreported cases than reported cases of harassment at workplace in Technopark. The researcher gathered such information during the face to face interaction with respondents. Many companies even the ones of repute, were ignorant of having workplace harassment committees and rarely accorded any importance for the implementation of such functions. Many employers neither document nor probe harassment cases arising in their organizations. Employers must constitute mandatorily and implement a policy and initiate steps to prevent sexual harassment as per the guidelines suggested mandatorily by “The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act 2013” act.
- **Physical and social audit:** The audit of work environment as per quality standards by both the company and technopark authorities mandated by from Government of Kerala. It will ensure the implementation of health, safety and welfare measures required for women employees to sustain and perform in their work.
- **Grievance redressal forum:** It is suggested to have a women grievance redressal forum by technopark (Government of Kerala). It is a forum in which employees grievances on companies where they are working should be entertained and probed properly.

B). Career Enhancers

Career **Enhancers** implies the probability of extending the length of service or formal engagement by a woman professional with a company. The researcher was able to identify various factors promoting women’s career & its longevity (Other than career

facilitators). The employers are advised to execute the following in a professional manner.

- **Women-centric referral programs:** Employers must initiate women-centric referral programs so that educated and experienced women get more opportunities in their respective domains of expertise and in turn, the companies too benefit from the service given by highly competent women professionals in I.T. sector
- **Skill Training Programmes:** The nature and demands of work and technologies keep changing day by day. Hence, employers must provide opportunities for women employees to undergo programs so as to enhance skill upgrade. Personal skill up gradation helps women I.T. professionals to get into critical projects and opens the doors to senior managerial positions.
- **Policy** for the promotion of performing employees to the top of the hierarchy without gender discrimination
- **An empowerment committee** in every organization headed by woman director / senior woman manager should be constituted to look into issues pertaining to women I.T. professionals.

The organisation's ability to offer diverse roles and Its sensitive and empowering approach to the challenges that the women workforce face will definitely win many hearts.

6.8.3 Suggestions to improve personal coping mechanisms for women I.T. employees

The researcher suggests that women I.T. employees must develop personal coping mechanisms to withstand the pressure arising out of highly competitive I.T. projects. They also need to balance the work and family demands for ensuring smooth running of their career. Women employees must concentrate on their physical and psychological health and they must be aware of various mechanisms which can help for a balanced life. Some of the suggestions are:-

1. Women employees should **be provided psycho-education** on lifestyle diseases, sexual harassment, domestic violence and cross cultural environment. It helps them to identify stressors and educate them as to how to effectively deal with stressors when it arises, and also go for available recourse

2. Women employees must utilize the provisions given by their organizations for **fitness support** such as meditation, yoga, relaxation training, gym, swimming, sports, arts etc. If not given by the organization, they must find other alternatives for body and mind relaxation to reduce the stress and burnout levels arising out of intense work schedule and unavoidable family demands.
3. They must **attend gender sensitization training programs** along with their male colleagues. Such an arrangement will reduce the communication gap and inequality in the work environment.
4. Working women in I.T. sector should be actively involved in **women self-help support groups**. Such groups can highlight the needs, requirements and suggestions of women I.T. professionals and it can bring all these to the notice of concerned authorities in a professional manner.
5. **Participation of women employees in cultural forums, technical fest and business contests** would boost up their confidence levels. It also motivates other working women to unleash their potential in various tasks.

6.9 Conclusion

Without any doubt, Indian women have become an integral part of the I.T. boom with many opportunities knocking at their doors and making them as one of the main beneficiaries of this economic boom. But many a times, the factors such as cultural, social, and psychological force them to take a back step from their ambitious career journeys. The study identified various factors, which work as the social, psychological and work related challenges for women I.T. employees. Identifying the social, psychological and work related challenges will definitely be an eye opener and help women I.T. professionals to take proactive measures and to chalk out a proper planning to maintain their steady career. The study also mapped the perception of women employees about factors which hinder their career progress. Creating an awareness of career inhibitors and career prospects can surely propel women I.T. professionals with the much needed fire to gain inroads into their career. Researcher also made an attempt to find out the career prospects of onsite as well as offshore projects. Such findings may influence women employees to focus more on their career by making a SWOT analysis. A part of the thesis evaluated the implementation and administration of labour laws by employers too. By analysing the perceived comments from the respondents, serious

lapses are noted from many employers, and it is an alert for them to urgently rectify their shortcomings to ensure proper work conditions for women employees.

An analysis of social, psychological and work related challenges, perception of employer administration, perception of challenges faced by women employees during early and middle adulthood, challenges faced by women I.T. professionals when they work at onsite and offshore as well as a tracking of career prospects of onsite and offshore projects were done in this study.

The study will certainly contribute new insights on how to maintain work-life balance of a women professional in a very competitive industry sector like Information Technology.